GOOD GOVERNANCE IN SUB-SAHARAN COUNTRIES: THE ROLE OF THE AU IN PROMOTING GOOD GOVERNANCE IN CAMEROON

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ABSTRACT

Constitutional changes, improper handling of diversity, weakened civil society, and an inability to institutionalize efficient policies are just a few of Africa's governance difficulties. In Cameroon, the corrupt practices that are maintained at the state department level usually thwart attempts to promote good governance. The gap between the affluent and the poor in the nation has widened as a result of corruption's contribution to injustice and inequality. Corruption is rampant in the customs agency as well as other government agencies including the police and gendarmerie. It's commonly claimed that anything is possible with enough money, and those who deal in human parts or transfer illegal products do so with ease thanks to the dishonest uniform men we see on our roads. In our port facilities, where import and export are conducted, corruption is also rife. Businesses engaged in import and export rob the government of enormous quantities of money with the help of customs officials who take money, report items incorrectly, or fail to disclose them at all. Besides, an Africa of good governance, democracy, and respect for human rights, justice, and the rule of law" stand out in its interconnectedness among the seven key aspirations listed in Africa Union (AU)'s Agenda 2063. This study aims to identify the role the AU plays in maintaining Cameroon's good governance. The research also makes suggestions for how to improve Cameroon's system of governance. In terms of methodology, this study's focus was on descriptive elements. The only type of data used in this investigation was secondary data. The internet, periodicals, books, journals, and other sources were used to obtain information. To find reliable responses to the study's questions, the data was analyzed, rebuilt, and compared. In 2011, the AU introduced the African Governance Architecture (AGA). The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), of which Cameroon is a member, established the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). The AU should make effort to persuade its member states put into practice the shared principles and guidelines they have agreed upon, such as the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance.

Keywords: *Good governance, Bad governance, Politics, Corruption, Cameroon, African Union*

1. INTRODUCTION

In order to put the good governance policy into practice, the World Bank Group Board of Directors accepted it in December 1996 and released guidelines in March 2001. As a result, good governance was kept as a crucial component of the organization's vision and 1999 Strategic Plan. The success of investments made to guarantee sustainable development is dependent on good governance. Thus, the Bank emphasizes good governance practices more and more in its activities [1].

The inability of an ineffective government to provide consumers and businesses with high-quality services stems from its lengthy and convoluted procedures. When public resources are mismanaged and poorly governed, the balance of macroeconomic aggregates is impacted by severe budget deficits. A State that promotes a centralised,

state-controlled economy, does not engage in social dialogue, does not include civil society and actors who are fairly representative of the economic and social sector in the decision-making process, and does not uphold the values of democracy, the advancement of human rights, and, in general, good governance, has little concern for these [1].

An Africa of good governance, democracy, and respect for human rights, justice, and the rule of law" stand out in its interconnectedness among the seven key aspirations listed in Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, the African Union's (AU) shared 50-year development and transformation programme for realising the full potential of the continent. This desire holds the key to Africa's political and economic transformation during the next ten years. It is true that "good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development," as former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan put it [11].

1.1 What is good governance?

Although the word "good governance" has many diverse interpretations, it is typically linked to social, political, and economic objectives that are thought to be essential for achieving progress. Thus, according to Johnston (2002), good governance is the process by which public institutions manage resources and conduct public affairs in a way that supports the rule of law and the realisation of human rights (civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights) [9].

International Monetary Fund (IMF) stated in 1996 that "promoting good governance in all its aspects, including by ensuring the rule of law, improving the efficiency and accountability of the public sector, and tackling corruption, (are) essential elements of a framework within which economies can prosper." Today, national and international development organisations frequently use the term "good governance." Its intent and scope, though, are not always clear. Although this adaptability allows for a contextual application of the term, operational challenges may arise due to the lack of conceptual clarity [9].

Furthermore, effective governance in the context of nations is a wide concept, making it challenging to come up with a clear definition. Fukuyama argues that the state's capability and the bureaucracy's autonomy are the two factors that determine whether governance is good or bad [7]. They both work well together because when the state is more capable, like in the case of tax collection, there should be more autonomy because the bureaucrats can manage things effectively without being given elaborate instructions. But in less capable nations, more rule-making and less discretion are preferred.

Thinking about good governance in terms of results is another approach. There is no better way to think about good governance other than through deliverables, which are exactly the ones demanded by citizens, like security, health, education, water, the enforcement of contracts, protection of property, protection of the environment, and their ability to vote and receive fair wages, since governments carry out goals like the provision of public goods to their citizens [16].

Similar to this, effective public service delivery, increased participation of certain groups in society, such as the poor and minorities, the assurance that citizens have access to means of checking and balancing their government, the establishment and enforcement of laws protecting citizens and their property, and the existence of independent judicial systems are all indicative of good governance [12].

Additionally, concerns related to governance and corruption have become a central role in international conversations, particularly after the IMF adopted a new framework for engagement on governance and corruption in 2018. On the road to faster and more inclusive growth, strong institutions that guarantee integrity in the management of public affairs are essential. Institutional quality is weakened, government programmes are less effective, and public confidence in government policy is compromised by corruption. Indeed, the world's improved governance systems are reaping a "governance dividend," and sub-Saharan African reformer nations like Botswana, Rwanda, and Seychelles are among those [15].

1.2 Good governance in African nations.

According to Freedom house, press freedom in Africa has decreased more than any other essential freedom (6). Authoritarian governments continue to stifle independent reporting by using legal threats, jail, and other types of harassment. 48 journalists were imprisoned in sub-Saharan Africa as of the end of 2014, and 152 were forced into exile between 2009 and 2014, more than in any other region of the world, according to the Committee to Project Journalists. Even the democracies in the area are moving to restrict the media. For instance, Botswana charged a

writer and editor with sedition last year after they published an article that was critical of the president. Due to these unfavourable trends, only 3% of Africans reside in nations with free media [6].

Any country with a weak governance structure would typically see a rise in corruption, which is now a major problem throughout Africa. Kofi Annan, the late former United Nations (UN) Secretary-General, said it best when he said, "Corruption is an insidious plague with a wide variety of destructive repercussions in society. It threatens democracy and the rule of law, results in human rights abuses, skews markets, lowers standard of living, and supports terrorism and organised crime. By stealing money meant for development, eroding a government's capacity to provide basic services, fostering inequality and injustice, and deterring foreign investment and aid, it is evident that corruption and poor governance disproportion   nately harm the poor [4].

 In actuality, African nations have continued to improve their governance since the early 1990s. According to the African Development Bank, effective states, mobilised civil societies, and an effective private sector should serve as the cornerstones of good governance. Accountability, openness, fighting corruption, citizen participation, and a supportive legal and judicial environment are thus the essential components of good government. Since then, a large number of African nations have implemented institutional changes that drastically altered their governing structures and installed new leaders. For instance, Ghana has rigorously pursued governance changes from the early 1990s, including the creation and adoption of a new democratic constitution that emphasizes the separation of powers with checks and balances in order to change its political system [11].

Following this, Ghana rose to prominence as a model for the establishment of democratic government, as evidenced by the current President John D. Mahama's prompt admission of defeat in the 2016 elections. More generally, Kenya, Morocco, and Côte d'Ivoire have taken the lead over the last ten years. According to the Ibrahim Index of African Governance, these nations saw considerable advancements between 2008 and 2017, especially in terms of overall governance. In particular, Côte d'Ivoire (+12.7 points) saw the most improvement in overall administration from 2008 to 2017, followed by Kenya (+6.1 points) and Morocco (+7.3 points) [11].

Additionally, Angola, Sierra Leone, and Liberia show that significant reforms are achievable even in unstable situations. As nations attempt to implement legislation to combat the COVID-19 epidemic, corruption, and other problems, the significance of effective governance has grown even more. Therefore, it is crucial to pay extra attention to governance in emergency situations, such as those involving armed conflict, serious health crises, and natural catastrophes [15].

Cameroon is a country in Central Africa that is situated in the Gulf of Guinea. Its surface area is 475 000 km2, and it borders Chad, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, and Nigeria. Regarding its export goods (oil, forestry resources, coffee, cocoa, cotton, etc.), its geographic circumstances put it in a fortunate position in Africa. 26 million hectares, or 55% of the land, are covered in forests [1].

Cameroon is home to 15 million people, with a population growth rate of 2.7% annually on average, and 74% of the country's population is concentrated in just one-third of its area. According to its constitution, Cameroon is a unitary, decentralised, secular, democratic, and pluralist state that upholds the citizens' fundamental rights as well as their right to public and private liberties. The preamble of the Constitution states that, as long as public policy is respected, no one should be harassed because of his or her background, religion, philosophy, or political convictions or beliefs. The nation is characterised by variety within unity. In fact, the populations of the country's 10 provinces speak more than 250 national languages or dialects [1].

Similar to this, other nations, like Cameroon, are making gradual attempts to implement changes in order to achieve good governance. Breton Woods and other foreign donor organisations have been exerting growing pressure on African states to adopt good governance practices. The government of Cameroon has also developed a policy of regional balance that aims to provide some degree of equality in the distribution of what is generally known as the National Cake, in addition to adopting changes that will grant free political participation It is significant to notice that Cameroon has a wide variety of ethnic nations, and there is a stark imbalance in how resources are distributed naturally among various ethnicities. The government has developed the theory of regional balance to ensure fairness in the allocation of these resources because certain regions are naturally richer than others in terms of their natural potentials [14].

1.3 Good/Bad governance in Cameroon

Due to political fragmentation based on the cultural variance between the Anglophones and the Francophones, Cameroon, which has hardly recovered from the convalescences of her colonial reliance, continues to have the characteristics of a fragile state. The multitude of ethnic groups present in the nation has added to the fractured nature of Cameroon's democratic state, which can in part be traced to its complex colonial past. The kind of colonial inheritance that not only transformed the nation into a bi-cultural state but also displayed bad governance in the kind of clientelists governance structure that was left behind at the time of the colonialists' departure further complicated the already existing differences in ethnic configuration. The process of statehood has become more challenging in many different fields as a result of this type of inherited structure, which only served to increase ethnic division [14].

In fact, the progress of Cameroon is still hampered by poor governance. In the decades that followed independence, respect for national sovereignty and the ideal of not interfering in the internal affairs of other states, along with the frequently detrimental influence of external powers like the US, the Soviet Union, and France, gave rise to autocracy in Africa. The emergence of democratic governance on the continent was hampered by this. Constitutional changes, improper handling of diversity, weakened civil society, flimsy institutions, and an inability to institutionalise efficient policies are just a few of Africa's governance difficulties. There has been a propensity for civil strife and insurrection in places where governments refuse to relinquish or share power [13].

In the end, a nation's ability to govern itself is what ultimately sets it apart from others. The benefits of excellent governance are as obvious and appreciated as the undesirable effects of bad and ineffective governance. It is important to note that if good governance is not upheld in government, civil society, the public and private sectors, Africa, including Cameroon, cannot achieve a noble goal like building a prosperous and developed country based on inclusive growth and sustainable development. There is actual data from numerous studies conducted by international development organisations like the World Bank and the AfDB, for instance, that explicitly links strong governance to the attraction of foreign direct investment (FDI) and inclusive development results in Africa [4].

In addition, bad governance has been a significant contributor to Cameroon's high poverty rate. You can see how deeply ingrained corruption is in the nation by the fact that the state has twice been named the most corrupt nation in the world by Transparency International, a non-governmental organisation that fights corruption. The main sources of economic leakages continue to be capital flight and corruption in the national bureaucracy. According to estimates, over the course of Ahmadou Ahidjo's first twenty-two years in government (1960–1982), Cameroon lost CFA 965 billion francs to fraud, bad investments, and other financial mismanagement [14].

These indicated that despite the state's abundance of natural resources, poverty and inequality persisted due to ineffective management and a lack of motivation to implement good governance practises. The institution of good governance is necessary if Cameroon is to become an emerging economy by 2035 because this type of patrimonial structure, which was established under president Ahidjo and carried over to Biya, has continued to degrade the operation of the state apparatus [14].

In truth, Cameroon received a score of 26 on a scale from 0 ("highly corrupt") to 100 ("very clean") in the 2022 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index. Cameroon placed 142nd out of 180 countries in the Index when rated by score, where the top-ranked nation is thought to have the most honest public sector. For comparison, the highest score was 90 (ranked 1) and the lowest was 12, which was listed at position 180. In order to promote openness in the country's oil sector and combat corruption, the Cameroonian government joined the Extractive Industries openness Initiative in late 2013 [13].

However, this article does not question whether there is good governance or bad governance in Cameroon or which is more prevalent in the nation. This study seeks to uncover the role played by the AU in the improving of good governance in Cameroon. Also, what recommendations can be brought forward to enhance the situation of good governance in Cameroon?

1.4 The AU's role in strengthening Good Governance in Cameroon

In January 2007, African leaders ratified the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance, which went into effect five months later. The ratification of this charter represented a transition away from autocratic forms of governance and towards the embrace of universal principles like the support of democracy, the defence of human rights, and tolerance of difference. The 2000 African Union Constitutive Act (AUCA), the 2000 Solemn Declaration on the Conference on Security, Stability, Development, and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA), the 2002 Protocol

Establishing the Peace and Security Council, the 2009 Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy Framework, and the more recent Agenda 2063 of 2015 are all examples of shared-values documents [13].

Approximately 30 members of the Constitutional Laws and Human Rights Commission of the Cameroon National Assembly (the Commission) received the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance (the Charter) on April 7, 2022, at the request of the Cameroon National Assembly. The presentation's goal was to increase the Member of Parliament (MP)s' understanding of the Charter and check that it was being followed [2].

It highlighted the significance of the Charter as a tool for development, provided that nations execute it properly and efficiently. The discussions that followed were centred on the difficulties in putting the Charter into practice, the continued coups d'états on the African continent despite its ratification, good governance indicators, and the best ways for Commission members to guarantee that all stakeholders respect and put the Charter into practice. Participants pledged to follow up on the State's periodic report to the AU Commission on Democracy and Elections and to ask the government to give the last five periodic reports to the Constitutional Commission [2].

The African Union (AU) established the African Governance Architecture (AGA) in 2011 in light of earlier commitments to enhance the quality of governance in Africa. Although there are multiple institutions at the national, regional, and continental levels with a mandate to promote democratic governance, as well as a number of governance frameworks, the AGA's major justification is that there is little effective synergy among these institutions and frameworks. In order to improve the coherence and relevance of the various tools for continental governance, the AGA works to reinforce them [13].

Similar to the Department for Political Affairs within the AU Commission, the African Governance Architecture (AGA) is implemented and good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, and transparency are all promoted. The AGA is the continent of Africa's overarching political and institutional framework for promoting good governance. The AGA is one of the most prominent tools available to the AU for its promotion of democratic practices, good governance and respect for human rights, humanitarian action, and disaster management, along with the African Peer Review Mechanism, a voluntary self-evaluation mechanism for African states intended to institutionalise and consolidate democratic governance (Institute for democracy and electoral assistance [8].

In recent decades, the AU and several regional organisations in Africa, such as the Economic Community of West African States, have done an admirable job of reconciling governance issues. However, proactively addressing problems as they arise should also be a top concern. It's likely necessary to rekindle the excitement and hopes that accompanied the 23 October 2001 introduction of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) [5].

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), a specialised agency of the African Union (AU), was launched in 2002 and created in 2003 as part of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) implementation process. Members of the APRM conduct self-monitoring of every facet of their socioeconomic and governmental development. Stakeholders from the African Union (AU) take part in the self-evaluation of the media, the private sector, civil society, and all three judicial, legislative, and executive branches of government. The APRM Review Process provides member states with a forum for national discussion on governance and socioeconomic indicators as well as a chance to forge an agreement on the future course of action [2].

At its 25th summit, held in Nairobi, Kenya, the APRM Forum of Heads of State and Government endorsed the APRM Statute and the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan. The APRM's role was further expanded by the 28th AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government to include monitoring the execution of and supervising the main governance projects for the Continent. The African Union Assembly also expanded the APRM's scope to include oversight of the implementation of both Agenda 2030 (AU, 2023) and Agenda 2063, the AU's set of Sustainable Development Goals [2].

In addition, the Memorandum of Understanding for the APRM was signed by 35 AU Member States. The most recent nation to join the APRM was Côte d'Ivoire, which did so in January 2015. To name a few, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Sudan, Cameroon, Congo, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Equatorial Guinea, Malawi, Rwanda, and Togo have completed their self-assessments and undergone peer review by the Forum. Three (3) additional countries, Djibouti, Chad, and Senegal, have also completed their self-assessments and will undergo peer review at the following APR Forum [2].

Despite these encouraging achievements, the continent still has serious governance issues. While the AU and Africa's Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have created standards and guidelines that serve as a foundation

for more inclusive and effective government, African states, including Cameroon, have continuously struggled to put declarative promises into action. While the institutions of the continent continue to be underfunded, lack collective power, and lack public support, national sovereignty is nonetheless jealously preserved [13].

Plus, there are troubling new patterns emerging across the continent that call into serious doubt the dedication of African leaders to the values of democracy. Some African presidents have manipulated their national constitutions through the phenomenon of "constitutional coups" or "third-termism" in an effort to circumvent presidential term limitations. Nine African heads of state have attempted to stay in power since 2000 by amending the constitutions of their nations to either extend or eliminate presidential term limits. In nations like Cameroon, Chad, Uganda, Burundi, and Rwanda, many of these endeavours have been successful [13].

2. RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE GOOD GOVERNANCE IN CAMEROON

Since the African Governance Architecture aims to increase AU member states' commitment to upholding democratic governance norms and values, it cannot be successfully implemented among AU member states without strong institutional synergies with the African Peace and Security Architecture, which is the continent's main framework for resolving conflicts and instability. In order to address the underlying causes of conflicts resulting from poor governance, including as election fraud and the militarization of politics, the AGA and the African Union's Peace and Security Architecture must work in harmony [13].

The AU should exert more effort to persuade its Member States to ratify and put into practice the shared principles and guidelines, such as the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance. All of the AU's instruments aimed at strengthening democracy and good governance on the continent must also be signed, ratified, domesticated, and implemented by AU Member States [8].

Ownership of these instruments by Member States is essential to attempts to thwart unconstitutional governmental changes and carry out the Charter's legal provisions. The AU will not be able to effectively help its Member States in the strengthening of democracy as long as the current gap between norm-setting and norm-implementation persists [8].

Furthermore, our governments must remember that they have signed numerous normative governance frameworks at the regional and continental levels, and they must take immediate steps to domesticate these frameworks in national laws and institutions. Frameworks that have yet to be signed should be signed as a demonstration of their determination to contribute to the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration adopted by African leaders in May 2013 [10].

The AU must also take more initiative in dealing with dictatorial governments and leaders in Africa, such as those in Cameroon and Uganda, where the incumbents refuse to step down. In order to promote stronger governance, term limits and increased accountability must be implemented throughout the region. It is obvious that the international community must, as part of their aid policy, promote a united African voice in denouncing repressive regimes and continuing to campaign for democratic and human rights ideals using all the tools afforded by international law [5].

The AU could think about adopting a proclamation outlining clear expectations for adhering to term limits, similar to the one that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is currently debating. As they do when military coups occur in the area, AU leaders should likewise publicly denounce any attempts to alter, bypass, or violate existing term limits. Actually, the AU could consider adopting a proclamation similar to the one proposed by ECOWAS, which would establish clear expectations for respecting term limits. AU leaders should also publicly denounce any attempts to modify, evade, or violate existing term limits, in the same way they do when military coups occur in the region [6].

3. DISCUSSION

The degree of peace and stability as well as the chances for economic progress are shaped by the kind of government in Africa, as they are in any other area. Governance is the most important factor since it decides whether the state and the society it is supposed to have long-lasting ties. Authoritarian regimes continue to obstruct independent reporting by using the legal system, jail, and other types of harassment.

Additionally, it is quite possible that African presidents would strive to stay in office longer than the limit specified by the constitution, which will ignite violent protests across the nations, including in Cameroon. The integration of

business and transportation rules and regulations is one of the significant governance issues that must be addressed in the infrastructure construction process. Additionally, when it comes to poor governance, mismanagement and corruption are quite obvious.

The AU has been quite admirable. However, proactively addressing problems as they arise should also be a top concern. The AU, through NEPAD, already has mechanisms in place like the APRM that would be helpful if expanded up. In order to deal with dictatorial governments and leaders in Africa, like those in Cameroon, the AU must likewise take more initiative. The AU must make sure that its member states adhere to the common values and principles of the African Union's governance structures.

4. CONCLUSION

In general, African leaders have failed to deliver the strategic vision and good governance required for political stability and socioeconomic progress. Instead, African leaders have used public power and exploited public resources for their own personal gain. The practice has resulted in the formation of behavioral leadership that jeopardizes the state's ability to provide fundamental services to the people, such as security, food, housing, and health care. As a result, despite the continent's abundance in natural resources, Africans suffer from a variety of maladies, including famine, warfare, illnesses, and widespread poverty.

Combating poverty and increasing human development in Cameroon must begin with wealth generation, a process that necessitates the existence of a healthy entrepreneurial class. To attain these objectives, peace and security are required, particularly the peaceful cohabitation of the diverse ethno cultural communities that populate each region. Unfortunately, many African countries, like Cameroon, continue to struggle to create and preserve the required enabling environment for peaceful cohabitation, entrepreneurship, and wealth development.

Indeed, in countries such as Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and South Sudan, the absence of governing systems based on the rule of law has failed to prevent ethnic-induced violence. In these countries, violence stifles business and economic progress. Peace and security, which are required for entrepreneurial activity and the generation of wealth, are unlikely to return to these nations unless participatory and inclusive government frameworks are provided.

It is obvious that excellent governance is the solution to Cameron's difficulties. Peace and security issues are essentially manifestations of governance issues, such as how we organize elections. Terrorism, diversity management, development, and other concerns are all about governance. Good governance is a facilitator in Sub-Saharan Africa; its absence creates a huge weakness in the nation. As a result, governance is critical. Governance is Africa's path to claiming the century.

In order to address weak governance and strive towards Agenda 2063, the AU should increase its efforts to advocate for the application of its normative frameworks, particularly the APRM. There is little question that the path to a successful and functional APRM, and hence to a peaceful and wealthy Africa, lies in the future; nonetheless, the present provides the basis for Africa's political and economic resurrection. As a result, it is strongly urged that African leaders, organisations, and governments firmly support the APRM through political commitment and financial resources.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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