To appease or to repress: how dictators use economic dynamics to increase their regime longevity

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Abstract

International crimes, such as genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes, are more likely to occur in non-democratic regimes. Consequently, the decision-making process of dictators has increasingly garnered criminological interest [78]. The decisions dictators make and the strategies they use impact the longevity of their regime. Scholars predominantly focus on the extent to which a dictator is able to generate support from both the elite and the masses in explaining regime survival [3, 22, 54]. A dictator can use economic dynamics to increase his support among the elite through corrupt practices [3], he can determine the extent to which he is supported by the masses by offering public goods and services to them [22] and he can withhold benefits to repress threats stemming from these groups [17]. However, the intentional use of these strategies to increase regime survival remains under-researched [77]. The present research aims to fill this gap through an analysis of Paul Biya's 37-year reign in Cameroon. It is argued that the economic structure of a country influences the strategy—repression or appeasement—that is chosen to deal with the threat stemming from the masses or the elite and that ultimately, these considerations are likely to influence the economic development of a country.

Introduction

There are great differences in the longevity of dictatorial regimes. While some dictators rule for decades, others fall within a short amount of time [29]. Since it is more likely that international crimes such as genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes occur in non-democratic regimes [78], it is not surprising that there is a significant amount of literature that focuses on dictatorial regime survival. This body of work

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predominantly concentrates on the role and support of the ruling elite and of the masses [3, 22, 54]. The overarching concept that seems to influence these different strategies is the economic situation of a state.

There is a long-standing practice of analyzing the relationship between economic growth and regime stability [17]. This relationship is rooted in the *modernization theory* of Lipset [44]. He argued that the more economically developed a nation is, the greater the chance a regime will develop into a democracy. While influential, the relationship between economic development and regime stability is far more complex than initially theorized by Lipset [44].¹ Dictatorships can sustain despite poor economies [6] and there are cases in which dictatorships have stabilized while undergoing economic development.² The connection between dictatorship survival and states' economic situation is therefore complex and currently remains underexposed within the scholarly debate [77].

There are several ways in which a dictator can use the economic dynamics in a country to maintain control. The economic situation of a state can influence corrupt practices by the dictator that help him create a supportive elite, repress political opposition within this group, and therewith manage potential violence being directed against himself [3, 56]. The relationship between this ruling elite and the dictator is often characterized by clientelism and is dependent on co-optation practices through rent-seeking [45]. Economic dynamics may also help the dictator to increase the support of the masses, by providing public goods and services [22]. In contrast, he may deprive certain groups of such goods in order to repress them [17]. In sum, economic dynamics allow leaders to minimize threats to their position in power [15] either through the repression or appeasement of the ruling elite and the masses.

Most of the literature that covers the relationship between the economic dynamics and a dictator's survival is based, implicitly or explicitly, on a political economy approach (e.g. [15, 79]) which, as Verwimp ([76], pp. 164, 165) explains, allows

“the researcher to look through the dictator's eyes and to explain the decisions the dictator is making. We do that, assuming that the dictator is rational...Rationality means that the dictator will use his available resources as well as possible to attain his goal(s). The dictator's first priority is to stay in power.”

This article seeks to contribute to this specific field of study that focuses on the survival strategies of dictators through a political economy approach. It proposes an analytical framework in which the economic dynamics of a country are portrayed as being a predictor of a dictator's behavior to either repress or appease the ruling elite and masses to stay in power.

¹ The origin of theories that focus on the influence of economic dynamics on regime longevity traces back to the observations of Lipset [44] who argued that economic development is one of the two characteristics that influence democratic stability. In this work, Lipset claims that the more economically developed a nation is – with the focus on education, urbanization, industrialization and wealth – the greater the chance the regime will develop into a democracy. This assumption is built on the notion that only if a nation is wealthy, the mass population can actively participate in politics. Political participation of the masses will enable them to become significant opponents to extreme ideologies of the regime and subsequently, pose a threat to it [44].

² Przeworski and Limongi [62] give the examples of Singapore and Syria.

Many dictatorial regimes use the economic situation as an integral part of daily politics [34, 66].³ To provide a more in-depth analysis we, however, chose to use an instrumental case study design of Paul Biya's regime in Cameroon to answer the question *how dictators use the economic dynamics in their country to increase the longevity of their regime*. Since generalizing findings from a non-random sample size of one unit is difficult [52], this article uses the concept of 'particularizability' as described by Erickson [20] to assess the relevance of its findings for other case studies. Through an analysis of the factors that are generalizable to other cases and pointing out those factors that are unique and 'particular' to the case-study of Cameroon, the extent to which the findings of this article apply to other cases can be determined.

On October 7th, 2018 Paul Biya, president of Cameroon, started his 37th consecutive year in office which makes it an outstanding example of regime longevity. Even though Cameroon has often been portrayed as one of sub-Saharan Africa's most stable and prosperous countries [36, 37], the country has been struggling for peace and economic stability ever since its independence from England and France in 1960.⁴ Cameroon is divided into an Anglophone and Francophone region and it has been difficult to blend these different political, judicial, and linguistic systems [21]. By now, many civilians have fallen victim to international crimes that were perpetrated by the Anglophone separatists and the government security troops [30, 41]. In addition, the country has been engulfed by an economic crisis for years. However, despite—or maybe because of—the economic instability within the country, there does not seem to come an end to the leadership of Paul Biya anytime soon.

The first section gives an interdisciplinary overview of the existing literature that focuses on the link between regime longevity and the economic dynamics within a country, to finally come to a proposed analytical framework. In this analytical framework, economic structures are set out as predictors of practices of repression and appeasement among dictators. It explains how government income influences rent-seeking practices, oppressive actions, and economic development. The section that follows briefly sheds light on the regime of Paul Biya after which his regime is analyzed through the proposed analytical framework. The research question is answered in the conclusion.

Regime longevity and economic survival strategies

Many scholars have pointed to a link between dictatorships and international crimes (e.g. [13, 23, 33, 67]). As Rummel argued, "[p]ower kills, absolute power kills absolutely" ([67], p. 1).⁵ While the consensus in the field refers to democracies as being the least violent, not all dictatorships are inherently violent.⁶ Moreover,

³ Examples of countries are Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo [63].

⁴ France remained a strong player within both the political and economic spheres of Cameroon after its independence, because of cooperation agreements [36, 37].

⁵ Rummel's work is contested by many scholars, arguing that most human rights violations and repression occurs in semi-authoritarian regimes but the consensus in the field seems to be that stable democracies are the least violent (for an overview see [78]).

⁶ For a comparative case study of a violent and non-violent (or at least much less violent) dictatorial regime, see McLoughlin and Weerdesteijn's work on Zimbabwe and Zambia [51].

international crimes have certainly been perpetrated by and within democratic systems of government and have been explicitly linked to the process of democratization [47]. However, because of the increased risk to the well-being of the population in dictatorships, it is important to better understand these regimes and why some are more enduring than others. In the next paragraphs, we will provide an overview of the literature that has been written across a wide range of academic disciplines to examine the role of economic dynamics in regime longevity.

Regime longevity: The masses and ruling elite

To stay in power, dictators need to contend with threats stemming from two different directions: the masses and the ruling elite [15, 29]. Firstly, through active or passive loyalty, citizens can form the foundation of a dictatorial regime [46]. Once part of the population starts rebelling and becomes disloyal to the dictator, there is a risk they can overthrow his regime. To decrease this risk, dictators need to ensure the threat of the dissident population is limited and controllable. According to Magaloni and Wallace [46], this risk depends on three different aspects: the size of the opposed masses to the regime, the knowledge they have of the existence of one another and, lastly, their ability to coordinate through a public organization. Secondly, support from within the political realm influences the longevity of dictatorships [15]. According to Albertus and Menaldo “the most serious threat dictators face emanates from *within* their support coalition” ([3], p. 974). Because this ruling elite⁷ forms an integral part of the political fabric of the state and the dictator’s power, he cannot simply detach himself from this group [32]. Ensuring regime survival and therewith increasing regime longevity thus requires the dictator to control the ruling elite and minimize the opposition they can form against the regime.

Whether the dictator has the support of these two groups is determined by several factors. When looking at the masses, Magaloni and Wallace [46] point out genuine loyalty to the regime is based on their satisfaction with public policies and economic development. In addition, support of the dictator’s ideology may be an important element [46]. As opposed to genuine support, mass loyalty can also be built upon fear—generated through e.g. punishments or the use of violence. On the side of the ruling elite, support is generally based on spoils [29]. These spoils, also referred to as rents, include the transfer of particular (financial) goods to specific groups. These clientelist relationships—based on rent-seeking practices—form an important reason for the ruling elite to support the dictator. To generate support of the masses and the elite, the dictator may employ specific economic and political strategies as will be explained in the following paragraphs.

Dictatorial regime longevity and the economic structure of a state

Dictators need to constantly deal with and adapt to the threats stemming from the elite and the masses to survive in office [28]. The financial revenues of a state are of great

⁷ Even though this paper is aware of the fact that there are different terms to refer to this threat from within the regime, this paper uses the term ‘ruling elite’. Ruling elite is the term that is used in the existing literature on the case of Biya’s regime in Cameroon and therefore most applicable for the purpose of this study.

importance to how dictators deal with these threats [15, 53]. The source of revenues they have at their disposal depend partly on the structure of the economy ([15], p. 936). Two economic structures are distinguished: ‘free resources’ and ‘productive economic activity’ [15]. First, in the scenario of ‘free resources’ the government is mainly dependent on natural resources, such as oil or foreign aid. These relatively labour-free resources are easy to tax compared to labour-intensive resources [2]. Moreover, since it does not require the active cooperation of human capital (the masses) it forms a stable source of government revenues in times of political or economic upheaval. The other economic structure is that of ‘productive economic activity’ that is characterised by financial revenues gained from labour-intensive resources, such as agriculture and industrialization [2]. These are more vulnerable to political and economic crises because they are dependent on the cooperation of the masses [2, 15].

The ‘intentional’ use of economic dynamics by the dictator

In both scenarios, a dictator needs to deal with the threat stemming from the masses as well as the elite. He can do this through either repressive or appeasing strategies depending on the economic structure of the country.

Strategies to deal with the threat from the masses: Appeasing or repressing

According to De Mesquita and Smith [15], a dictator can deal with the threat from the masses through an increase in the provision of (public) goods and thereby improve the well-being of its citizens. An example of this is the rise in the production price for coffee initiated by President Habyarimana of Rwanda [76]. In doing so, Habyarimana gave the farmers an incentive to increase their production and therewith ensure loyalty from the peasant community [76]. As this example illustrates, the provision of goods diminishes the desire among the population for change. Alternatively, the dictator can also restrain the provision of goods—particularly the so-called ‘coordination goods’ that help masses organize and coordinate ([15], p. 936).⁸ The strict government regulation of the media in Sierra Leone is illustrative of a situation in which the population is deprived of coordination goods. Here, several journalists accused the government of censoring the press after the Independent Media Commission (IMC), an organ created by the parliament that approves media submissions, decided to shut down a radio station of the opposition party [65]. In this way, the government tried to dim the oppositional voices and, with that, the chance the population would gather and revolt. In both the provision and deprivation of goods, the underlying mechanism is that the dictator tries to minimize the risk of revolutions—either through appeasing the masses or through repressing them.

When a dictator relies primarily on an economic structure that consists of ‘productive economic activity,’ he will be more likely to use appeasing strategies towards the masses because he is dependent on the cooperation of this group for his economic revenues [18, 53]. Providing them with certain goods will increase the welfare and productivity of the masses and therewith his economic revenues [15]. A dictator will

⁸ Coordination goods include infrastructural goods, e.g. free, transparent press and communication means [15].

tend to fall back on repressive strategies towards the masses when he relies on ‘free resources’ next to productive economic activity. The fact that he is less reliant on the masses for his economic revenues reduces the harmful effect of repressive strategies that hamper productivity and the revenues the dictator obtains [15, 18]. An example of the repression of public goods is the redistributive policy. This policy entails the marginalization of a particular group in favor of the satisfaction of another group. It requires the reallocation of wealth from one group to another group to benefit the latter [77]. A common redistributive policy is ‘urban bias.’ To thoroughly understand ‘urban bias,’ it is key to first shed light on the influence of urbanization on the stability of dictatorships.

Wallace [77] focuses on economic development and the process of urbanization that often accompanies this. As he argues, “cities bring together masses of people, improve communication links among them, and increase the ability of private grievances to accumulate and circulate” ([77], p. 632). Hence, it is not urbanization in itself that determines regime survival [62], it is the influence this has on the discontent of the masses and the extent to which they can mobilize themselves. Moreover, urbanization creates concentrated urban areas in which the population can actively monitor the obscured and befogged practices of the dictatorial regime – such as corruption [61]. This combination gives civilians the willingness and ability to openly oppose the government [55].

Conducive to alleviating the threat from the urban population, dictators can use redistributive policies that implement an ‘urban bias’ [77]. This means that rural areas will be marginalized and restrained from certain rights in order to favor the urban dwellers—who form the most serious threat to the regime. However, in the long run, redistributive policies that only benefit urban dwellers can provoke difficulties. Wallace [77] argues that ‘urban bias’ makes it more attractive to live in urbanized areas—which will lead to an increasingly urban population. In the long term, keeping this growing urban population satisfied will be more difficult. As Wallace argues, larger populations go hand in hand with larger-scale unrest [77]. This public discontent that follows urban bias can have different causes such as food crises [55, 77], or urban unemployment [14]. In the early 1980s, food volatility caused by droughts had led to mass protests against the government in, amongst others, Tunisia and Morocco [55]. Hence, as Mukherjee and Koren explain: “While the onset of a food crisis gives the civilians the willingness to mobilize, high urban development levels give them the ability to do so and thus overtly oppose the government” ([55], p. 19). In this way, the urbanization resulting from an urban bias can form a threat to the powerful position of a dictator.

An example of a dictatorship in which urban bias led to urban unemployment is Sierra Leone. Historically in Sierra Leone government policy regarding public goods was characterized by a fundamental urban bias. This expressed itself in facilities such as telecommunications, electricity, and modern water supplies clustered in Freetown, the capital of the country [14]. Later, the government also started subsidizing petroleum and rice—two goods in high demand by urban dwellers. Where this urban bias was incorporated partly because of a fear of urban upheaval, in the long run it encouraged rural-urban migration leaving more people within the cities unemployed [14]. Another unintended result of the urban migration was the ease with which rebels could recruit new members in these urban areas [14]. Considering these possible negative effects of

urban bias, dictators who predominantly rely on productive economic activity are less likely to use this repressive strategy. This can be explained by the fact that it will be more difficult to appease a growing urban population if there are fewer means stemming from productive rural areas. Therefore, repressive strategies—such as urban bias—are more likely to be used in a situation of free resources, in which the dictator relies less on the cooperation of the masses.

Besides redistributive policies, the dictator may also block economic development if he fears these changes could damage his position of power. This is called the ‘political replacement effect’ [1]. The decision of a dictator to stagnate or progress economic development is again dependent on the extent to which he feels threatened by the masses and the elite [60]. Where certain investments such as education, infrastructure, public health, and communication goods will strengthen the position and welfare of the population at large, it will simultaneously increase opportunities for government opposition among the masses [60]. These investments increase the transparency of the government’s misconduct as well as fostering cohesion between possible opposition members. In Sierra Leone, the repression of communication goods decreased the opposition stemming from the masses. Here, the lack of resources, such as the internet, made it impossible for the wider public to access information about the conduct of government officials [65]. Censorship of information is then used to prevent the public from forming networks that could lead to public uprisings [31]. In Argentina as well the government’s decisions regarding economic investments were influenced by the opposition they experienced from the masses. The military junta shifted the focus away from furthering industrialization, which would have benefited the middle-class workers. Cooney [12] argues that this decision was motivated, among other reasons, by the fact that the junta wanted to eliminate dissent. The industrial park had formed a breeding place for unrest among the masses which, as one example, had led to the protests in the 1960s [12]. Furthermore, the powerful bourgeoisie—having most of its investments in finance and agriculture—were not dependent on industrialization and the cooperation of the middle-class [12]. These two countries, where the government was not primarily dependent on financial resources stemming from productive economic activity clearly show how economic development is consciously blocked or guided by the dictatorial regime to control the masses.

In the scenario of productive economic activity in which a dictator relies on the productivity and cooperation of the masses for his revenues, he will be more likely to encourage economic development—even though this potentially makes the masses more powerful opponents. An example of a dictatorship in which the economic structure is highly dependent on productive economic activity is Ethiopia. Strikingly, this country has shown rapid economic growth from 1990 to 2012 [48]. Matfess [48] describes how 80 % of the country’s economy is involved in agriculture. This has clearly influenced the political economy of the government in its promotion of the industrialization processes and the development of the agricultural sector [48]. Deciding to encourage economic development can also be influenced by the fact that certain economic reforms might be necessary to receive the free resource of foreign financial aid. Brown [11] points out that many African governments know how to pursue the most basic reforms required to obtain or maintain international aid. In this way, the free resource of international aid can form an important incentive for dictators to carry out economic reforms. When successful, these free resources are beneficial for the regime.

This was also the case in Angola where economic reforms secured new deals with the IMF and World Bank [42]. In sum, in a situation of free resources, a dictator is less reliant on the masses. When a dictator comes to rely predominantly on free resources, he is, therefore, more likely to block or stagnate economic development—except for those developments that foster the exploitation of free resources and are necessary to maintain financial aid.

Strategies to deal with the threat from the ruling elite: Appeasing or repressing

Just as is the case for the masses, a dictator can appease or repress the elite. One way in which the dictator can obtain and maintain the support of the ruling elite is through the provision of goods [15]. This strategy is called ‘co-optation’ and refers to the corrupt practice of ‘bribing’ the support from the elite by giving economic incentives [32]. In the scenario of free resources, a dictator will have a greater tendency to fall back on practices of co-optation. Not only are free resources easier to tax and less vulnerable to political and economic shocks [15], they also form an important incentive for the ruling elite to get in power [17]. Therefore it is important that the dictator satisfies the ruling elite to minimize their threat to him [10]. North et al. [56] explain this political equilibrium between a dictator and the potential threats he faces through the phenomenon of a limited access order (LAO). In an LAO, “the political system manipulates the economy to generate rents that bind the interests of economic actors to support the current political system” ([56], p. 6). These rents are given to those individuals and groups that could form a credible threat to the regime, in exchange for their support and loyalty. Violence and opposition to the status quo would mean the loss of these rents and it, therefore, forms an important incentive to cooperate with the regime [56]. In this way, there are mutually beneficial relationships between the dictator and these clients that eventually help the dictator to stay in office—clientelist relationships that are also referred to as neopatrimonialism [6]. An example of a country in which the government has been highly dependent on free resources, such as oil and diamonds, is Angola. As Le Billon points out ([42], pp. 64, 65)

Politically, the oil and other state rents have allowed the Presidency to sustain a clientele beyond the military apparatus, building a degree of legitimacy among those rewarded and allowing support or resistance to reforms, according to short-term expediency...The clientelist redistribution of oil and state rents has targeted the presidential entourage, the state *nomenklatura*, and privileged sections of the population through mechanisms sustaining a relatively stable internal political order.”

As the example above illustrates, the government in Angola uses rents, obtained from an economic structure of free resources, to strengthen the stability of its regime.

In the alternative scenario of productive economic activity, there will be less security regarding the economic revenues a dictator receives because he is more

reliant on the masses. When a dictator does not have a steady flow of revenues to continue practices of co-optation and clientelism, he is more likely to use strategies of repression towards the elite [31]. A dictator can “dismiss, replace, purge or demote” individuals in key positions who form a credible threat to his regime ([70] p. 1771). According to Sudduth [70], this is more likely to occur when the elite form a less credible threat to take over power because using repressive strategies in such a situation is less likely to harm the dictator in place. Bove and Rivera [9] agree and argue that in general, strategies of co-optation are preferred instead of repression, since repression can actually work against a dictator’s survival in times when the elite is powerful. In the scenario of productive economic activity, the economic incentive for the ruling elite to get into power is smaller than in the alternative scenario of free resources. This then makes them less of a threat to the regime and forms another explanation why a dictator in this scenario will be more likely to fall back on repressive strategies towards the elite. An example of a dictator that used purges to strengthen his position in power is Joseph Stalin in the former Soviet Union. Whilst promoting industrialization and therefore focusing on productive economic activity, Stalin carried out purges among the state apparatus, with everything focused on maximizing economic growth [7].

The extent to which the elite form a threat also influences economic development. A dictator is likely to block economic development if he is afraid that these changes will destabilize the status quo and form a threat to his political power and revenues [1].⁹ In a country where most government revenues trace back to taxes gained from free resources that are used to co-opt the elite, it is beneficial for dictators to stagnate economic development because economic development is generally accompanied by industrialization, which will lead to more dependency on the side of productive economic activity [1]. This, in turn, is more difficult to tax than revenues obtained from free resources. Foreign aid, which falls under free resources, can play a particularly dubious role in that regard since it allows dictators to continue practices of co-optation and repression [69] while simultaneously decreasing their financial dependency on well-functioning economic structures ([16], p. 180). As North et al. [57] emphasize, the societal structure of LAOs that is based on privileges limits economic growth by fostering monopolies and rents. In the case of Sierra Leone, Reno [65] explains how the abundance of the country’s natural resources has never been translated into economic growth partly due to the strongly embedded corrupt neo-patrimonial rule in which the government relationships are based on rents. In the 1970s, the government would obtain around 250 million dollars stemming from internal, natural resources [64]. The country’s economy was regulated and controlled by its presidents and Reno [64] explains how the masses’ access to economic opportunities was blocked to increase their personalist rule. As this example shows, economic development was blocked in an environment in which

⁹ As previously described, economic development—such as increased education and infrastructure—can create more powerful opponents and it can therefore potentially create political upheaval.

the government did not rely on the masses for its revenues. Instead the revenues were obtained mostly from natural resources—specifically blood diamonds [64]. Therefore the analytical framework suggests that economic development is more likely to be blocked when dictatorships rely heavily on revenues gained from a predominantly free resource structure in order to buy support from the ruling elite [1, 43, 57] (Fig. 1).

In the alternative scenario of productive economic activity, a dictator is more likely to encourage economic change. This can be explained by the fact that he relies on the masses in order to obtain his revenues and therefore seeks to appease them [15]. As Matfess [48] points out, Rwanda and Ethiopia are examples of countries in which economic development goes hand in hand with authoritarian regime stability. As is consistent with the analytical framework, these countries are both characterized by an economic structure that primarily relies on productive economic activity.

The analytical framework

To sum up, as the previous paragraphs have shown, the proposed analytical framework combines the following three interrelated components: the economic structure of a country, the threat stemming from the elite and the threat stemming from the masses. It claims that in a situation in which the dictator obtains his economic revenues primarily from free resources, this likely results in repressive strategies towards the masses and predominantly appeasing strategies towards the elite. In the alternative scenario, the dictator faces a less threatening ruling elite but is more reliant on the masses. Consequently, this is likely to result in more appeasing strategies towards the masses. Moreover, the insecurity regarding economic revenues as well as the decreased political incentive for the elite to get in power will make the dictator use more repressive strategies towards this group than in the alternative scenario.

The analytical framework is obviously a simplistic reflection of reality and the two economic structures are not mutually exclusive and can both be present in countries to

Fig. 1 The analytical framework

different degrees.¹⁰ Nevertheless, a theoretical model such as this might be useful to analyse the decision-making process of a particular dictator. By providing an in-depth analysis of the case of Cameroon, the aim is to contribute to the thorough understanding of how dictators rationally use economic dynamics to stay in power. By implementing a political economy approach, the decision-making is understood from the dictator's point of view.

The regime of Paul Biya in Cameroon

When Paul Biya became President in 1982, he needed to deal with a politically and economically unstable Cameroon. The country was divided between the English-speaking (Anglophone) and the French-speaking (Francophone) parts [35]. Moreover, Biya's predecessor Ahidjo had left him a single party, the Cameroon National Union (CNU), and a strong loyal alliance that had served as an extension of Ahidjo's coercive reach [36, 37]. This alliance consisted of Ahidjo's ethnic group, the Muslim Fulbe, and the Bamilike elite who were influential in both political and economic spheres of Cameroonian life [36, 37]. In the midst of this political upheaval, the country began to suffer from a severe economic crisis from the mid-1980s onwards [35–37, 50]. The economic crisis was the result of internal economic mismanagement including a deterioration in export revenues that was not followed by a simultaneous decrease in import [35, 50].

Biya promised a 'New Deal' that would improve the political and economic situation in Cameroon [37]. He spoke about moralization and a zero-tolerance policy regarding corruption and started by changing the name of the CNU to the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) [50]. But implementing political reforms was difficult. Former president Ahidjo created a party in which the top consisted of loyalists who supported his autocratic, patrimonial state philosophy [36, 37]. Many of these politicians were unwilling to accept the presidency and reforms Biya proposed not only because he was a Beti Christian as opposed to a Muslim Fulbe, but also because they feared the loss of privileges they had benefited from under Ahidjo's rule [37]. In order to implement reforms, Biya needed to create his own loyal alliance that would be committed to his ideology. In 1988 and 1989, in an attempt to reverse the economic depression, president Biya agreed on a structural adjustment program with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and accepted a loan from the World Bank [27] of 150 million US Dollars [72]. The adjustment program included the disengagement of the state in the economy, focusing on the privatization and liberalization of the market [50]. However, due to the clientelist nature of the state, these suggested reforms were implemented hesitantly and inconsistently [36, 37].

Overall, Biya's regime seems to have continued the corrupt practices of his predecessor Ahidjo. Over the years, Biya created a political environment that is based on the implementation of seemingly democratic values which, in reality, only increased his personalist power. This 'showroom democracy' that implements minor improvements—such as civil liberties and multi-party elections—turned out to be merely a cover-up for the fact that the

¹⁰ For example, there are countries that are greatly dependent on the economic structure of productive economic activity but do receive international aid from sponsors. An example of this is Ethiopia which has an extensive agricultural sector along with the exploitation of some natural resources, but has also received the free resource of financial aid [11].

clientelist nature at the top of the regime has not changed [8]. At the same time, he maintains a ‘divide-and-rule’ approach to deal with the growing calls for independence among the Anglophone population ([38], p. 292; [49]). Real economic transformation seems to be blocked by the interests of the regime to maintain the status quo within the country [8]. The corrupt political nature of Biya’s regime, therefore, seems to impede economic development and has created a country in which the personalist rule of Biya is embedded in every aspect of Cameroonian political and economic life.

Paul Biya’s strategies for regime longevity

Paul Biya has used both repression as well as appeasing strategies towards the masses and the ruling elite to stay in power and his decision-making seems to be influenced by the economic structure of the country. The following paragraph is divided into three different timeframes. Each timeframe first sheds light on the economic structure and threats stemming from the elite and the masses in that specific period. In the second paragraph, the proposed analytical framework is used to understand the strategies used by Biya to deal with these threats.¹¹

1982–1990

Two economic structures, an extensive ruling elite and supporting masses

After its independence, the economy of Cameroon was dependent on the export of agricultural products and the discovery of oil [8, 36, 37, 68]. The management of this diversified economy has, from the moment of independence, been in the hands of the government [5]. Ever since its independence, Cameroon received a lot of financial aid from international donors such as France and the World Bank [36, 37]. When analyzing these government revenues in light of the analytical framework, Cameroon is a country that originally falls in the category of ‘productive economic activity’—relying predominantly on labor-intensive sectors, such as agriculture. However, over the years, Biya’s regime has also obtained other financial revenues, such as oil rents and international financial aid, both falling under the category ‘free resources.’ Therefore, the country is an example of how these two economic structures can co-exist.

Politically, when Biya first got into power in 1982, he was initially supported by Cameroonians from different ethnic groups [59]. Not only was he seen as the ‘national leader’ of the country that would overcome ethnic divisions, but he was also admired for his political progressive attitude expressed in his proposed ‘New Deal’ [59]. However, it soon became clear that the reforms Biya promised as part of his New Deal proved to be a short-lived project that slowly started to be abandoned by the regime [37, 59]. Apart from the fact that the ruling elite was dissatisfied that Ahidjo’s position was taken over by a Christian, they also feared the loss of their privileges that were guaranteed under Ahidjo’s rule [37]. To

¹¹ The choice of these timeframes is based on historical points that created the following logical distinction: 1982–1990 (Biya’s first years of power and the time in which the economic crisis started), 1990–1997 (continuous economic crisis and the re-election of Biya as president), and lastly 2000–present (slow economic recovery and Biya’s continued presidency).

strengthen his position as president, Biya needed to deal with this loyal alliance of Ahidjo and also create his own loyal ruling elite. His ruling elite, therefore, consisted of both former loyalists to Ahidjo as well as his own supporters—specifically those stemming from his own ethnic group Beti whom he appointed to influential positions [59].

Strategies: Beti co-optation and urban Bias

To maintain support from both the Beti as well as the loyalists of Ahidjo, Biya started investing heavily in the public sector. The number of civil servants increased from 80,000 in his first year as president in 1982, to around 180,000 in 1988 [35–37]. The expansion of the public sector had created an extensive state apparatus, and the number of rent-seeking agreements taking place increased significantly in the first years of Biya's rule [36, 37]. He started co-opting the Beti elite with economic privileges and replaced the Bamilike businessmen that were part of Ahidjo's ruling elite for Beti businessmen [36, 37]. He, therefore, chose to both appease and repress parts of the ruling elite. The strategy of repression is in line with the proposed theoretical framework which states that dictators who rely predominantly on productive economic activity have a stronger tendency to fall back on repressive strategies towards the elite. Conversely, Biya also used appeasing strategies. The fact that he was able to carry out co-optation practices on a widespread scale can possibly be explained by the discovery of oil in 1977. The revenues obtained from the oil industry offered Biya the means to finance the increased clientelist, rent-seeking practices [8]. Thus, the free economic structure allowed him to carry out appeasing strategies next to the repressive strategies to strengthen his rule.

However, around 1985, Cameroon was confronted with a severe economic crisis [36, 37, 59]. Due to this economic crisis, the revenues the government obtained from both the labor-intensive resources as well as the natural resources decreased and hence put pressure on the clientelist character of Biya's regime [37]. In addition, despite Biya's New Deal promises to rigorously moralize the regime, the clientelist co-optation practices continued to take place and, although some repressive measurements were taken, only alliances of former president Ahidjo seemed to be the target [35]. This corresponds with the analytical framework, that in a situation in which the dictator is predominantly reliant on productive economic activity, he is more likely to fall back on repressive measures towards the elite. In this particular case, the economic crisis also caused a situation in which there was even less security regarding revenues obtained from productive economic activity. Therefore, the means to co-opt the extensive ruling elite were compromised because of the crisis. This logically brought along a situation in which Biya became increasingly dependent on repressive strategies that would help him to sustain his power.

Due to falling international commodity prices, it was difficult for Cameroonian farmers to compete in the international market [75]. Where goods were imported on a massive scale, local farmers had difficulties in selling their output. Even though the government could have implemented reforms that would have improved the competitiveness of domestic production through taxes on rice imports, little progress was made. As Van de Walle [75] points out, this situation seemed to have favored people in towns and cities who were benefiting from the low consumer prices and marginalized the local producers whose purchasing power decreased. The government's reluctance to take measures indicates a fear of urban upheaval [75] that can be explained by the growing discontent among the masses in response to the ongoing economic crisis. Besides, the

regime benefitted from the crisis to some extent. The regime started to receive more financial aid from international sponsors such as France and the World Bank. It is possible that, at this point in time, Biya implemented the aforementioned strategy of urban bias because he increasingly relied on free resources compared to productive economic activity for his revenues. Dissatisfaction among the rural population would, therefore, not be very damaging to the majority of his revenues, as these stemmed primarily from free resources and did not require the cooperation from the masses. This is in line with the analytical framework, which assumes that dictators who rely predominantly on free resources tend to repress the masses. Moreover, it clearly shows how Paul Biya benefitted from two economic structures and adapted his survival strategies to these.

Due to the continuing economic crisis, Biya reached agreements with both the IMF and the World Bank for the implementation of a 'structural adjustment program' (SAP) in 1988 [36, 37, 39]. SAP included the stabilization of the domestic economy through the privatization, rehabilitation, and liberalization of the market and the parastatals [36, 37]. However, due to the personal interests of Biya and the ruling elite, these reforms were reluctantly carried out. Only retrenching on the public sector, the regime tried to leave the personnel expenditures untouched [37]. Moreover, Biya purposely delayed the reforms regarding the privatization and liberalization of the economy. Being dependent on the revenues of parastatals, privatization would decrease Biya's coercive reach within the country's economy. Furthermore, following the framework, Biya did not rely as much on the cooperation of the masses. Therefore, opposing economic change and potentially risking the increase in discontent would probably not harm his revenues. Finally, after continuous international pressure from the World Bank, Biya started the reforms of the parastatals [36, 37]. Often these reforms resulted in a tremendous cut in wages and other benefits as well as a rise in dismissals [36, 37]. Therefore, the masses kept being affected by the choices made by the regime. However, the resulting discontent this brought along, was not seen as a priority by Biya due to his reliance on two economic structures.

In sum, Biya's first years of power were characterized by an extensive state apparatus of which support was ensured through co-optation practices. The economic crisis put pressure on the system of co-optation and increased mass discontent. The fact that Biya chose the repressive strategy of urban bias seems to be related to the increase in free resources—financial aid. Biya could integrate this strategy in times of economic crisis because of the diverse economic landscape of the country that gave him resources from both labor-intensive sectors as well as from financial aid and other free resources.

1990–2000

Free resource stemming from financial aid and the threat from the masses

While the economic situation in the country was getting worse, the state was not fully dependent on its internal economy for its sources of income. Instead, Cameroon was the recipient of many international funds, among which were the World Bank and France [27]. Since the economic crisis continued and the government was expected to heavily decrease expenditures in the public sector, the revenues obtained from international donors became increasingly important to the regime [71].

The masses, in the meantime, started to publicly show their discontent [36, 37]. Disappointed by Biya's regime, the majority of them held the government responsible

for the economic crisis and criticized the corrupt practices of their president [36, 37]. The demands for greater political freedom rose due to the continuing economic crisis as well as political change in neighboring countries [27]. This growing discontent resulted in the establishment of a new party that turned out to become the major opposition party to the CPDM, the Social Democratic Front (SDF) [27]. Even though the demands for political liberalization lived predominantly among the masses [27], there were also members of the ruling elite that started to express their dissatisfaction regarding the Biya dominance within Biya's regime [37]. This discontent brought along a splintering of the ruling elite [40], potentially making them less of a threat to Biya.

Strategies: The co-optation through financial aid, the repression of media and the blocking of economic change

The opposition started to repeatedly organize major strikes of which the most important one was the 'ghost town' campaign in 1991 [36, 37]. The campaign entailed a total shut down in the major cities, resulting in great public and private economic loss as well as an exacerbation of the economic crisis [27, 36, 37]. In an effort to stop the protests, Biya agreed on new elections for the National Assembly in exchange for a halt to protests [37]. The international sponsors—the IMF, World Bank and France—were satisfied with these agreements and their financial support continued [37]. Ultimately, this meant that Biya could continue with his practices of co-optation.

When the National Assembly elections were held in 1992, Biya's regime managed to stay in power. This can be explained by censorship of the press as well as a "compliant Supreme Court" that approved the victory of the CPDM ([40], p. 615). For the Presidential elections in 1992, Biya managed to win against John Fru Ndi, a candidate of the SDF [37]. Even though many suspected these elections were fraudulent [36, 37], the President was supported by the former colonial power, France, which continued to be involved in the country through cooperation agreements [37]. France, therefore, had a big interest in supporting Biya over Fru Ndi to make sure its economic interests in the country would not be threatened [38, 71]. Eventually, the free resources that stemmed from foreign aid gave him the means necessary to ensure his position in office in this time of political and economic upheaval.

Even though by winning the elections Biya had secured his position for the next 5 years, he increasingly needed to deal with growing dissatisfaction among the international donors who were concerned about the lack of progress in implementing the reforms that were required by the SAP [36, 37]. In 1994, the World Bank threatened to withhold credit if Cameroon would not increase the speed of privatization of the parastatals [36, 37]. This would mean a strong cutback in the government's resources—resources he was increasingly dependent on due to the economic crisis in order to co-opt his alliance [36, 37]. As Konings explains ([37], p. 262):

"The Biya regime rightly feared that the implementation of economic reforms, such as the dismantlement and privatization of the costly and inefficient parastatal sector and the reduction of the public service, would fuel popular discontent and augment the membership of the opposition parties. Moreover, it was obliged to proceed with the supply of privileges, in the form of rent-seeking opportunities, so as to maintain the hegemonic alliance and to stave off opposition."

Thus, Biya was reluctant to implement economic reforms because of several reasons. He feared it would increase the already ominous threat from the masses and that shifting away control from his regime to the private sector in combination with economic development, would make it more difficult to control the masses. Moreover, economic reforms—such as privatization—would provide the government with fewer revenues for co-optation. During this time, Biya, therefore, maintained a strategy in which he blocked economic change in order to prevent the masses from getting more powerful and the opposition from taking over to ultimately stick to the status quo that would provide him with his revenues [39]. Considering Biya's growing reliance on free resources during the economic crisis, his reluctance to implement economic change corresponds with the analytical framework as this would offer him fewer revenues. Thus, most of the economic stagnation can be explained by government policies rather than structural factors that constrain it [8]. However, Biya had to continue the privatization of some parastatals to ensure the financial support of international donors [36, 37]. In line with the framework, what this situation indicates is that a greater dependency on free resources is more likely to go hand in hand with a dictator who chooses to block economic change. What the case of Cameroon also demonstrates is that the supplier of these free resources—in this case financial aid—can, at the same time, demand economic development and play a big role in the decision-making process of a dictator.

To sum up, where a wave of political change and 'democratization' was roaring through Africa in the 1990s [59], the regime of Paul Biya managed to stay relatively untouched. Even though Biya had to comply with some democratic values—such as a multi-party system—he did so through the creation of a 'showroom democracy' in which he could still control the greatest part of the state apparatus [8]. Furthermore, whereas he slowly implemented some reforms as required by the SAP to satisfy international donors and therefore secured the flow of revenues, he remained reluctant to implement reforms and decided to block economic development. With the idea of reducing the threat stemming from the masses as well as maintaining the status quo of clientelism, Biya used repressive strategies in which he restrained the population from particular goods and services—such as communication goods and free media—and minimized economic reforms.

2000-present

The recovery of economic structures and the continuous growing threat from the masses

In the early 2000s, Cameroon was slowly recovering from the economic crisis [74]. Even though the regime of Biya carried out some privatization measures, many companies are still under state control [8]. The fact that so many companies are state-owned holds back economic competition in Cameroon [74]. Moreover, The Transformation Index BTI [8] that focuses on analyzing the transformation process towards democracies and market economies, even claims that the pace of privatization of parastatals has slowed down over the last couple of years. Meanwhile, the government is increasingly investing in major projects such as mining and infrastructural development that could potentially be more dependent on human capital [8]. However, in reality these investments will not change much if there are no simultaneous, specific investments in human capital [8]. As pointed out by the World Bank [73], the government is focusing more on a machine-intensive

economy in its investments rather than a labor-intensive economy. This would not guarantee protection for job creation [8] and it decreases the extent to which Biya is dependent on human capital—hence productive economic activity—for his revenues.

In terms of perceived threat, the regime of Biya continuously has to deal with the opposition stemming from the SDF and other smaller opposition parties. Moreover, protests from the masses have become the rule rather than the exception. At the same time, Biya is still heavily dependent on the clientelist networks that ensure the support of the ruling elite. Thus, as was the case in the previous timeframe, the regime of Paul Biya needs to deal with both the threat stemming from within the regime as well as the threat coming from the masses and the opposition parties. In sum, this time period is characterized by increased financial support to Biya's regime and major investments in a machine-intensive economy. In light of the analytical framework, this signifies an economic structure predominantly characterized by free resources. The economic investments taken by the regime only seem to decrease Biya's dependency on the economic structure of productive economic activity and hence, the cooperation of the people.

Strategies: Continuous co-optation, new investments and repression of the masses

From 2000 onwards, political unrest continued. In May 2000, the regime set up an anti-corruption organ named the National Anti-Corruption Observatory [19, 24]. Aiming to check on political corruption and serving mainly as an observatory organ, the institution lacked powers to prosecute [19]. Moreover, the institution was linked to the office of Biya and its independency was therefore disputed. In 2006, the quasi-public National Anti-Corruption Committee (CONAC) was set up, making anti-corruption an official priority [8, 19]. This was followed by the arrests of some corrupt ministers [8]. However, any further serious actions in this regard, seemed to fail. According to BTI [8], this can be explained by the fact that this policy seemed to be merely the result of an attempt to retain credibility for international donors with the ultimate aim of continuing the flow of financial aid. The arrests of the corrupt ministers as a strategy of repression directed towards the ruling elite seems to have just been a way to ensure the continuous flow of revenues. When the elections of 2004 were coming up, President Biya also limited the freedom of press [25]. Leading up to the elections, several TV and radio stations had been shut down [25]. In the end, these elections were characterized by immense flaws and were won by CPDM.

In addition, economically, the country has been far from stable. The government invested in a shared pipeline with Chad under the support of the World Bank [25]. When this oil entered international markets in 2003, it was expected to boost government revenues [25]. However, the minor economic recovery soon stagnated and over the course of 2004–2008 there was a global rise in food prices [4, 8]. The masses were, again, affected by economic instability and Biya had to deal with growing discontent among the urban population [4]. Even though he initially tried to minimize this threat by an appeasing strategy, namely reducing the prices of commonly used goods, such as oil, the protests intensified [4]. This intensification was related to the fact that Biya wanted to change a constitutional amendment [4, 26] that would ensure he could run for the presidency again during the next presidential elections in 2011 [26]. However, during these protests, the regime of Biya clearly underestimated the new generations of young Cameroonians that were using new methods of communication, such as social

media, through which information was effectively distributed among the masses [4]. In the end, the protests achieved little but damage and casualties as the economic situation remained the same and the amendment was accepted by the National Assembly [4].

After he underestimated the influence of social media in the protests, Paul Biya took measures to minimize the threat this would pose to his regime. In 2015, this resulted in regular shutdowns of the internet in the Anglophone areas as well as a national anti-social media campaign [8]. Biya thus chose the strategy of repression, targeting the use of communication goods. This shows how Biya used the strategy of repression to control the masses. The fact that Biya could use this strategy at a time when there was major discontent among the masses indicates that he did not rely on them for his economic revenues. Rather, the proposed theoretical framework expects he felt secure because of the free resources at his disposal.

Up until this point, the state still seems to regulate the market heavily. According to the World Bank [74], more competition would increase the productivity of the domestic economy and could improve the economic situation within the country. However, since there are still many parastatals that are important to the clientelist network of Biya's regime, domestic competition and the accompanied economic development seems to be lacking [74]. Recently, there have been major economic investments made by the government, such as new mining projects and infrastructure [8, 58]. The regime's justification for these major investments is that these should form a supplementary revenue as a backup for when the oil revenues would shrink [58] so that economic development would continue, and poverty would decrease. However, Biya's regime thus far has not shown any intention to implement policies that are expected to lead to political or economic transformation and benefit the masses [8]. Instead, the government seems to be more concerned with maintaining the status quo on which the extensive alliances Biya built around him relies [8]. Nting [58] confirms this by arguing that it is unlikely that these investments will result in economic development since its primary goal seems to be the provision of financial resources to the regime in order to buy off the elite. Another benefit of the investments for the regime is that it makes them less dependent on taxes from local businesses [58]. This will, in times of economic repression, prevent the regime from needing to increase these taxes which would in turn lead to more discontent among the masses and more support for the opposition [58]. Seemingly, the investments are all taken in light of Biya's own political gain, as is supported by the following quote of BTI ([8], p. 27):

"In Cameroon as in other countries, the use of resources follows exclusively a political logic in which resources serve the political purpose of ensuring regime stability. While pockets of administrative efficiency certainly exist, the overall picture is one of inefficiency and corruption. The more than 120 state-owned enterprises are a case in point. They are wasteful organizations that serve political purposes rather than public, let alone economic purposes"

In the last couple of years, Biya's regime chose a path in which clientelism through rent-seeking practices has been maintained by an increased dependency on free resources. The investments that are currently made by the government seem to be empty gestures that are implemented with the underlying objective of regime survival instead of offering a sustainable development trajectory that benefits the local community [58].

Since the regime experiences pressure from the international community for economic reforms, the shift from labour-intensive to machine-intensive production as well as the growing exploitation of natural resources, will give Biya relatively little to fear in terms of financial revenues. In this way, he secures the taxes and therewith the means to co-opt the extensive clientelist network he needs to stay in power [58]. Meanwhile, part of the masses continuously falls prey to the repressive attitude of Biya, who wants to limit his reliance on the population.

Reflecting on Biya's strategies

The proposed analytical framework starts with the dictator himself who receives financial revenues from free resources and/or productive economic activity. Depending on which economic structure is more significant, he will decide on strategies to either appease or repress the masses and the ruling elite—the two groups on which the stability of a dictatorial regime is dependent. The analytical framework indicates that a situation in which a dictator is predominantly dependent on free resources will leave him with a more stable but more power-hungry elite and less reliance on the cooperation of the masses. Subsequently, the strategies he implements are those that focus on the repression of the masses while appeasing the elite. He will, in this scenario, be more likely to block economic development because this will be unbeneficial to his financial revenues. In the alternative scenario, in which the dictator relies more on productive economic activity for his revenues, there is likely to be less stability among the elite and a greater dependency on the cooperation of the masses. Consequently, the framework proposes that in this situation, a dictator has a stronger tendency to fall back on appeasing strategies towards the masses and mostly repressive strategies towards the elite. Moreover, he will be more likely to encourage economic development because this will increase the welfare and satisfaction of the masses and in turn, therefore, have a positive effect on the economic productivity and his financial revenues.

Using this analytical framework to analyze the case study of Paul Biya in Cameroon, it seems the economic structures played a dominant role in determining the strategies Biya used to stay in power. Throughout the years, Biya seems to have become more reliant on free resources for the co-optation of the elite. At the same time, he increasingly implemented repressive strategies towards the masses.

This is in line with our theoretical framework and the previously mentioned situation in Sierra Leone and Argentina. In Argentina, the industrial park formed a breeding place for opposition and was therefore closed. In Sierra Leone, internet restrictions were preventing the population from getting to know about the actual conduct of the government. This is similar to strategies implemented by Biya in Cameroon where the deprivation of communication goods—e.g. internet shutdowns—assured the masses would not form a credible threat to the regime. In such a situation, where free resources become more important, a dictator has a stronger tendency to block economic change.

The comparison with the situation in Sierra Leone is interesting in that respect. Both countries have an economy that is for a great part characterized by free resources—among which is oil. The government revenues that are obtained from these resources are in both countries used to appease the most powerful individuals and are therefore of great importance to the regime stability of the incumbent. Furthermore, Sierra Leone as well as Cameroon have financial support from international donors. Just as the Sierra

Leone government did, Biya implemented some economic reforms—e.g. the privatization of the parastatals. In both cases, however, these reforms seemed to be supported by the underlying goal of satisfying international donors and therefore assuring continued financial aid. Moreover, in both cases, these reforms lacked in transparency which made it possible for the regimes to continue corruptive practices. Overall these states appear to be reluctant to further economic development, with the ultimate idea that this would hamper their position in power.

While the case study demonstrates the usefulness of the proposed theoretical framework and the many similarities with the previously discussed examples from the other countries, the case study of Biya also demonstrates the difficulty of applying the analytical framework as a one-size-fits-all model to a particular regime. Cameroon is a country in which both economic structures are present. This puts Biya in the fortunate position of having some leeway in the strategies he adopts to minimize the threat from the elite and the masses. Biya has proven to be a master in using these two economic structures, to continue to appease the elite and repress the masses. As the case of Cameroon demonstrates, even developed institutions and nations when functioning as sponsors can unwittingly play an important role in prolonging the longevity of dictatorial regimes.

Conclusion

The relationship between dictatorial regime longevity and economic dynamics has been relatively underexplored in the current academic debate. This is remarkable given the need to understand the survival of dictatorial regimes in which international crimes are more likely to occur. To fill this gap in the literature, we analyzed *how dictators use the economic dynamics in their country to increase the longevity of their dictatorial regime* through a literature review with a case study of Cameroon.

The proposed analytical framework emphasized the importance of three inter-related components for the decision of the dictator whether or not economic development would be in his best interest. The first decisive factor is the economic structure of the country; whether the country relies predominantly on free economic resources or productive economic activity. The second important element is the extent to which the masses form a threat. It was argued this was more likely the case in countries where productive economic activity dominated. The third important element is the threat stemming from the elite which tends to be higher when the economy relies predominantly on free resources. These elements then determine whether the dictator will decide to appease or repress these groups and ultimately whether the dictator sees economic development as beneficial to his continued rule. Ultimately, we argued dictators would be more inclined to halt economic development when he relies more on free resources. Analyzing this from a political economy approach, these resources allow for an environment of neopatrimonialism in which clientelist relationships create a loyal support base on the side of the elite. This, in its turn, decreases the dependency of the dictator on the cooperation of the masses and therefore results in a more repressive attitude towards them. The framework predicts that in the alternative scenario of productive economic activity, a dictator obtains his financial resources mainly from labor-intensive sectors for which the cooperation of the masses is required. This

results in more appeasing strategies towards the masses and an encouraging attitude regarding economic development.

The case study showed that Paul Biya indeed navigated the threats stemming from these groups in the three timeframes we analyzed and that the strategies seemed to be dependent on the structure of the economy. However, analyzing one particular case study in-depth also highlights the simplicity of theoretical models such as these since both economic structures are present in Cameroon. While this complicated the analysis, it nevertheless proved to be useful in understanding how dictators can take advantage of these economic structures and use them to their advantage.

The extent to which the findings of this research are relevant to other regimes is dependent on the ‘particularizability’ of the case study of Cameroon. To start with, as the findings of this case study have shown, the two economic structures that characterize Cameroon have had an important influence on the decision-making process of Biya. Even though many other countries have two economic structures [8], the fact that Biya had access to the free resource of financial aid—which was relatively unchanged by the economic crisis—can be seen as a particular of this regime. Furthermore, Cameroon has, ever since its independence, been struggling with the ethnolinguistic division that has formed a trigger for political tensions. The strive for independence in the Anglophone region has put pressure on Biya’s regime and the decisions he has made regarding survival strategies. Moreover, assuring the support of his ethnic group within the regime has created strong tensions between other ethnic groups among the elite. Adapting his survival strategies to these tensions has been inevitable to maintain regime stability. Even though other dictatorial regimes might also have to deal with divided societies, the role this plays in a dictator’s decision-making process is country dependent. Lastly, this study shows how Cameroon has suffered from economic instability. This is not something that is unique to the case of Cameroon, albeit it has played a significant role in the way in which the analytical model helped understanding the strategies that Biya used. At the same time, the country seems to have been relatively untouched by other external shocks, such as interstate conflicts. Even though Biya recently needed to deal with attacks from extremist group Boko Haram [30], the relatively peaceful relationship of the country with other States has given the president the chance to predominantly focus on intrastate political and economic dynamics. These three examples are, although non-exhaustive, factors that seem to have played an important role in the findings of this case study. Ultimately, examining whether the findings of this case study are relevant to other regimes should be determined on a case by case basis.

To conclude, the proposed analytical framework contributes to the understanding of how dictators can use economic strategies to increase the longevity of their regime. Even though the analytical framework is an idealized version of reality in which other relevant factors have been disregarded, it nevertheless has proven to be useful in understanding the relationship between economic dynamics and a dictator’s choices for survival strategies. Therefore, what might be the most important lesson learned from this article, is that there is a strong interrelation between the economic structures of a state, the strategies of regime survival used by the dictator, and the longevity of dictatorial regimes.

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