



The CPDM and other political parties in 21st century governance: Comparative analysis

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Abstract

This article presents a comparative analysis of the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) and other political parties in 21st-century governance, examining their roles, governance models, and implications for democratic development in Cameroon. The study employs theoretical frameworks from political science, including party systems theory and governance theories, to evaluate how the CPDM's dominant-party system has shaped the nation's political landscape since its founding in 1985. Through comprehensive analysis of the CPDM alongside opposition parties including the Social Democratic Front (SDF), Union Démocratique du Cameroun (UDC), and Cameroon Renaissance Movement (MRC), the research explores governance approaches, electoral strategies, and public engagement mechanisms. The findings reveal that while the CPDM's centralized governance model has facilitated significant developmental initiatives such as the Emergence 2035 strategy and infrastructure investments, it faces persistent challenges including authoritarian tendencies, electoral irregularities, and the ongoing Anglophone crisis. Opposition parties have contributed to political discourse through advocacy for decentralization, human rights, and social equity, yet struggle against the CPDM's established dominance. The study concludes that Cameroon's political future depends on embracing inclusive governance practices, fostering inter-party dialogue, and responding to growing citizen demands for transparency and accountability.

Keywords: Cameroon, CPDM, governance, political parties

Introduction

Contextual Background

Cameroon, located in Central Africa, is often described as "Africa in miniature" due to its diverse geography, cultures, and ethnicities. The country gained independence from French and British colonial rule in 1960, a significant turning point that shaped its political landscape. Initially, Cameroon adopted a multi-party system that allowed for the free expression of political ideas and competition among various parties (Ngoh, 2008) ^[28]. However, the political environment soon shifted towards a more centralized and dominated structure, leading to the emergence of the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM).

Founded in 1985, the CPDM arose under the leadership of Paul Biya, who has been in power since 1982. The party was established as a response to the need for stability and national unity during a period marked by political unrest and economic challenges. The CPDM positioned itself as a progressive force advocating for modernization and development, promising to address the pressing socio-economic issues facing the nation (Joseph, 1986) ^[16]. However, the party's rise to prominence was not without controversy; it has been accused of authoritarian practices, including suppressing dissent and manipulating electoral processes to maintain its grip on power (Takougang, 2003) ^[33].

Over the years, the political landscape in Cameroon has been characterized by a dominant-party system. Key opposition groups, such as the Social Democratic Front (SDF), the Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS), and the Mouvement pour la Renaissance du Cameroun (MRC), have struggled to gain significant traction against the well-established CPDM (Awasom, 2006) ^[1]. This dynamic has led to a political environment where governance is closely intertwined with party loyalty, and public trust in political institutions has waned. The

CPDM's governance, marked by both developmental initiatives and criticisms of corruption and inefficiency, reflects the complexities of managing a diverse nation with various ethnic and regional interests (Mbah, 2017) ^[22].

As Cameroon entered the 21st century, the political landscape continued to evolve. Recent events, including social movements advocating for greater political reform and transparency, have put pressure on the CPDM to adapt its governance strategies. The country faces significant challenges, including economic downturns, high unemployment rates, and public discontent regarding governance. Understanding the role of the CPDM amidst these challenges, particularly in comparison to other political parties, is essential for grasping the current state of governance in Cameroon. Political parties serve as fundamental components of democratic governance. They act as intermediaries between the government and the citizenry, facilitating political participation and representation. In a healthy democracy, political parties promote the articulation of diverse interests and ensure that various social groups have a voice in the political process (Dahl, 1989) ^[4]. They engage citizens in political discourse, mobilize voters during elections, and provide platforms for policy debates that are crucial for informed decision-making.

Moreover, political parties play a vital role in shaping public policy and governance frameworks. They contribute to the legislative process by formulating policies that address the needs and aspirations of the electorate. In representative democracies, parties are responsible for selecting candidates for public office, thereby influencing who governs and how policies are implemented (Wanyande, 2000) ^[34]. Effective political parties are essential for fostering accountability and responsiveness in governance, as they are expected to remain attuned to the needs of their constituents. In Cameroon, the CPDM has historically dominated the

political scene, shaping governance practices and public policy for decades. The party's long-standing control has raised questions about its commitment to democratic principles, particularly in terms of accountability and transparency. Critics argue that the CPDM's governance has often prioritized party loyalty over meritocracy, leading to inefficiencies in public service delivery and a lack of responsiveness to citizens' needs (Dibua, 2006) ^[5].

The importance of political parties becomes even more pronounced in contexts where governance challenges persist. In Cameroon, issues such as corruption, economic mismanagement, and social inequalities have prompted calls for reform from both citizens and opposition parties. The effectiveness of governance is increasingly scrutinized, and citizens are demanding greater accountability from their leaders. Thus, understanding the role of the CPDM in this context, alongside its competitors, is crucial for evaluating the overall health of democracy in Cameroon (Freedom House, 2020) ^[11].

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical frameworks in political science are essential constructs that provide a systematic approach to analyzing political phenomena. According to renowned political scientist David Easton (1965) ^[7], a theoretical framework can be defined as "a set of interrelated concepts, definitions, and propositions that explain or predict phenomena."

1. Political Party Systems

Political party systems are crucial for understanding the organization of political competition and the functioning of democracies. They can be categorized into three primary types: single-party, multi-party, and dominant-party systems.

In a single-party system, one political party controls the government, often suppressing opposition and limiting political pluralism. This system can lead to authoritarian rule, where dissent is not tolerated, and political participation is effectively restricted to party members. Historical examples include the former Soviet Union and contemporary North Korea.

In contrast, a multi-party system allows multiple political parties to compete for power, fostering a vibrant political environment. This system encourages diverse representation, enabling various social groups to express their interests. Multi-party systems can enhance democratic governance by facilitating electoral competition and accountability, though they may also lead to fragmentation and instability if no party can secure a majority (Gemandze & Fonchingong, 2009) ^[13].

A dominant-party system occupies an intermediate position, where one party, like the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), maintains significant power while other parties exist. While opposition parties are permitted, they often struggle to gain traction (Njeuma, 2001) ^[29].

2. Governance Theories

Governance theories are essential for understanding the operational dynamics of political entities and the mechanisms by which they can be held accountable. Renowned political scientist Robert Dahl (1989) ^[4] emphasizes the principles of democratic governance, which include participation, rule of law, and respect for human rights. Dahl argues that for a government to be deemed

democratic, it must be responsive to its citizens, ensuring that policies align with the electorate's preferences. Another significant aspect of governance is accountability, as articulated by Mark Bovens (2007) ^[2]. He highlights the importance of mechanisms that hold public officials responsible for their actions, which include transparency in decision-making and the capacity for citizens to demand answers. Bovens categorizes accountability into various forms, such as political, legal, and administrative, each playing a vital role in maintaining public trust. Effective governance, as noted by Francis Fukuyama (2014) ^[12], requires a delicate balance between authority and accountability. This balance ensures that power is exercised in the public interest while upholding checks and balances to prevent abuse. Collectively, these governance theories provide a comprehensive framework for evaluating political dynamics and governance practices, particularly in contexts like Cameroon, where accountability and responsiveness are critical challenges.

Overview of the CPDM

a. Historical Background

The Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), founded in 1985, traces its origins to the Cameroon National Union (CNU), the sole legal party in the country since 1966. Under the leadership of President Paul Biya, the CPDM was established as part of a strategic shift to adapt to rising demands for political reform and democratization. This formation coincided with the waning influence of the CNU and growing pressures for political pluralism, especially in the wake of the 1990s ^[18], a decade marked by significant global political changes (Ngoh, 2004). The CPDM initially positioned itself as a reformist party, promoting a platform centered on national unity and development. As Cameroon transitioned to a multi-party system, the CPDM faced increasing competition from opposition parties, notably the Social Democratic Front (SDF). Throughout the 1990s ^[18] and early 2000s, the party consolidated its power, often employing a combination of strategic alliances and resources to maintain its dominance (Krieger, 2008) ^[18]. Over the years, the CPDM has undergone internal transformations, adapting its policies and strategies to respond to both domestic challenges and the international political environment (Nwaha, 2017) ^[31].

CPDM Structure

1. National Executive Committee

a. Regional Committees

- Local Party Committees
- Youth Wing
- Women's Wing

b. Specialized Committees

- Economic Development
- Social Affairs
- Electoral Affairs

2. Additional Features

- Executive Officers
- Advisory Councils

b. Governance Approach

The governance approach of the CPDM is characterized by a focus on economic development, stability, and security.

Key policies include substantial investment in infrastructure, education, and healthcare, aimed at fostering economic growth and improving living standards (Kum, 2019) ^[19]. Additionally, the CPDM has emphasized decentralization as a governance strategy, aiming to empower local governments and enhance citizen participation in decision-making (Higazi, 2012) ^[15]. However, critics argue that the implementation of these policies often lacks transparency, and the central government retains significant control over local administrations. Moreover, governance under the CPDM has been criticized for authoritarian tendencies (Mbah, 2017) ^[22].

c. Electoral Success and Challenges

The CPDM has historically enjoyed significant electoral success, consistently winning presidential and parliamentary elections. President Paul Biya's re-election in 2018, amidst allegations of electoral irregularities and a boycott by opposition parties, exemplified the party's enduring dominance (Dionne & Signé, 2018) ^[6]. This pattern continued dramatically in the 2025 presidential election. At 92 years old and seeking an eighth term, Biya was declared the winner with 53.66% of the vote, according to the Constitutional Council's announcement on October 27, 2025. His main challenger, Issa Tchiroma Bakary of the FSNC, was credited with 35.19%.

However, the 2025 election was deeply controversial. Before the results were announced, Tchiroma Bakary had already insisted he had won, a claim dismissed by the CPDM. The election period was marred by deadly violence. At least four people were killed during protests in Douala on the day the results were announced, and further unrest in Garoua resulted in additional fatalities. At least ten petitions alleging electoral malpractice were rejected by the Constitutional Council, and opposition supporters defied protest bans in several cities, clashing with security forces. The election was also characterized by a fragmented opposition. A significant blow to the anti-CPDM forces came when Maurice Kamto, the main opposition leader from the MRC and Biya's primary challenger in 2018 ^[6], was disqualified from running by ELECAM. His candidacy was rejected on the grounds that his party, MANIDEM, had presented two candidates, a justification his supporters vehemently contested. Efforts to create a unified opposition coalition, which had been ongoing throughout 2025, ultimately proved unsuccessful.

The political fallout from the 2025 election was immediate and severe. The US House of Representatives introduced a resolution highlighting the political turmoil and the government's suppression of dissent, calling for a humanitarian parole program for Cameroonians fleeing the violence. Analysts warned that Cameroon could descend into political turmoil if the election results were not seen as reflecting the will of the people, with one calling Biya's new mandate "notably shaky". The ongoing Anglophone crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions further complicates the CPDM's position, as issues of national identity and governance have intensified (Ommerolle & Heungoup, 2017) ^[32]. The situation was so tense in the capital, Yaoundé, that almost all shops and schools remained closed following the announcement.

Comparative Analysis

a. Political Contexts

In the diverse political landscape of Cameroon, the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) stands as a dominant force, but it operates alongside several other notable parties that each contribute to the nation's political dialogue. The Social Democratic Front (SDF), founded in 1990 ^[18], emerged as the primary opposition party to the CPDM. The SDF has carved out a significant base, particularly among Anglophone voters, and is known for its strong advocacy for democratic governance, human rights, and socio-economic reforms (Krieger, 2008) ^[18]. While the SDF has been critical of the CPDM's governance, especially concerning issues of national identity and decentralization, it has also played a crucial role in promoting political discourse and accountability in Cameroon. The SDF was represented in 2025 by candidate Joshua Osih.

The Union Démocratique du Cameroun (UDC), established in 1991, focuses on social democracy and economic development, aiming to uplift the marginalized and address pressing issues such as poverty and youth unemployment (Ngniman, 1993) ^[26]. In 2025, the UDC was represented by Patricia Tomaïno Ndam Njoya, the only female candidate in the race. Despite having a smaller electoral base compared to the CPDM and SDF, the UDC emphasizes grassroots mobilization and community engagement, striving to connect with citizens at the local level.

The Cameroon for the Renaissance of Movement (CRM), founded in 2012 ^[15] by Maurice Kamto, has quickly positioned itself as a pro-democracy party advocating for political reform and social justice. The MRC gained considerable attention during the 2018 ^[6] elections, where it successfully mobilized significant youth support and articulated concerns over electoral fairness (Dionne & Signé, 2018) ^[6]. However, its leader and key figure for 2025, Maurice Kamto, was controversially disqualified from the 2025 presidential race, severely weakening the party's direct electoral impact. Other significant candidates in the 2025 election included Cabral Libii (PCRN), Akere Muna (Univers), and former Prime Minister Bello Bouba Maigari.

a. Governance Models

When comparing governance models, the CPDM's approach is characterized by a strong central authority that enables decisive action and rapid implementation of policies. This top-down decision-making framework has facilitated substantial investments in infrastructure, healthcare, and education, contributing to national development (Kum, 2019) ^[19]. However, this model has faced criticism regarding transparency and accountability, prompting calls for greater inclusivity in governance (Enonchong, 2020) ^[9]. Critics point to the CPDM's management of the 2025 election as further evidence of a lack of transparency and democratic commitment.

In contrast, the SDF advocates for a more decentralized governance structure that promotes local autonomy and citizen participation. This model emphasizes social equity, aiming to ensure that marginalized groups have a voice in policy-making processes. The SDF's focus on community engagement represents a commitment to addressing local

needs and enhancing democratic practices (Krieger, 2008) ^[18].

Both the UDC and MRC emphasize participatory governance, with a strong focus on public service delivery and accountability. The UDC aims to implement social welfare policies that directly benefit the population, while the MRC has been vocal about anti-corruption measures and electoral reforms (Koufan Menkene & Ngam, 2022) ^[17]. This commitment to transparency and equity aligns with the aspirations of many Cameroonians for a more accountable and responsive government.

b. Electoral Strategies and Public Engagement

The CPDM employs a multifaceted approach to engage with the electorate, leveraging strategic resources and grassroots mobilization effectively. Its campaigns often highlight national unity and development achievements, showcasing the tangible benefits of its governance (Koufan Menkene & Ngam, 2022) ^[17]. By emphasizing completed infrastructure projects and social initiatives, the CPDM reinforces its role as a leader in national progress. However, the 2025 election saw the CPDM's traditional campaign strengths overshadowed by allegations of manipulation, deadly protests, and a widespread separatist-imposed lockdown in the Anglophone regions designed to disrupt the vote.

The SDF focuses on community outreach and grassroots activism, utilizing town hall meetings and rallies to connect with voters. Their campaigns often spotlight issues of governance, human rights, and economic inequality, positioning the SDF as a champion for those seeking reform and social justice (Krieger, 2008) ^[18]. The UDC engages with the electorate through social programs and initiatives that resonate with local communities, while the MRC has effectively harnessed social media and youth-focused campaigns to mobilize support. The MRC's strategies have included protests and public demonstrations, reflecting a proactive stance in raising awareness about electoral issues (Dionne & Signé, 2018) ^[6].

In 2025, the opposition's electoral strategy was centered on attempts to present a unified front. Throughout the year, various initiatives, including those from the "Groupe de Douala" and diaspora movements like "237 - Socialists & Democrats," sought to create a consensus candidate to challenge Biya. However, these efforts failed. The process was hampered by disagreements over whether the coalition should be built around a candidate (as advocated by the MRC) or a common political program (as advocated by the PCRN). The disqualification of Maurice Kamto, who many saw as the strongest potential challenger, ultimately dashed hopes for a united opposition and left a divided field of candidates to face the well-resourced CPDM machine.

Case Studies

a. Successful Navigation

The Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) has been at the forefront of several successful governance initiatives that have significantly impacted the nation's development. One notable example is the Emergence 2035 ^[20] strategy, launched in 2010 (Fopa, 2025) ^[10]. This long-term development plan aims to transform Cameroon into an emerging economy by 2035 ^[19], focusing on infrastructure, education, and health sectors. The government has invested heavily in road construction, with projects like the Yaoundé-

Douala highway, which has improved connectivity between major cities and facilitated trade (Kum, 2019) ^[19]. The completion of the Kribi Deep Sea Port has further enhanced Cameroon's position as a logistics hub in Central Africa, attracting foreign investment and boosting economic activity (Nkwatoh, 2016) ^[30]. Another success story is the National Health Insurance Scheme, introduced to enhance access to healthcare for citizens. This initiative has made significant strides in reducing out-of-pocket expenses for medical services, thereby improving health outcomes and increasing public satisfaction with the health system (Lo-oh, 2014) ^[20]. The CPDM's commitment to investing in education is also evident in the establishment of numerous schools and vocational training centers across the country, aimed at reducing illiteracy and equipping the youth with skills for the job market.

Moreover, the CPDM has made strides in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment through various programs. For example, the National Gender Policy, implemented in 2011, seeks to integrate gender considerations into all sectors of governance, ensuring that women have equal access to resources and decision-making processes (Mefire, Vissandjée, & Bibeau, 2017) ^[24]. This policy has led to an increase in the representation of women in local governments and community leadership roles.

While the CPDM has been successful, other political parties have also made notable contributions. The Social Democratic Front (SDF), for example, has been instrumental in promoting community engagement and grassroots democracy. Initiatives such as the SDF's Community Development Program focus on empowering local communities by providing them with resources to tackle local challenges (Krieger, 2008) ^[18]. The SDF has also emphasized transparency in governance, advocating for anti-corruption measures that resonate with the electorate's concerns.

b. Challenges Faced

Despite these successes, the CPDM has faced significant challenges and controversies that have impacted its governance reputation. One of the most pressing issues has been the ongoing Anglophone crisis, which began in 2016 when English-speaking regions of Cameroon protested against the marginalization of their language and culture. The government's response, which included crackdowns on protests and arrests of activists, drew widespread condemnation (Ommerolle & Heungoup, 2017) ^[32]. This crisis has not only strained relations between the Anglophone regions and the central government but has also led to a humanitarian crisis, with thousands displaced and in need of assistance (Mbagha, 2021) ^[21]. As of 2025, the situation remains dire, with non-state armed groups imposing widespread lockdowns that severely restrict humanitarian access and disrupt daily life.

Additionally, allegations of electoral irregularities have plagued the CPDM's electoral processes. The 2018 ^[6] presidential elections were marred by accusations of fraud and manipulation, leading to protests and a significant boycott by opposition parties, particularly the MRC (Dionne & Signé, 2018) ^[6]. These controversies have raised questions about the legitimacy of the CPDM's governance and its commitment to democratic principles (Freedom House, 2020) ^[11]. The 2025 election has further intensified these concerns, with international observers and civil

society groups echoing the legitimacy crisis voiced by many citizens.

The economic pillar of the CPDM's governance has also come under intense scrutiny, particularly regarding the Emergence 2035^[20] plan. A 2025 report by the Groupement des entreprises du Cameroun (GECAM) indicates the country is significantly off-track. To achieve the goal of becoming an emerging economy, Cameroon would need a per capita income growth rate of over 8%, a stark contrast to the current 1.1% average. Industrialization is similarly in decline, and the poverty rate remains dangerously high.

On the other hand, the SDF and MRC have also faced challenges. The SDF, while historically significant as the main opposition party, has struggled with internal divisions and leadership disputes that have weakened its effectiveness (Krieger, 2008)^[18]. The party's inability to capitalize on the CPDM's controversies has hindered its growth and electoral success. Similarly, the MRC, despite its rapid rise and youth support, has encountered severe repression from the government, including the arrest of its leader, Maurice Kamto, following the 2018^[6] elections. This repression has stifled its ability to mobilize effectively and engage with voters, limiting its potential to challenge the CPDM's dominance (Dionne & Signé, 2018)^[6]. The disqualification of Kamto from the 2025 election was arguably the most significant blow to the MRC and the entire opposition movement.

Discussion

a. Implications for Governance

The comparative analysis of political parties in Cameroon provides critical insights into their roles and implications for governance. At the forefront is the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), which has maintained a significant grip on power since its formation. The CPDM's governance model reflects a centralized authority that has facilitated swift decision-making and implementation of developmental projects. This model has resulted in substantial investments in infrastructure, healthcare, and education, which have contributed positively to national development (Kum, 2019)^[19]. However, it has also drawn criticism for a lack of transparency and accountability, raising concerns about the effectiveness of governance in addressing citizens' needs (Mbah, 2017)^[22]. The 2025 election, with its widespread allegations of fraud, deadly protests, and suppression of dissent, has created a profound governance legitimacy crisis.

The role of opposition parties, such as the Social Democratic Front (SDF) and the Movement for the Rebirth of Cameroon (MRC), is equally significant. The SDF has highlighted issues of governance, human rights, and social equity, advocating for transparency and community engagement. This has fostered a culture of political discourse and accountability, essential for democratic governance. The SDF's focus on grassroots mobilization demonstrates the importance of local participation in governance, reflecting a model that emphasizes citizen involvement in policy-making processes (Krieger, 2008)^[18]. However, the inability of the SDF and other opposition parties to form a meaningful coalition in 2025 highlights their fragmentation and organizational weakness.

The emergence of the MRC introduced a new dynamic, particularly among the youth. By leveraging social media and contemporary campaigning techniques, the MRC

succeeded in mobilizing significant support (Dionne & Signé, 2018)^[6]. Its disqualification in 2025 underscores the CPDM's strategy to neutralize key challengers and maintain its dominance. The implications for governance are profound. First, the CPDM's continued dominance amidst rising opposition, combined with electoral controversies, indicates a deepening crisis of democratic legitimacy. The persistent issues surrounding the Anglophone crisis and electoral integrity highlight the necessity for dialogue and negotiation between the government and opposition parties. A governance model that embraces inclusivity and addresses the concerns of marginalized groups will likely foster national unity and stability (Enonchong, 2020)^[9].

Second, the failed attempts at opposition unity in 2025 demonstrate the challenges of building an effective counterweight to the CPDM's entrenched power. The fragmentation of the opposition has historically diluted its impact, making it easier for the ruling party to secure electoral victories.

Lastly, the growing engagement of youth through parties like the MRC, and the role of the diaspora in attempting to coordinate a unified opposition, underscore a shift in political culture. This demographic is increasingly disillusioned with traditional politics and demands transparency, accountability, and a more significant role in governance. Recognizing and integrating the voices of young citizens into political processes is crucial for the future stability and effectiveness of Cameroon's governance (Lo-oh, 2014)^[20].

b. Prospects Political Parties in Cameroon

Looking ahead, the future of political parties in Cameroon is likely to be characterized by both challenges and opportunities. The CPDM's continued dominance is not totally guaranteed, especially given the rising strategies of other parties pinpointing the need for governance reforms issues. However, the events of 2025 have shown that the party faces a significant crisis of legitimacy that, if unaddressed, could lead to long-term instability. Predictions suggest that if the CPDM fails to address pressing concerns—such as the Anglophone crisis, corruption, and economic inequality—it could face significant electoral challenges in subsequent political dominance (Freedom House, 2020)^[11]. One key recommendation for the CPDM is to embrace a more inclusive governance model that actively engages with opposition parties and civil society. This could involve fostering dialogue around key issues, particularly those affecting governance issues (Enonchong, 2020)^[9]. By addressing grievances and promoting transparency, the CPDM can restore trust and legitimacy among its constituents. Without such reforms, the current trajectory of turmoil and instability is likely to persist.

For opposition parties like the SDF and MRC, the future hinges on their ability to present a coherent alternative strategy to the CPDM. The failures of 2025 highlight the urgent need for a coalition of strategies that effectively addresses the electorate's concerns (Koufan Menkene & Ngam, 2022)^[17]. The fundamental challenge remains overcoming the personal ambitions and regional affiliations that have historically prevented the formation of a strong national coalition. Furthermore, the role of civil society and grassroots movements will be pivotal in shaping the political landscape. As citizens become increasingly vocal about their rights and demands, these movements can drive

political parties to prioritize accountability and responsiveness. Engaging citizens in the political process through education and advocacy will foster a more informed electorate that can hold political leaders accountable (Mbuagbo *et al.*, 2003) ^[23].

Finally, the international community's role should not be overlooked. The introduction of a resolution in the US House of Representatives specifically citing the political turmoil and suppression of dissent in Cameroon is a sign of increasing international scrutiny. Support for democratic governance, human rights, and election integrity from international organizations can help promote a political environment conducive to fair competition among parties (Freedom House, 2020) ^[11]. This support can also empower local civil society organizations that challenge governance failures and advocate for reforms.

The future of political parties in Cameroon will depend on their ability to adapt to changing societal dynamics and the pressing needs of the electorate. By fostering inclusive governance practices, embracing collaboration, and engaging with citizens, political parties will contribute to a more stable and democratic Cameroon. The interplay between the CPDM, SDF, MRC, and civil society will be crucial in shaping a political landscape that is responsive to the aspirations of all Cameroonians. The 2025 election has proven to be a critical juncture, and the decisions made by all actors in its aftermath will profoundly shape the country's trajectory for years to come.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of political parties in Cameroon reveals a complex landscape shaped by historical legacies, governance models, and evolving citizen demands. The Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) has maintained a dominant position since its establishment, leveraging a centralized governance model that has facilitated significant investments in infrastructure, healthcare, and education. However, this model has also drawn criticism for a lack of transparency and accountability, particularly in addressing the needs of pertinent governance issues (Mbah, 2017; Enonchong, 2020) ^[9, 22]. The events of 2025, including the controversial re-election of President Paul Biya at age 92 amidst widespread protests and violence, have brought these criticisms to a head, raising serious questions about the health and future of Cameroon's democracy.

Opposition parties, notably the Social Democratic Front (SDF) and the Movement for the Rebirth of Cameroon (MRC), have played crucial roles in advocating for democratic governance, human rights, and social equity. The SDF's focus on grassroots mobilization and community engagement highlights the importance of local participation, while the MRC has successfully harnessed social media to connect with younger voters, reflecting a shift in political engagement (Krieger, 2008; Dionne & Signé, 2018) ^[6, 18]. The disqualification of Maurice Kamto from the 2025 election, and the subsequent failure of the opposition to form a viable coalition, highlights the immense challenges faced by those seeking to challenge the CPDM's hold on power. This dynamic underscores the urgent need for more inclusive governance practices that address the grievances of all citizens, particularly in the context of ongoing challenges like the Anglophone crisis (Ommerolle & Heungoup, 2017) ^[32].

In the 21st century, the importance of political diversity and effective governance cannot be overstated. A robust multiparty system fosters healthy competition and accountability, essential for addressing the pressing social, economic, and political challenges facing nations. In Cameroon, the interplay between the CPDM, SDF, MRC, and civil society will be pivotal in shaping a political landscape that is responsive to the aspirations of the populace (Mbuagbo *et al.*, 2003) ^[23].

As citizens increasingly demand transparency and accountability, political parties must adapt to these changing dynamics. Embracing inclusive governance practices and engaging with diverse voices will not only enhance democratic legitimacy but also contribute to national stability. Ultimately, a vibrant political environment that values diversity and fosters collaboration among various stakeholders is key to promoting sustainable development and social cohesion in Cameroon and beyond (Fukuyama, 2014) ^[12]. The 2025 election serves as a stark reminder of the fragility of these principles and the critical importance of political reform.

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