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## **Revisiting the origin and evolution of Cameroon's diplomatic relations with the united states of America (USA), 1960-1990**

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### **Abstract**

The United States of America (USA) is not a new diplomatic actor in Africa. At the eve of independence of most African country, the USA played a very active role and its influence has grown remarkably, especially in the field of democracy and good governance. Cameroon's diplomatic tie with the USA is characterised by visits, counter visits and mutual assistance within the political, socio-cultural and economic domains established and consolidated by the first head of state, President Ahmadou Ahidjo and the present government. The areas that continue to stir the USA and make Cameroon a more attractive destination include its raw material and numerous business opportunities. Other areas of concern which seek to boast this diplomatic tie include: health, security, education, trade and investment, rural development, culture and sport. These converging points have established a seemingly win-win diplomatic partnership between both countries, especially at the first signal. Based on the above, this paper re-examined Cameroon's diplomatic relation with the USA from 1960 to 1990. It equally articulates Cameroon's diplomatic stance within the framework of modernity, masterminded by the USA, in collaboration with other capitalists, socialists and communists' relations around the world. Also, it looks at the principles and objectives of Cameroon's diplomacy within this multifaceted context, piloted by globalisation. Finally, the analysis concluded that Cameroon significantly benefited both socially and economically in this diplomatic tie with the USA.

**Keywords:** Cameroon-USA, diplomatic tie, foreign policy, cooperation

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### **Introduction**

Cameroon has an extensive network of diplomatic missions, reflecting strong ties and non-contentious standing with other African states, the United States, Israel, Brazil, Russia, and China, and other well branded organizations like the Commonwealth of Nations and Francophonie.

Cameroon and the United States of America (USA) enjoy long standing and friendly bilateral relations since 1960 when they established diplomatic relations following the independence of the French-administered part of the country. However, it was in July 1957 that the United States opened the first diplomatic office in Cameroon. Economic prosperity, promotion of democratic values, respect for human rights, good governance and regional security were the pillars of the bilateral relations between both countries. The United States has continued to encourage concrete efforts within these domains in Cameroon. Cameroon and the USA relations are positive, although from time to time they have been affected by concerns over human rights abuses and the pace of political and economic liberalization. Both countries are partners in countering regional threats to stability, such as the Boko Haram terrorist organisation, and addressing issues of democracy, regional security, environmental protection, public health, and economic development. The United States hopes to continue to work with Cameroon in consolidate democratic gains and economic growth.

In view of the above, this paper seeks to map out early periods of

Cameroon and the United States of America diplomatic relations from 1960 to 1990. The first part of the paper briefly reviews the historical background of Cameroon's diplomacy at the eve of independence and reunification. The second part examines Cameroon's position in the World of modern diplomacy. The third aspect analyses the principles and objectives of Cameroon's foreign policy. Finally, the last part discusses the evolution of Cameroon's diplomatic ties with the United States of America in the domains of politics, economic and social issues.

### **The Geographical and Historical Context of Cameroon**

Cameroon with a territorial surface of 475,442 square kilometers (183,569 sq mi) is a Central African nation on the Gulf of Guinea, bordered by Nigeria, Chad, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon. It is nearly twice the size of Oregon. Mount Cameroon (13,350 ft; 4,069 m), near the coast, is the highest elevation in the country second by Mount Oku. Cameroon is the world's 53rd-largest country. It is slightly larger than the nation of Sweden and state of California<sup>[1]</sup>. It is comparable in size to Papua New Guinea. Cameroon lies between latitudes 1° and 13°N, and longitudes 8° and 17°E. Cameroon is sometimes described as "Africa in miniature" because it exhibits all the major climates and vegetation of the continent: mountains, desert, rain forest, savanna grassland, and ocean coastland. Cameroon can be divided into five geographic zones. These are distinguished by dominant physical, climatic,

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<sup>1</sup> John Mbaku Mukum, *Culture and Customs of Cameroon*, Westport, Connecticut Greenwood Press, 2005, p.6.

and vegetative features. The main rivers are the Benue, Nyong, and Sanaga <sup>[2]</sup>.

Bantu speakers were among the first groups to settle Cameroon, followed by the Muslim Fulani in the 18th and 19th centuries. The land was in the hand of the indigenes until the colonial rule 1884, when treaties with tribal chiefs brought the area under German domination. After World War I, the League of Nations gave the French a mandate over 80% of the area, and the British 20% adjacent to Nigeria. After World War II, when the country came under a UN trusteeship in 1946, self-government was granted, and the Cameroon People's Union emerged as the dominant party by campaigning for reunification of French and British Cameroon and independence. Accused of being under Communist control, the party waged a campaign of revolutionary terror from 1955 to 1958, when it was crushed. In British Cameroon, unification was also promoted by the leading party, the Kamerun National Democratic Party, led by John Foncha <sup>[3]</sup>. In 1959 a fully autonomous government of Cameroon was formed under Ahmadou Ahidjo. Cameroon became an independent republic on January 1, 1960. In 1961 the southern part of the British territory joined la République du Cameroun and the northern section voted for unification with Nigeria. After a 1972 plebiscite, a unitary republic was formed out of East and West Cameroon to replace the former Federal Republic. The president of Cameroon since independence, Ahmadou Ahidjo was replaced in 1982 by the Prime Minister, Paul Biya. Both administrations have been authoritarian <sup>[4]</sup>.

Administratively, Cameroon is divided into 10 semi-autonomous regions, each under the administration of a Governor appointed by a presidential decree. Governors have broad powers: they may order propaganda in their area and call in the army, gendarmes, and police. All local government officials are employees of the central government's Ministry of Territorial Administration, from which local governments also get most of their budgets. The regions are subdivided into 58 divisions. These are headed by presidentially appointed divisional officers. The divisions are further split into sub-divisions, headed by assistant divisional officers, who are now the smallest administrative units <sup>[5]</sup>. The three northernmost regions are the Far North, North, and Adamawa. Directly south of them are the Centre and East. The South Province lies on the Gulf of Guinea and the southern border. Cameroon's western region is split into four smaller regions: the Littoral and Southwest regions are on the coast, and the Northwest and West regions are in the Western Grassfields.

### Cameroon in the World of Modern Diplomacy

Cameroon attained independence in the early sixties with a foreign policy doctrine and diplomatic practice which adhered strictly to the spirit of the Westphalia Peace Treaty of 1648 that encouraged the rise of independent nation-states and instituted the legal concept of sovereignty. Cameroon also adhered to the spirit of Bandung Conference of 1955 that formed a bloc of non-

aligned countries in a global ideological environment marked by the post-World War Two Cold War. Hence. Its diplomacy has been clothed with reserve, noninterference, non-alignment and a formidable mastery of international law. This explains its remarkable success in different peacemaking policies wherein peace and the respect for the legal frameworks available for resolving conflicts and sustaining peace watchwords.

The first success story of Cameroon's diplomacy could be traced back to the 19th meeting of the Council of Ministers of the OAU on June 15 1972, in Rabat, Morocco where a Cameroonian, Joseph Nzo Ekanjiki, was appointed as Secretary General of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). Following the latter's resignation two years later, Cameroon scored another success at the OAU meeting in Mogadishu in June 1974 when the OAU Secretary General's election became deadlocked between a candidate from Somalia and a candidate from Zambia, with neither of them able to secure a two-thirds majority. As a result, President Ahidjo from Cameroon proposed William Aurelien Eteki Mboumoua as the Cameroonian candidate for the office. The Cameroonian candidate was elected as a compromise choice. The activities of both Secretary Generals from Cameroon during an era of political turbulence in Africa were eloquent testimonies of Cameroon's wise diplomatic options and belief in African unity <sup>[6]</sup>. Still in the same spirit, Cameroon has continued to pay her dues to multilateral organisations such as the African Union (AU), the UN, the Communate Economie et Monetaire de L'Afrique Centrale (CEMAC), the LCBC and the Niger Basin Commission. Backdoor diplomatic activities by Cameroon have led to the election of Cameroonians to posts of responsibility within international organizations. They include Dorothy Njeuma, a member of the Panel of Eminent Persons of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), Elizabeth Tankeu, Commissioner of Trade and Industry at the AU and Barrister Akere Muna, President of UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Although Cameroon has taken a gradualist approach to the concept of a United States of Africa, her focused approach and determination to seek arbitration in her border dispute with Nigeria are some of her diplomatic achievements which overshadow many of her previously erratic forays into international politics <sup>[7]</sup>.

Cameroon carried its legendary diplomatic reserve, policy of noninterference and respect for international law to greater lengths by not interfering in political and military conflicts that affected its neighbours like Nigeria, Chad, Central African Republic and Congo-Brazzaville. Instead, Cameroon played key advisory and mediating roles in the shadows, using preventive diplomacy strategies that earned respect from its neighbours. The threat of cross-border conflicts involving Cameroon were skillfully managed with the creation of Mixed Commissions, whose activities always ensure that peace is sustained through joint responsibility. No surprise therefore that the scary threat of a conflict over the Bakassi Peninsular was so skillfully managed

<sup>2</sup> Aaron Neba, *Modern Geography of the Republic of Cameroon* (3rd ed.), Bamenda: Neba Publishers 1999, p.9.

<sup>3</sup> Viviane Frings, *Kingdom on Mount Cameroon: Studies in the History of the Cameroon Coast, 1500-1970*, Providence, R.I.: Berghahn Books, 1996, p.12.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Mark W., DeLancey, & Mark Dike DeLancey, *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Cameroon*, (3ed.), Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2000, p.11

<sup>6</sup> George Mbella, "Increase Cameroon's Presence on the International Scene: A challenge to Cameroon's Diplomacy", in *The Global Network for Good Governance* (GNGG), *Success Story E-Magazine*, N° 024, Limbe, 2010, p.4.

<sup>7</sup> Nicasius Achu Check, "Bilateralism and Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts in Africa: Cameroon's Diplomacy during the Bakassi Peninsula Dispute", in *Policy Brief, South Africa Institute of South Africa*, Briefing N° 45, March 2011, p.2.

until a ruling from the International Court of Justice at the Hague was passed, leading to the permanent peaceful settlement of the issue [8].

In other parts of the world, Cameroonian diplomats have been negotiating forces to reckon with especially in the countries where they operate. Some have risen to the enviable positions of Deans of Diplomatic corps in countries like Germany, Belgium, Senegal and Canada. They have used these positions to defend Africa's interests whenever the need arose. Cameroonian diplomats played instrumental roles in shaping trade relations between the European Union and African countries under the famous EU-ACP Agreements. At the United Nations, charismatic Cameroonian Ambassadors like Paul Bamela Engo, Marie Simone and Belinga Eboutou pulled Cameroon's weight to bear on issues that affected global peace and security. Cameroon headed the Security Council at a sensitive period marked by the Iraqi crisis. Cameroon's stand for weapon inspectors to finish their work in Iraq and submit their report before any military solution, was in line with its adherence to respect of the sovereignty of nations. Cameroonians like Jacques Roger Booh Booh and Amos Namaga Ngongi were appointed to head UN peace keeping missions in Rwanda and DRC respectively. During the 64th General Assembly Session of the UN that focused on Climate Change, last September 2009, Cameroon was Vice-President of the session while a Cameroonian, Jean Victor Nkolo, was appointed as the Spokesman of the session's president, Dr. Ali Abdussalam Triki [9].

President Paul Biya unlike his predecessor builds a legacy of continuity in the domain of diplomatic ties with reliable Nations and organizations. This front role in international diplomacy shares Cameroon's vision and proposals for solutions on key topical issues that affect the country in particular and the world in general. He has iterated Cameroon's resolve to be more present on the international scene, henceforth. However, it has been submitted that Cameroon's diplomats should blend their skills in preventive diplomacy with new skills in economic diplomacy by prospecting for foreign investments and facilitating their implantation in Cameroon to help speed the country's economic recovery using vast and immeasurable available resources. Also, Cameroonian Diplomats should shift towards public diplomacy to increase global awareness about Cameroon and diffuse the Cameroonian way of life around the world using avenues already opened by the popularity of the national soccer team.

### Principles and Objectives of Cameroon's Foreign Policy

Since independence, Cameroon has opted for a foreign policy that has been described variously as status quo, conservative, pragmatic, cautious, non-confrontational, capitalist, pro-West, and moderate. These characterizations of Cameroon's behavior since independence are for the most part reflective of not only the principles that both the first and present generations of political leadership endorsed as the philosophical foundation of Cameroon's foreign policy. They are also indices of the country's desire to achieve certain objectives with the external world. The

extent to which these principles and objectives have been upheld has been largely a function of the domestic situation which under the current political atmosphere is ripening in terms of our ability to attain the maximum of our foreign policy objectives [10].

Essentially, these principles which include international cooperation, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, Pan Africanism, non-alignment, anti-colonialism/imperialism and respect for the territorial integrity of states were coined at independence with a view to enabling the young states better articulate their position and define their place vis-a-vis others. These principles were also coined as reflections of the colonial heritage and legacy, which endowed the nation with certain national attributes that would be determinant in their capacity and ability to achieve the foreign policy objectives at independence. These objectives, which also happen to be the foreign policy goals characteristic of most African foreign policies in general, include the consolidation of national independence, the achievement of sustained economic development, decolonization, African unity, international peace and security, the achievement of national political stability, and the attainment of international respectability [11].

The natural question that has been the subject of contention within scholarly circles is in what ways and to what extent have these foreign diplomatic objectives been achieved in the last three decades of after the independence of most African states? It suffices to argue that an objective response to this question would largely depend upon the particular analytical perspective adopted. What most of Africa's foreign policy literature suggests is that radical, political, economy and neo-Marxist scholarship tends to dismiss African foreign policy as having achieved little or nothing, while traditional/Realist/Orthodox scholars have tended to be more liberal in their interpretation of African foreign policy performance, however limited these performances maybe [12].

Regardless of the perspective one adopts, there is strong empirical evidence that supports the view that as limited as African foreign policy performances might be, a lot has been achieved during the fifty years of independence, given the circumstances of the international environment. It would be difficult for any analysis to disagree with the fact that African states have achieved a measure of international respectability, a measure of unity, a measure of respect for their national integrity, a measure of economic development, and a general maturation in their foreign policy experiences. This experience notwithstanding, the record leaves much to be desired about not only its consequences but also its future.

The direction and achievements of Cameroon's foreign diplomacy are largely reflective of this general African pattern. Being fundamentally of a status quo type, the best description that can be attributed to the country's foreign policy for the most part of the last fifty years is one of change and continuity. Essentially, Cameroon's foreign policy's record in the five decades of independence revealed a discernible pattern of conservatism and caution in external comportment. The country has in turn emphasize and commit itself to the colonial heritage, historical

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p.3.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> E., Ngolle Ngolle, "Democratic Change and Foreign Policy in Africa: The Case of Cameroon", in Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule, Forschungsstelle für Internationale Beziehungen, Beiträge, Nr. 4 / Juni 1996, pp.6-8.

<sup>11</sup> Mark Delancey, "Cameroon's Foreign Relations", in Michael Schatzberg and I. William Zartman, *The Political Economy of Cameroon*, Johns Hopkins, University Press, Baltimore, 1986; Ndiva Kofele-Kale, "Cameroon and its Foreign Relations", *AFRICAN AFFAIRS*, 1981, Vol. 80, pp.197-217.

<sup>12</sup> Cited by E., Ngolle Ngolle, "Democratic Change and Foreign Policy in Africa: The Case of Cameroon", 1996, p.8.

relationships, regional affinities, national development options, which are essentially of a free enterprise or capitalist nature. Respect for international norms and institutions, relations with all actors who demonstrate a will and capacity to contribute to national development is also imperative. More particularly, the country has laid special emphasis on and commitment to former colonial powers and relationships. It suffices to state that within this pattern of continuity, new grounds have been broken, such as opening up new avenues for interaction and exchange with non-traditional actors such as Japan, the Soviet Union, China, Korea, and Brazil; and a propensity to constantly review relationships with traditional partners, with the view to achieving greater equilibrium and perhaps greater room for schemes in international relations. Mark Delancey captures this trend in this commentary:

It is decolonization that seems best to describe the history of Cameroon's foreign relations given the gradual diversification of partners most easily observable in the economic and commercial areas. Even though this freedom of choice has been limited within the Western capitalist bloc mainly due to its national economy which has a capitalist base<sup>[13]</sup>.

Obviously, this pattern of foreign diplomacy has had its appeal and continues to describe Cameroon's foreign policy performance in the last fifty years. The question that arises is in what ways and to what extent are the democratic changes taking place in the country likely to change this pattern of external behavior.

### Cameroon-USA Early Diplomatic Relation

Contact between Cameroonians and Americans on Cameroonian soil predated the establishment of formal diplomatic relations in 1960. In 1892, Dr. Good established Presbyterian Mission stations within the Bulu region of Cameroon. In addition, schools and hospitals were established. By 1913, the American Presbyterian Mission had 97 schools with 6545 pupils in attendance. It was in the area of education that the Presbyterian Mission continued to make the most significant impact. Another denomination that arrived in Cameroon during the early part of the twentieth was the North American Baptist Mission. The Baptist Mission also played a significant role in education. Rev. Paul Gebauer, a missionary of the American Baptist spent over thirty years in Cameroon before returning to the United States in 1962. Other missionary groups were active in the region before independence. Whatever the initiative taken by the missionary groups, formal diplomatic relations between the United States and Cameroon were not established until 1960. The United States was among the countries that provided rapid recognition of the new Cameroon nation<sup>[14]</sup>.

The United States established diplomatic relations with Cameroon in 1960, following the independence of the French-administered part of the country. Cameroon has had two presidents since independence. USA relations with Cameroon are positive, although from time to time they have been affected by

concerns over human rights abuses and the pace of political and economic liberalization. The two countries are partners in countering regional threats to stability, such as the threat of Boko Haram, and addressing issues of democracy, regional security, environmental protection, public health, and economic development<sup>[15]</sup>.

Realizing the importance of the United States to his overall objectives in foreign and domestic policies, Ahidjo moved quickly to call for the establishment of better and more substantial relations between the nations. On January 19, 1961, Ahidjo sent a letter of congratulations to Kennedy on his inauguration as President of the United States. Ahidjo wrote:

Au moment où Vous prenez Vos hautes fonctions à la tête du Vaillant peuple des Etats Unis d'Amérique, j'ai l'honneur de souhaiter à votre Gouvernement la réalisation complète du programme qu'il s'est tracé convaincu qu'il entretiendra avec le Gouvernement de la République du Cameroun les meilleures relations qui ont toujours caractérisé les rapports Américano-camerounais<sup>[16]</sup>.

A pragmatist, Ahidjo had acted quickly for several reasons. First, Cameroon needed urgent economic assistance from the United States. Second, as a superpower, Ahidjo hoped that America's intervention in Cameroon would neutralize France's influence in his country. That was particularly important, especially as Cameroon had entered a series of entangling agreements with France before independence. Third, Ahidjo hoped to use Cameroon's bilingualism to his nation's advantage. Cameroon's bilingualism gave it prestige and status. As far as culture is concerned, Ahidjo wrote:

We must refrain from any blind and narrow nationalism and avoid any complex when absorbing the learning of other cultures. When we consider the English language and culture and the French language and culture, we must regard them [...] as an acquirement of the universal civilization to which we belong"<sup>[17]</sup>. In March 1962, Ahidjo visited the United States, and while there raised a series of issues in his discussion with Kennedy. First, he asked that the United States should not give up its opposition to colonialism, reminding Kennedy that a large part of Africa was still colonized. Second, Ahidjo discussed what he referred to as Cameroon's "lutte contre la subversion" (Struggle against subversion), emphasizing the destruction those wars have caused in Cameroon. The rebels, Ahidjo, stated, were pro-communist. Third, Ahidjo raised the critical issue of Cameroon's twenty year development plan (broken down into five year plans), and requested American aid which was necessary in order to fulfill the long range goals of the plan. Fourth, Ahidjo condemned France's continuous attempt to divide Africa into spheres of influence, and called for active American involvement in his country. Ahidjo's attempt to "break the umbilical cord tying her [Cameroon] to France", was destined to be one of his major challenges in foreign policy. Cameroon continued to receive assistance through Kennedy's new United States Agency for

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Harry R. Rudin, *Germans in the Cameroons, 1884-1914: A Case Study in Modern Imperialism*, New York: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1968, p.375.

<sup>15</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/Foreign\\_relations\\_of\\_Cam](https://en.wikipedia.org/Foreign_relations_of_Cam). Cameroon's non contentious, low-profile approach to *foreign relations* puts it squarely in the middle of other African and developing country states on major, visited 12 October 2016.

<sup>16</sup> Letter, Ahmadou Ahidjo to John F. Kennedy, 19 Janvier 1961, Cameroon: General, 1961-1962, presidents Office Files (POF), John F. Kennedy Library, Boston (hereafter referred to as JFKL), cited by Julius A. Amin, "Cameroon's Foreign Policy towards the United States", 1999, p.222.

<sup>17</sup> Speech, "His Excellency President Ahmadou Ahidjo on Education", West Cameroon Teachers' Journal, Department of Education, Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Volume 2, 14 Number 5, 1964, p.5.

International Development (USAID). Also, Ahidjo was occasionally invited to Washington<sup>[18]</sup>.

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) runs a number of programs in Cameroon, mainly through its regional office in Ghana, and primarily in the health sector. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) also has activities in Cameroon, mostly in HIV/AIDS prevention. Peace Corps volunteers work in maternal child health, youth empowerment, and sustainable livelihoods. The Public Affairs Section of the US Embassy in Cameroon organizes and funds diverse cultural, educational, and informational exchanges. It maintains a library and helps foster the development of Cameroon's independent press by providing information in a number of areas, including US human rights and democratization policies. The Embassy administers both the Ambassador's Special Self-Help and Democracy and Human Rights Fund programs and the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation. Through several State Department and USAID regional funds, the Embassy also provides funds for biodiversity protection, refugees, and civic engagement in elections processes, democratization, human rights, countering violent extremism, and education<sup>[19]</sup>.

The chaos caused by the Maquisards (rebels) in Cameroon orchestrated the need for economic aid. Committed to reversing the tide of communism "anywhere", and at "anytime", Kennedy instructed the American Ambassador in Cameroon, Leland Barrows, to ensure that Cameroon received the necessary assistance. Whether or not, the terrorist groups were procommunist, it was certainly pragmatic politics by Ahidjo to emphasize the possible communist threat in order to ensure immediate assistance from the "New frontier" administration.

United States aid to Cameroon included road construction equipment, scholarships to students, and financial assistance. In 1963, there were fifteen Cameroonians studying engineering, agriculture, and cooperative and vocational education in American universities with American scholarship funds. In the same year, the United States extended a grant of 120 million francs CFA to the Cameroon government for economic and social development. This grant was devoted to the reconstruction of those areas destroyed by the terrorists. To hasten the improvement of roads, the United States AID donated road equipment to Cameroon's Public Works Department (PWD), the agency charged with road development in the country.

Assisting Cameroon's development was the organization called Operation Crossroads Africa (OCA). As a nonprofit organization, OCA helped "small communities to work together to meet common problems"<sup>[20]</sup>. In the early years of the Cameroon Republic, three units of OCA visited the country. Of those units, two groups served in East Cameroon, and the other unit assisted construction projects in Guzang and Batibo in West Cameroon. In September 1963, Ambassador Barrows presented a twin-

<sup>18</sup> Memorandum to the President, March 13, 1962, unsigned, Cameroon-Ahidjo visit, March 1962, Box 1 12a, JFKL; "Head of Cameroon Says Reds Aid Foes", New York Times, March 15, 1962; Ndiva Kofele-Kale, "Cameroon and Its Foreign Relations", p.207.

<sup>19</sup> World Investment News, This is the electronic edition of the special country report on Cameroon published in *Forbes Global Magazine*, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2001, Developed by *Agencia E.*, 2001, visited 12 October 2016.

<sup>20</sup> Julius A Amin, "Cameroon's Foreign Policy towards the United States", In: *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer*, tome 86, n°322-323, 1er semestre 1999, *De l'inventaire du monde à la mise en valeur du globe, Botanique et colonisation (fin 17<sup>e</sup> siècle-début 20<sup>e</sup> siècle)* p.225.

engine DC-3 airplane to the Cameroon government as a gift from the United States. In the absence of large airports and modern roads in Cameroon, this plane served to transport senior government officials from one part of the country to another. Also in the same year, the United States government extended a loan of \$9, 2 million to Cameroon. Road equipment donated to Cameroon in October included four Caterpillar tractors; two farm-size tractors; two front-end loaders; five motor graders; ten trucks; a rear-end dump; one low-boy trailer; one pneumatic roller; two air compressors and attachments; and one portable crushing and greening plant<sup>[21]</sup>.

To dramatize the new partnership, Mennen Williams, United States under Secretary of State for Africa Affairs visited Cameroon in July 1963. He noted: "I trust that my presence and that of my colleagues will serve as a reaffirmation of the positive relations which exist between the Government and the People of Cameroon, and the Government and People of the United States"<sup>[22]</sup>. Williams told an audience in Cameroon. Williams emphasized that there were Cameroonians on various American scholarships studying in American Universities. In 1967, Cameroon entered an investment guarantee agreement with the United States, and a bilateral accord between the two nations was ratified in 1989. Both the assistance and the investment agreements were critical during this period in Cameroon's history<sup>[23]</sup>.

Ahidjo made several trips to America during his tenure as president. By 1967, he had been to America five times. In 1969 and 1971 Ahidjo made more visits to the United States. During these visits, Ahidjo encouraged American businesses to invest in Cameroon, and assured the American government of Cameroon's gratitude to its continuous aid to his nation. Simultaneously, he frequently pleaded with the American government that one of the problems between his nation and the western world was the failure by the west to pay fair prices for Cameroonian products. As a major producer of cocoa and coffee, the president wanted prices of those commodities to be stabilized. Though America was lukewarm on price stabilization, Ahidjo was able to get the US commit itself into an agreement in October 1972. Despite the problems over price stabilization, the United States continued to assist Cameroon in other areas. When he left office in 1982, American interest and investment was at an all time high in Cameroon<sup>[24]</sup>.

Between 1963 and 1984, American aid to Cameroon totaled \$278.6 million. Aid was provided to agriculture and the construction of the infrastructure, particularly railroads. In the early 1970s after the United States concluded that Northern Cameroon was increasingly being affected by the Sahel drought, America intensified its effort in agricultural research in Cameroon. Assistance was given to agricultural education. In 1978, the Agricultural Management and Planning Project were

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> "Dinner Speech, July 5, 1963, by U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Governor A. Mennen Williams", Press Release No. 2530, July 8, 1963, and "U.S. Grants to Cameroon 120 million francs for social development", August 8, 1963, Press Release No. 2615; "Ambassador Barrows Presents U.S Plane to Cameroon", Press Release No. 2641, September 2, 1963, National Archives, Buea, Cameroon (hereafter referred to as NAB).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Harold D. Nelson, *Area Handbook for the United Republic of Cameroon*, Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973, p.262.

initiated. Its purpose was to assist government ministries to carry out agricultural census for the entire nation. In 1984, the census was conducted and it received praise from all over. The project was extended to 1987. Presently, the ministry has a data analysis office. The USAID-funded National Cereals Research and Extension project in Cameroon was developed. It enriched research programs in maize, sorghum, millet, and rice. In the late 1980s, the United States provided money for the completion of the University of Dschang in Cameroon, an institution devoted to the training of senior level personnel in agriculture. Along the same lines since the 1980s, Cameroonian agricultural workers, utilizing USAID grants, have received training in American institutions. In 1984, USAID approved \$39 million to continue the work of the National Cereals Research and Extension project [25].

Economically, the relationship with the United States has been beneficial to Cameroon. In the late 1980s, there were roughly fifty American firms engaged in business activities in Cameroon, though some of those companies worked with European subsidiaries. These firms saw Cameroon as an ideal nation to invest in for several reasons. First, Cameroon was one of the few politically stable nations in Africa. Second, the nation is bilingual, and in 1990, Cameroon created an Industrial Free Zone (IFZ), which gave foreign investors comparative advantages. Third, IFZ gave investors fourteen guarantees including property ownership, transfer of capital and income, and complete expropriation compensation. However, Cameroon is eligible for preferential trade benefits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act. Cameroon's exports to the United States include Crude oil, cocoa, rubber, tobacco, timber, and coffee while imports from the United States include machinery, chemicals, aircraft, vehicles, flour, and plastics. The United States is one of the leading investor in Cameroon, largely through the Chad-Cameroon petroleum pipeline project. The United States and Cameroon have a long outstanding bilateral investment treaty [26].

It is significant to emphasize once more that the United States Agency for International Development has contributed in various ways towards the development of Cameroon. While its primary attention has been focused on agricultural extension services, some of the other areas it has provided assistance to include: Trans-Cameroonian Railway, Kumba-Mamfe Road, the University Center at Dschang, and a free trade zone. Despite all these, the most enduring American assistance to Cameroon was the Peace Corps volunteers.

September 1962, the first batch of the United States Peace Corps Volunteers arrived in Cameroon to begin their services, and since then Peace Corps volunteers have been serving in Cameroon. In the 1960s, volunteers' services were largely in the area of education. Volunteers filled a critical vacuum in Cameroon's educational System. Volunteer services also included work in community development. Volunteers were charged with the responsibility of improving the lives of the rural poor. As agents of modernization, their duties included road and bridge

construction, agricultural development, organization of cooperatives, digging of latrines, and reform of health services, resettlement projects and the improvement of sanitation. This was and continues to be the most challenging aspect of volunteer responsibilities [27].

By the 1980s, hundreds of Peace Corps volunteers had served in various parts of Cameroon, and their services continue to receive praise from the public and private sectors. Sadou Daoudou, a one time Cameroon's former Minister of Public Service, praised the volunteers and referred to their services as most enduring assistance given to Cameroon by the United States. John Ngu Foncha was equally impressed with the work of the volunteers and wanted to see them more operational in the domains which concerns education [28].

Finally, Peace Corps services in Cameroon also scored some political victories. By establishing the Peace Corps, Kennedy hoped to show developing nations that America cared for them, thereby preventing them from falling into communism during the Cold War. Cameroon did not even consider communism as an option. It remained a nonaligned nation all through the Cold War. The volunteers were in part agents for propaganda engaged in a form of people to people diplomacy. Through them, Cameroonians learned about American democracy, and many have continued to call for the establishment of American brand of democracy in their country [29].

Also in the social domain, from 1961, numerous cultural exchanges took place between the United States and Cameroon. American culture including dressing habits has become so widely accepted in Cameroon to the point that if the current pace continues its popularity will soon surpass the acceptable French culture in that society. Today, in the major cities in Cameroon, blue jeans are the popular craze. Rap music has come alive, and from music stores to night clubs to their individual homes, young people in Cameroon are dancing and listening to Rap, and Blues. Hip-Hop culture is equally on the rise. Increasingly, Cameroonian movie theaters project American movies. American television programs including the Cosby Show, Matlock, Santa Barbara, and more are regulars on Cameroon television. The United States has capitalized on that. At the American Cultural Center in Yaounde Cameroonians receive a heavy dose of American propaganda [30]. At the center, Cameroonians are introduced to American life through books, magazines, films, and documentaries. Through these educational and cultural exchanges, Cameroonians came to accept Thomas Jefferson's beliefs about the spread of democracy that "the disease of liberty is catching". Armed with the knowledge of American democratic System, Cameroonians have asked their leaders to implement more democratic reforms.

## Conclusion

From empirical knowledge about African foreign diplomacy behavior, there is reason to ascertain that Cameroon's future foreign diplomacy with the USA would continue to be characterized by both continuity and change. However, given the

<sup>25</sup> Uma Lele (ed), *Aid to African Agriculture: Lessons From Two Decades of Donors' Experience*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992, p.285.

<sup>26</sup> U.S Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration, *Foreign Economic Trends and Their Implications for the United States*, May 1990, cited by Amin Julius A. Cameroon's Foreign Policy Towards the United States, p.229.

<sup>27</sup> P. David Searles, *The Peace Corps Experience: Challenge and Change*, 1969-1976, Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1997, p.21.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

changing domestic political scene in the direction of greater democratization, there is a likely tendency that change would occur within the domain of style, intensity, scope, degree of emphasis and understanding and the management of issues. The current administration of President Paul Biya is already prefiguring these changes through its ever-increasing, preservation of traditional values of the country's foreign policy, especially with the USA, and compliance to international norms. Throughout this paper, we have attempted to demonstrate the classic argument that the conceptual linkage between domestic and external politics is relevant in Cameroon's diplomatic relation with the USA. In putting forward our argument, we have not only placed the analysis within the framework of the principles and objectives that characterize Cameroon's foreign policy, but have equally attempted to show how this early diplomatic relations was and are still manifested in the domains of politics, economic and social activities. Given this phase, it is our desire that future diplomatic relation with the USA continue to operate on the bases of continuity and change, which has long ago been established.

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