

POLITICAL PARTIES AND PROSPECTS FOR SOCIALISM IN CAMEROON: CASE STUDY OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT (SDF)

by

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Abstract

In spite of the dismal performance of the post-colonial state in Cameroon and the deplorable and deteriorating condition of the masses in general and the peasantry in particular; there has so far been no serious debate on any alternative form of economic, political and state institutions/organization in the country. The fundamental assumption of this paper is that socialism is the most appropriate political and economic system for Cameroon and other sub-Saharan African countries given their historical experience and socio-cultural and political context. This paper briefly revisits the literature on socialism in general and Africa socialism(s) in particular and advocates democratic socialism as the most appropriate political system in Cameroon. The article reviews Cameroon's historical experience as well as its level of socio-cultural, economic, and political development. It advocates a major role for political parties in the institutionalization of democratic socialism in the Cameroonian polity. It however notes that so far, of the numerous political parties in the country, only one of them – the Social Democratic Front (SDF) – has adopted a socialist agenda. The paper examines the origins and social bases of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) and undertakes a critical analysis of its organizational structure. Furthermore, it critically examines the strategies adopted so far by the Social Democratic Front (SDF) to ensure the effective institutionalization of democratic socialism in the Cameroonian polity. The study also attempts to determine whether factors such as institutional environment are conducive to the attainment of the objectives of the SDF. The paper proposes strategies to enhance the capacity of the SDF for the effective institutionalization of democratic socialism in the Cameroonian polity. These strategies include – a fundamental reform of the SDF organizational structure and culture; institutionalization of ties/partnerships with organized interests and social movements; 'social engineering' of potential 'socialist' organizations such as workers and/or producer groups and a much more comprehensive, vigorous and sustained ideological discourse.

