

A Legal Appraisal of the Causes of the Cameroon Anglophone Crisis

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Abstract

The Cameroon Anglophone Crisis, which erupted in 2016, stems from longstanding grievances among the Anglophone population regarding marginalization, governance issues, and cultural rights within a predominantly Francophone nation. This legal appraisal examines the historical context, highlighting the post-colonial legacy that has shaped Anglophone identity and political aspirations. It analyzes the key main Causes of the anglophone crisis bringing out facts such the constitutional problem, socio-political causes and the role of the diaspora and the media. The study adopts a qualitative research methodology which makes use of the doctrinal method as one of the main methods which deals with content analysis of primary and secondary data. Unstructured interviews and observation were also used as part of the methods of obtaining data. The ensuing results reveal that the main cause of the crisis is one of ideology which was birthed as far as the period of reunification which has remain unaddressed till date. Hence, it laid a foundation for the researcher to recommend a sincere and all-inclusive dialogue amongst the concerned parties amongst others.

Keywords: legal appraisal, causes, anglophone crisis

1. Introduction

The fragmentation of the African continent, which has led to wars of all kinds, is one of the long-lasting consequences of colonial control. In order to hasten their management and resource exploitation, the colonialists established new boundaries while they were on the continent, both conventional and ideological. Africans, however, thought these borders were largely ugly when colonization ceased.

“[The] European colonial boundaries have had profound effects, generally, negative on the history of statehood in Africa as they are generally responsible overtly or covertly for many inter and intra-state conflicts in the continent. This is because many of them were created without due considerations of the traditional state boundaries that pre-colonial African state-builders had made and sanctioned through different types of traditional diplomacy mechanism.”¹

Actually, by drawing new borders in Africa, the colonialists were fostering unity among the continent’s people in addition to making it easier for them to administer and exploit its resources, which was harmful to Africa. According to Hazlewood;

“In a sense, the unity which appeared once to exist [in Africa] was illusory. It was a unity imposed from

¹ Abwa, D., (2011). Introduction. In: Abwa D., Fomin E. S. D., Temgoua A. P. and Dze-Ngwa W. (eds.) *Boundaries and History in Africa: Issues in Conventional Boundaries and Ideological Frontiers* (Festschrift in Honour of Verkijika G. Fanso). The University of Yaounde I: Department of History, pp. 1-7.

*outside for the administrative convenience of the colonial power — it was unity of Europe in Africa ... It was not to be expected that, with the removal of Europe from the scene, the unity would necessarily continue.*¹

As a result of colonialism, African states have tended to be particularistic and prioritize micro nationalisms over continental unity.² The conventional and ideological boundaries set by the Europeans are said to have remained a major source of strife on the continent ever since colonialism ceased. After German Kamerun was defeated in 1916, the League of Nations took full administration of the area and later handed it over to Britain and France as Mandatory Powers. After the Condominium's ultimate collapse, these countries experimented with a system of joint rule, ultimately deciding to split the area between France and Britain. During the division, France and Britain each received 4/5 (80%) and 1/5 (20%) of the land.³ The area that Britain annexed was tiny in surface area, but it was also narrow (elongated), non-contiguous (separated), and beset by transportation and communication problems, making it very challenging to manage as a distinct entity from Nigeria.⁴

Notwithstanding this, the British deliberately managed the Southern Cameroons as a component of Nigeria's Southern and then Eastern Regions. The goal of this decision was to fulfill British administrative ambitions in the area (at least by ensuring its efficient economic use and reducing administrative expenses). Nonetheless, it exposed the region of Southern Cameroon to circumstances that significantly altered and influenced its historical development between 1922 and 1961.⁵ Thus, French Cameroons and British Southern Cameroons were socialized under the French and Anglo-Saxon systems, respectively, and were ruled autonomously for around 45 years, from 1916 to 1961. In 1961, as the two regions were coming together, a clear ideological gap started to emerge. The Cameroon Anglophone Crisis, which arose in 2016 as a result of decades of efforts to bridge this division, provides the basis for this study's exploration of the reasons for this problem and its remedies.

2. The Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon: Its Causes

There are numerous factors that might be cited as the cause of the current Anglophone problem in Cameroon. As we will discuss in turn below, these causes range from the constitutional issue to contemporary issues.

2.1 The Issue of the Constitution

With the establishment of the Federal Republic of Cameroon on October 1, 1961, two regions that had experienced distinct colonial histories following World War I were reunited.⁶ Notably, a portion of the British mandate trust territory—later known as Cameroons—was first a part of the Eastern Provinces of Nigeria until 1954, when it gained a limited degree of self-government and a quasi-regional status within the Federation of Nigeria. In 1958, it was granted full regional status. Without a doubt, Southern Cameroons' growth was flagrantly neglected as a result of its administration as a Nigerian adjunct,⁷ as well as the Ibo and Efik-Ibibio migrants' hegemonic role in its economy. During the 1961 United Nations plebiscite, Southern Cameroons chose to reunite with French Cameroun instead of joining Nigeria.⁸

A new federal experiment in Africa was supposed to begin, but it quickly proved to be more of a shadow than a reality.⁹ The bargaining power of the francophone delegation during the constitution-making process, especially

¹ Hazlewood, A., (1967). The Problem of Integration among African States. In: Hazlewood A. (ed.) *African Integration and Disintegration: Case Studies in Economic and Political Union*. Oxford, New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, pp. 3-16.

² Ngwa, C. A. (2011). Sacrificing Micro Nationalisms within the Broader Dream of Pan-Africanism: What Prospects for the United States of Africa (USA). In: Forje, J. W. (ed.) *Century of Change: Symposium on African Unity*. New York, Hauppauge: Nova Science Publishers, pp. 55-60.

³ Ndi, A. (2013b). *Southern West Cameroon Revisited: North-South West Nexus, 1858-1972, Myth, History and Reality*. Volume Two. Bamenda: Paul's Press.

⁴ Ngoh, V.J., (2001). *Southern Cameroons, 1922-1961: A Constitutional History*. Burlington, USA: Ashgate Publishing Company.

⁵ Budi, R.N., (2019b). *Identity and Resistance in Nigeria's Southern Cameroons, 1922-1961*. Latvia, European Union: Lambert Academic Publishing.

⁶ Willard R. Johnson, *The Cameroon Federation: political integration in a fragmentary society* (Princeton, NJ, 1970); Victor T. Le Vine, *The Cameroon Federal Republic* (Ithaca and London, 1971); and Jacques Benjamin, *Les Camerounais occidentaux: la minoritéU dans un eUtat bicommunautaire* (Montreal, 1972).

⁷ Paul M. Kale, (1967). *Political Evolution in the Cameroons* (Buea, Government Printer), pp. 12±13.

⁸ Edwin W. Ardener, (1967). The Nature of the Reunification of Cameroon, in Arthur Hazlewood (ed.), *African Integration and Disintegration* (Oxford), pp. 285±337.

⁹ Cf. Frank M. Stark, (1976). Federalism in Cameroon: the shadow and the reality, in *Canadian Journal of African Studies* (Ottawa), 10, 3, pp. 423±42.

at the Fouban conference in July 1961, reinforced the idea that the Anglophone region was small in both area and population, making up only 9% of the total area and roughly 25% of the total population. The Southern Cameroons had yet to gain independence by joining the independent Republic of Cameroon at the time of these negotiations. As the head of the francophone delegation, Ahmadou Ahidjo was able to dictate the terms of the federation by taking advantage of his territory's "senior" status. (The Anglophone delegation's leader, Southern Cameroons Prime Minister John Ngu Foncha, had advocated a loose version of federalism but was ultimately compelled to accept a highly centralized structure of governance and administration.) In June 1961, the delegation from Southern Cameroons convened in Bamenda to determine their own form of federalism for a unified Cameroon. They proposed, among other things, (i) a separate government, (ii) a federal legislature with two houses, (iii) a head of state who is ceremonial rather than executive, and (iv) Douala as the administrative capital. Before the Fouban conference, Foncha and Ahidjo met in secret to establish private arrangements.¹ However, the team from Southern Cameroon arrived still undecided about the type of administration they truly desired, according to Ngwane (1994). Therefore, Ahidjo's document was delivered, and some members, notably the opposition leader Dr. Emmanuel Endeley, saw it for the first time on the morning of the opening ceremony. Bamenda's ideas were thus merely disregarded.²

Due to the hurried nature of the discussions, it was decided that both delegations would meet later, which they did in Yaounde in August 1961. However, Ahidjo's document became the federal constitution of Southern Cameroon in October 1961 after he refused to consult the House of Assembly. As a result, rather than presenting the constitution to the people of Southern Cameroons for ratification through Parliament or a Referendum, Ahidjo had it "merely imposed on them."³

Ahidjo used a variety of strategies to accomplish this goal since he believed that federalism was an inevitable step in the creation of a powerful unitary state. He pitted Anglophone political groups against one another after taking office as president of the Federal Republic of Cameroon in October 1961, ultimately convincing them to join the *Union nationale camerounaise* (UNC), any Anglophone leader who continued to support federalism could be punished by the one party that was established in September 1966. Therefore, Solomon Tandeng Muna, a "unitarist," took Augustin Ngom Jua's post as Prime Minister of the federated state of West Cameroon in 1968, and his creation of 'clients'. In 1968, he served as Prime Minister of the federated state of West Cameroon. He created "clients" by giving important ethnic and regional groupings in the Anglophone region key positions in the government and/or the party. Giving prominent positions in the administration and/or the party to members of important Anglophone ethnic and regional groups.⁴

Ahidjo declared in the National Assembly on May 6, 1972, that he would abolish clause 1 of article 47 of the Fouban constitution, which stated that he would turn the Federal Republic into a unitary state if the people approved of the plan in a referendum scheduled for May 20: 'The unity and integrity of the Federation will be compromised by any move to amend the current constitution'. Because clause 3 of article 47 stated that "proposals for revision shall be adopted by simple majority vote of the members of the Federal Assembly, provided that such majority includes a majority of the representatives ¼ of each of the Federated States," even if the constitution were to be amended, it should not be done by referendum.⁵ The United Republic of Cameroon was established right away as a result of the people's overwhelming support for the draft constitution, which can be explained by the dictatorial nature of Ahidjo's government.

2.2 Political, Social, and Economic Aspects

To defend the magnificent revolution of May 20, 1972, the President argued that federalism impeded economic development and promoted regionalism. Many articulate Anglophones, however, tended to attribute the emergence of "regionalism" and lack of progress to the hegemonic inclinations of the francophone-dominated state rather than federalism itself. Their region's loss of autonomy and the unitary state's alleged subjection of the Anglophone minority made them feel deceived. The majority of their many grievances were cultural, political, and economic in character. Among these were efforts to "Frenchify," the misuse of their region's plentiful natural riches, especially oil, and the disregard for its infrastructure by succeeding francophone

¹ Ebune, J.B., (1992). *Growth of Political Parties in Southern Cameroon, 1916 – 1960*, (Yaoundé, Centre d'édition et de production pour l'enseignement et la recherche).

² Ngwane, G., (1994). Anglophone File. *Limbe Pressbook*.

³ C. A. Taku, (1996). *For Dame Lynda Chalker & Other Anglophone Cameroonian Notes* (Aba, Iduma Industries (Nigeria) Ltd, 1996), p. 14.

⁴ Konings, P. & Nyamnjoh, F.B., (1997). The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon. *Journal of Modern African Studies*.

⁵ A. W. Mukong (ed.), (1990). *The Case for the Southern Cameroons* (Yaounde, Cameroon Federalist Committee), p. 18.

governments, as well as their underrepresentation and lower standing in national decision-making bodies.¹

Despite being well aware of the internal conflicts within the Anglophone community between the grass-field people in the North West Province and the coastal forest people in the South West Province, Ahidjo chose to split the former federated state of West Cameroon into two provinces in order to lessen the growing threats of united Anglophone action. Due to early exposure to western trade, religion, and education, the former had gained an advantage over the latter. For a number of years, the Bakweri and other intelligentsia from the coastal regions dominated the Anglophone political landscape and swiftly rose to the head of the nationalism movement.

However, in the late 1950s, the two main parties in the British trust area engaged in a bitter battle for the political destiny of the Southern Cameroons: The Kamerun National Party, based in the South West Congress (KNC) led by Emmanuel Endeley, and the North Westbased Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP) led by John Ngu Foncha. In general, the latter fought for independence from Nigeria and eventual reunification with the Republic of Cameroon, while the former promoted integration with Nigeria.² Endeley was appointed the first prime minister of the Southern Cameroons in 1958 after a close election victory in 1957, but he was defeated by Foncha in 1959.

The people of the South West expressed a great deal of sympathy for standing with Nigeria during the 1961 UN plebiscite, but Cameroon won, primarily due to the votes cast in the North West, where the following song was written right after the plebiscite: ‘Endeley was thrashed by Foncha. Endeley was thrashed by Foncha. Without Foncha, Endeley would have sold us out’. Remarkably, the lyrics of this song were altered thirty years after the incident: Foncha trounced Endeley. Endeley was crushed by Foncha. We wouldn’t have been sold if Foncha had not beaten Endeley.³

The North West elite had maintained its dominance in both provinces’ socioeconomic and political spheres since the early 1960s, and their acquisition of the best positions and land in the South West has sparked intense animosity.⁴ The South West Elites Association (Swela) is an organization that is incensed about the KNDP’s list of abuses, which includes the relocation of South West-specific infrastructure to the North West and the Foncha regime’s “deliberate” delay of foreign aid and development projects.⁵ The fact that the “entrepreneurial” North Westerners have steadily taken control of the majority of the South West economy, particularly trade, transportation, and housing, has exacerbated these feelings. The fact that Simon Achidi Achu was elected prime minister in 1992 on the support of the Anglophone lobby and then reportedly insulted the South West by appointing only North Westerners to important positions in his administration is a source of resentment for some.

It is also necessary to take into account the consequences of the large-scale labor migration from the North West to the South West, where a plantation economy was built around the turn of the century during the German colonial period. In order to justify all political unrest in their province, pro-government Swela politicians and administrators have invoked the large number of workers from the North West. They have even gone so far as to suggest, as Governor Oben Peter Ashu did in a Radio Buea interview following the January 1996 municipal elections, that the ruling party’s poor performance in the Fako division, *Rassemblement de démocratique du peuple camerounais* (RDPC) may be entirely ascribed to the opposition-supporting “settler population.”⁶

A number of conferences were convened with the purpose of discussing the terms of the union between Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon after the plebiscite in 1961 saw Southern Cameroons vote for reunification. These included the following: the Fouban Constitutional Conference on July 17–21, 1961; the Buea Tripartite Meeting on May 15–17, 1961; the Yaoundé Ahidjo–Foncha Meeting on May 22–24, 1961; the Buea Tripartite Meeting on June 14–19, 1961; the Bamenda All-Party Conference on June 26–28, 1961; and the Yaoundé Tripartite Conference on August 2–7, 1961.⁷ Following the Fouban Conference, a federal system of governance was established, with prime ministers serving as the leaders of the States of West (formerly Southern Cameroon) and East (formerly French Cameroon). In his support of the federal system of government during this Fouban Conference, President Ahidjo hinted that;

“Linguistic, administrative and economic differences do not permit us to envisage seriously and reasonably

¹ Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), (1994). The Buea Peace Initiative, in *Cameroon Post* (Yaounde!), 20-27 April 1994.

² Bongfen Chem-Langhee, (1995). The Road to the Unitary State of Cameroon, 1959 to 1972, in *Paideuma* (Stuttgart), 41, 1995, pp. 17-25.

³ *Cameroon Life* (Buea), 1, 8, 1991, p. 10.

⁴ Ndiva Kofele-Kale, *Tribesmen and Patriots: political culture in a poly-ethnic African state* (Washington, DC, 1981).

⁵ Swela’s magazine, *The Oracle* (Limbe), April 1992, p. 35.

⁶ *The Herald* (Yaounde), 29-30 January 1996, p. 3.

⁷ Ngoh, V. J., (2019). *Cameroon 1884-Present (2018): The History of a People*. Limbe: Design House.

a state of the unitary and centralized type. It was because a confederal system on the other hand, being too loose, would not favour the close coming together and the intimate connection which we desire.”¹

Foncha, the leader of the 25-member Southern Cameroons Delegation, also presented the following at the same conference;

“In our previous discussions ... we have kept in mind that in our desire to rebuild the Kamerun nation we must not however, forget the existence of the two cultures. We have, therefore, proposed a form of government which will keep the two cultures in the areas where they now operate and to blend them in the centre. The centre is, therefore, deliberately given only very limited subjects, while the States are left to continue largely as they are now.”²

However, President Ahidjo, who was not a federalist by birth, started acting almost immediately to repeal the federal system as soon as it was established. Decree No. 61/DF/15, which was issued on October 20, 1961, was the first of these measures. It divided the Federal Republic of Cameroon into six administrative inspectorates, with West Cameroon being one of them. The first of these measures was Decree No. 61/DF/15, published on October 20, 1961. West Cameroon is one of the six administrative inspectorates that were created out of the Federal Republic of Cameroon.³

In 1962, West Cameroon switched from using the Nigerian pound sterling to the *Communauté Financière Africaine (CFA)* Franc which was accepted as legal tender across the country. (Bongfen Chem Langhee maintains that the true significance of the CFA is the *Communauté Française d’Afrique*.)⁴ Likewise, the East Cameroon metric system replaced the West Cameroon imperial system of weights and measures in 1964. The pivotal moment occurred in 1966 when President Ahmadou Ahidjo exploited the division within the West Cameroonian ruling party; the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP). All of the political parties in the states of East and West Cameroon were combined to create the Cameroon National Union (CNU) as the nation’s only political party. (The KNDP crisis, which shook the party from 1963 to 1965, was primarily a dispute between A. N. Jua and S. T. Muna over who would take over as West Cameroon State’s prime minister after J. N. Foncha moved to Yaoundé to become the Federal Republic of Cameroon’s vice president. The crisis had far-reaching consequences for the politics of the Cameroon nation as a whole and West Cameroon State specifically. After the dispute, A. N. Jua was elected P. M. of West Cameroon State, and his opponent, S. T. Muna, was expelled from the party to form the CUC because he refused to concede defeat) The Cameroon United Congress (CUC), led by S. T. Muna of West Cameroon State, the Cameroon Peoples National Congress (CPNC), led by E. M. L. Endeley, the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP) of J. N. Foncha, and the *Union Camerounaise (UC)* of Ahmadou Ahidjo of the East Cameroon State.⁵

By 1968, the biggest barrier to Ahidjo’s attempt to create a unitary state was the strong opposition to his agenda from A.N. Jua, the P.M. of West Cameroon State. S. T. Muna, who appeared to be a dupe and an unquestioning backer of Ahidjo’s policies, took his place after he was fired. His vice president, J. N. Foncha, was another obstacle for Ahidjo two years later, in 1970. Similar to Jua, Foncha was anti-unitarist by nature and disagreed with Ahidjo on that point. Without hesitation, Ahidjo dismissed him and appointed S. T. Muna in his place, allowing the latter to serve as both the Federation’s vice president and the P. M. of West Cameroon State.⁶

Nothing, it is clear, could prevent President Ahidjo from accomplishing his ultimate objective of ending the Cameroonian federation. The referendum held on May 20, 1972, was the final decisive action that ended the federal system of government. Cameroonians from both states flocked to the polls on this particular day to cast their votes on a question put forth by the head of state. The query was;

“Do you approve with the view of consolidating National Unity and accelerating the economic, social and cultural development of the Nation, the draft constitution submitted to the people of Cameroon by the President of the Federal Republic of Cameroon, instituting a Republic One and Indivisible to be styled The

¹ Ibid 43.

² Ibid 43.

³ Ibid 43.

⁴ Langhee, B.C. (1990). The Road to the Unitary State of Cameroon, 1959-1972”. In *Annals of the Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences, Volumes 1 and 2*, University of Yaoundé, January-July (1990): 14.

⁵ Ngoh, V.J. (1996). *History of Cameroon since 1800*, Limbe: Presbook.

⁶ Ngam, C.C. & Budi, R.N. (2020). The Anglophone Question in Cameroon: Historical Context and Evolution from “Everyday” Resistance to Armed Conflict, 1961-2017. *AFRICANA STUDIA*, (33), 2020.

United Republic of Cameroon?"¹

The majority of Cameroonians cast ballots for "YES" 3,236,280 persons registered nationwide, and 3,177,846 of them cast ballots, according to the polls and the results of the vote were "YES" Additionally, a negligible 176 votes were cast against the Unitary Constitution. 56,646 voters chose not to cast ballots, while 1,612 ballots were deemed invalid. Of the 731,850 people who registered to vote in the Referendum, 716,774 voted in favor of the Unitary Constitution, 89 voted against it, 13,934 registered voters did not cast ballots, and 1053 ballots were deemed invalid at the State of West Cameroon level. Of the 2,504,430 voters who registered to vote in East Cameroon State, 2,461,072 supported unitary state and 87 opposed it. Despite 559 ballots being deemed invalid, 42,712 people chose not to cast a ballot.² With far-reaching effects on the Anglophones, these outcomes immediately ended Cameroon's federal system of government and established a unitary state.

The Anglophone Question was based on Cameroon's decision to abandon its federal structure of governance. This was because, in spite of the obvious flaws in the federal structure, it still provided some constitutional protections for Anglophones; the West Cameroon State's customary judicial systems were permitted to operate; the West Cameroon House of Chiefs was permitted; it had a prime minister; it had its own budget; it also had some control over education and could elect a president or at least vice president of the FRC. Additionally, the maintenance of the Anglo-Saxon identity was guaranteed by the State of West Cameroon's control over basic education, local government, social welfare, agriculture, internal trade, cooperatives, state public works, archives and antiquities, and other minor matters. But when the federal constitution was ultimately repealed in 1972, these fundamental protections were taken away.³

The subject of the political future of the sandwich region between French Cameroon and British Nigeria became a hot topic when French Cameroon gained independence on January 1, 1960, and Britain announced plans to offer British Nigeria independence on October 1, 1960. This sparked a flurry of political scheming in Southern Cameroons, especially during the 1950s. Three different viewpoints surfaced among the political leaders as Southern Cameroonians differed on the political destiny of their region. Those choices included becoming an independent territory in its own right (secession), a part of the Republic of Cameroon (reunification), or an integral part of Nigeria (integration).⁴⁵⁶ A variety of Southern Cameroonians, including traditional rulers, supported the option of independence, which was perhaps the most popular, while integration and reunification choices had some support. For example, Bafut's Fon Achirimbi II, who also served as the Chiefs' Conference Chairman, contended that;

"We [traditional rulers] believed on two points during a conference in Bamenda in which Dr. Endeley and Mr. Foncha were present. I was Chairman of that conference. We rejected Dr. Endeley because he wanted to take us to Nigeria. If Mr. Foncha tries to take us to French Cameroon we shall also run away from him. To me French Cameroon is 'fire' and Nigeria is 'water' ... I support secession without reunification."⁷

Apparently, at this pivotal point in their political development, Southern Cameroonians found themselves torn between Scylla and Charybdis. The United Nations, the British, the Commonwealth, the French, other European countries, and even Nigeria pushed through their interests in the region in the middle of this political dilemma.

In general, the Commonwealth maintained a skeptical attitude while the French adopted a reluctant stance, while the British voiced misgivings about Southern Cameroons' ability to stand alone as an independent state.⁸ To put it plainly, these countries and groups, including Nigeria, opposed Southern Cameroons' independence. Torrent has averred that, "Just as they opposed to put it plainly, these countries and groups, including Nigeria, opposed Southern Cameroons' independence."

It appears that the French supported the idea of reunification, even though they were more receptive to the

¹ CNU, (1972b). The People Massively Approve the Institution of the United Republic of Cameroon, *l'Unité*, (537).

² CNU, (1972a). Results of the Referendum of May 20 Announced, *l'Unité*, (540).

³ Chem-Langhëë, B., (1990). *The Road to the Unitary State of Cameroon, 1959-1972, Annals of the Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences, vols. 1 and 2*. University of Yaoundé, January-July, pp. 3-22.

⁴ Fanso, V. G., (2017). *Cameroon History for secondary Schools and Colleges. From Pre-historic Times to the Twenty-first Century*. Revised and Updated Combined Edition. Bamkika'ay-Kumbo-Cameroon: Team Work Press.

⁵ Ngoh, V. J., (2019). *Cameroon 1884-Present (2018): The History of a People*. Limbe: Design House.

⁶ Ndi, A., (2013a). *Southern West Cameroon Revisited, 1950-1972: Unveiling Inescapable Traps*. Volume One. Bamenda: Paul's Press.

⁷ Kale, P. M., (1967). *Political Evolution in the Cameroons*. Buea: Government Printer.

⁸ Torrent, M., (2012). *Diplomacy and Nation Building in Africa: Franco-British Relations and Cameroon at the End of Empire*. London and New York: I. B. Tauris.

British interest in the region, and the British and Nigerians supported integration. Thus, the UN and other international organizations' choices about the area of Southern Cameroon were affected by both powers.

The independence of Southern Cameroons as a sovereign state was actually resisted by Britain.¹ In addition to significantly slowing down Southern Cameroons' socioeconomic development when they were in charge of the region, the British also made a concerted effort to keep the region a part of Nigeria. The entire concept of the plebiscite in Southern Cameroons was a sham, according to certain British officials who worked there in various positions during this time. Malcolm Milne, the former Deputy Commissioner of the Southern Cameroons, acknowledges that,

“I had not come to terms with the conviction myself-[...] we were doing the [Southern] Cameroons a wrong. We would have struggled harder to continue our trusteeship for several years longer. But the forces against us were strong and I judge now that had I, as Commissioner of the Cameroons taken this line in 1959-61, I should merely have made a great nuisance of myself and achieved nothing.”²

John Percival, one of the British-appointed plebiscite commissioners in Cameroon, has even accused the UN and Britain of being responsible for the situation in Southern Cameroon. As he says;

“Many Southern Cameroonians continued to plead for colonial administration to be prolonged for a little longer, to give them a chance to make informed decision about the future, but both the UN and the [British] had refused to countenance this option... with Ian Macleod as colonial secretary, the British Government of the day was only too eager to wash its hands off the Cameroons ... as quickly and painlessly as possible.”³

In its Resolution 1514 (XV) of December 14, 1960, the UN General Assembly stated that “inadequacy of political, economic, social, and educational preparedness should never serve as a pretext for delaying independence,” demonstrating its resolve to grant independence to all aspirant nations worldwide. UN, 1960 According to Resolution 1541 (XV) on December 15, 1960, non-self-governing areas could likewise become independent by; *Emerging as a Sovereign Independent State or Free Association with an Independent State or Integration with an Independent State* (Emphasis added).⁴ Due to the need to safeguard the interests of the European powers, particularly the British, who were against the first option and doubtful of the second, they had to use the UN to their advantage in order to profit from the third, which was giving Southern Cameroons independence as a necessary component of Nigeria's independent state. The plebiscite questions from February 11, 1961, the pinnacle of Southern Cameroon's political development, reflected this.⁵

British Southern Cameroonians were forced to submit to the UN-supervised plebiscite on this date, which was a strange circumstance. The following choices were crucial to answering the challenging questions: *Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the Independent Federation of Nigeria? OR Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the Independent Republic of Cameroon?*⁶ In the Southern Cameroons, these questions represented two of the three primary political stances. The third and, of course, most popular choice, “Independence without joining” (secession), was relegated to obscurity or oblivion. If correctly read, the questions above meant; “*Do you wish to achieve Independence by being annexed to the Nigerian Federation?*” OR “*Do you wish to achieve Independence by being annexed to the Republic of Cameroon?*”⁷

As a result, Southern Cameroonians were left with little choice than to lose their independence in order to gain it. Nevertheless, by the day of the election, John Ngu Foncha, the leader of the push for reunion with the Republic of Cameroon, had managed to convince Southern Cameroonians that voting for reunification would be the “superior option”. By a vote of 233,571 (70.5%) to 97,741 (29.5%), Southern Cameroonians decided to reunite with the Republic du Cameroun in order to attain independence. In accordance with UN Resolution 1541 (XV),

¹ Ndi, A., (2013b). *Southern West Cameroon Revisited: North-South West Nexus, 1858-1972, Myth, History and Reality*. Volume Two. Bamenda: Paul's Press.

² Milne, M., (1999). *No Telephone to Heaven: From Apex to Nadir, Colonial Service Nigeria, Aden, the Cameroons and Gold Coast, 1938-61*. Longstoke: Meon Hill Press.

³ Percival, J. (n.d.). *The Southern Cameroons Plebiscite, Choice or Betrayal*. Bamenda, Mankon: Langaa Research and Publishing CIG; cited in Ndi, A., (2013b). *Southern West Cameroon Revisited: North-South West Nexus, 1858-1972, Myth, History and Reality*. Volume Two. Bamenda: Paul's Press.

⁴ Ngoh, V. J., (2019). *Cameroon 1884-Present (2018): The History of a People*. Limbe: Design House.

⁵ Ngam, C.C. & Budi, R.N., (2020). The Anglophone Question in Cameroon: Historical Context and Evolution from “Everyday” Resistance to Armed Conflict, 1961-2017. *AFRICANA STUDIA*, (33).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

the independence of Southern Cameroons was so obviously conditional. Even though Southern Cameroons were granted independence in exchange for reunification, federalism served as the foundation for the reunification negotiations. Before Paul Biya came to power in 1982, Anglophone leaders were unable to publicly criticize francophone dominance due to a lack of unity and harsh persecution. However, after he implemented a limited amount of liberalization, they started to voice their long-standing complaints. The Anglophone General Certificate of Education (GCE) was modified by the government in 1983 to make it more akin to the Baccalauréat. The protests and class boycott that followed were put down by police brutality at the University of Yaounde and in Anglophone Cameroon's cities. Despite substantial objections since this was what independent francophone Cameroon had been called by Ahidjo before reunification, the government changed the country's official name from the "United Republic of Cameroon" to simply the "Republic of Cameroon" in 1984.

A well-known Anglophone attorney named Fon Gorji Dinka was jailed in 1985 after he distributed a statement claiming that the Biya Government was unconstitutional and demanding that the Southern Cameroons be reclaimed as the Republic of Ambazonia. Almost simultaneously, two memoranda sent to the ruling UNC's Bamenda congress by Douala-based North West and South West elites brought attention to the predicament of the Anglophone minority and emphasized how it felt excluded from political authority.¹

Other causes, most notably the increasing monopolization of key positions by members of the President's ethnic group, who appeared considerably more willing than Ahidjo's barons to assert claims to the state's resources, added to the frustration with the francophone-dominated state in the late 1980s. As of August 1991, 22 out of 38 top bureaucrats appointed to the newly created position of Prime Minister were Beti, along with 37 out of 47 senior prefects and 75% of the parastatals' directors and general managers, according to Joseph Takougang.²

In addition, English-speaking individuals tended to attribute the growing economic problem mostly to Biya's government's bad management and corruption. They said that their abundant oil riches had not benefited their area and lamented the lack of increased investments in its deteriorating infrastructure and faltering economy. Those in power were said to have used oil revenues to feed "the bellies of their allies" and stimulate the economies of other region.

The ruling RDPC had vulgarized the politics of "scratch my back, I scratch yours" and "politics na njangi," which both suggest that "one good turn deserves another." This was particularly true after Simon Achidi Achu, a North Westerner, was elected prime minister in 1992. The ruling RDPC had vulgarized the politics of "scratch my back, I scratch yours" and "politics na njangi," which both suggest that "one good turn deserves another." This was particularly true after Simon Achidi Achu, a North Westerner, was elected prime minister in 1992. Peter Mafany Musonge, a South Westerner, replaced him in September 1996. At a reception in Buea, Musonge said, "President Biya has scratched our back, and we shall certainly scratch the Head of State's back thoroughly when the time comes." This meant that South Westerners should make a commitment to show their complete support and loyalty to the President who had appointed Musonge. The *Société nationale de raffinage* (Sonara), the oil refinery near Limbe (or Victoria as some prefer to call it again), remained dominated by Francophone leaders and employees. Anglophone Cameroon was also somewhat concerned about its main agro-industrial companies, particularly the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) and *Plantations Pamol du Cameroun Ltd* (Pamol). During the ongoing structural adjustment program, it would either be liquidated or sold to French or francophone entities.³

2.3 The Rise in Anglophone Dissension

It should come as no surprise that with the escalating political and economic crises in Anglophone Cameroon, the nation's first opposition party emerged. The North West Province's capital, Bamenda, is where the Social Democratic Front (SDF) was established in 1990. Its chairman was book salesman John Fru Ndi, who was to become quite popular with the urban populace due to his bravery and populist leadership style. Following the deadly May march to launch the SDF, which claimed the lives of six young Anglophones, the state-run media attempted to discredit the government and misrepresent the facts. The nation was astonished by the RDPC's top leaders' response to this nonviolent protest, and they vehemently denounced the Anglophones for this "treacherous" deed.⁴ The First Vice-President of the RDPC, who was the Anglophone architect of the federal

¹ Stephen Mungwa Tebi, *Cameroon and a New Militantism: the faces behind the mask* (1985).

² Joseph Takougang, (1993). The Demise of Biya's New Deal in Cameroon, 1991-1992, in *Africa Insight* (Pretoria), 23, 2, 1993, pp. 91-101.

³ Piet Konings, (1997). Agro-Industry and Regionalism in the South West Province of Cameroon During the National Economic and Political Crisis, in Paul Nchoji Nkwi and Francis Beng Nyamnjoh (eds.), *Regional Balance and National Integration in Cameroon: lessons learned and the uncertain future* (Yaounde!, ASC ICASSRT), pp. 289-305.

⁴ Paul Nchoji Nkwi and Francis Beng Nyamnjoh (eds.), (1997). *Regional Balance and National Integration in Cameroon: lessons learned and the uncertain future* (Yaounde, ASC ICASSRT).

state, resigned in June. As Foncha clarified:

“The Anglophone Cameroonians whom I brought into union have been ridiculed and referred to as ‘les Biafrais’, ‘les ennemis dans la maison’, ‘les traitres’ etc., and the constitutional provisions which protected this Anglophone minority have been suppressed, their voice drowned while the rule of the gun replaced the dialogue which the Anglophones cherish very much.”¹

The government increased its level of political liberalization in response to significant pressures from both the inside and the outside. It declared the arrival of multipartyism and some degree of freedom of mass association and communication, including the ability to attend public gatherings and protests, in December 1990.² Consequently, Cameroon saw the establishment of political parties, pressure groups, and private publications that started to voice and represent Anglophone concerns.

The SDF then extended its sphere of influence to the South West and quickly rose to prominence as Anglophone Cameroon’s main opposition party. However, because of concern about reestablished North West dominance, the province’s elite remained dubious of the SDF leaders’ ambitions. The South West has failed to develop a powerful and viable party, primarily due to personal animosities, with the exception of the Liberal Democratic Alliance (LDA), which has made an effort to become a significant political body with only limited success. In fact, the ongoing leadership dispute in the LDA between Lydia Belle Effimba and Mola Njoh Litumbe is only one more sign that the South West’s elite has not yet developed a viable substitute for the SDF.³

By planning multiple significant conflicts with the ruling authority, particularly during the “ghost town” campaign in 1991–1992, the SDF leaders contributed to the Anglophone region becoming a veritable hotbed of revolt. Between April 1991 and January 1992, the radical opposition sent out calls, ultimatums, tracts, and other materials urging people to boycott businesses and markets, stay indoors, block roadways, and refuse to pay taxes and bills in order to halt the economy. The goal of the “ghost town” campaign was to have the Biya government host a *Conférence nationale souveraine*.⁴

When Fru Ndi won 86.3 and 51.6 percent of the votes cast in the North West and South West Provinces, respectively, in the subsequent presidential elections, the effect this had on the Anglophone population was very evident. It should come as no surprise that Biya’s October 1992 triumph was a painful event in Anglophone Cameroon, with violent protests taking place across the North West against his “theft of Fru Ndi’s victory.” Following that, the president declared a three-month state of emergency in this province, keeping Fru Ndi under observation at his Bamenda home.⁵ The French persisted in backing Biya, who seemed prepared to protect their interests in Cameroon, while the US, Germany, and the EU condemned the rigged elections and the state of emergency in the North West and threatened to stop providing aid to the country until “there was a clear advancement in the democratic process.”⁶

Ironically, despite Fru Ndi and the SDF’s significant contributions to Anglophone awareness and action, the party is becoming more and more of a “national” organization, as shown by the rise in its number of francophone supporters, the majority of whom are from the nearby West and Littoral Provinces. In response to the calls for a return to the federal state from recently formed pressure organizations, the SDF seems to have taken a very equivocal stance. The devolution of powers received special attention during its 1992 national convention in Bamenda, and “decentralization” was the rhetorical focus at Bafoussam the following year, where Fru Ndi used the word “federalism” at least once.⁷ Notwithstanding having the opportunity to join any Anglophone movement, SDF members seem to be losing their original attractiveness among English-speaking Cameroonians due to the party’s ambivalent stance on the “anglophone problem”.

In real terms, Anglophone elites established or revived a number of associations and pressure groups to represent and protect their interests after political liberalization in 1990. Most initially supported a return to the federal state, particularly the Cameroon Anglophone Movement (CAM) and the All-Anglophone Congress (AAC), but some, most notably the Free West Cameroon Movement (FWCM) and the Ambazonia Movement (AM) of Fon

¹ John Ngu Foncha’s letter of resignation from the RDPC is reproduced in Mukong (ed.), op. cit. p. 155.

² Société de presse et d’éditions du Cameroun, *Cameroon. Rights and Freedoms: collection of recent texts* (Yaounde!, Sopecam, 1991).

³ *Cameroon Post* (Yaounde), 16-22, April 1996.

⁴ Celestin Monga, *La Recomposition du marche U politique camerounais, 1991-1992*, (Douala, 1993).

⁵ Boh Herbert, *Cameroon: state of human rights violations following October 11 presidential elections* (Bamenda), 10 November 1992.

⁶ Konings, P. & Nyamnjoh, F.B. (1997). The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon. *Journal of Modern African Studies*.

⁷ Cf. Milton Krieger, Cameroon’s Democratic Crossroads, 1990±4, in *The Journal of Modern African Studies* (Cambridge), 32, 4, December 1994, pp. 605-28.

Gorji Dinka, advocated full secession. The Cameroon Anglophone Students' Association (Cansa), the Teachers' Association of Cameroon (Tac), and the Confederation of Anglophone Parents-Teachers' Association of Cameroon (Captac) were other pro-federalist groups with a more limited goal. They pushed the government to establish a General Certificate of Education Board in 1993, marking a significant win for the Anglophones in their ten-year battle against resolute attempts to dismantle the GCE.¹

In their struggle against the francophone-dominated unitary state, these associations and pressure groups have frequently called for protests, strikes, and boycotts; the involvement of different societal groups shows that the "Anglophone problem" is no longer merely and exclusively an élitist issue. It's interesting to note that some of these acts are directed against the myths, discourses, and symbols promoted by the ruling system. On May 20, the "day of the 1972 glorious revolution," Anglophone movements have boycotted the national feast day celebration, calling it a "day of mourning" and a "day of shame." Instead, they have urged Anglophones to commemorate the "day of the plebiscite" on February 11 and the "day of independence" on October 1. When CAM activists attempted to raise the federation flag on these feast days in 1992–3, the police allegedly responded with "extreme brutality".²

Furthermore, those who claim that Ahidjo failed to follow the correct procedures for the enactment and revision of the federal constitution are increasingly referring to the Southern Cameroons.³ According to this viewpoint, some Anglophones assert that they reside in an area that was under trust prior to reunification, and as a result, the UN flag has recently come to represent their conviction that the UN will always be responsible for the Southern Cameroons. Despite the fact that the controversial return of this terminology has the benefit of reminding the locals of the Anglophone identity's historical roots, as Luc Sindjoun correctly points out, only residents of one of the region's "autochthonous" ethnic groups are able to claim Anglophone identity, a distinction that tends to bar immigrants from obtaining citizenship in Southern Cameroon.⁴ This means that being "Anglophone" is less a cultural reality and more a geographical and administrative one. For people who are viewed and treated as "Francophones of Anglophone culture," references to the supposed "eleventh province" are therefore made.⁵

The Tripartite Conference, which President Biya called from October 30 to November 18, 1991, presented a significant threat to the unitary state that was controlled by francophones. Four Anglophones were able to persuade their francophone counterparts that Cameroon needed to revert to the Fouban federal arrangements of 1961, despite the fact that delegates were not chosen based on their cultural background. When Carlson Anyangwe from the North West and Sam Ekontang Elad, Simon Munzu, and Benjamin Itoe from the South West released the EMIA constitution (named after their initials), which called for a West Cameroon state in a loose federation, they essentially put an end to the proceedings.⁶ Following the regime's announcement in March 1993 of a nationwide constitutional reform debate, they went on to call the All Anglophone Conference (AAC). The following month, more than 5,000 members of a "All Anglophone Congress" gathered in Buea, the former capital of the Southern Cameroons, "for the purpose of implementing a common Anglophone position on constitutional reform and other issues concerning our well-being, that of our posterity, our territory, and the country of Cameroon as a whole".⁷

In furtherance of calling for a return to the federal state, the Buea Declaration enumerated several complaints against francophone dominance.⁸ Similar to earlier papers produced by comparable pressure groups.⁹ The misery of the poor Anglophones was often attributed to the evil Francophones as a whole, and the two were compared in an idealized manner: the former, in complete unity, agree to oppress the latter, who are by their very nature peace-loving, receptive to discussion, and liberated.¹⁰ Naturally, this demagogic technique, which is

¹ Konings, P. & Nyamnjoh, F.B. (1997). The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon. *Journal of Modern African Studies*.

² Konings, P. & Nyamnjoh, F.B. (1997). The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon. *Journal of Mordern African Studies*.

³ A. D. Olinga, (1991). La "Question anglophone" dans le Cameroun d'aujourd'hui, in *Revue juridique et politique* (Paris), 3, pp. 292-308.

⁴ Luc Sindjoun, Rente identitaire, politique d'affection et crise de l'équilibre des tensions au Cameroun, in *Afrique politique* (Paris), forthcoming.

⁵ Konings, P. & Nyamnjoh, F.B. (1997). The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon. *Journal of Modern African Studies*.

⁶ *Cameroon Post*, 1-7 June 1993.

⁷ *The Buea Declaration*, p. 8.

⁸ Anglophone Patriotic Alliance, (1991). The Restoration of the State of West Cameroon, in *The West Cameroon Journal* (Bamenda}Victoria), pp. 11-18.

⁹ Mukong (ed.), (1991). op. cit., and Anglophone Patriotic Alliance, The Restoration of the State of West Cameroon, in *The West Cameroon Journal* (Bamenda, Victoria), pp. 11-18.

¹⁰ V. E. Ngome., (1993). Anglophobia. *Focus on Africa*. (London, BBC African Service), 4, 3, pp. 27±9.

frequently used in ethnic discourse, highlights the “insurmountable” dichotomy that supports the AAC’s demand for autonomy. The above approach may be effective in organizing Anglophones, but it hasn’t done much to aid in the fight against their “real” adversary, the francophone-dominated unitary state, which has supporters and adversaries across the nation. It also gravely undermines any francophone sympathy for the Anglophone cause and rejects the existence of varied ethnic ties.¹

The AAC’s 65-member Anglophone Standing Committee published a draft constitution in May 1993 that would grant significant political, economic, and budgetary autonomy to the two federated republics, their respective provinces, and the communities within each province.

Each federated state would have a senate and national assembly, the traditional division of powers between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, and the Federal Republic would have a rotating presidency in which an Anglophone would succeed a francophone after no more than two consecutive five-year terms (or vice versa). To guarantee province-to-province rotation, this idea was even restated for each of the federated nations (clearly keeping in mind the South West/North West division). Only after Simon Munzu, Ekontang Elad, and Carlson Anyangwe realized that the other members of the reform committee President Biya had established in May 1993 were unreceptive to any federalist ideas was the complete language of the draft (EMIA) constitution made public.²

On December 3, 1993, one of the most significant AAC groups expressed its support for the “zero option,” or complete independence for the Southern Cameroons, in response to the government’s steadfast unwillingness to debate the AAC’s constitutional demands.³ The Second All Anglophone Conference (AAC II), held in Bamenda from April 29 to May 2, 1994, essentially adopted the CAM’s move from federalism to secession. It was decided that the Anglophone Council should “proclaim the revival of the independence and sovereignty of the Anglophone territory of the Southern Cameroons, and take all measures necessary to secure, defend and preserve the independence, sovereignty and integrity of the said territory” if the government “either persisted in its refusal to engage in meaningful constitutional talks or failed to engage in such talks within a reasonable time.”⁴

According to the Bamenda Proclamation, the Anglophone Council should become the Southern Cameroons Constituent Assembly after the country’s independence was declared. This would allow the council to draft, discuss, and adopt a constitution for the independent and sovereign state of Southern Cameroons without calling another meeting of the All-Anglophone Conference. In August 1993, the Anglophone Council was renamed the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) after delegates decided to replace the AAC with the Southern Cameroons Peoples Conference (SCPC).⁵

¹ *La Nouvelle expression*, 13±17, January 1994, pp. 1-3.

² Konings, P. & Nyamnjoh, F.B., (1997). The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon. *Journal of Modern African Studies*.

³ *Cameroon Post*, 1-8 December 1993, pp. 7-10, and *Cameroon Life* (Buea), 2, 10 October 1993.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

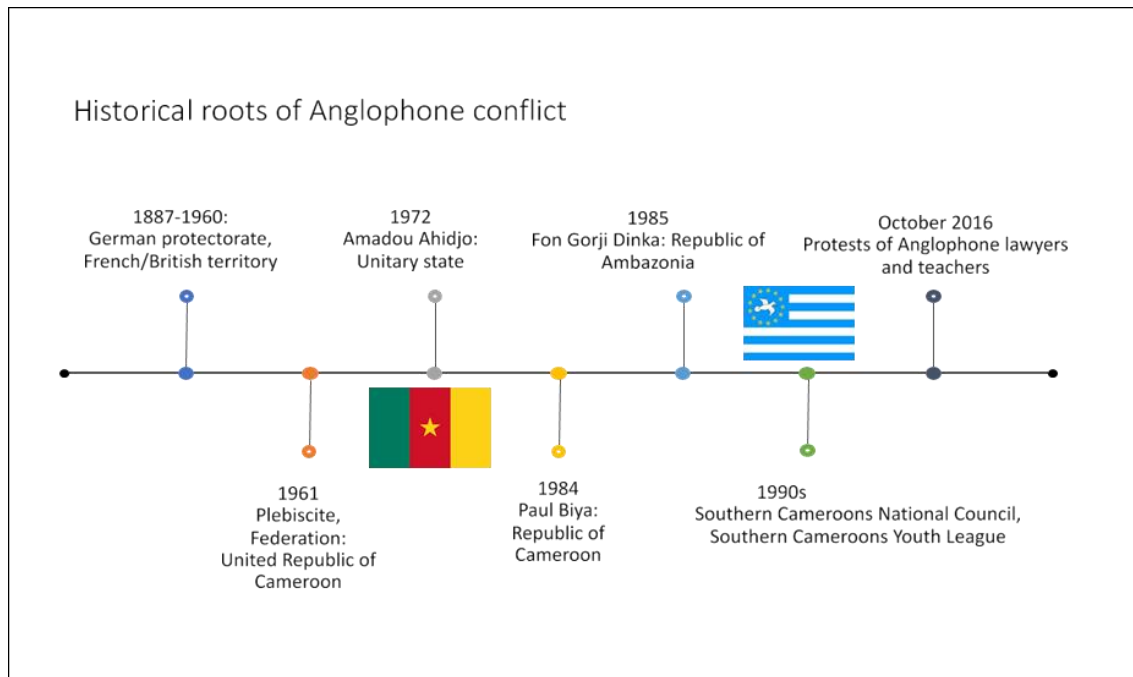


Figure 1. Illustrates how the Anglophone struggle developed

Source: Adapted from Pelican, M. (2022). The Anglophone conflict in Cameroon — historical and political background. Working Paper No. 20. Freiburg, Germany.

2.4 Early Popular Cooperation

People in the Anglophone Regions supported the armed organizations known as “Amba Boys” during the height of the conflict”. The public adored them and viewed them as true Freedom Fighters. Perhaps they had positioned themselves as self-defense movements and defenders of freedom, arising to defend the populace from the federal government’s invading forces, which many perceived as the culprit behind innumerable terrible crimes. A segment of the Anglophone people at this time referred to the “Amba Boys” as “Our Boys” with affection. During their home visits, they asked for material and financial support for the fight, which the locals kindly and voluntarily provided. In addition to portraying them in a highly favorable light, the locals in certain situations offered the boys housing and, more importantly, moral support. This led to both an increase in the number of armed organizations and a largely positive public image of them.

Public opinion started to shift, albeit slowly, as “Our Boys” started carrying out atrocities against the populace over time, such as kidnappings for ransom, attacks on students, blocking roads to some towns and villages in the North West and South West Regions, and the “arrest,” torture, murder, and beheading of alleged blacklegs. Instead of the loving nickname “Our Boys,” they were increasingly called “Those Boys.” But as the situation continued, the populace soon found itself torn between Scylla and Charybdis, suffering greatly at the hands of both “Amba” Boys and government forces. The armed conflict in the Anglophone regions was further exacerbated by the government’s poor crisis management.¹

2.5 Global Consequences

In furtherance of securing the full support of the Anglophone population for their plans to establish a federal or independent Southern Cameroons state, the Anglophone Standing Committee and the SCNC have worked hard to garner international support for their cause. In 1995, delegations were sent to the United Nations to protest “the annexation of its ex-Trust Territory, the Southern Cameroons.” They were doing so in response to a petition that was submitted to the UN by Fon Gorji Dinka and Albert Mukong, a prominent member of CAM and one of the regime’s most vehement opponents.

To take action on behalf of the Anglophone minority in the 1980s and early 1990s. Since Ngu Foncha and Solomon Tandeng Muna are largely considered to be the Anglophone architects of the federal and unitary states, respectively, their co-optation in the SCNC delegation sent to New York was significant. When they crossed the river Mungo in July 1995, rites were held to commemorate their return to the Southern Cameroons, and the

¹ *Ibid.*

SCNC sympathizer Fon of Bafut bestowed the title of “Lord” to both of them in appreciation of their symbolic significance.¹ Notwithstanding the fact that these UN missions had no concrete outcomes, they contributed to discredit Biya’s government and brought widespread attention to the Anglophone cause.

Cameroon petitioned to join the Commonwealth in 1989, but it wasn’t until June 1993 that Chief Emeka Anyaoku, the Secretary-General, traveled there to assess whether the Republic complied with the requirements for admission. After that, he was essentially “hijacked” by anglophone pressure organizations that managed to mess with the government’s plan and make him aware of their predicament. They argued that since the country they represented could satisfy the linguistic and historical requirements for admission, the Commonwealth ought to deny the Republic’s application and give the Southern Cameroons full membership or special status.²

Due to Cameroon’s failure to meet the requirements for membership outlined in the 1991 Harare Declaration—namely, the establishment of a democratic system, good governance, and respect for human rights—its admission was delayed during the October 1993 Commonwealth summit in Nicosia, Cyprus. Some of the participants were heavily lobbied by the Anglophone Standing Committee’s uninvited two-man delegation, which raised their awareness of the Biya regime’s ongoing persecution of the Anglophone minority and surely influenced their decision to delay the country’s admission.³

Although not making any progress toward democracy over the following two years, Cameroon joined the Commonwealth on November 1, 1995. Anglophone circles generally believe that Biya and Sani Abacha’s “deal” to protect one another from international criticism of their governments may have contributed to Nigeria’s favorable stance toward inclusion. Following Nigeria, other Commonwealth nations voted in favor of Cameroon’s admittance, including Britain, which has frequently claimed to support the Anglophone cause. Although SCNC officials have expressed their great disappointment for Cameroon’s admission, SDF chairman Fru Ndi backed the claim that this would put pressure on the government to implement political changes. Even though the Commonwealth, an association of sovereign and independent states, is typically hesitant to grant admission to “separatist movements of minority groups,” the latter appears to have adopted a new tactic when they pleaded for a Quebec-style independence referendum for the Southern Cameroons and submitted an application for separate membership during the November 1995 summit in Auckland, New Zealand.⁴

In addition to the many agreements of cooperation between the two countries, there are several more aspects that can be used to describe strategy. Because the SDF chairman has never concealed his pro-American views and his distaste for French neo-colonialism, the organized opposition seems to be centered around a “hard” Anglophone core. Fru Ndi’s anti-French comments and call for a boycott of French goods did not sit well in Paris. Additionally, it is still commonly believed that American decision-making in Cameroon threatens France’s “superior” interests, and that the draft federal constitution makers of the AAC in Washington are having an excessive amount of influence over the policies of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and even the anglophone opposition.⁵

Growing discontent with the political and economic performance of the Biya regime, along with growing interest in other English-speaking African nations, particularly South Africa and Nigeria, have contributed to some shifts in French opinion. In 1993, a few months after taking office as French ambassador to Cameroon, Gilles Vidal did something that none of his predecessors had ever done before: he traveled to Buea and Bamenda and met with Anglophone leaders, including Ngu Foncha, before setting up a meeting with Anglophone Standing Committee members to learn about the AAC’s goals. Philippe Selz, his successor, has likewise taken care to maintain communication with the opposition; in April 1996, while on his ambassadorial “tour of French-sponsored projects” in the North West Province, he even had dinner with Fru Ndi, the leader of the SDF.⁶

The French president’s choice to skip Yaoundé on his 1995 African tour is one sign of the growing distance between France and her former colony, as does Cameroon’s recent Commonwealth membership.⁷ According to reports, Jacques Chirac became impatient with Cameroon’s slow and uneven economic and political reforms and was harshly critical of the country’s ongoing widespread corruption. This may help to explain why even President Biya’s May 1996 trip to Paris is thought to have done little to ease tensions. Even though the French

¹ SCNC Homecoming, in *Cameroon Post*, 3-10, July.

² Konings, P. & Nyamnjoh, F.B., (1997). The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon. *Journal of Modern African Studies*.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Cameroon Post*, 23-29 April 1996, and *The Rambler*, 30 April-6 May 1996.

⁷ `En Tournée africaine J. Chirac ignore le Cameroun, in *La Nouvelle expression*, 11-14 July 1995.

president had lately separated himself from the Government of Cameroon by “recognizing the Anglophone problem,” he was undoubtedly upset to be greeted at the airport by the Minister of Cooperation rather than Chirac, as must have been expected and offering conversation and constitutional remedies as remedies.¹ Biya’s boycott of President Chirac’s attendance at the Franco-African summit in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in December 1996 further worsened the situation. The Southern Cameroons’ independence was supposed to be declared on October 1, 1996, but the date passed without anything more than an Independence Day speech by the SCNC’s new chairman, Henry Fossung, in which he urged Southern Cameroonians to make their “national day” “a day of prayers,” asking God “to save us from political bondage” and restating that independence was “irreversible and non-negotiable.”²

The SCNC hopes that its diplomatic offensive has at least increased external awareness enough to make the Government seriously consider potential military intervention after the eventual declaration of independence, even though international recognition of an independent Southern Cameroonian state is unlikely to occur. However, it has never ruled out the possibility of a “long-drawn-out war,” which is why it is necessary to build “defensive shields” in the Southern Cameroons to ensure that we are not deterred by the Republic’s vicious forces and their constant provocations³.

2.6 Current Factors Contributing to the Anglophone Crisis

The reunion of the two Cameroons was negotiated on the basis of federalism, as mentioned in the previous section. The Southern Cameroonians actually voted for reunion in large numbers because they were assured that their identity would be maintained in the union through a federation. When President Ahidjo visited Buea in July 1960, Tiko gave Southern Cameroonians the assurance that “our desire is [re]unification not annexation.” For Cameroonians, the time has come to come together and create a nation—within a united Africa.⁴ Federalism would be the foundation for reunion, Ahidjo went on to say. Anglophones in Southern Cameroon voted for reunion with former French Cameroon (Francophones) based on these promises. Southern Cameroonians were likewise not doing well at the time due to developments in Nigeria. It was evident that the Southern Cameroonians were dominating Nigeria in the Constitutions of 1922 (Clifford Constitution), 1947 (Richards Constitution), 1951 (Macpherson Constitution), and 1954 (Lyttelton Constitution). This was made worse by the Igbos’ ongoing attempts to socially oppress, economically exploit, and politically dominate the Southern Cameroonians. Therefore, the only explanation for how Reunification ultimately sparked the Anglophone Question is that Ahidjo’s (and later Biya’s) governments failed to maintain the policies put in place to protect the Anglophone identity. The Anglophone Question was obviously rooted in this. This significant aspect of Cameroon after independence is reflected in all other apparent causes, including the marginalization of Anglophones in the country in all of its expressions, including linguistic, administrative, economic, and political. That is why the Cameroon Action Movement (CAM), which called for secession from the union in 1979, was founded by Anglophones in response to the destruction of federalism in 1972. Over time, numerous further pro-Anglophone movements and pressure groups arose.⁵

Although there have always been complaints among Cameroon’s Anglophones, which came to light after the federal government was dismantled in 1972, they have never reached the level of the situation that was observed in 2017. Common law attorneys’ complaints, then those of Cameroon Anglophone Teachers Trade Unions, were first voiced through strikes before spiraling into a sociopolitical crisis that has imprisoned the entire nation till. Around 2017, the Anglophone Question had descended into violence as armed organizations had emerged to protect the Anglophones’ cause, including their independence and secession and the establishment of the State of Ambazo. As a result, the armed groups that arose were known as “Amba” Boys, and they continued to attack government officials, military personnel, and educational institutions. They also blocked and destroyed roads and bridges that connected the South West and North West regions of the country’s towns and villages. Government forces protecting the nation’s territorial integrity also violently reacted to this.⁶

The Anglophone Question emerged as a result of Cameroon’s breakdown of the federal system, leading to subtly

¹ *Cameroon Post*, 16-22 April 1996, for Chirac’s appeal and CAM’s reactions.

² *The Witness* (Bamenda), 12-18 November 1996.

³ Fossung, H., (1997). *Cameroon Post*, 7-13 January 1997.

⁴ Ndi, A., (2013b). *Southern West Cameroon Revisited: North-South West Nexus, 1858-1972, Myth, History and Reality*. Volume Two. Bamenda: Paul’s Press.

⁵ Ngoh, V. J., (2019). *Cameroon 1884-Present (2018): The History of a People*. Limbe: Design House.

⁶ Budi, R.N., (2019c). Caught between Scylla and Charybdis? Assessing the Practice of Journalism in Bamenda-Cameroon during the Anglophone Crisis, 2016-2019. *Arts and Humanities Open Access Journal*, 3(6), pp. 261-268.

expressed opposition. The Cameroon Action Movement (CAM), a pro-Anglophone lobbying group, was established in 1979 in response to the dissolution of the federal form of government in order to support the Anglophones' way of life.¹ Considering this, it was challenging for more Anglophones to express their complaints through activism and pressure groups due to the nation's restrictive political environment. However, President Biya eliminated the term "United Republic of Cameroon" and replaced it with the name "Republic of Cameroon" by signing Law N° 84-001 on February 4, 1984.² This reform was met with resistance by the Anglophones, who characterized it as annexationist and assimilationist. After the Liberty Laws were passed in December 1990, more Anglophone societies and pressure groups formed, either to protect the situation of Anglophones in Cameroon or to commemorate remnants of Anglophone identity. Among them were the Ambazonia Liberation Movement (ALIM), the Free West Cameroon Movement (FWCM), the Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL), the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), the Southern Cameroons Peoples' Organization (SCAPO), and the Ambazonia Peoples' Emancipation Council (APEC). The South West Chiefs' Conference (SWECC), the North West Fons' Union (NOWEFU), the South West Elite Association (SWELA), and the North West Elite Association (NOWELA) were among the other organizations founded to commemorate the remnants of Anglophone identity.³

Anglophones have previously engaged in resistance over the years, but it had never escalated to the point where armed conflict occurred as it did in 2017. As the government discussed its business concerns with teachers and attorneys, it should be mentioned that both groups were determined to force the government to return to the two-state federation that served as the foundation for the union. This resulted in the formation of a Consortium of Anglophone Teachers and Common Law Lawyers, but the government ultimately outlawed it due to illegality, and several of its members, like Agbor Bala and Fontem Neba, were subsequently arrested. Nevertheless, the events of October 1, 2017, and the popular march on September 22, 2017, truly laid the ground for armed confrontation. It became apparent that the Anglophone regions were heading into armed confrontation based on allegations that the march was peaceful but the government's response was violent, as well as the fact that some Anglophones were killed on October 1, 2017. Ambazonia Defense Forces (ADF), Southern Cameroons Defense Forces (SOCADEF), Southern Cameroons Defense Forces (SCDF), Lebialem Red Dragons, Manyu Ghost Warriors, Ambazonia Self-Defense Restoration Forces, Tigers of Ambazonia, 10 Manyu Tigers, The Sword of Ambazonia (TSOA), Southern Cameroons Restoration Forces, Ten-Ten Group, Ambazonia Restoration Army, "General" Obi's Group, and other armed groups were established in the North West and South West Regions under the leadership of numerous Anglophones living abroad. The North West Region is home to numerous groups, including the Vipers, Donga/Mantung Self-Defense Group, "General" Satan's Group, Menchum Fall Warriors, White Tigers, Seven Kata, Ambaland Kwifor, Ambazonia Defense Forces (ADF), and the Warriors of Nso. In the South West Region, there are also groups like General Eugene's Group and "General" Nyambere Group. As a result, irregular organizations and official government forces on the ground occasionally clashed. Secessionist organizations also targeted government products, services, and institutions. The burning of Brasseries trucks carrying drinks by separatist fighters is seen in Figure 2.

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*



Figure 2. Burning of Brasseries trucks by Seperatist Fighters

Source: Adapted from Menyolu, G.I. (2021). The Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon, Historical and contemporary Perspectives. Master’s thesis in Peace and Conflict Transformation, SVF-3901. Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education. The Arctic University of Norway. (Accessed on 10th October 2023).

Due to these groups’ presence, there have been frequent clashes in both areas, which have had a significant impact on the civilian populace. How did we get here, though? According to the abstract, this turn in the Anglophone struggle in Cameroon was caused by a confluence of events. Unquestionably, collected complaints show themselves as frustrations, Armed conflict in the Anglophone Regions since 2017 has been caused by “Ambazonism,” which has grown and been promoted on social media as the twin phenomena of liberalism and nationalism. It has been led by a prominent Anglophone Cameroonian diaspora, who have benefited from the protection that comes with distance and geography.¹ Figure 3 depicts warring parties in the Anglophone conflict.

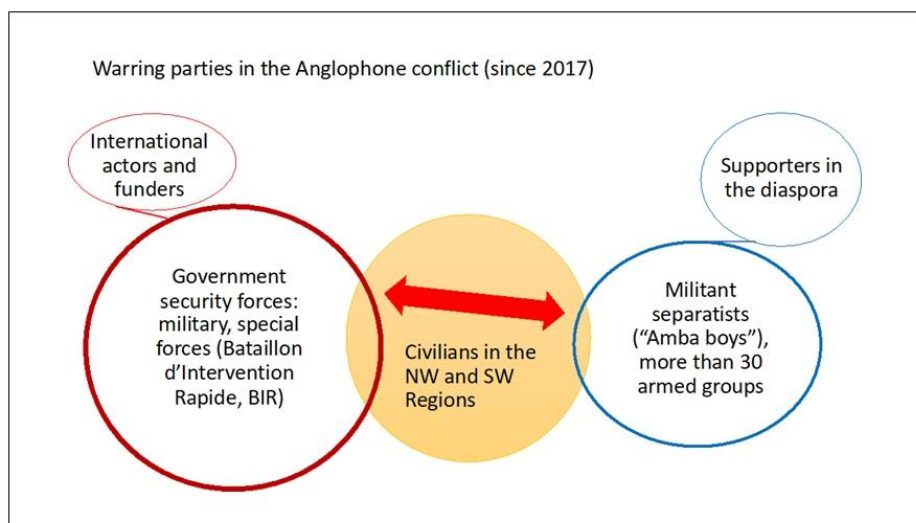


Figure 3. Warring Parties in the Anglophone Conflict

Source: Adapted from Pelican, M. (2022). The Anglophone conflict in Cameroon — historical and political background. Working Paper No. 20. Freiburg, Germany.

¹ *Ibid.*

2.7 The Function of Social Media and the Diaspora

Social media nationalism has played a significant role in the crisis's spread in the North and South West regions. Social media was employed by secessionist advocates, the majority of whom were based abroad.¹ Reaching out to many young people whose faith in the government has all but vanished by spreading their beliefs in the most seductive way possible. The secessionists were extreme on Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and even Instagram, making pledges and declarations encased in propagandist — mostly unfounded — statements that not only revealed the scope of the situation but also attracted more supporters for the cause. Actually, the adolescents' access to Android devices exposed them to secessionists' pleas, which led them to employ violent conflict in order to establish the State of Ambazonia.²

Owing to the large number of Anglophone Cameroonians residing overseas, the diaspora has made substantial contributions to the separatist cause through lobbying for international political support, organizing communication, and raising money. To report on the situation, sway public opinion, and direct violent operations, diasporic separatist leaders established communication channels such as websites, social media networks, and satellite TV channels.³ Furthermore, some of the bigger militias interact with their leadership via social media from overseas. However, as ICG (2019) notes, a number of militias that were initially supported by the Anglophone diaspora have turned to kidnapping for ransom and extortion to obtain financial support from the civilian populace, so gaining some degree of autonomy from their foreign leadership.⁴ However, as seen by several accusations of firearms trafficking and plotting against diaspora Cameroonians in the US, Cameroonians in the diaspora still appear to be deeply involved in the fighting.⁵

Both the government of Cameroon and the separatist forces have used media, both new and old, as mass mobilization tools and communication channels, and they have been instrumental in enabling the fight. For the dissemination of its narratives and delegitimize the struggle, the government primarily uses mass media, including radio, television, and newspapers. The government's strict regulation of the public media industry is one example of attempts to shape public opinion. The Anglophone opposition, on the other hand, has benefited from online communication platforms like social media and satellite TV. They have coordinated protests and distributed information via social media.⁷ Further, mobile phone messages, voice messages, and photographs have been shared, connecting Anglophones in the diaspora with Cameroon. As Agwanda et al. (2020) contend, violence has also been incited by social media: Through social media, the diaspora organizations have been encouraging fellow Anglophone Cameroonians to donate money to the armed separatists through initiatives like "Adopt a Freedom Fighter," which requires a minimum of \$75 per month, and "Feed the Nchang Shoe Boys"⁸.

The administration implemented a three-month internet shutdown in January 2017 after quickly realizing the influence of social media and the internet. After then, there were sporadic throttling and brief shutdowns, which resulted in almost 230 days without internet over a 14-month period. As a result, Cameroon has gained the notoriety of enforcing the longest internet ban in Africa outside of Chad.⁹ President Biya and opposition candidate Kamto, who receives support from the Bamiléké ethnic group in the West region, both based in Cameroon and the diaspora, are engaged in political contests on the internet and social media, according to ICG

¹ Takor, N. K., (2011, December 2). *The Arab Spring: Interrogating the Historical Basis and Implications of Social Media Nationalism in Africa*, Paper Presented at NOWEHCTA Seminar.

² Ngam, C.C. & Budi, R.N., (2020). The Anglophone Question in Cameroon: Historical Context and Evolution from "Everyday" Resistance to Armed Conflict, 1961-2017. *AFRICANA STUDIA*, (33).

³ Nganji, Julius T. and Lynn Cockburn, (2020). Use of Twitter in the Cameroon Anglophone crisis. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 39, (3), 267-287.

⁴ ICG, (2019). Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis: How to get to talks? Africa Report 272, May 02, 2019. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/272-crise-anglophoneau-cameroun-comment-arrive-aux-pourparlers> (accessed October 19th, 2023).

⁵ Bagnetto, L.A., (2021). Cameroon Anglophone separatist 'supporters' in US charged with gun smuggling. Rfi, June 18, 2021. <https://www.rfi.fr/en/africa/20210618-cameroonanglophone-separatist-supporters-in-us-charged-with-gun-smuggling> (accessed October 15, 2023).

⁶ Kom, Nana Kamsu, (2022). Cameroon: Separatists' Partners Convicted in US For Arms Trafficking. *Journal du Cameroon*, May 13, 2022.

⁷ Miller, Daniel, et al, (2021). *The Global Smartphone: Beyond a youth technology*. UCL Press.

⁸ Agwanda, Billy et al (2020). Cameroon and the Anglophone Crisis. IN *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Peace and Conflict Studies*, O. Richmond and G. Visoka (eds.). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

⁹ Marchand, Eleanor and Nicole Stremmlau, (2019). Africa's Internet Shutdowns: A report on the Johannesburg Workshop. Programme in contemporary media law and policy, University of Oxford.

(2020).¹ Since excessive discourse and false information have proliferated on social media, these interactions have taken on troubling dimensions that could exacerbate ethnic tensions and violence. The Cameroonian government passed a bill in December 2019 that makes provocative rhetoric against ethnic groups illegal in order to combat the growth of extremist speech on social media. This law supplements the country's 2010 cybersecurity legislation. Reasonable concerns have been raised by ICG (2020) on the government's ability to regulate social media and the fair and efficient enforcement of the law. I contend that these recent actions demonstrate unequivocally the importance of social media and the Anglophone and Francophone diaspora in changing the nature of national politics and conflicts. In the Mbororo case, Pelican and her co-authors (2022) examine the importance of extreme information that is shared on social media.²

3. Conclusion

Because the Ahidjo and Biya governments were unable to maintain steps to protect their identity, the Anglophones had grievances against the Cameroonian government. This situation has typically resulted in attempts to integrate or annex Anglophones into the majority French population, along with a well-founded sense of marginalization. Anglophones are typically treated as second-class citizens in the nation as a result of this. The Anglophones have been protesting this since the union's founding. These complaints were exacerbated by near socioeconomic and administrative exploitation and neglect, which led to underdevelopment and financial hardship, particularly for young people. This gives insight into the responses of young people at talks between government ministers and teachers' and lawyers' representatives in Bamenda in January 2017. In addition to the Anglophones' legitimate complaints; there was an emotional eruption that gradually overtook reason, which led to the intensification of unrest in the Anglophone regions. The strikes by teachers and attorneys were viewed by the young people as a chance to change the circumstances they had endured over the years.³

4. Recommendations

Considering the aforementioned, this paper presents the following recommendations in a bid to addressing the Cameroon Anglophone Crisis. Amongst these recommendations we have.

Legal Reform and Constitutional Review. Adopting this will help to initiate a comprehensive review of the Constitution to ensure equitable representation for Anglophone regions, including provisions that recognize and protect linguistic and cultural rights. Hence, it will greatly build trust in the hearts of the Anglophone in the state again.

Decentralization and Autonomy. A complete implementation of a genuine decentralization policies that grant greater autonomy to Anglophone regions, allowing them to manage their local affairs and resources effectively will be received as a great step towards a lasting solution.

Dialogue and Mediation. Facilitating a sincere and inclusive dialogue involving all stakeholders, including government officials, Anglophone leaders, and civil society organizations, to address grievances and negotiate solutions will come as relief to many whom have felt wounded and lost trust in the system in place.

Strengthening Human Rights Protections. Enhance the enforcement of human rights laws and mechanisms to protect the rights of Anglophone citizens, ensuring accountability for violations committed during the conflict. This will greatly deter the warring parties from carrying out the many Human Rights violations as the crisis keeps worsening. **Judicial Independence:** Ensure the independence of the judiciary to provide fair legal recourse for individuals affected by the crisis, fostering trust in legal institutions.

Education and Awareness. Promote educational initiatives that foster mutual understanding and respect between Anglophone and Francophone communities, emphasizing the importance of cultural diversity.

International Engagement. Encourage international organizations and human rights bodies to monitor the situation and provide support for conflict resolution efforts, ensuring that the Anglophone perspective is included in discussions.

Economic Development Programs. Implement targeted economic development initiatives in Anglophone regions to address economic disparities and reduce tensions stemming from marginalization. By adopting these recommendations, stakeholders can work towards a peaceful resolution to the crisis, fostering unity and respect for the rights of all citizens in Cameroon.

¹ ICG. (2020). Easing Cameroon's Ethno-political Tensions, On and Offline. Africa Report 295, December 03, 2020. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/295-easing-camerouns-ethno-political-tensions-and-offline> (accessed August 9, 2022).

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

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