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### Features of US-Cameroon Relations in the Central Africa

The study is the first to examine U.S.-Cameroon relations in the context of competition of regional centers of power in Central Africa. The study aims to examine the benefits/advantages of the U.S.-Cameroon relations to Cameroon in the leadership competition in the Central African region. Following up on the latest developments in Cameroon regarding Central Africa was another method used in the study. U.S.-Cameroon relations are positive, although they have been negatively affected by concerns over human rights abuses, especially in the Anglophone Northwest and Southwest Regions. Cameroon plays an essential role in regional stability, especially in the Central African Republic's peace process and defeating piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. Cameroon is a crucial regional player in the fight against terrorism, in the Lake Chad Region in particular and in the Central African region in general. America's and Cameroon's governments collaborate and cooperate positively on many issues, including democracy and governance, environmental protection, health, humanitarian assistance, and regional security in Central Africa. US-Cameroon relations have put Cameroon at the forefront of the leadership competition in the Central African region. The U.S. considers Cameroon to be the 'natural and legitimate' leader in the Central African region.

**Keywords:** U.S., Cameroon, Central African region, Regional Leadership Competition.

### Особливості відносин США та Камеруну в Центральній Африці

У статті розкриваються особливості та провідні напрями відносин США та Камеруну. Мета роботи полягає у дослідженні впливу американо-камерунських відносин на перспективи досягнення Камеруном статусу регіонального центру сили в Центральній Африці. США розглядають Камерун як важливого зовнішньополітичного партнера. Цінність даної держави для США полягає у вигідному геополітичному положенні, наявності спільних кордонів зі значною кількістю держав Центральної Африки, транспортному та енергетичному потенціалі Камеруну, ролі держави в регіональних інтеграційних утвореннях та здатності впливати на вирішення регіональних проблем безпеки.

Камерун відіграє ключову роль у забезпеченні регіональної стабільності, особливо у врегулюванні ситуації в Центральноафриканській Республіці та протидії піратству в Гвінейській затоці. Камерун залишається регіональним партнером США у боротьбі з тероризмом в регіоні озера Чад, зокрема, та в регіоні Центральної Африки загалом. США та Камерун тісно взаємодіють з питань, що стосуються розвитку демократії та управління, охорони здоров'я, гуманітарної допомоги та захисту навколишнього середовища в Центральній Африці. США намагаються сприяти економічним реформам та покращенню механізмів захисту прав людини в Камеруні. Важливим напрямом двосторонніх відносин є енергетична сфера. Двостороннім відносинам сприяє позитивне ставлення політичних лідерів та громадян Камеруну до співробітництва із США.

Незважаючи на критику Сполученими Штатами політики щодо прав людини в Камеруні, недостатньо високі темпи економічного розвитку, Камерун є найбільш пріоритетним та перспективним партнером для США в Центральній Африці. Співпраця з Камеруном дозволяє Сполученим Штатам посилити свої лідерські позиції в регіоні. Рівень двосторонніх американо-камерунських відносин дозволяє Сполученим Штатам також реалізовувати свої зовнішньополітичні цілі в Центральній Африці і перетворення Камеруну на регіональний центр сили в

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інтересах обох сторін. США підтримують прагнення Камеруну досягти статусу регіонального центру сили в Центральній Африці, що, безумовно, посилює позиції Камеруну у регіональній конкуренції.

**Ключові слова:** США, Камерун, Центральноафриканський регіон, конкуренція регіональних центрів сили.

**Actuality.** The U.S. foreign policy toward Central Africa has led to an increase in U.S. interest in making Cameroon a reliable partner in the region. Cameroon's strategic position in Central Africa is critical to the U.S. Cameroon is now a part of the U.S. ally coalition, confronting other nations, like China and Russia, in Central Africa and considering Cameroon as a significant partner in Central Africa. Central Africa's congruence is still to be defined because of the plurality of integration and cooperation systems in the region as countries belong to many different regional organizations; this causes an inert integration process and the primary organization's ineffectiveness in the Central African sub-region called the Economic Community of Central African States or ECCAS. ECCAS comprises Cameroon, Central African Republic, Angola, Burundi, Equatorial Chad, Republic of the Congo, Gabon, DR Congo, Guinea, and São Tomé and Príncipe.

Geopolitically, the term "Central Africa" consists of six countries in the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC). Countries within CEMAC are Chad, Central African Republic (CAR), Cameroon, Congo Brazzaville, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon. CEMAC runs alongside EC-CAS in the Central African sub-region but is the dominant regional organization that has made measurable integration efforts<sup>2</sup>. Regional integration has been stagnant because of countries' political and economic interests in the Central African sub-region. Central African countries compete for the leadership role in the Central African sub-region.

US-Cameroon relation is fundamental to both the U.S. and the Cameroonian government in fighting the Boko Haram terrorist group in the Lake Chad region. Also, a good relationship between the U.S. and Cameroon paves the way for the U.S. to use Cameroon as a gateway to landlocked Central African countries. Equally, an essential aspect of US-Cameroon relation is that the U.S. uses Cameroon as a proxy to secure U.S. energy and strategic interest in the Gulf of Guinea in particular and the Central African sub-region in general. Cameroon benefits from this relationship as the U.S. portrays Cameroon as the region's preferred leader.

**Literature Review.** The US-Cameroon relation has been a topic of research for a while now. Many scholars have analyzed U.S. relations with Cameroon. For example, Awoumou, C (2005) wrote about U.S. interest in Cameroon. In his work, he emphasized that the U.S. is interested in Cameroon because of Cameroon's several geostrategic and geopolitical advantages in the Central African region<sup>3</sup>. Also, Amin, A (1999) analyzed Cameroon's increasing interest to establish a good relationship with the U.S. and how this is beneficial to Cameroon<sup>4</sup>. Equally, the World Bank and International Finance Corporation, in one of its publications, Chad–Cameroon Petroleum Development and Pipeline Project, analyzes the Chad- Cameroon pipeline's economic, political, and social importance to Cameroon, the U.S., and the Gulf of Guinea<sup>5</sup>. Other authors wrote about the U.S. foreign policy towards the Central African region. For example, Fikreyesus, D. (Professor in the Political Science department at Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA) wrote about Oil and U.S. Foreign Policy towards Africa. In his work, he stated how the U.S. showed more interest in the African energy sector only after 2001<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Awah, L. A. (2015), The Central African Region and Sub-Regional Security. *African Leadership Centre*, available at: <https://africanleadershipcentre.org/index.php/2014-10-22-15-44-06/alc-newsletters/feb-2015-issue/282-the-central-african-region-and-sub-regional-security> (accessed 29 October 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Awoumou, C. D. (2005), Le Golfe de Guinée face aux convoitises. *CODESRIA Annual Meeting on Re-thinking African Development: Beyond the Stalemate, Alternatives*, Maputo, pp. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Amin A.J. (1999), Cameroon's Foreign Policy Towards the United States. *Outre-Mers. Revue d'histoire*, Année, 1999, pp. 211-236, available at: [www.persee.fr/doc/outre\\_0300-9513\\_1999\\_num\\_86\\_322\\_3726](http://www.persee.fr/doc/outre_0300-9513_1999_num_86_322_3726) (accessed 29 October 2020).

<sup>5</sup> World Bank and International Finance Corporation (2020), Chad–Cameroon Petroleum Development and Pipeline Project, *Document of the World Bank and International Finance Corporation*, available at: <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/821131468224690538/pdf/36569.pdf> (accessed 24 October 2020).

<sup>6</sup> Fikreyesus D. (2012), *Oil and U.S. Foreign Policy Towards Africa*, available at: [https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1022&context=political\\_science\\_diss](https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1022&context=political_science_diss) (accessed 26 October 2020).

Furthermore, Ploch, L. (2011), in his work, *The United States African Command: American Strategic Interests and the Role of the American Armed Forces in Africa*, discussed the role of the U.S. military in Africa to protect U.S. strategic interest in the continent<sup>7</sup>. Equally, Goldwyn, D. L., and Morrison, J. S. (2005) analyzed U.S. role in providing security in the Gulf of Guinea<sup>8</sup>. Authors have noted the increasing interest of the U.S. towards Cameroon. Others have underscored the growing interest the Central African region has for America. Equally, other authors have studied the Gulf of Guinea as a strategic area of rivalry and interest, especially for the U.S. and other world powers.

**Purpose and Tasks.** The objective is to examine the benefits/advantages of US-Cameroon relations to Cameroon in the leadership competition in the Central African region.

The purpose of the study led to the following research tasks.

- To establish and examine the features of U.S. cooperation with Cameroon
- To establish the role of Cameroon in the Central African sub-region
- To examine the reasons for US-Cameroon cooperation in providing security in the Central African region
- To analyze the factors for U.S. interest in Cameroon in particular and Central Africa in general.
- To analyze the benefits of US-Cameroon relations and how this relationship has portrayed Cameroon as a leader in the Central African sub-region.

**Research Method.** The researcher examined Cameroon's policy documents, the U.S., and Central African regional organizations. The researcher used theories and policies to collect, arrange, and analyze data. Considering the latest political developments in Cameroon regarding U.S. interests in Central Africa was another critical research method. Three essential sources, policy documents, libraries, and observation, were used to collect data. Evaluating policy documents was the primary source of data (the library, especially webliography). The study equally relied on personal observations on Cameroon and the U.S. relations, national and international events, and politics in Cameroon and Central Africa in general.

**Basic Material.** For the past two decades, the U.S. has been showing increasing interest in Cameroon in particular and in the Central African region in general. U.S. increasing interest in Cameroon is partly because of Cameroon's strategic position in Central Africa and having Cameroon as a strategic and vital ally in the sub-region. The research question then comes up; what are the benefits/advantages of US-Cameroon relations to Cameroon in the context of competition for regional leadership in the Central African region?

Cameroon is located in the very coveted Central African region. This region has been a center of interest for timber, cocoa, rubber oil, and minerals. The interest in this region's study came from personal observation of the diplomacy and cooperation between the U.S. and Cameroon and how this diplomatic relationship is beneficial to Cameroon in the context of competition of leadership in the Central African region.

The largest American investment in Central Africa is the Chad–Cameroon Pipeline project. The budget spent for the Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline was about USD 3.5 billion, funded by the World Bank with cooperation from Exxon Mobil. Inaugurated in 2004, the pipeline transports oil (255 000 barrels per day) from the Chadian region of Doba to the Cameroonian seaport town of Kribi for export<sup>9</sup>. This project has strengthened the U.S. energy interest in the area, making the Gulf of Guinea one of the continent's busiest regions. Traditionally of French influence, the Gulf of Guinea and its landlocked countries (Niger, Great Lakes region, Chad, and CAR) is becoming a region of American interests<sup>10</sup>. A more significant part of this interest is covered by the pipeline project with a far-reaching proportion because the building of the pipeline from Chad to Cameroon and plans to extend the con-

<sup>7</sup> Ploch, L. (2011), *Africa Command: U.S. Strategic Interests and the Role of the U.S. Military in Africa*, Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, Report for Congress, available at: [www.everycrsreport.com/files/20070706\\_RL34003\\_edb5745c809850521645a5915044404d1e2e2c93.pdf](http://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20070706_RL34003_edb5745c809850521645a5915044404d1e2e2c93.pdf) (accessed 26 October 2020).

<sup>8</sup> Goldwyn D.L., Morrison J.S. (2005), *A Strategic U.S. Approach to Governance and Security in the Gulf of Guinea*, available at: [https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy\\_files/files/media/csis/pubs/0507\\_gulfofguinea.pdf](https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/media/csis/pubs/0507_gulfofguinea.pdf) (accessed 28 October 2020).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ajab A. (2008), *Developing a sustainable economy in Cameroon*. African Books Collectives, available at: [www.africanbookscollective.com/books/developing-a-sustainable-economy-in-cameroon](http://www.africanbookscollective.com/books/developing-a-sustainable-economy-in-cameroon) (accessed 28 October 2020).

struction to CAR, Niger, Sudan, and Libya strengthens the geostrategic dimension of this region<sup>11</sup>. With the sub-region's potential, this significant interest has reinforced American presence and the necessity for security percussions in the area. Therefore. Simultaneously, the Horn of Africa is a pivot for the fight against terrorism, and the Gulf of Guinea, where Cameroon is located, remains the center of economic interest. The geostrategic location puts Cameroon at the forefront of U.S. policy towards the Central African region.

The United States' collaboration with Cameroon in the fight against the Boko Haram terrorist group has put Cameroon at the forefront of U.S. policy in the fight against international terrorism in the Central African region. It is imperative to consider the terrorist Islamist Boko Haram group's frequent attacks in Chad, Niger, Cameroon, and Nigeria<sup>12</sup>.

Since 2012, Cameroon has encountered abductions, kidnappings, and sometimes violent terrorist attacks instigated by Boko Haram from their headquarters in Nigeria. In October 2013, the United States Homeland Security discussed Boko Haram's possibilities and willingness to attack the U.S. and warned not to underrate the terrorist group<sup>13</sup>.

In 2015, the former U.S. Ambassador to Cameroon Michael Hoza explained that cooperation between the Cameroonian armed forces and the American military would save many people's lives in northern Cameroon. The United States provided military equipment and ammunition to Cameroon to help fight against Boko Haram because of the increasing terrorist attacks in the northern part of the country<sup>14</sup>. In October 2015, former President Obama ordered about 300 American Armed Forces personnel to Cameroon to carry out intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance duties. The U.S. armed forces and military equipment assist the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), commanded by Iliya Abbah, a Nigerian army General. The MNJTF had about 8,500 armed forces and 2,000 police officers from Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria, and Chad<sup>15</sup>. Cameroon President Paul Biya and President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria welcomed former U.S. president Barack Obama's deployment of American armed forces and intelligence expertise in Cameroon<sup>16</sup>. Intelligence expertise is an essential contribution to the fight against terrorism as African countries have a severe deficiency in intelligence abilities for peace operations. The U.S. military drone base in Garoua, Cameroon, is a confirmation by the U.S. that Cameroon is an essential partner and the de-factor leader in Central Africa. The U.S. has allied with Cameroon to defeat the Islamic State's violent extremism – West Africa, Boko Haram. The U.S. has assisted Cameroon financially and materially to provide peacekeepers to the United Nations to bring stability back to the Central African Republic's suffering people. Equally, U.S. partnered with Cameroon to defeat pirates in the Gulf of Guinea.

Building a strong relationship with Cameroon as a gateway into the Gulf of Guinea area is very important to the United States of America. The Gulf of Guinea is rich in natural resources. Its geostrategic location makes the region one of the most important globally, such that developing strategic alliances and securing it has many advantages. The United States is protecting its interest in the Gulf of Guinea by cooperating with Cameroon in fighting the terrorist Boko Haram group in Central Africa. U.S cooperation with Cameroon is an additional advantage to Cameroon in the Central African region's leadership competition.

US-Cameroon cooperation in the aviation sector has put Cameroon at the forefront of regional leadership in Central Africa. Cameroon's government signed an agreement with the American government known as the "Safe-Sky for Africa Initiative". The objective was to increase exchanges, encourage investors and extend the tourism sector. The Open-Sky Agreement was another significant level in US-Cameroon relations. The Open-Sky Aviation Agreement was signed by former Undersecretary for African Affairs, Jendayi E. Frazer, and former Cameroonian Minister of Transport Dakole

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<sup>11</sup> Ajab A. (2008), *Op. cit.*

<sup>12</sup> Signé L. (2015), Why Obama's military deployment against Boko Haram is too little, too late, *Washington Post*, October 28, 2015, available at: [www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/10/28/why-obamas-military-deployment-against-boko-haram-is-too-little-too-late/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/10/28/why-obamas-military-deployment-against-boko-haram-is-too-little-too-late/) (accessed 21 October 2020).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Kindzeka E. M. (2014), US to Help Cameroon with Anti-Terrorism Training. *Relief Web International*, available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/us-help-cameroon-anti-terrorism-training> (accessed 27 October 2020).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

Daissala on February 16, 2006, Yaoundé. It was the former U.S. Transportation Secretary Norman, Y. M.<sup>17</sup> who explained the Agreement's geopolitical advantage when he declared that Cameroon serves as a gateway into the Gulf of Guinea region<sup>18</sup>.

Cameroon's important and busy seaports (Douala, Kribi, and Limbe) serve as routes for goods and services to landlocked States in the Central African sub-region. The increasing American oil and security policies in the sub-region explain US-Cameroon relations' recent heightening<sup>19</sup>. Cameroon's geographical position at the center of Africa and bordered by mineral and oil-rich countries makes Cameroon a preferable partner of the U.S. Cameroon's role as the regional organization leader (CEMAC and ECCAS) is a duty that satisfies Cameroon and the U.S. government.

U.S. perception of Cameroon is to attain a peaceful Central Africa sub-region through Cameroon's leadership. Because of Cameroon's geographic, ethnic, religious, cultural, climatic, and linguistic diversity, Cameroon is considered the leader of CEMAC, Franc Zone, and ECCAS. Capable of satisfying its agricultural products and natural resources requirements, Cameroon has a good and reputable economy in Africa. Generally, the U.S. recognizes Cameroon's status and leadership in the Central African sub-region.

Cameroon is the backbone of the Central African regional organization called CEMAC. As a member of CEMAC, Cameroon takes part in a significant role in boosting economic and political cooperation in the sub-region. Presiding over the organization and hosting the Headquarter of the Bank of the Central African States (BEAC) in Yaoundé, Cameroon, has the largest economy in the CEMAC. Recognizing this role, former U.S. Ambassador to Cameroon, Linnet D., said in 2001 that Cameroon has the biggest economy in CEMAC<sup>20</sup>. Cameroon is the only country in the Central African sub-region to have brought about a real multi-nationalization of its state companies<sup>21</sup>.

In U.N. terminology, Central Africa is defined as ECCAS countries (Cameroon, Angola, Chad, Sao Tome, and Principe, Democratic Republic of Congo, Congo Brazzaville, Gabon, CAR, Equatorial Guinea, Rwanda, and Burundi). The Member States of ECCAS have ambitions to take leadership roles in the region, the most reliable Cameroon, Angola, and Gabon candidates. Cameroon is more likely to be a leader of the area and an essential ally of the U.S. Cameroon's leadership position is a guarantee because it is a CEMAC and ECCAS leader, speaking English and French, with a dominant and strategic location in the franc zone. As for Angola, the author Chouala (2005) disagrees with its leadership ability, explaining that Angola has little or no strategic importance given its location at the continent's lower slope<sup>22</sup>. This disadvantageous geostrategic position gives credence to Cameroon, located at the Gulf's center. It has a bilingual (English and French) culture, more preferable to the other countries of the region. As for Gabon, it would be impossible to be the leader of the union because of its economic, geographical, demographic size, and little or no gateway to countries like Chad and CAR, disadvantages which Cameroon overcome. DR Congo, though geographically well located and has a significant history in Central Africa, the political circumstances marked by conflicts and the effects on its economy, offers the leadership predisposition to Cameroon, which has good economic and political conditions than the rest of the other countries in the sub-region.

Financial institutions have established an essential factor in developing Cameroon U.S. relations. The U.S. influenced the World Bank's gesture in supporting Cameroon in the funding of the Chad-Cameroon Pipeline. The Chad-Cameroon pipeline project was financed entirely by the World Bank. The U.S. government insisted on having the project to reaffirm their presence in Cameroon and the

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<sup>17</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation (2020), *USA and Cameroon sign Open-Skies aviation agreement*, available at: [www.traveldailynews.com/post/usa-and-cameroon-sign-open-skies-aviation-agreement-12466](http://www.traveldailynews.com/post/usa-and-cameroon-sign-open-skies-aviation-agreement-12466) (accessed 28 October 2020).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> World Trade Organization (2001), *WTO Trade Policy Review Of Cameroon*, Statement by U.S. Ambassador Linnet Deily, July 18, 2001 in Washington DC, available at: [www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/tpr\\_e/tp170\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tpr_e/tp170_e.htm) (accessed 24 October 2020).

<sup>21</sup> Awoumou C. D. G. (2005), *Le Golfe de Guinée face aux convoitises, CODESRIA Annual Meeting on Rethinking African Development: Beyond the Stalemate, Alternatives*, Maputo, pp. 5.

<sup>22</sup> Chouala (2005), *La Crise Diplomatique de Mars. Entre le Cameroun et la Guinée Équatoriale: Fondements, Enjeux et Perspectives. POLIS – Cameroon Political Science Review*, available at: <http://polis.sciencespobordeaux.fr/vol12ns/chouala.pdf> (accessed 25 October 2020).

Central African sub-region. Managed by the U.S. oil company Exxon-Mobil, the project is described as the most prominent American investment in the Central African region<sup>23</sup>.

Even though US-Cameroon relations are good and the U.S. considers Cameroon to be a reliable partner in playing an important role in the U.S. policy toward Central Africa, in the fight against Boko Haram and international terrorism, there are, however, some disagreements between the U.S. and Cameroon with regards to human rights and democracy. The United States has been putting pressure on the Cameroonian government to find a solution and end the current Anglophone crisis. The country report on Cameroon by the U.S. Department of State on Human Rights Practices in 2017 described how the Cameroonian forces intentionally disrespect, disregard, and violate human rights practices, such as unlawful detentions, persecutions, and violations of freedom of expression<sup>24</sup>. In 2018, the United States officially accused the Cameroonian military of murder<sup>25</sup>. The American government also condemned the “systematic intimidation of people because of their ethnicity and religious beliefs” in Cameroon.

In February 2019, the American authorities decided to cut military aid to Cameroon valued at about \$17 million over Cameroon's negative human rights record and canceled Cameroon's invitation into the American Partnership Program<sup>26</sup>. The United States Africa Command head, General Thomas Waldhauser, declared that the paucity in transparency in the investigations of human rights violations by Cameroon's government soldiers could have a significant effect on the U.S. ability to support Cameroon's counterterrorism endeavor and challenged Cameroon's President Biya to show greater transparency<sup>27</sup>. In March 2019, the United States Secretary for African Affairs, Tibor P. Nagy, appealed to the Cameroonian government to make important decisions to solve the Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon. Cameroon was also asked to grant autonomy in the form of a Federation to the English speaking South West and North West regions, and the release of political prisoners in Cameroon to bring peace.

At a casual discussion at the United Nations Security Council in May 2019, America again condemned the Cameroonian government<sup>28</sup>. On May 16, 2019, Tibor Nagy criticized Cameroon's government for not doing enough to find a solution to solve the conflict between the Cameroonian government and pro-Anglophone rebels. Tibor Nagy also declared that he did not believe that the independence of Ambazonian was a realistic option and that the American government recognized the territorial integrity of Cameroon<sup>29</sup>. In July 2019, the committee of the U.S. House of Representatives voted positively on resolution 358 to re-implement a federation in Cameroon that was abolished in 1972. The U.S. House of Representatives wanted a federal system of government in Cameroon and for the Government of Cameroon and rebel forces to respect all citizens' human rights, put an end to all fighting, and find a broad-based political dialogue without preconditions to end the civil war in the Northwest and Southwest regions<sup>30</sup>. In October 2019, President Donald Trump nullified a trade

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<sup>23</sup> Brottem, L. (2004), The World Bank's Great Gamble in Central Africa. *Foreign Policy in Focus*, July 6, 2004, available at: [www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/35/196.html](http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/35/196.html) (accessed 27 October 2020).

<sup>24</sup> Shaban, A. R. (2018), Cameroon forces in gross abuse over Anglophone, Boko Haram crisis – U.S. report, *Africa News*, April 22, 2018, available at: [www.africanews.com/2018/04/22/cameroon-forces-in-gross-abuse-over-anglophone-boko-haram-crisis-us-report](http://www.africanews.com/2018/04/22/cameroon-forces-in-gross-abuse-over-anglophone-boko-haram-crisis-us-report) (accessed 21 October 2020).

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<sup>28</sup> Arria-Formula Meeting of the UN Security Council, United Nations (2020), available at: <http://webtv.un.org/live-now/watch/arria-formula-meeting-of-the-un-security-council/6036271424001/?term=> (accessed 29 October 2020).

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<sup>30</sup> United States Congress (2020), H.Res. 358, Calling on the Government of Cameroon and armed groups to respect the human rights of all Cameroonian citizens, to end all violence, and to pursue a broad-based dialogue

agreement with Cameroon because of human rights abuses. Cameroon was suspended from the African Growth and Opportunity Act or AGOA trade program because of human rights violations<sup>31</sup>. The decision came as U.S. officials accuse Cameroon's government of extrajudicial killings and unlawful detentions amid the Anglophone crisis that has displaced more than six hundred thousand people over the past three years<sup>32</sup>.

**Conclusion.** Based on the facts presented above, it is evident that despite the few disagreements on human rights and democracy between U.S. and Cameroon, Cameroon has good relations with the U.S. from a geopolitical and geostrategic perspective. The U.S. considers Cameroon to be a reliable partner and portrays Cameroon as the Central African region leader. Cameroonian researchers and politicians need to know the stakes and the way forward for Cameroon, what policy approach to take. Cameroon stands to lose by taking on an aggressive policy since she has no rival ambitions. Cameroon's government needs not even adopt a legalistic or philosophical stance since that would not be advantageous. The only way forward is for Cameroon to ally with the world power and develop positive relations with the American government so that Cameroon can get the best out of the relationship.

A very relevant point is for Cameroon's government to formulate U.S. foreign policy objectives. Cameroon must clearly define its policy's goals in political, economic, and strategic terms. Cameroon has to reassure American authorities of the need to cooperate with Cameroon. The level of American investment in Cameroon is relatively high, but it needs to be maximum. The U.S. should be considered a strategic partner with whom important projects could work. For instance, engaging political dialogue through the many U.S. companies in Cameroon while presenting potential investment sectors, predominantly agricultural, would primarily boost U.S. investment in Cameroon.

US-Cameroon relation has put Cameroon in a "natural" legitimate leadership position in the Central African region. From a Central African sub-regional point of view, the absence of a clear sub-regional leader is an invitation to Cameroon to play her role as a leader. Cameroon's leadership role is not to "disapprove the desires the sub-region induces". Cameroon should define interests, protect them and create an agreement with other nations of the sub-region and act as a "bridge" between Central African countries and other world powers like the U.S., China, Russia, and France.

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