

Gathering storm clouds

Political and economic uncertainty in Central Africa

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The Central African region is facing remarkable pressure along several fronts. The recent downturn in global commodity prices is exacerbating an already fragile fiscal situation in the region. Moreover, rapid population growth is accentuating the challenges related to poor service delivery, while the uncertainty around future political transitions lends itself to a pessimistic outlook. Although the region faces serious problems, interconnected regional and country-specific policy approaches provide the best opportunity for peace and prosperity in the region.

Key points

- ▶ Redress the thorny issue of state capture and pseudo-democratic governance by sclerotic regimes
- ▶ Promote regional economic complementarity
- ▶ Diversify economies through agricultural and environmental investment
- ▶ Build connected regional transport infrastructure
- ▶ Tie investments in infrastructure to social goods
- ▶ Capitalise on the region's women and youth population
- ▶ Promote innovative evidence-based policymaking

Introduction

The decline in commodity prices since 2014 has triggered an economic crisis in Central Africa. It has exposed existing structural contradictions and the already frail sociopolitical fault lines of the petro-dependent economies of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC). The immediate outlook for the regional economy is bleak. With economic growth averaging 0.6% in 2016, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) expects only meagre improvement to 1% in 2017. Equatorial Guinea was the hardest hit economy, shrinking by 10% last year. Chad and the Republic of Congo also experienced negative economic growth in 2016. Only the Central African Republic (CAR) and Cameroon expect to experience growth of more than 4% per year in the near future.²

Figure 1: Central/West African regions



Table 1: Basic country information³

Country (A–Z)	Population (millions)	President	In power since
Cameroon	23.4	Paul Biya	1982
CAR	4.6	Faustin-Archange Touadera	2016
Chad	14.6	Idriss Deby	1990
Congo, Republic of	5.1	Denis Sassou Nguesso	1979 ⁴
Equatorial Guinea	1.2	Teodoro Obiang Nguema	1979
Gabon	1.9	Ali Bongo	2009 ⁵

To absorb shocks resulting from the decline in public revenue triggered by the collapse of commodity prices, these countries have lined up before the IMF for bailout packages broadly negotiated under the Extended Credit Facility.⁶ However, a macroeconomic solution alone cannot resolve the underlying political dimension of the challenges they face.

This report's focus on the six CEMAC countries is deliberate given their historical trajectories and geographical proximity. It explicitly avoids a forensic institutional evaluation of either CEMAC or the larger Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS),⁷ despite acknowledging the central role that both organisations ought to play in promoting regional integration and setting a human development-focused policy agenda that yields security dividends.

The CEMAC countries all evidence a neo-patrimonial governance system that pays scant attention to the promotion of collective human development

In-depth country analysis is necessary, but regions are also objects of analysis in themselves. Regional analyses can provide a broader context for understanding the interconnected nature of today's world and the outcomes of processes affecting neighbouring countries.

While the report does take a brief detour to explore some country-level indicators, the predominant focus is on the trajectory of the region and situating that within an African context. A detailed examination of the specific characteristics of member states would be necessary to inform policy in those countries, but such an exhaustive analysis is beyond the scope of this report.

This report largely takes CEMAC as its unit of analysis and aims to frame the complex political dynamics in the region within the context of structural changes occurring across demographic, social and economic systems. In general, and despite their stark differences, the CEMAC countries all evidence a neo-patrimonial governance system that pays scant attention to the promotion of collective human development.

Against this backdrop the key question is, can the Central African region dissipate the gathering storm

clouds? This report combines an analysis of current political and socioeconomic patterns with data and forecasts from the International Futures (IFs) system – developed and housed at the Frederick S Pardee Center for International Futures at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies at the University of Denver – to explore key development trends up to 2040 and place those prevailing trends within the broader context of the social and political realities of the CEMAC countries.⁸

Box 1: International Futures (IFs)

IFs is a long-term, integrated assessment model that leverages historical data (over 4 000 series) to map trends and forecast hundreds of variables for 186 countries from 2015 to 2100. There are three primary avenues for analysis in IFs: historical exploration (how systems have developed thus far), Current Path analysis (where systems seem to be heading given current policies and environmental conditions) and alternative scenario development (exploring 'if, then' statements about the future). IFs offers empirically grounded, futures-oriented policy analysis that helps frame uncertainty around the development trajectories of countries (or groups of countries) across a number of development systems. The tool also helps users think more systematically about potential futures and development targets, in order to advance more holistic solutions to Africa's human security challenges.

Comparative regional outlook

According to the African Development Bank, recent governance trends in Africa show a growing demand for better economic opportunities and more accountability with respect to public policy.⁹ Those results are largely confirmed by the most recent Afrobarometer survey, which finds that roughly three-fourths of respondents believe that their members of Parliament (MPs) and councillors 'never' or 'only sometimes' listen to their constituents, and that fewer than half of Africans approve of the job performance of their MPs or councillors.¹⁰ Furthermore, in 2016 governments' inability to address unemployment was the most commonly cited issue among survey respondents.¹¹

However, this is a general picture, and viewing trends at the continental level may obscure the particular challenges of governance arrangements that shape participation, access, exclusion and service delivery at the regional and national levels. Table 2 lists the average scores for regime type (Polity IV), Civil and Political freedom (Freedom House) and Government Effectiveness (World Bank), as well as those of the Corruption Perception Index (Transparency International) and the Index of African Governance (Mo Ibrahim Foundation) for various African regions, along with the average for the continent and the world.¹² Table 2 clearly shows that poor governance is a prominent issue in the CEMAC region.

Resistance to lowering barriers to more responsive and effective governance (often from the highest levels) and apathy from public officials towards effectively operationalising regional integration have contributed to the gathering storm clouds over the CEMAC region. Such public policy choices have implications for sustainable economic recovery, long-term human development, collective security and stability at both national and regional levels.

At the same time, oppositional battle lines have hardened in a region where regimes have devised creative strategies to retain their hold on power. The youngest regime in the region – besides the CAR, which experienced a tumultuous post-war transition

last year – is Chad, where the current regime has been in power for 27 years. The Bongo family have held on to power in Gabon since 1967. In Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon and the Republic of Congo the same presidents have been in power for 38, 35 and 33 non-consecutive years, respectively.

Regimes have devised creative strategies to retain their hold on power

Benchmarking against the Current Path forecast within IFs helps frame the current political, security and economic realities in Central Africa within the broader structural changes unfolding throughout the region in areas such as demography, social services and core infrastructure. By combining this macro-level analysis with regional expertise, the report provides a more comprehensive understanding of the types of collective responses most likely to effectively enhance human security in Central Africa. To further contextualise this analysis, the CEMAC countries will be measured against the countries in the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU).¹³

WAEMU was selected because it shares a colonial history with the CEMAC countries, although over the past decade WEAMU countries (with the exception of Togo) have made a resolute shift toward actualising

Table 2: Various measures of governance in different regions of Africa relative to the average for Africa and the world¹⁴

Region	Regime type (-10 to +10)	Civil and Political freedom (0 to 14)	Government Effectiveness (0 to 5)	Corruption (0 to 10)	Ibrahim Governance Index (0 to 1)
CEMAC	-3.1	3.6	1.3	2.3	0.40
WAEMU	4.2	8.5	1.6	2.6	0.44
SADC	4.3	8.0	2.0	3.6	0.46
EAC	2.2	7.1	1.7	2.8	0.45
ECOWAS	4.4	8.0	1.6	2.9	0.46
Africa	2.1	6.6	1.7	3.0	0.45
World	3.2	8.1	2.4	4.0	N/A

Note: Each of these measures has been scaled, so that a higher score indicates better performance.

Source: Polity IV, Freedom House, World Bank, Transparency International and the Mo Ibrahim Foundation.

democratic governance in sync with the broader Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) region. There is also an economic congruity, as the currencies of both the WAEMU and the CEMAC regions (the FCFA) are pegged to the euro through a fixed exchange rate mechanism. Introducing an inter-regional comparison helps to highlight how those countries are evolving in different ways, and underscores the need to focus on sustainable solutions to the region's interconnected crises in governance, underdevelopment, economic management and deeper regional integration and cooperation.

Widely seen as challenges, Africa's most discussed trends could be opportunities if governments made the right investments. The optimistic interpretation of the demographic transition occurring in CEMAC today is that the region could have a very large workforce in the coming decades. However, if countries in the region fail to make the necessary investments in human capital, basic infrastructure and social services, then that large population could be a catalyst for instability (explained in more detail in following sections).¹⁵

This new round of borrowing will, in time, require greater fiscal prudence, but will not reverse the human development and security challenges facing the region overnight

The total population of the CEMAC region in 2017 is approximately 51 million inhabitants. These countries' oil production for 2016 was estimated at approximately 950 000 b/d¹⁶ cumulatively, with the CAR the only country in the region not registering any oil production last year. The decline in crude oil prices has hit this region particularly hard.

As a result of poor economic management, all CEMAC countries had to apply for and abide by various structural adjustment programmes implemented by the IMF in the late 1980s. With the exception of Gabon and Equatorial Guinea – which experienced an oil-induced growth spurt in the late 1990s – they also all subsequently qualified for debt relief under the HIPC initiative (Heavily Indebted Poor Countries) and all went through to completion point.¹⁷ However, the recent combination of loose macroeconomic policies, continued dependence on natural resource rents and price shocks has sent them back to seek IMF-financed relief within the Extended Credit Facility framework. This new round of borrowing will, in time, require greater fiscal prudence, but will not reverse the human development and security challenges facing the region overnight.

Table 3 shows that while the contribution of oil revenue to gross domestic product (GDP) has decreased for most of the CEMAC countries, and has shrunk compared to levels in 1991 (apart from Equatorial Guinea), these countries still remain highly dependent on primary commodities and natural resources. In fact, the CEMAC countries remain heavily dependent on primary commodities, in particular energy.

±51 million

THE TOTAL POPULATION
OF THE CEMAC REGION
IN 2017

Table 3: Contribution of natural resources to economy

Country (A–Z)	GDP per capita 2015 (US\$)	Oil (% GDP) 1991	Oil (% GDP) 2015	Primary commodity dependence (% GDP) 2015
Cameroon	1 244	5.3	1.4	31.8
CAR	348	0.0	0.0	47.7
Chad	777	N/A	6.8	45.9
Congo, Republic of	1 712	24.3	18.1	33.6
Equatorial Guinea	10 347	0.4	14.7	38.5
Gabon	7 388	23.1	9.9	26.6

Source: World Bank World Development Indicators.

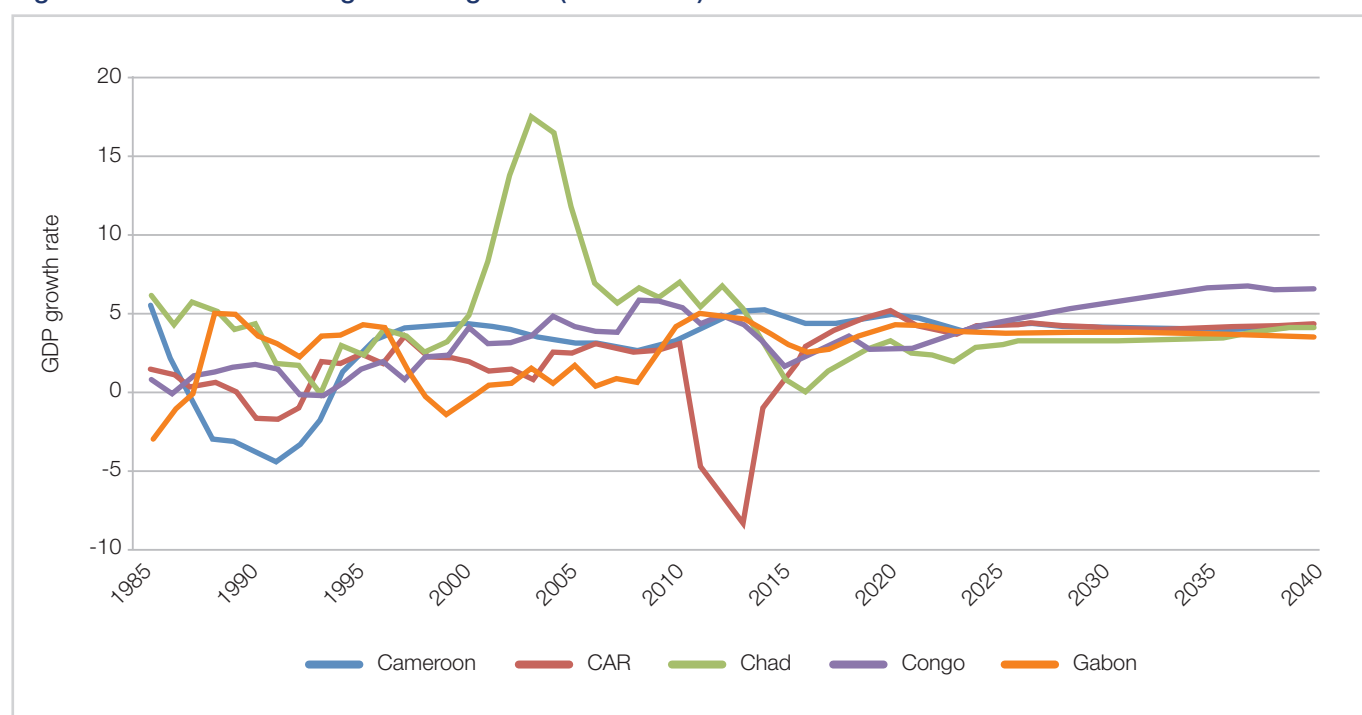
While the agricultural sector in CEMAC countries is significantly larger than the African average (by about 18%), their energy sector is nearly 75% larger than the continental average. This leaves those states and their citizens exposed to the effects of the resource curse (explained in more detail below) and vulnerable to future commodity price downturns with their concomitant effects on economic growth, governance and security.

Figure 2 shows the historical trajectory of economic growth in individual countries in the region (excluding

Equatorial Guinea) from 1985, as well as a forecast until 2040. As a region, CEMAC is forecast to grow by 3.9% per year (on average) between 2017 and 2040.

There is a bit of variance between countries – the Republic of Congo is forecast to grow most rapidly (5.1% per year) and Equatorial Guinea the slowest (1.7% per year) – but the rest of the countries in the region are forecast to remain within a fairly narrow band of about 4% growth per year to 2040.

Figure 2: Central African region GDP growth (1985–2040)¹⁸



Source: IFs v. 7.31 initialised from IMF data.

While important, economic growth is a necessary but insufficient condition for poverty alleviation and improved human development on the continent in general, and in the region in particular. Economic growth should absolutely be pursued, but CEMAC states must also be aware that there are structural aspects to their economies that will complicate efforts to stimulate inclusive growth and potentially imperil stability. Along with extending basic services (to be covered in a later section), governments must take steps to diversify their economies away from dependence on the primary sector and make strategic investments in human capital that equip their populations for a more dynamic economy.

Alongside a history of conflict and chronic underdevelopment, the CEMAC countries also suffer from some of the most severe inequality on the continent

Moreover, alongside a history of conflict and chronic underdevelopment, the CEMAC countries also suffer from some of the most severe inequality on the continent. With an average Gini score of about 0.44 (out of 1), the CEMAC region has the second highest levels of inequality of any African region (after Southern Africa at 0.52). Furthermore, the CAR (0.57) and Equatorial Guinea (0.52) are among the 15 most unequal states in the world, at 5th and 12th respectively. To understand the links between conflict and social stability, it is important to account for factors that produce and underpin inequality and how or whether they provide a basis for social mobilisation and possibly violence.¹⁹

Changing demographics

Between now and 2040 the population of the CEMAC region will increase by roughly 75%, from about 51 million people in 2016 to more than 90 million in 2040. The total population of the WEAMU was 116.7 million people in 2016. This population growth is fuelled by the region's persistently high fertility rates, combined with increasing life expectancy.

In 2015 total fertility rates in CEMAC countries (5.1 births per woman) were notably higher than the African average (4.6 births per woman). According to IFs, these are forecast to remain so until 2040. Moreover, while fertility rates in CEMAC countries are currently lower than in the WAEMU comparison group (5.6 births per woman in 2015), fertility rates are forecast to decline much more rapidly in the latter group.

Figure 3 shows fertility rates in CEMAC, WAEMU and African countries from 1955 to 2040 and highlights the relative stagnation of fertility rates in CEMAC countries compared to its WAEMU reference group. Figure 3 illustrates the decades of increasing fertility in CEMAC and WAEMU countries before a steady decline beginning around 1980.

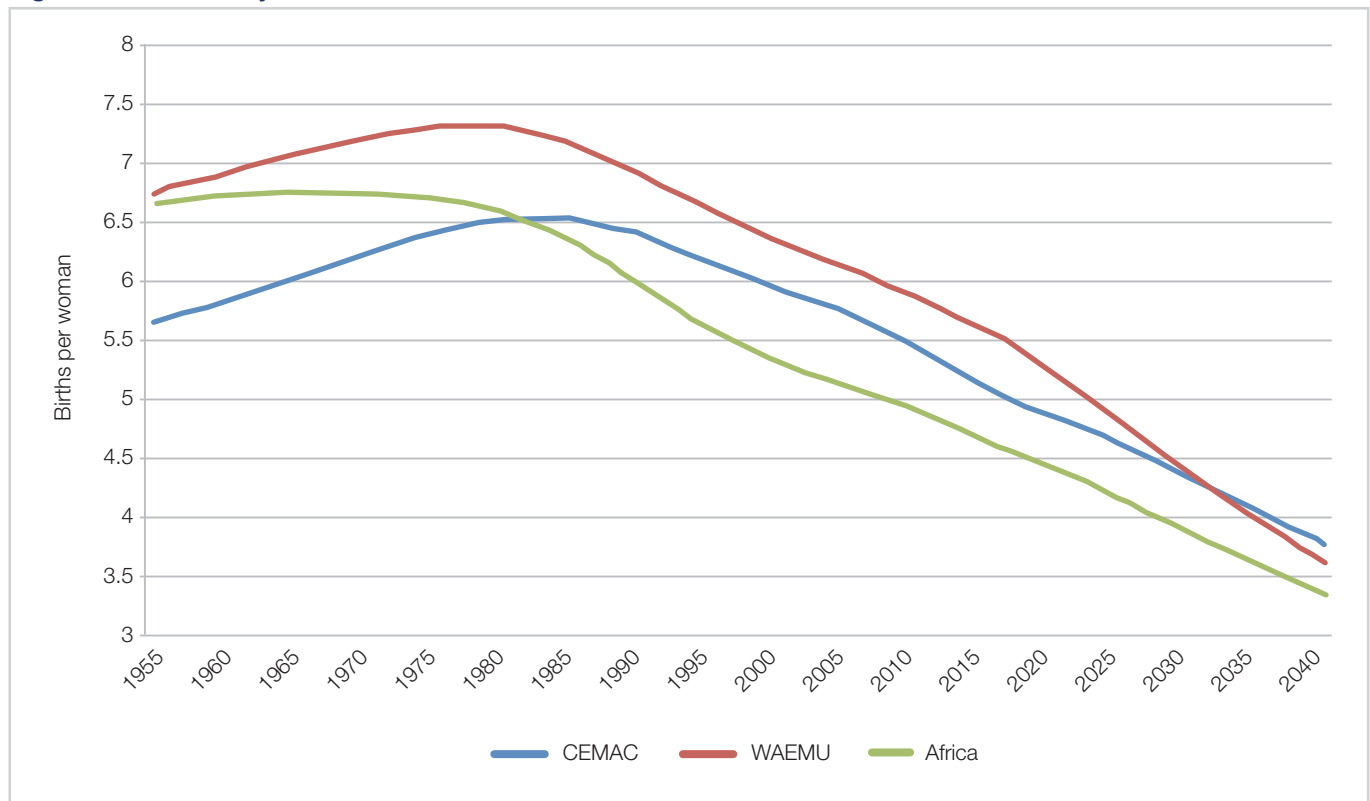
This divergence in fertility rates is driven by two distinct factors. The first is that the use of contraceptives is forecast to accelerate much more rapidly

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Figure 3: Total fertility rates in CEMAC and WAEMU countries from 1955–2040



Source: IFs v. 7.31 initialised from UNPD data.

in WAEMU countries. While the percentage of women using contraceptives in CEMAC countries is about 7 percentage points higher today, that gap is forecast to shrink to about 1 percentage point by 2040.

The second and related factor is that gender parity in education is increasing much more rapidly in WAEMU countries. Gender parity can be considered as a general proxy for equality of access to education and is measured as the ratio of female to male students. As recently as 2013 gender parity in lower secondary education was roughly equal in the two regions, at about 0.8 female students for every one male student.

However, the trend has been diverging and WAEMU countries are forecast to move more rapidly toward an education system where girls and boys have similar levels of access to primary and lower secondary education.²⁰ Lower secondary education in particular has been demonstrated to be a powerful driver of reduced fertility rates and increased economic productivity.²¹

High fertility rates are only part of the equation; the other side is increasing life expectancy. Average life expectancy at birth is forecast to increase by about 13%, from 57

years today to more than 64 in 2040. This increase is above the African average of about 10% over the same time frame. But, average life expectancy in CEMAC countries (64.4 years) is forecast to remain well below the African average (69 years) in 2040, underscoring the magnitude of underdevelopment in the region to date.

Average life expectancy in CEMAC countries is forecast to remain well below the African average in 2040

The challenges posed by this rapid population growth are most evident when viewing the associated pressures on service delivery. With a population that is forecast to increase by 75% over the next 23 years, there will be a significant increase in demand for services from the state. This forecast indicates that the CEMAC countries will have a working age population (aged 15–65) that is more than 90% larger than it is today. This means that those states must create education, infrastructure and employment opportunities for 25 million additional people in 2040.²²

More importantly, this forecast indicates that there will be roughly 34 million people in CEMAC countries without access to improved sanitation facilities, about 26 million people living below US\$1.90 per day, nearly 18 million people without access to piped water and more than 14 million adults without a primary education in 2040. Not only are the absolute figures daunting but they also represent significant increases from 2017 values, as shown in Table 4.

While a large working age population can be an engine for economic growth and increased prosperity, those people must be equipped with the basic infrastructure, education and other services that can prepare them for a quaternary economy. Failing those investments, that same young population could be a force for instability and violence.²³

Population growth is anticipated to accelerate more rapidly than the provision of service delivery

By 2040 CEMAC countries are forecast to expand access to basic services to a greater proportion of their citizens. But, because population growth is anticipated to accelerate more rapidly than the provision of service delivery, the absolute number of people without access to basic services will undoubtedly rise. For instance, while the percentage of stunted individuals is forecast to decline from 20% of the population today to about 18.8% in 2040, the absolute number of stunted people is forecast to increase by more than 7 million over that time period.

This phenomenon is perhaps best illustrated by looking at a forecast of the percentage of people living in extreme poverty relative to the absolute number of people surviving on less than US\$1.90 per day. Figure 4 shows the number of people living in extreme poverty both as a percentage (line) and in millions of people (bars).

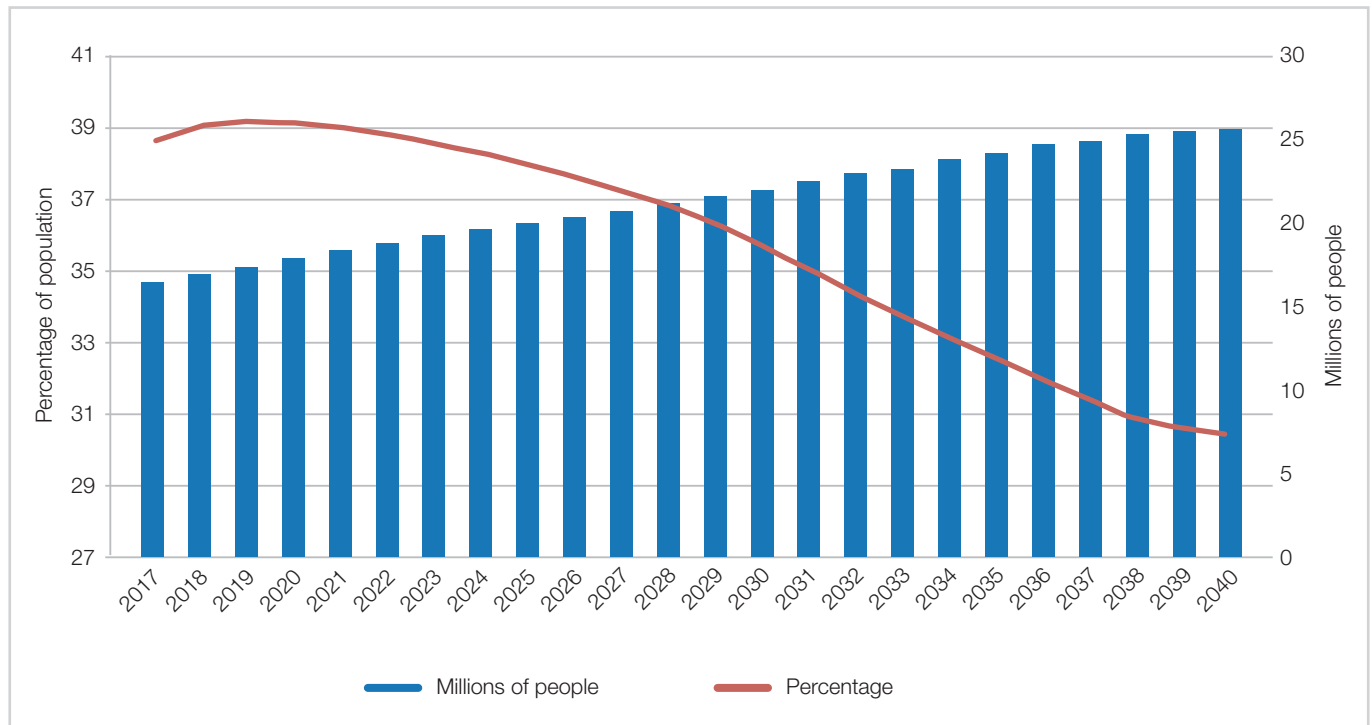
Table 4: Population in CEMAC countries in need of basic services and employment opportunities over time

Indicator (millions of people)	2017	2030	2040	Change from 2017 to 2040
Population without access to piped water	16.3	18.8	17.9	1.6
Undernourished children	1.5	1.6	1.4	0.1
Population without access to improved sanitation	18.4	27.5	34.4	16
Working age population (15–64)	27.9	41	53.5	25.6
Adults without primary education	10.7	13.1	14.3	3.6
Stunted individuals	9.9	13.9	17	7.1
Population living in extreme poverty	16.6	22.2	26	9.4

Note: Red represents an increase in the absolute number of people while green represents a decrease.

Source: IFs v. 7.31 initialised from World Bank, WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Project, FAO, UNPD and UNESCO Institute for Statistics data.

Figure 4: Extreme poverty in millions of people and as a percentage of the total population in the CEMAC region, 2016–2040 (using a five-year moving average)



Source: IFs v. 7.31 initialised from World Bank data.

Despite a reduction in the proportion of people living in poverty from 39% in 2017 to about 30% in 2040, the absolute number of people living in poverty increases by about 10 million (or 50%) – from 16 million people today to more than 25 million in 2040. Although it is notoriously difficult to find reliable estimates of unemployment in these countries, a 2016 report from the IMF concluded that ‘poverty and unemployment remain high, particularly among young people’.²⁴

Another consequence of this rapid population growth is that the CEMAC region is forecast to add nearly 10.5 million additional young people (between the ages of 15 and 29) to a region that already has a significant youth bulge (defined as the proportion of 15–29-year-olds relative to total adult population over the age of 29). Although the size of the youth bulge is forecast to shrink slightly, from about 49% of the adult population today to about 44% in 2040, research suggests that countries with a youth bulge of over 40% are significantly more likely to experience instability.²⁵

This persistently large youth bulge, coupled with rising inequality, unemployment and governance dysfunction, makes for a combustible mix in the long term.²⁶ This

is especially the case for a region with a long history of coups, civil wars and various forms of protest and conflict.

Governance in CEMAC

Except for the western part of bilingual Cameroon and hispanophone Equatorial Guinea, the CEMAC countries share a number of historical similarities, having been collectively governed under the colonial arrangement known as *Afrique équatoriale française*. Like most post-colonial African states, leadership here embarked on a path of bureaucratic and political centralisation with the creation of one-party systems, state-planned economies and the institutionalisation of personalised presidencies.

Despite these historical similarities, CEMAC countries have embarked on differing trajectories since independence. Where political transitions have occurred in the region, they have mainly come through coups d'état. Cameroon is the exception in the region, having never experienced a successful coup d'état.

The first military coup occurred in 1964 in Gabon. It was shortlived as deposed president, Leon Mba was returned to power by French troops, but successful coups followed in the CAR (1966), the Republic of Congo

(1968), Chad (1975), and Equatorial Guinea (1979). However, a recent trend towards dynastic governance, which first emerged in Gabon when Ali Bongo succeeded his deceased father Omar Bongo in 2009, is likely to influence future political transitions as governing regimes seek to perpetuate their hold on power. In Equatorial Guinea Teodorin Obiang Nguema was promoted by his father to the position of first vice-president in June 2016, making him the constitutionally designated successor to the president. Meanwhile, in the Republic of Congo it is widely believed that Denis-Christel Sassou Nguesso, a National Assembly representative for the ruling Congolese Labour Party (PCT) from Oyo, is preparing to succeed his father.

Despite a reduction in the proportion of people living in poverty from 39% to about 30%, the absolute number of people living in poverty increases by about 10 million

In spite of its limited legitimacy, a small political elite in the region has managed to rule for decades, governing along a spectrum that ranges from pure authoritarianism to complex pseudo-democracy. These Central African regimes have proven adept at navigating the demands for political reconfiguration brought about by the 1990s' third wave of democratisation²⁷ and, in spite of the impact of external economic shocks, managed to keep tight control of power. The preferred arrangement has been deeply personalised presidential systems supported by patronage networks sustained mainly through elite bargaining and collusion with traditional rulers.

These ruling coalitions also build quorum-proof majorities in national assemblies to situate their power across legislative institutions. In Cameroon, for example, the ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement controls 148 of the 180 seats in the National Assembly. The Gabonese Democratic Party has 113 of the 120 seats in Gabon; the Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea controls 99 of the 100 seats in Equatorial Guinea; and the Congolese Labour Party has 91 of the 151 seats in the Congolese National Assembly.

The objective of these regimes is to capture and maintain control of all the institutions of the state in order stay in power indefinitely. Inevitably, investing such extensive resources to extend the benefits of the state to a narrow group of constituents occurs at the expense of inclusive political participation and accountable government institutions. This process further entrenches inegalitarian political arrangements and undermines the legitimacy of governments in the region.

Recent political climate

In 2016 hotly contested presidential elections took place against the backdrop of a regional economic crisis in the CAR, Chad, Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon. Except for the CAR's post-conflict transitional elections, voting triggered post-electoral disputes in the other countries. The elections were tainted by opaque election management processes that disenfranchised



DESPITE HISTORICAL SIMILARITIES, CEMAC COUNTRIES HAVE EMBARKED ON DIFFERING TRAJECTORIES SINCE INDEPENDENCE

voters and secured victory for incumbents. These elections also set the stage for dynastic political succession in most of the CEMAC countries.

The CAR's elections marked a further step in the country's transition from war to peace as Faustin-Archange Touadera succeeded the head of the National Transitional Council, Catherine Samba-Panza. In the Republic of Congo, however, after successfully changing the constitution in November 2015,²⁸ allowing himself to run one more time, Denis Sassou Nguesso won re-election in 2016. Since that constitutional referendum, a number of opposition platforms (i.e. coalitions) have boycotted the national dialogue conference in March 2017, at which the participants agreed to increase the number of seats in the National Assembly from 139 to 151. These same opposition groups subsequently boycotted the parliamentary, local and senatorial elections later in the year.

Meanwhile, in the absence of presidential term limits in Gabon, Bongo was re-elected in contested polls against former African Union Commission chairperson Jean Ping. The post-election crisis that has ensued in Gabon, together with the economic decline, has made it impossible to hold the parliamentary elections scheduled to take place in 2017.

High commodity prices can further incentivise rogue actors to capture the state, which now appears more valuable

Teodoro Obiang Nguema won handily in Equatorial Guinea after the main Democratic Opposition Group boycotted the elections; as did Idriss Deby – who was elected to a fifth term in Chad – after shutting down Internet and other telecommunications services on election day. Little has changed politically in the region in recent decades and, as a result, many countries currently have to deal with exacerbated political crises in the face of decidedly unfavourable economic headwinds.

Cameroon, the only country in the region due to hold presidential elections later in 2018, is also trapped in identity-based violence, while the incumbent, Paul Biya, who has been in power for 35 years, is widely expected to stand for re-election.

Resistance and repression

In a region with some of the most oppressive regimes in sub-Saharan Africa, according to Freedom in the World scores by Freedom House,²⁹ it was no surprise that the 2016 elections led to sustained social and political contestation. In Gabon the opposition continues to contest the legitimacy of the electoral process, with some opposition groups boycotting a national dialogue from March to May 2017, organised by the government to discuss policies aimed at avoiding future post-election violence.

Immediately after the presidential results in the Republic of Congo were announced, the government launched military offensives against the Ninja



CAMEROON IS THE ONLY COUNTRY IN THE REGION DUE TO HOLD PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS LATER IN 2018

militia in the Pool region in response to an attack on government facilities in Brazzaville's southern districts. The military offensive continues, to date, and as of August 2017 had resulted in about 81 000 internally displaced persons.³⁰ Meanwhile, the elections in the CAR have failed to stabilise the country as militias continue to control over 70% of the territory.³¹ Even Chad has seen protest movements led by student unions on campuses and labour unions in the public space. The only exception in the region is Equatorial Guinea, where extreme repression has left little space for post-election political competition.³²

Individuals and communities contesting regimes focused exclusively on their own survival have been led by an array of actors demanding a reconfiguration of the political and economic space. On one side, protesters have been resilient in their demands for systemic change. On the other side, states have used their coercive capacity to great effect – despite declining economic fortunes. This confrontation has resulted in the escalation of different forms of violent protest and incrementally more repressive state responses.

Resource dependence

The complex dynamics that drive such intense competition for control of the state in CEMAC countries are compounded by regional countries' high degree of reliance on primary commodities. Countries that rely on primary commodities for revenue are prone to what has been termed 'the resource curse'.³³ The resource curse has been most prominently associated with (often) high-value, point-source commodities such as diamonds, oil and illicit drugs, but has also been linked to less valuable substances such as coffee, cocoa and other plantation crops.³⁴ The resource curse can have negative implications for currency appreciation in the form of 'Dutch disease', but in African states the dangers are primarily political.³⁵

The resource curse phenomenon exists when the presence of contestable resources 'heightens competition for control of the state' and undermines the development of good governance and strong institutions by an 'implicit reliance on extraction in economic life'.³⁶ In other words, states with an abundant supply of easily extractable resources do not need to invest in developing a social contract with their citizens because there is, presumably, a never-ending supply

of revenue. This discourages accountability, fuels large-scale corruption and largely dispenses with the need to expand the domestic tax base. Resource rents thus provide ruling elites with a 'gift' that they use to buy political allegiance.

While this mechanism may suffice in times of plenty, when commodity prices decline sharply, as happened with petrol prices in 2014, these states become suddenly and unexpectedly strapped for cash. Such moments expose the fragility of resource-based political patronage systems and can compel regimes to use violence in the absence of a sufficient fiduciary incentive.

Violence sustained and deployed through cross-border networks further imperils state and human security

There is also a flip side to this coin. Whereas commodity downturns may complicate governance in states with already low levels of capacity, high commodity prices can further incentivise rogue actors to capture the state, which now appears more valuable. During commodity booms 'high prices facilitate repression, incentivise contestation of political control, and make it easier to finance insurgency'.³⁷ These competing pressures make states – aware of the cyclical nature of commodity price movements – more prone to maintain a tight grip on political power and less likely to address public corruption.

Other non-state actors

These struggles coexist with other, more potent, national security threats. Violence sustained and deployed through cross-border networks by organised non-state actors further imperils state and human security. Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin has triggered a humanitarian emergency in the peripheral regions of Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon. Factionalised ex-Seleka and anti-balaka in the CAR continue to alter the political economy of violence and create a complex regional conflict system linking Chad, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Congo. Although these groups differ in origin, structure and operation, they exist across borders in peripheral regions of states where the benefits of challenging the centralised state's authority are relatively high.

These cross-border security threats displace populations and amplify existing structural drivers of instability. Since they largely occur in the peripheral regions of states that already suffer from relatively poor service delivery – stemming from low levels of government capacity in rural areas – the intervention cost at the national (or transnational) level is extremely high. The crises in the Lake Chad Basin area and in the CAR have resulted in the displacement of over 3.4 million people, directly affecting most countries in the region except for Gabon and Equatorial Guinea.

Governance challenges within states intertwine with regional security threats to exacerbate structural violence and deepen existing conflicts that appear to defy resolution. Empirically understanding how these tenuous political and economic dynamics interact with human and social development priorities should provide the basis for innovative and forward-looking policy planning and implementation.

Governance challenges

Central Africa currently has some of the longest-serving and oldest African presidents, so some kind of turnover (i.e. change in leadership) is inevitable in the next 10 to 15 years. Given the history of personalised presidential governance, political transitions will be clouded by uncertainties regardless of how they occur. Whether they take place through violence or the ballot box, intense power struggles – between personalities, among political parties and within ruling parties – are likely to characterise political transitions in the region. Such succession-related challenges will require fundamental political, economic and social adjustment in the short term, if the region is to avoid being trapped in a continuous cycle of violence and underdevelopment.

All CEMAC countries are likely to remain in the mixed-regime or anocratic space and under the democratic threshold until 2040, with the associated consequences

The institutional and socio-political arrangements that have hitherto sustained regime durability have often come at the expense of transparency and accountability, undermining constitutionalism and political participation and rendering political transitions unpredictable. A framework for understanding the demographic, economic and social pressures that will accompany the political developments of the coming years and decades will help policymakers and practitioners be better prepared for the challenges that lie ahead.

Post-Cold War politics

The Central African region was noticeably affected by the post-Cold War wave of political competition that swept across the continent. By 1996 all the hitherto single-party CEMAC states had technically adopted multiparty constitutions and ostensibly subscribed to democratic norms. Figure 5 shows the abrupt transition to nominal democracy experienced in CEMAC countries in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Although democratic transitions



AFTER ALMOST THREE DECADES OF 'DEMOCRACY', THE REGION HAS SEEN ONLY TWO DEMOCRATIC TRANSFERS OF POWER

are not inherently problematic, research suggests that mixed regime types (or anocracies) are typically more unstable than either full democracies or autocracies.³⁸

Using data from the Center for System Peace's (CSP) Polity IV project, Figure 5 employs institutional characteristics to classify regimes on a spectrum that ranges from -10 (hereditary monarchies) to +10 (fully democratic states).³⁹ Countries ranked between -10 and -6 are considered autocracies, countries ranked +6 or higher are classified as democracies, and anything in the middle is characterised as a mixed regime or anocracy.

Research from the CSP suggests that anocratic states are about six times as likely as democratic states to experience a major regime change within any given five-year period.⁴⁰

Paradoxically, the CEMAC countries have managed to avoid many of the problematic dynamics inherent to mixed regimes by remaining below the quasi-democratic threshold and at the authoritarian end of the spectrum. CEMAC countries adopted the trappings of democracy while denying citizens the real choices that come with it. Ruling parties exploit incumbency to deny the opposition any chance of winning power during purported multiparty elections. After almost three decades of 'democracy', the

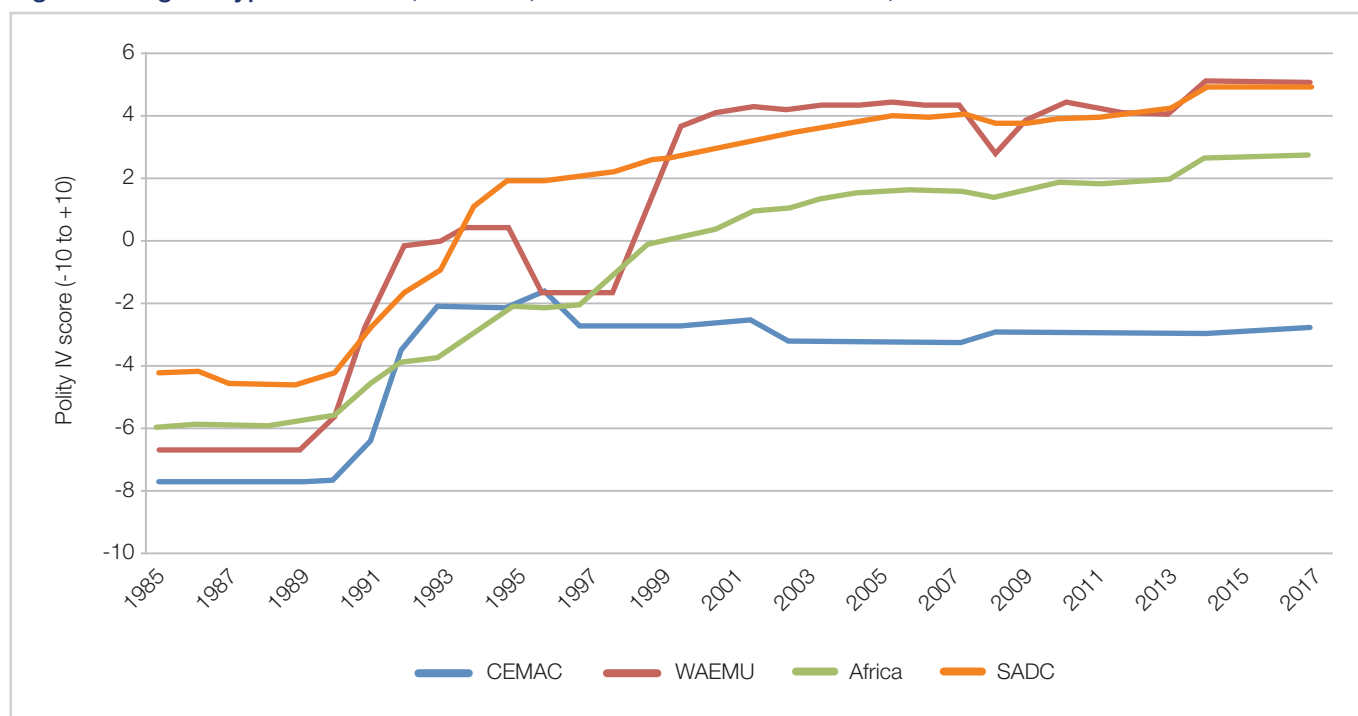
region has seen only two democratic transfers of power. The first occurred in the Republic of Congo in 1992, the second in the CAR in 1993. In both cases these flashes of democratic power succession did little to advance democratic practice.

CEMAC countries adopted the trappings of democracy while denying citizens the real choices that come with it

Figure 6 illustrates the evolution of regime type in individual CEMAC countries from 1985 to 2017. It shows that each country in the CEMAC group experienced some level of movement towards greater democratisation after the fall of the Berlin Wall. However, as evidenced with the recent post-electoral repression in Chad, Gabon and the Republic of Congo, all of them have experienced varying degrees of democratic backsliding since the mid-1990s.

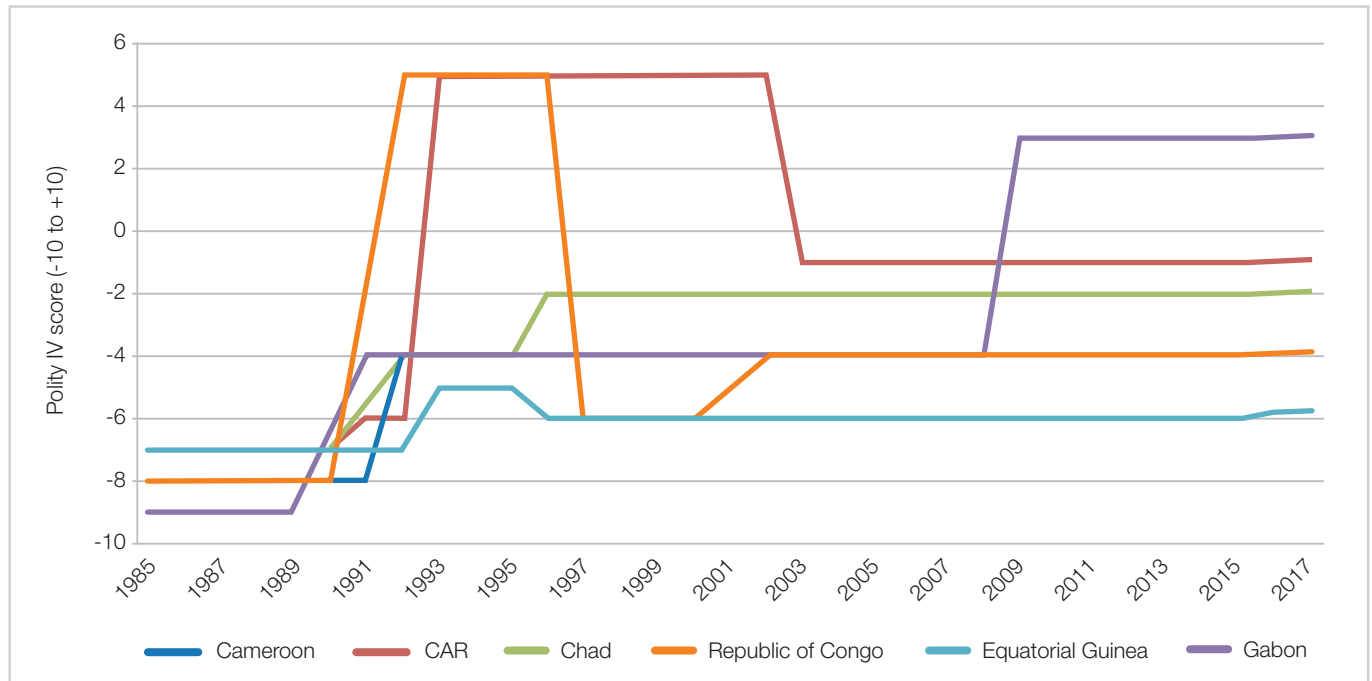
Furthermore, all CEMAC countries are likely to remain in the mixed-regime or anocratic space and under the democratic threshold until 2040, with the associated consequences for instability and conflict. This problem of

Figure 5: Regime type in CEMAC, WAEMU, SADC and African countries, 1985–2017



Source: IFs v. 7.31 initialised from Polity IV data.

Figure 6: Regime type in CEMAC countries, 1985–2017



Source: IFs v. 7.31 initialised from Polity IV data.

regime type could be significantly exacerbated if those anocratic states experience a high degree of factionalism.

Research from Goldstone et al. indicates that partial democracies with high degrees of factionalism are particularly unstable. Factionalism is characterised by ‘parochial or ethnic-based political factions that regularly compete for political influence in order to promote particular agendas and favour group members to the detriment of common, secular or cross-cutting agendas’.⁴¹

More importantly, the socio-political and economic governance particularities of partial or pseudo-democracies help explain regime durability and relative stability in the countries of the CEMAC region. Despite regionally factionalised politics, these regimes have successfully enlisted the collaboration of elites of predominantly opposition regional and ethnic groups to join them in government, creating a semblance of representativeness.

Since countries that are forced to endure this brand of political patronage (i.e. anocracies characterised by high degrees of factionalism) are 30 times more likely to experience a destabilising event,⁴² political transitions in the event of the incapacitation of the president are critical junctures that require deft management. This is

particularly pertinent to the CEMAC region, as nearly every country in the region is highly factionalised along ethnic or religious lines.

As noted earlier, the region has experienced only two peaceful transfers of power from one living president and political party to another. But, even that may be overstating the quality of democracy in the CEMAC countries. Paradoxically, the return to multiparty politics in the Republic of Congo also coincided with the militarisation of political parties⁴³ and a subsequent slide into civil war in 1997. In the CAR, Ange-Felix Patasse, who succeeded Andre Kolingba via the ballot box in 1993, was deposed a decade later by Francois Bozize. Bozize subsequently presided over the CAR’s slide into civil war.

Touadera’s election to the CAR presidency in 2016 occurred within the context of a post-civil war political transition enforced by a strong international presence.

All the CEMAC states have developed a mixture of co-opting and coercive regime consolidation strategies in the post-1991 multiparty context, although to differing degrees. That said, even after the backsliding, all of these countries are more inclusive than before the fall of the Berlin Wall, indicating the steady progression towards greater inclusion evident across much of Africa when compared to pre-1990 rankings.

Political transitions

Looking forward, political transitions represent critical junctures that are likely to threaten internal stability in the region. The CEMAC countries have moved rapidly from authoritarianism into an anocratic space in the post-Cold War period, with the same leaders and political parties retaining political power to date. Having reluctantly agreed to give their institutions a democratic veneer amid internal and external pressures, these states have not, however, implemented the reforms necessary to progress towards meaningful democratisation.

Hence, the region continues to display the lowest levels of civil and political freedom (as measured by Freedom House), and is forecast to have the least democratic regimes (according to Polity IV). The region also has the most unfavourable scores of any region in Africa on a host of other governance metrics.

As of 2017 there have been only two peaceful electoral transitions from one living president and political party to another in Central Africa

A country-level view also reveals that there is little variation. Although Gabon clearly outperforms the other countries in most categories, the political crisis resulting from its poorly managed 2016 presidential elections and post-electoral repression should alter its future score downwards.⁴⁴

Table 5 shows the most recent (2014) values for the same measures of governance as Table 2, but for the individual countries in the CEMAC region. While some countries perform better along certain dimensions

Table 5: Various measures of governance in individual CEMAC countries relative to the African average⁴⁵

Country/region	Regime type (-10 to +10)	Civil and Political freedom (0 to 14)	Government Effectiveness (0 to 5)	Corruption (0 to 10)	Ibrahim Governance Index (0 to 1)
Cameroon	-4	4	1.8	3.4	0.45
CAR	-1	2	0.66	2.5	0.25
Chad	-2	3	1	2.9	0.34
Congo, Republic of	-4	5	1.4	2.5	0.43
Equatorial Guinea	-6	2	1.1	1.9	0.35
Gabon	3	5	1.8	3.6	0.52
Africa	2.7	6.6	1.7	3	0.49

Note: Each of these measures has been scaled, so that a higher score indicates better performance.

Source: Polity IV, Freedom House, World Bank, Transparency International and the Mo Ibrahim Foundation.

of governance, the overall picture is one of relatively poor governance across a number of indicators when compared to the continental average.

As Table 5 shows, most countries in the CEMAC region suffer from poor governance. With the exception of Gabon (and to some extent Cameroon), the CEMAC countries perform below the African average on the majority of the selected governance indicators. Some countries, such as Equatorial Guinea and the CAR, have among the lowest rankings on the selected indicators of any country in the world.⁴⁶

Security challenges and increasing violence

Growing presence of non-state armed groups

The Central African region faces highly resilient security threats both within some states and at its frontiers. This tenuous security situation has national, regional and international implications. Boko Haram, from its bases in Nigeria, is regionally active across borders in Chad and Cameroon. Such cross-border networks give violent extremist organisations a support infrastructure from which they launch attacks on civilians, businesses and state infrastructure.

Within the CAR, the remobilisation of armed factions after Touadera's election in March 2016 tests the country's post-transition state-building mettle, and challenges the restoration of centralised order and the state's monopoly over the legitimate use of force. Despite the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in the CAR's (MINUSCA) 12 400-force presence, large swaths of the eastern CAR remain under the control of non-state forces, many of which are highly factionalised. According to the UN Panel of Experts on the CAR, these non-state actors have organised *de facto* modes of ordering, service delivery and taxation, even appropriating humanitarian aid to secure their territorial occupation.⁴⁷ Such practices imperil the state itself, while posing a serious risk of contributing to the emergence of cross-border insecurity and instability.

In the aftermath of the March 2016 presidential elections in the Republic of Congo, a militia group known as the Ninjas resurfaced. This group, which had fought rival militias during the country's civil war from 1997–1999, attacked administrative facilities in Brazzaville's southern districts and disrupted transport infrastructure in the Pool region. The government responded in April 2016 by

launching military operations to arrest the group's leader. This has led to an intractable conflict in the Pool region to which journalists and humanitarian organisations have been given little access. The ongoing war in the Pool region poses a challenge to regime survival against the backdrop of a serious economic crisis.

Illegal trafficking

Human trafficking networks and the proliferation of conflict following the Arab Spring and the subsequent NATO intervention in Libya directly affected Chad. The security risk from Libya was so grave that, as recently as January 2017, Chad closed its northern border with Libya. It has also had to contend with the protracted crisis in Darfur to the east.

On the Atlantic seaboard, piracy in the Gulf of Guinea imperils maritime security and poses a clear and present threat to hydrocarbons operations in Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and the Republic of Congo.

The Central African region faces highly resilient security threats both within some states and at its frontiers

Most of these security threats have elicited cooperative regional responses. The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), for example, was reactivated to play a central role in countering threats from Boko Haram. The MNJTF is a collective security arrangement created under the auspices of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and comprises troops from Nigeria, Niger, Benin, Cameroon and Chad.⁴⁸ The 2014 inauguration of a regional centre for maritime security in Central Africa in Pointe-Noire, Republic of Congo reflects the regional commitment to deal with threats to maritime security. However, these collective security interventions have been tainted by allegations of egregious human rights violations documented by international human rights organisations.⁴⁹

Politically motivated violence

Data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Dataset (ACLED) suggests that CEMAC countries may be facing a rise in politically motivated violence not seen in the region in recent years. Apart from Equatorial Guinea, where political repression is deeply

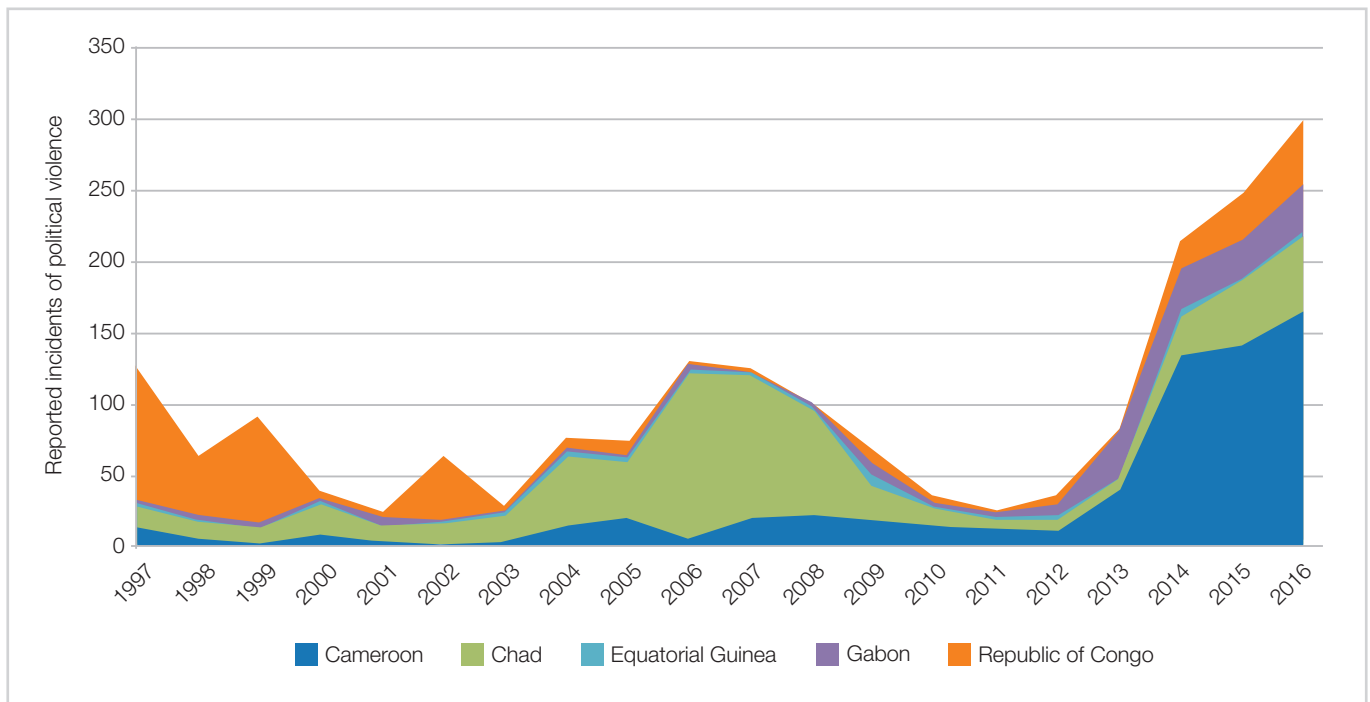
entrenched, there has been a steady increase in the number of reported events of political violence since 2012.

However, a distinction ought to be made between violent extremist incidents and politically motivated violence – a differentiation that does not filter through ACLED’s data coding. This distinction is perhaps most evident in Cameroon, where infiltration by Boko Haram has caused a significant increase in the number of incidents of violence against civilians since 2012 that could be described as violent extremism. These attacks occur mainly in the Lake Chad Basin area of Cameroon’s Far North Region.

The re-emergence of an anglophone crisis in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon since November 2016 brings into perspective the issue of growing political violence in the country. At the heart of the current crisis is the historical marginalisation of English-speaking communities, especially in the governance, judicial and educational systems. The government’s mixture of repressive and conciliatory measures to deal with the anglophone issue only appears to have emboldened the proponents of independence for the two English-speaking regions of Cameroon. The state’s zero-sum framing of the crisis by positioning itself as a unionist force opposed to the secessionist anglophones has led to further violence.

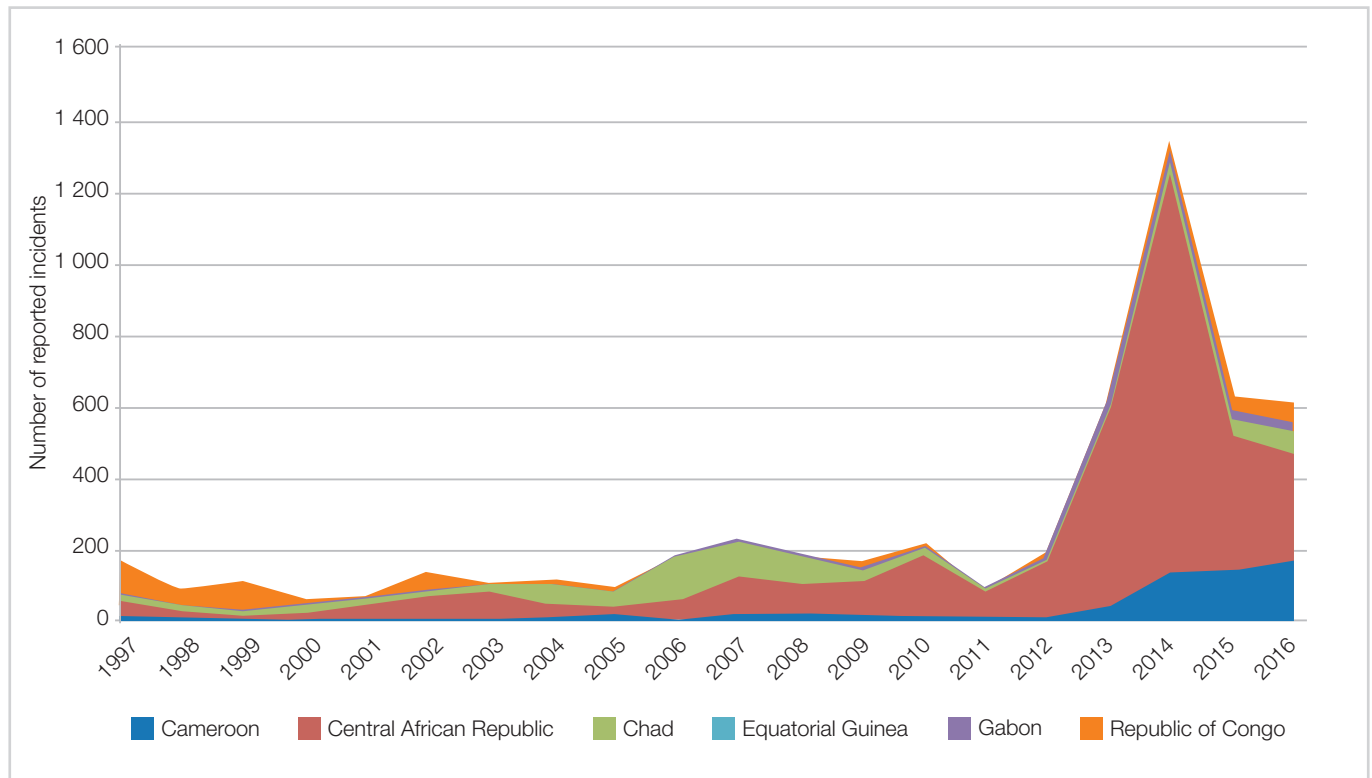
Figure 7 shows the evolution of reported incidents of political violence in individual CEMAC countries (excluding the CAR) from 1997 to 2016. The figure shows a significant increase in most CEMAC countries (with the exception of Equatorial Guinea) since 2012/13, with the region as a whole

Figure 7: Number of reported incidents of political violence in CEMAC countries (excluding the CAR), 1997–2016



Source: ACLED all Africa data version 7.

Figure 8: Number of reported incidents of political violence in all CEMAC countries, 1997–2016



Source: ACLED all Africa data version 7.

experiencing a dramatic increase in reported incidents of political violence. Again, the most significant recent increase has occurred in Cameroon, which has experienced more than a 10-fold increase in reported incidents of political violence between 2012 and 2016. Political rivalry leading up to the constitutional referendum in the Republic of Congo in November 2015 and the subsequent post-election outbreak of war in the Pool region in April 2016 explains that country’s slight uptick in political violence.

The CAR has seen sustained levels of violence since the Seleka overthrow of Bozize’s government in 2013. Hence the number of incidents of political violence dwarfs the number of reported incidents in the other CEMAC countries, as shown in Figure 8.

The duality of frontier security threats and internal pressures necessitates crosscutting, innovative and forward-looking research to guide policy planning. However, it also requires the political will of the region’s states to drive effective implementation – not only on security challenges but also in terms of addressing the underlying causes of the region’s various security and political issues.

Basic human development

Along with a general lack of good governance and the attendant security risks, the region also suffers from chronic underdevelopment across a wide range of human development indicators. Table 6 shows average levels of access to basic services and other measures of human wellbeing in 2015 in various CEMAC countries relative to the African average.

Prioritisation of macroeconomic stability over human development could spark tension

Table 6 highlights the severe lack of human and economic development in the region. Some countries perform better than the African average on some indicators, but not others. For example, Cameroon has higher levels of access to piped water and improved sanitation than the African average, but it still has lower life expectancy, higher infant mortality and a lower Human Development Index (HDI) score than the average

Table 6: Scores on various measures of human development in individual CEMAC countries compared to the African average

Country (A – Z)	Lower secondary enrolment (%)	Infant mortality	HDI	Clean water (%)	Sanitation (%)	Life expectancy
Cameroon	66.6	62.8	0.52	75.6	45.8	57.6
CAR	21.8	87.4	0.35	68.5	21.8	51.4
Chad	25	86	0.4	50.8	12.1	52.5
Congo, Republic of	65.8	42.7	0.59	76.5	15	63.9
Equatorial Guinea	39.1	65.5	0.59	47.9	21.9	57.4
Gabon	75.9	37.9	0.68	93.3	41.9	65.6
Africa	64	50.4	0.53	70.6	38.9	61.9

Source: World Bank, WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Project, WHO, FAO, UNDP and UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

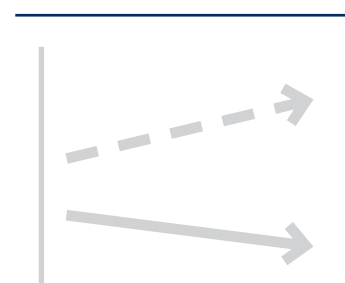
African country. Likewise, the Republic of Congo has favourable scores on life expectancy, infant mortality and HDI, but, shockingly, only 15% of its population have access to improved sanitation facilities.

Perhaps most importantly, the CAR and Chad perform well below the African average along every dimension of human wellbeing highlighted above. In some areas the challenges are extraordinary. Both countries would have to more than double lower secondary enrolment to achieve parity with the African average in 2015. Even this aggressive improvement would place those countries well short of the Sustainable Development Goal of universal secondary education by 2030. Chad would have to more than triple access to improved sanitation facilities to reach the 39% continental average, while life expectancy in the CAR is more than 10 years below the African average.

No quick fixes

The IMF has consistently advocated that countries in the region diversify their economies.⁵⁰ This involves a significant investment in the agricultural sector to improve productivity, a diversification away from hydrocarbon-dependant growth and a broader transition to a manufacturing and services-based economy. Because these countries are starting from very different baselines, the respective diversification strategies employed by each country will have to vary somewhat, but the overall thrust away from commodity dependence will remain similar.

Along with this move away from a dependence on primary goods, the IMF is recommending that countries in the region implement a fiscal adjustment to stabilise budgets in the short term, combined with efforts to create a more favourable business environment, restore macroeconomic certainty and strengthen the financial sector. This broad set of economic policy adjustments, in tandem with accountable democratic governance; an even broader diversification of the economy; and parallel investment in human



THE CAR AND CHAD PERFORM WELL BELOW THE AFRICAN AVERAGE ALONG EVERY DIMENSION OF HUMAN WELLBEING

development, could provide a pathway to a more secure and prosperous future for Central Africa.

Alternatively, overly ambitious austerity programmes and the prioritisation of macroeconomic stability over human development and democratic governance reform could spark further tension.

All CEMAC countries have committed to diversifying their economies and improving efficiency, especially in the agricultural sector. However, what investments there have been in that sector across the region have yet to produce meaningful improvements. Improving agricultural productivity would have implications for both employment and food security in the region.

Accounting for the fact that the Bongo family have held on to power in Gabon since 1967, the regional average presidential term is 28.5 years as of 2017

Although CEMAC is one of the most productive agricultural regions on the continent, producing about 33% more per person than the African average, it imports nearly 8% of its total crop consumption. Even in a forecast where average yields increase from about 2.5 million metric tonnes per hectare in 2014 to 3.7 million metric tonnes in 2040, net imports are forecast to account for more than 30% of total crop demand by 2040. This increased dependence on imported food could leave the region even more vulnerable to external price shocks and adverse effects from climate change. The growing reliance on imported food, despite net improvements in agricultural production, is driven, in large part, by rapid population growth. This evolution is inherently conflict-prone, as proven by the 2008 demonstrations about food prices in Cameroon.

Conclusion

Economic and political storm clouds are gathering over the CEMAC region and future prospects are further darkened by a complex array of security challenges. Political disputes around poorly managed elections that disenfranchise voters and marginalise key social groups have proven difficult to resolve against a backdrop of declining public revenue caused, in part, by the collapse in commodity prices.

Battle lines among opposition groups have solidified in a region where regimes have become increasingly adept at maintaining their control on power. Accounting for the fact that the Bongo family have held on to power in Gabon since 1967, the regional average presidential term is 28.5 years as of 2017.

In response to these sclerotic regimes, states in the CEMAC region are starting to experience successive waves of socially rooted political contestation.

These internal struggles have shaken the false sense of regime durability and political stability. As these challenges persist, the lack of predictability in presidential succession planning creates uncertainty that disrupts the business environment and imperils long-term stability in a region of aging presidents.

CEMAC'S RAPIDLY
GROWING POPULATION
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IN THE REGION TO
PROVIDE SERVICES TO
AN ADDITIONAL

40 million
people

OVER THE NEXT

23 years

This uncertainty is compounded by volatile commodity prices and the heavy reliance on rents from the production of hydrocarbons.

The economic stagnation caused by depressed global oil prices has compelled states in the region to cut back on public expenditure. As population growth places more demands on service delivery, governments will come under pressure from their citizenry on several fronts. Regimes that are guided by self-preservation rather than legitimate broad-based social, political and economic networks sow discontent and imperil their own long-term peace and security. Most countries in the region are guided by the former instinct, rather than the latter.

CEMAC's rapidly growing population will place great strain on governments in the region to provide services to an additional 40 million people over the next 23 years. Meanwhile, numerous cross-border security threats, combined with internal demands for reform – that have been steadily growing over the past five years – and economic stagnation, could spell disaster for the region.

These interconnected social, political and economic dynamics require long-term strategic planning and policy interventions to avert devastating outcomes. As states consider the appropriate economic remedies to their current revenue challenges, it is necessary to interweave these changes with political reforms at the national level that signal a genuine move toward democratic governance norms that are safeguarded at the regional level.

These interconnected social, political and economic dynamics require long-term planning to avert devastating outcomes

Each country in the CEMAC region has particular political and economic challenges. Governments in the region obviously need to manage their respective political and economic transitions within the broader social context in which they take place, and that will necessarily vary from country to country. That said, the challenges presented in this report ought to be viewed as being nationally and regionally interconnected, necessitating solutions that mirror their interwoven nature. Moreover, CEMAC provides an existing regional architecture to address the shared economic and security challenges. Within that framework, CEMAC countries should seek to deepen regional cooperation in an effort to:

- **Redress the thorny issue of state capture and pseudo-democratic governance by sclerotic regimes.** Regime durability in the region occurs at the expense of inclusive, legitimate and accountable governance, as elections have become a process of status quo confirmation. For inherently personality-based governance systems, incumbency does not avoid rivalries for presidential succession or ensure peaceful transitions. Reforming the current configuration can only take place through an open, inclusive and constructive political dialogue directed by the people. Democracy cannot consist of rubber-stamping the agendas of the current regimes. Moreover, such reforms can only be effective if they are safeguarded at the regional level by the adoption and implementation of a democratic governance compact, most easily implemented through the existing CEMAC governance structure.
- **Promote regional economic complementarity.** In a region covering over 3 million km² and with 51 million inhabitants, the free movement of goods and persons is fundamental to promoting international trade. During the November 2017 CEMAC summit, the heads of state committed to accelerating regional integration at the policy level, but its effective implementation and outcome will have to be determined over the long term.
- **Diversify economies through agricultural and environmental investment.** Governments must take steps to diversify their economies away from a dependence on the primary sector. Although agricultural production in the region is above the African average, it is operating well below its full potential, if effectively industrialised. While the WAEMU region has twice the population of CEMAC, it has approximately 10 times as much land equipped for irrigation.⁵¹
 - Initiatives supporting the blue economy in the Congo Basin – of which all the CEMAC countries are a part – hold the potential for prodigious industrial agricultural production, a thriving tourism industry and massive pharmaceutical production from its incredible biodiversity.
 - Investing in research, training and productivity to connect this blue economy on the regional level would contribute to unlocking its potential, which is not only economically beneficial – for employing skilled and unskilled labour – but also environmentally promising.

- **Build connected regional transport infrastructure.** Of the six countries in the region, the two biggest in landmass – Chad and the CAR – are both landlocked. A regional infrastructure platform will reduce the time and cost in moving goods from ports to landlocked capitals, and vice versa. Transportation infrastructure therefore is not only an economic driver but also an economic sector in its own right with the potential for job creation, service delivery and revenue generation.
- **Tie investments in infrastructure to social goods.** Core infrastructure can help support broader human development goals. Equipping schools with water and sanitation facilities can help ensure that children stay healthy and are able to pursue their education free from malnutrition and communicable diseases. Moreover, access to electricity provides health benefits along with allowing children to study later in the home, while a better road network will facilitate the movement of people to schools and jobs, and help reduce agricultural losses.
- **Capitalise on its women and youth population.** The only way to fully leverage the human capital in the region is to allow all citizens full participation in political, economic and community decision-making. Moreover, all individuals must be given access to the basic services necessary to stay healthy and complete their education. Without tremendous investments in human capital that occur alongside an opening up of the political space, the region could slide further into a vicious cycle of violence and underdevelopment.
- **Innovate evidence-based policy development.** By setting out a baseline forecast of broad regional trends and situating them against current political dynamics, this report clearly showed the need for systematic, evidence-based solutions to the challenges facing the CEMAC region. Research centres within the region should be supported to provide the country-specific long-term and evidence-based policy development support to drive government decision-making.

The recommendations outlined above are ambitious. But they are necessary if states hope to promote economic growth, human development and human security. The complex array of challenges facing the region across the dimensions of security, regime type, and economic and human development is no doubt daunting. However, it is because of those challenges, not in spite of them, that governments must act immediately to embrace a more holistic and regionally integrated approach to public planning.

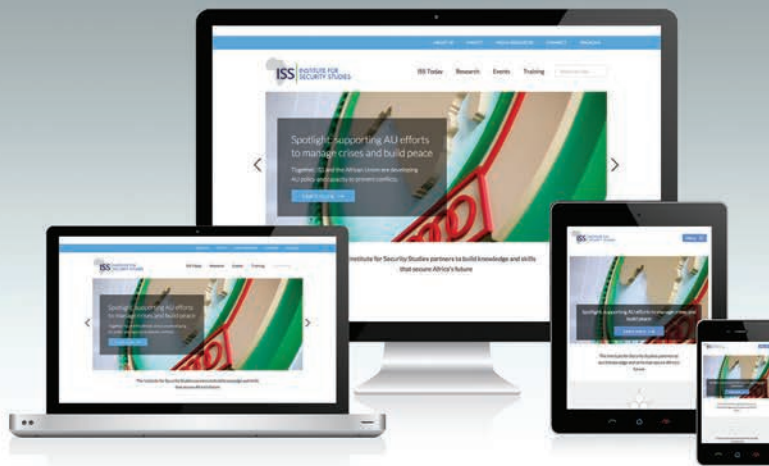
Notes

- 1 The authors' names are listed alphabetically, but each contributed equally to the production of this publication.
- 2 2017 IMF World Economic Outlook. <http://www.imf.org/external/ns/cs.aspx?id=28>
- 3 Sourced from the World Bank (July 2017).
- 4 Denis Sassou Nguesso was president from 1979–1992 and returned to power after a civil war in 1997.
- 5 Gabon has been ruled by the Bongo family since 1967.
- 6 International Monetary Fund (IMF), Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC): staff report on the common policies in support of member countries reform programs, 12 July 2017, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2017/07/12/Central-African-Economic-and-Monetary-Community-CEMAC-Staff-Report-on-the-Common-Policies-in-45011>.
- 7 Formed in 1983 by a group of 10 countries from the Central African region with Angola an observer until 1999. ECCAS was created to achieve collective autonomy, raise the standard of living of its populations and maintain economic stability through harmonious cooperation.
- 8 IFs is a free, open-source integrated assessment model. See Frederick S Pardee Center for International Studies, <http://pardee.du.edu/understand-interconnected-world>
- 9 African Development Bank, African Economic Outlook 2017: Special theme: entrepreneurship and industrialisation, https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/AEO_2017_Report_Full_English.pdf.
- 10 Afrobarometer, Highlights of Round 6 survey findings from 36 African countries, 2016, www.afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/summary_results/ab_r6_afrobarometer_global_release_highlights8.pdf. It should be noted that Cameroon is the only CEMAC country to have participated in the most recent Afrobarometer survey. See Afrobarometer countries, www.afrobarometer.org/countries
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 The South Asia group is taken from the World Bank regional grouping list and consists of Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
- 13 Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo.
- 14 While there is broad overlap between WAEMU and ECOWAS, the exclusion of key countries such as Nigeria and Ghana from WAEMU warrants the inclusion of the larger group.
- 15 C Raleigh, Urban violence patterns across African states, *International Studies Review*, 17:1, March 2015.
- 16 US Department of Energy, EIA Beta, International, 16 June 2017, <https://www.eia.gov/beta/international/index.cfm?view=production>
- 17 World Bank, Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) Initiative, 10 October 2016, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/debt/brief/hipc>
- 18 Equatorial Guinea has been excluded from this figure because growth rates in excess of 60% of GDP in the mid-1990s distort the scale of the figure.
- 19 C Cramer, Inequality and conflict: a review of an age-old concern, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), Identities, Conflict and Cohesion Programme, Paper 11, October 2005.
- 20 Although WAEMU countries may technically 'achieve gender parity' in education by the end of this forecast, it is important to underscore that the region is working from a starting point where only .38 female students were enrolled in lower secondary school for every male student. Overcoming decades of gender inequality of this magnitude will take generations. For example, Latin America and the Caribbean have experienced a gender imbalance in favour of females in lower secondary education since about 1995.
- 21 J Dickson, B Hughes and M Irfan, *Advancing global education: patterns of potential human progress*, volume 2, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- 22 Finding reliable estimates for unemployment in CEMAC countries can be challenging, in large part due to their comparatively large informal sectors. A 2013 study of Chad, for instance, found that more than 90% of its non-agricultural labour force was employed in the informal sector. M Nodja and G Ulrich, Hysteresis in CEMAC informal employment, *Journal of Quantitative Economics*, 13:2, 2015, 285–303. For a discussion of the nuance of the informal economy see D Bohl et al., The informal economy in the IFs Model: final report to CEPLAN, Pardee Center for International Futures, University of Denver, April 2015, http://www.pardee.du.edu/sites/default/files/Bohl_2015_Ceplan.pdf
- 23 RP Cincotta et al., *The security demographic: population and civil war after the Cold War*, Washington DC: Population Action International, 2003; C Raleigh, Urban violence patterns across African states, *International Studies Review*, 17:1, March 2015.
- 24 IMF, Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) financial system stability assessment, April 2016.
- 25 RP Cincotta et al., *The security demographic: population and civil war after the Cold War*, Washington DC: Population Action International, 2003.
- 26 C Raleigh, Urban violence patterns across African states, *International Studies Review*, 17:1, March 2015.
- 27 L Diamond, Developing democracy in Africa: African and international imperatives, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 14:1, 2007, 191–213.
- 28 A new constitution in the Republic of Congo was passed by referendum in November 2015. This constitution lifted presidential age limits and changed the presidential term from two seven-year terms to three five-year terms.
- 29 Freedom House's average scores on political rights for these countries over the past 10 years sit at 5.5/7 (not free) and 6/7 for civil liberties. For the sake of simplicity, these scores have been inverted in the IFs model, so that a higher score indicates a more positive or 'free' ranking (i.e. scores would be 1.5/7 and 1/7 respectively).
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 - 44 Gabon has a higher GDP per capita and, therefore, we would expect that it would also have higher scores across various measures of governance. Interestingly, this trend does not hold for Equatorial Guinea, which has a high GDP per capita but very poor scores of governance.
 - 45 This is most notable with the civil and political freedom scores from Freedom House, where the data is reported on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being highest or best. Those figures have been inverted so that a 7 becomes a 1 and vice versa.
 - 46 Equatorial Guinea and the CAR are both ranked among the bottom 10 countries globally in civil and political freedom, while the CAR is ranked the fourth least effective government in the world and Equatorial Guinea is perceived as the 11th most corrupt country.
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