

BRITISH SOUTHERN CAMEROONS (AMBAZONIA): A SIMILITUDE OF ERITREA, PANACEA FROM THE BALKANS.

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ABSTRACT

Arrangements for the people of former British Southern Cameroons to gain independence by joining their brothers of independent French Cameroun has been a subject of contention for several decades now, with the recent strike of teachers and lawyers having an overwhelming public support in 2016 which has culminated in the demand for unconditional self-determination and civil war. This article seeks to find out reasons why the British Southern Cameroons seek to separate from Cameroun and how the government has responded to such quest. To proffer recommendations, it tries to compare the case of Southern Cameroons with Eritrea which fought against Ethiopian subjugation. The article recognizes the fact that there are strong grounds for Southern Cameroons to ask for a separation. It also recognizes the realistic reaction of the government, albeit extreme. However, it holds that for there to be a compromise in these two opposing positions, the conflict resolution experts implicated in resolving the crisis could adopt the Dayton Agreements that settled the Bosnia and Herzegovina war to satisfy both parties and ensure a sustained resolution of the crisis. In the case of the Cameroons, this article proposes the establishment of a confederal structure and proper confidence-building mechanisms among the different segments of society. It recognizes the fact that for there to be a proper resolution of the conflict, the government must take the first step in all honesty to address the root causes which invariably must address the form of State. Anything short of this which produces an end to hostilities would be merely a settlement void of resolution, which will bring about a more devastating consequence once the warring parties have recuperated their “energies.”

Keywords: Separation, Confederation, Consociation, Cameroun, Cameroon, Ambazonia, British Southern Cameroons.

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INTRODUCTION

Cameroon is a country where a few have hijacked the entire territory and governance structures and arrogated upon themselves a position of more “*citizenness*” than every other citizen- so much so that what is not congruent with their beliefs and expectations, is synonymous to rebellion against the state. The present quest by the British Southern Cameroons to restore their independence which was voted in 1961 by the UNGA is a quest undertaken after every legal consideration. Historically, culturally, politically, and legally, the British Southern Cameroons has all the locus to seek external self-determination as was given them on a platter of gold by member states of the UN in 1961 (Adams, 2017¹). At the same time, the actions of the Camerounian government are very understandable, as no government in the world would helplessly watch the territorial integrity of its state being undermined.

There are therefore two conflicting positions. On the one hand, it is the Anglophone minority who want to restore their autonomy as an independent entity. On the other hand, it is the government that wants to ensure that the territorial integrity of the state is not undermined. Both parties have clung unto their positions for a long time now and the effects have been disastrous on the citizens as well as state institutions. How then do we draw a balance to ensure the satisfaction of both parties so that they could shift from their positions to embrace a more durable win-win solution? Such is the quest of this research and to achieve this aim, it is worthwhile looking at the reasons why the British Southern Cameroons is seeking the restoration of her independence. It is also important to assess the missteps of the government in addressing this quest. A comparative analysis with the case of Eritrea will then help in elucidating the conflict patterns that characterize some African states since independence. Based on the analyses from these sections, the study proffers a way forward that permit the parties to shift their positions, yet have their underlying interests met.

¹ Adams, bouddih (2017). UN Voted for Southern Cameroons Independence; Who Overturned the Verdict?
<https://cameroonpostline.com/un-voted-for-southern-cameroons-independence-who-overturned-the-verdict/>

REASONS FOR QUEST

Self-determination is a right deeply enshrined in article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations. It could either be internal self-determination (wherein members of a minority group seek to achieve greater autonomy within the state) or external self-determination (where a group of people wants to achieve total independence from an established entity). The bases for the quest for external self-determination by the peoples of former British Southern Cameroons can be categorized into two broad reasons: Legality of the Union and Marginalization of the Anglophones (Ngamfon, 2013²).

A- LEGALITY OF THE UNION

According to the arguments raised by the separatists, there are many bases why the present union between former British Southern Cameroons and La Republique du Cameroun is illegal. These reasons range from the fact that the independence of the former British colony voted by members of the United Nations General Assembly was poorly executed and incomplete; to the provisions of UNGA Resolution 1608 interpreted from UNGA Res 1514 and 1541 (Achu, 2020: 55); to the establishment and abrogation of the Federal structure and the 1984 Unilateral act of the Camerounese³ government which sealed the divorce between the two 'concubines⁴.'

i. Refusal of the third option

According to Professor Carlson Anyangwe, the erstwhile territory of Southern Cameroon has internationally recognized boundaries that were delimited by boundary treaties and treaded steadily on the path of independence until when it became a state *in statu nascendi* (when it was about to be born) in 1958 (Anyangwe, 2019⁵). However, with a stroke of diplomacy, British Southern Cameroons was denied the option of gaining independence as an entity based on a lack of economic viability. Proponents of an independent Southern Cameroons hold that refusing to

² Ngamfon, F. (2013). Bases and Prospects of the Quest for Self Determination by the Anglophone Minority in Cameroon. *International Bi-Lingual and Multidisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Issues and Development Studies*. Vol. 2(1). Pp 31-39. The entire thesis of this article seeks to prove the reasons for which the Anglophone minority in Cameroon are seeking to separate from Cameroon.

³ The spelling of Cameroun with the "U" is meant to emphasize an aspect related to the former East Cameroon.

⁴ This term is used because the process of union between the two autonomous parts was never formally completed. Advocates for a separation therefore maintain that the two Cameroons have been living in concubinage.

⁵ Professor Carlson Anyangwe is a Professor of International Law and one of the front-liners of the restoration of the independence of Southern Cameroons called Ambazonia. This Article is retrieved from <https://ambanews24.com/analysis-opinion-on-unga-res-1608-xv-of-21-april-1961/>

grant the territory the right to be independent as an entity was against the Declaration of the Granting of Independence which stated that “Inadequacy of political, economic, social or educational preparedness should never serve as a pretext for delaying independence.” Moreover, the denial by the UN of the demand for more time by the Southern Cameroonian political leadership to assess the various plebiscite options made available to them deprived them of making comprehensive assessments of what was at stake (Anyangwe, 2019). The “two-alternatives” availed to the Southern Cameroonians were not alternative political statuses as Anyangwe puts it, but were two alternatives reflecting one political status-and that was the status of dependence thereby equating it to a mere hoax aimed at making the world know that the people of Southern Cameroons were being given a choice to exercise their free will. In other words, the destiny of the people of Southern Cameroons was not determined by themselves but by their two adjacent neighbors, the UN, and Britain.

ii. UNGA Resolution 1608

The UNGA adopted Resolution 1608 (VX) on the future of the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under United Kingdom administration on April 21, 1961. This resolution recognized the results of the February 11, 1961 plebiscite and thereby terminated the Trusteeship Agreement of December 13, 1946 in accordance with article 76(b) of the UN Charter (Anyangwe, 2019). By this, therefore, British Northern Cameroon was to join Nigeria as a separate province of the northern region of Nigeria as per their decision in the plebiscite meanwhile British Southern Cameroon was to join the Cameroun Republic (La Republique du Cameroun) on an equality basis (based on the agreements of rejoinder which were duly published in *The Two Alternatives*⁶ by the British government). The provisions of this resolution were disregarded- the fact that the implementation of the plebiscite results was to be done by the UN, and Britain was to be a front-liner in the preparations for the October 1, 1961 independence preparations (the lack of Union Treaty argument).

More so, by 1959, British Southern Cameroons had attained the level of a federated state within Nigeria where they were not satisfied with the level of their economic, political and social

⁶ *The Two Alternatives* was a pamphlet published by the British government that documented the terms of the two alternatives which British Southern Cameroons had to choose from. These terms were what instructed their decision because they revealed exactly what status British Southern Cameroons was to have in the case of joining either Cameroun or Nigeria.

development (Elong, 2013). Deciding therefore to join the independent Republic of Cameroun meant that they fully understood what they were opting for in terms of the bargain which was proposed by Cameroun. This bargain was not just Federalism in itself but a Confederation that recognized two existing governments coming together but maintaining their every identity and collaborating merely in certain aspects.

According to the UNGA Resolution 1608 (XV) in paragraph 5, the governments of both territories were then to initiate discussions in view of finalizing the implementation of the agreed policies by October 1, 1961. Many believe that this resolution, which was voted in favor by 64 sovereign states out of 99, and which ended the Trusteeship dispensation, gave independence to Southern Cameroons. The February 1961 Plebiscite was merely a declaration of intentions after considering the promises in *The Two Alternatives* (Anyangwe, 2010: 61). That is why Res. 1608 equally set October 1, 1961 as Southern Cameroon's Independence Day. If this resolution was not granting independence to Southern Cameroons, why is it that La Republique du Cameroun, which was already independent and was present at the UNGA, voted against it? Had there been a post-plebiscite conference held by the governments of the two territories, a Federal Constitution and a Treaty of Union would have been agreed upon, ratified and registered at the UN Secretariat in accordance with Art 102 (1) of the UN Charter (Nfor, 2010: 35). Since this has never been the case, the union is therefore not recognized by the world governing body which oversaw decolonization.

iii. Abrogation of the Federal Constitution

Both Southern Cameroon and the Cameroun Republic had to prepare draft Constitutions and submit them before October 1, 1961 for approval. The understanding of a federation as per the Anglophone elite (Southern Cameroon leaders) was not quite what their counterparts had in mind⁷. It rather turned out to be a mere transitory phase to the integration agenda which the French

⁷ The Anglophone delegation had envisioned some sort of confederal structure when they had met in Bamenda in June 1961. To them, the federal arrangement was to: (i) have separate governments, (ii) a bicameral federal legislature, (iii) ceremonial head of state, (iv) and Douala as the administrative headquarters (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 1997: 209). During the 1991 Tripartite Conference, the Anglophone delegation would formally request for a return to the loose federation where West Cameroon would have a high degree of political, financial and fiscal autonomy, proper separation of power and a rotating presidency for the Federal Republic. This was referred to as the EMIA constitution which is an acronym got from the four principal anglophone actors at the Tripartite Sam Ekonkang Elad, Simon Munzu, Benjamin Itoe and Carlson Anyangwe.

counterparts had of bringing the anglophones into a strongly centralized unitary state (Edide, 2013: 29). The Delegation of the Cameroun Republic took advantage of the division of their counterparts to unilaterally present and enact the draft constitution which they had prepared (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 1997: 209). Elong (2013) makes an analysis of this constitution which ended up being adopted in Foumban. To him, the fate of British Southern Cameroonians was sealed by articles 5, 6, 15, 47, and 59. While articles 5 and 6 took over the control of the federated states over institutions such as administration, education, national defense, foreign affairs, article 15 directly invested excess power unto the president of the federation. And although article 47 forbade the revision of the constitution which had to alter the form of the state, another part of the said article stated that the president of the Federal Republic could revise the constitution after consultation with deputies of the Federal Assembly (Elong, 2013). May I however quickly state here that these permissible revisions were any bills that did not have to do with the change in the form of the state. It is argued that to Ahidjo, Federalism was simply a requisite first step for him to establish a strong unitary state which he had conceived from the start. The draft constitution was in abeyance to the plebiscite pact on which basis the former British Southern Cameroonians voted. It was supposed to incorporate the conditionalities which were posed at the plebiscite and was to be submitted to the parliaments of both federated states for them to give their opinion. This was never done.

In May 1972, the abrogation of the Federal Constitution which was the basis *sine qua non* of the political structure of the Federal Republic that was created, was a legal hook on which the English Cameroon fragment hung as they no longer had the obligations whatsoever to remain within the new structure according to the legal principle *Clausula rebus sic stantibus*⁸. By organizing a referendum to change the form of the state, Ahidjo flagrantly disregarded the provision of Article 47(1) of the Federal Constitution which forbade any revision of the constitution that would affect the form of the state (Ngamfon, 2013: 36) as well as section 3 of the same article which proposed that the revision of the Constitution was to be done by a simple majority vote of the members of the Federal Assembly provided that such majority included the representatives from each federated state (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 1997: 210). By deciding to alter the form of the state (implicitly the

⁸ This is an International Law legal doctrine that allows treaties previously entered by parties to become inapplicable due to a fundamental change in circumstances.

constitution), Ahidjo had committed flagrant delicto against the constitution thereby rendering it null and void.

According to Mola Njoh Litumbe,⁹ the establishment of a federation was illegal in the first place as the Commissioner for Cameroons who was the only competent authority to promulgate matters of foreign relations into law in the Southern Cameroons (as per the Order-In-Council signed in 1960 by Her Royal Majesty which created the post of the Commissioner for Cameroons, the Ministerial government, the West Cameroons House of Chiefs and the West Cameroons House of Assembly effective from October 1, 1960) did not promulgate the bill into law in West Cameroon House of Assembly as it was his exclusive right to do so (Tangwa, 2012)¹⁰. In the same way Ahidjo had the legislative body of East Cameroon adopt the federal constitution, so too did the legislative body of West Cameroon have to adopt the federal constitution. According to the doctrine of separation of powers held estimably in practice by Britain and her derivatives, the federal constitution therefore had no legal effect within the West Cameroon territory.

iv. Beyond the unitary state

After the May 1972 Referendum, Cameroon became a Unitary State. However, the decision of Paul Biya in 1984 to arbitrarily change the name from the United Republic of Cameroon to the Republic of Cameroun (which was the name of French Cameroon before they were joined by Southern Cameroons) was the last straw that signaled the total absorption of the British Southern Cameroonians into the Republic of Cameroon (Ngamfon. 2013: 36; Ayim, 2010: 30). It is the line of argument of some people hold that by this very act, the Republic of Cameroon (former French Cameroon) withdrew itself from the union and were therefore the first to separate. By going further to change the United Republic of Cameroun to “The Republic of Cameroon”, Biya had crossed the line of assimilation. It was therefore on these strong bases that Gorji Dinka brought the Republic of Cameroun to the Bamenda High Court in 1992 and the Court, against all anticipation,

⁹ Mola Njoh Litumbe is one of the Anglophone-independentist patriarchs who has steadily fought the course of external self-determination of Anglophone Cameroons.

¹⁰ Tangwa, C. (2012). *Reunification Sundance*, Chronicles from the Heartland [Blog Post]. Retrieved from <https://www.canutetangwa.com/2012/07/reunification-sundance.html>

ruled in favour of the Former British Southern Cameroon “*Republic of Ambazonia*” which was the plaintiff.¹¹

B. THE MARGINALIZATION OF ANGLOPHONES IN THE UNION

When Anglophones decry their predicament in the union, many are quick to shun them on the basis that what they are complaining is felt nationwide by other regions as well and they should not, therefore, take it as a locus to demand separation. Those who raise this argument see that Cameroon faces a general problem of governance which if addressed, will make every citizen benefit fully from the diversity of the country. However, this section argues that the marginalization of Anglophones cannot be equated in any way to the marginalization faced by different regions of former French Cameroon. An analysis of anglophone marginalization in this sub-section considers the Political, Economic, and Socio-cultural manifestations.

i. Political Marginalization

The division between the Anglophone elites which had existed prior to independence by joining the Cameroun Republic was exploited by the Francophone elites to keep them disunited in their expression of francophone domination. The marginalization of anglophones became so ocular that they had to submit two memoranda at the Bamenda Congress highlighting the fact that they felt sidelined from power (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 1997: 213).

The political marginalization of anglophones started as early as 1962 when Ahidjo usurped the power which was agreed to be shared by dividing the federation into six administrative units and appointing Federal Inspectors who were directly accountable to him. In West Cameroon, the federal inspector was more than the Prime Minister (Elong, 2013). The Anglophones, therefore, began feeling a decline in their political power almost immediately after the rejoinder which gives credence to the belief that from the start, it was a well-mapped out strategy of the French-guided Cameroun Republic to gradually assimilate anglophones.

¹¹ In the case filed as HCB28-92 the High Court of Bamenda ruled that the occupation of former British Southern Cameroon by Cameroun Republic was illegal and that all parliamentarians from the former British territories were to cease taking part in parliamentary sessions in Cameroun Republic and required all workers whose duties in the territory derived from Cameroun republic to leave the territory <https://ambazonia.org/media/pdfs/HCB28-92%20Le%20Messenger.pdf>

In May 1993, the Standing Committee of the All Anglophone Conference submitted a draft constitution for the nation to return to a Loose Federation which they had envisioned in 1961. This draft constitution stipulated a high degree of political and economic autonomy as well as the proper separation of power and rotation of the presidency but the government was not willing to consider such. This led to the *zero-option* choice by one of the affiliated organizations of the AAC in December 1993 that asked for outright independence (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 1997: 219).

ii. Economic Marginalization

The deteriorating economic crisis felt in Cameroon as a whole and former West Cameroon in particular, bit the anglophones twice harder because they had gotten into the union with very vibrant institutions. Mismanagement and corruption of the leaders (who were largely made of francophones even within the anglophone regions) had landed the regions wanting. Most companies were shut down in the anglophone regions such as POWERCAM, National Produce Marketing Board, and companies that served international needs such as SONARA, CDC, were nationalized and proceeds from those companies were never felt back in the anglophone regions (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 1997: 214).

As early as 1962, Ahidjo began economic reforms that completely obliterated the economy of former British Southern Cameroons. The Franc CFA was introduced and the pound sterling kicked out of the territory. In 1964, the metric system of weighing was introduced and the imperial system wiped out as well as certain institutions such as the Cameroon Bank, the West Cameroon Development Authority, the National Produce Marketing Board, Powercam, the Cameroon Air Transports, Post and Telecommunications, the Tiko and Bota ports, which were vibrant before the federation, suffered from closure (Ngamfon, 2014: 35). Some schools of thought believed it was more due to the inability of the Anglophones to manage these institutions as they were done by Nigerians prior to British Southern Cameroons deciding to join Nigeria (Elong, 2013). This is however very contestable.

iii- Socio-cultural

socio-culturally, the assimilation policy by Ahidjo was perceptible to the larger population of the former British Southern Cameroons. Apart from the inferior role assigned to the English language,

even from the constitution, the so-called bilingual status of Cameroon was a mere theory in public universities. The apex of attempts to *francophonize* the English subsystem was when the government tried to absorb the Anglophone General Certificate of Education into the *Baccalaureat* board. This led to several contestations by the Anglophones which made the changes unsuccessful. The English language has always been treated as a second-rate language where both in official communiques as well as public competitive exams, the texts are in French, and in some cases, they are inadequately translated when the government bothers to do so.

MISSTEPS FROM THE GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Over time, the nature of the anglophone crisis has metamorphosed due largely to the way the government failed to be dynamic in addressing the different levels of conflict. At the point where the conflict has reached at this moment, no sustained solution can be proffered without the form of the state being addressed. However, the government has been very rigid in tackling this problem in such a way that it has consciously or unconsciously exacerbated the crisis and nuanced any chances for a sustained resolution within the context of a unitary-decentralized state. In what ways has the government contributed to fueling the crisis? This section analyzes the governmental response to the anglophone quest and how this has contributed to the non-abatement of the crisis in Cameroon.

i. Underestimating the Anglophone quest

Over the years and even when overt conflict broke out in the anglophone regions, the government kept denying the fact that there exists an anglophone problem (Crisis Group Report, 2019: 6). Many government officials made public proclamations of the fact that there is no anglophone problem and that it was just a few people who were trying to destabilize the country. They made use of insulting comparisons such as “cubes of sugar in a basin of water”, “dogs”, “roaches which need to be exterminated”, and in some extreme cases, “terrorists” in reference to those who were asking for a relook into the form of the state¹². This use of incendiary language went a long way

¹² <https://www.dailynewscameroon.com/provocative-statements-from-government-officials-that-landed-president-biya-inside-the-hot-water-of-the-anglophone-crisis/>

to radicalize the anglophone actors as they became more determined to prove that the basin of water has not been able to melt the two cubes of sugar.

Despite the casualties faced in the English-speaking regions of the country, the anglophone crisis has never been on the agenda of discussions at the National Assembly (Crisis Group Report, 2019: 13). It wonders then how an institution that is meant to cater for the livelihoods of their various constituents remain mute in the face of such heinous crimes committed within the constituencies and which affect the economy as a whole.

- **Banning of the moderate representative body**

If there was ever a serious misstep taken by the government, it was the banning of the umbrella organization which was formed to articulate the interest of the anglophones and the arrest of some of the leaders. The arrest of these moderate prominent anglophone negotiators on January 17, 2019 emboldened extremist activities which led to the demand for full independence (Human Rights Watch, 2018¹³: 1).

Another great mistake made by the government was the refusal of the mediation effort by the Cameroon National Episcopal Conference and failing to support the organization of the All Anglophone Conference scheduled by Christian Cardinal Tumi and three Protestant and Muslim leaders. After postponement from August 2018 to November of the same year and then to March 2019, the conference suffered another postponement to an unspecified date (Crisis Group Report, 2019: 16). Had the government used this opportunity, she might have changed the dynamics and brought the leadership of the anglophone movement back into the hands of those who are in the country. In line with this, the government went ahead to organize the heavily criticized National Dialogue which was nothing more than a ready-made product meant to address a complex and sophisticated conflict (Achu, 2020: 57) and considered by others as the General Assembly of the ruling party with a handful of government ideology apologists as has been described by many.

- **Repressive response from Regime**

Over the years, the government has often resorted to repression in dealing with demands for a change in the form of the state. The leaders of the anglophone movement are always harassed by

¹³ Human Rights Watch Report of 2018 on Cameroon titled "The Killings can be Stopped": Abuses by Government and Separatist Groups in Cameroon's Anglophone Regions.

the security forces and this increased with the proclamation of independence by the Southern Cameroons National Council. The heavy clampdown during the 1993 anti-smuggling campaign for instance, was a decisive factor for many anglophone elites who were yet undecided about the federalism stance (Konings & Nyamjoh, 1997: 229; Edide, 2013: 30).

Recently between October and December 2016 when the teachers, students and lawyers took to the street to protest against the perceived Francophonization of the educational and judicial subsystems, the government responded by clamping down on them and arrested hundreds of them, killed at least four and wounded many (Human Rights Watch, 2018). On September 22, 2017 and October 1, 2017 when the *Interim Government*¹⁴ of the self-proclaimed Republic of Ambazonia¹⁵ called on people to march and celebrate their self-proclaimed independence, the people were met again with police brutality in the main cities of Buea, Bamenda, Kumba, Mamfe where live ammunitions were used against the protesters killing over 20 people, wounding scores of them and arresting hundreds more (Human Rights Watch, 2018: 2).

There is hardly a day that passes by without the media reporting cases of military torture in one way or another against even unarmed civilians in the anglophone part of Cameroon. The peak of it was the Ngaruh Massacre of February 14, 2020 that stunned the world. The government first denied about its involvement, then lied by accusing other national and international bodies and finally accepted the culpability of the massacres on April 20, 2020 (Finnan, 2020¹⁶). After acknowledging these killings, government soldiers still killed over four civilians in Bangem in the South West Region barely 2 days after (Mimi Mefo info, 2020¹⁷). These killings, especially of women, the older people and children have attracted more sympathy from people who either supported federalism or effective decentralization as they begin to reason with those seeking independence that the government is not willing to solve the crisis. The repressiveness of the

¹⁴ The Interims Government was created almost immediately after the arrest of the Consortium leaders and its first president was Sisiku Ayuk Julius Tabe who was later arrested with nine others at Nera Hotel, Abuja in Nigeria and extradited to Cameroon.

¹⁵ It is believed that the name Ambazonia derives from the Amba Bay in the South West Region of Cameroon and was first coined by HRH Gorji Dinka as the name of the new nation.

¹⁶ Finnan, D. (April 22, 2020). Cameroon Government Makes U-turn on Ngaruh Anglophone Massacre in Ngaruh <http://www.rfi.fr/en/africa/20200422-cameroon-government-makes-u-turn-on-anglophone-massacre-in-ngaruh>

¹⁷ Mimi Mefo info (April 22, 2020). Government Defends Muambong Killings, Promises More Crackdown in the days Ahead. https://mimimefoinfos.com/government-defends-muambong-killings-promises-more-crackdowns-in-the-days-ahead/?fbclid=IwAR118H6FryyhhFrceWP4-hA5MW_Q2DPkoIMIHClIHZq-nZOVHzIEIHD278

government this time around, as opposed to the early 1990s, is more of grassroots repression and this signifies knitting in a complex manner the level of intractability of the conflict.

- **The uncompromising position of territorial integrity**

The government has often held that the 1972 referendum was the voluntary expression of all Cameroonian people to be a united people and that a return to federalism is a no-option thought as it tends to be costly, provokes ethnic and regional sentiments rather than national consciousness and causes a weak state power (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 1997: 224). A major factor in the deterioration of the crisis is the fact that the government has consistently equated the quest for federalism to secession and treated those involved as terrorists and enemies of the state.

According to the government, changing the form of the state is a taboo. The 1996 Constitution which proposed decentralization as a panacea of the anglophone uprising in the 1990s has never been fully put into practice (Crisis Group Report, 2019: 6). This conflict will not come to an end without the form of the State being addressed. It is my candid advice that every actor in the resolution of this conflict should ensure that the underlying causes of the conflict (which lies in the form of the state) be addressed. If not, an end to the present imbroglio would only be indicative of a settled dispute and not a resolved conflict.

- **Mockery resolution process and lies**

Between March and July 2017, the government made a series of concessions such as recruiting 1000 bilingual teachers, translating the OHADA text, creating the English section of the Magistracy department in ENAM, as well as the restoration of the internet in the anglophone regions after 90 days (Crisis Group Report, 2018: 8). All these measures, however, were downplayed by Anglophones as screensaver measures to what they expected the government to do which would have addressed the root causes of their grievance- return to federalism.

The release in August 2017 of the first arrested anglophone leaders, the creation of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, the creation of the Ministry of Decentralization and Local Development, the organization of the National Dialogue in September 2019 and the release of more than 200 prisoners (with more to be released) held captive in relation to the armed struggle have all been termed as putting the cart before the horse strategies which

were bound to be dead on arrival as they are not conceived with the intention of addressing the principal worry of the anglophones. The National dialogue failed equally to include the main conflicting parties and as Peck (2009) opines, leaving a warring party out of the negotiations is a recipe for failure as these would have a greater motivation to act as spoilers (Peck, 2009: 419).

SIMILITUDE OF ERITREA

How similar is the British Southern Cameroon's quest to the experience of Eritrea? How did the Eritrean experience go and what can be learnt from them? This section seeks to provide such rapport to draw implications on which the present *Ambazonian quest* can learn from.

History bears witness that part of pre-colonial Eritrea in its central highlands was part of the Axumite civilization of Ethiopia while part of the western part of Eritrea was closer to Sudan meanwhile the Eastern part was never subjugated under Ethiopia. In 1890 Italy gathered all these territories into Eritrea and it became its colony (Gedamu, 2008: 32). So, while Eritrea was colonized by Italy, Ethiopia was never subjugated to colonial domination.

In 1941, Italy was jointly defeated from Eritrea by both Ethiopia and Britain leaving the fate of Eritrea uncertain. In 1950, Eritrea was voted by the UNGA Res 390 A (v) to become an autonomous federated unit within Ethiopia with its own constitution, flag, and parliament. This federation was however abrogated by Ethiopia after Ethiopia forced the Eritrean parliament to vote to join Ethiopia fully as the fourteenth province (Gedamu, 2008: 33). This then spurred up nationalism amongst the Eritreans who had already been discontented with the fact that the right to self-determination was denied them by the very body which oversaw the process (the United Nations). Groups such as the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) took the front stage to achieve total independence for Eritrea.

Just like Eritrea, the Anglophone crisis has its root causes in contested identity, history, and the processes of state formation (Bereketeab, 2009: 98). These similarities are well coined in a phrase which Bereketeab cites from Matsouka (2001) which says "basically, Abyssinian fundamentalism rejected the validity of Eritrean identity and insisted Eritreans were 'really' Ethiopians, errant family members deceived by postcolonial fantasies and separated from their true nature"

(Bereketeab, 2009: 98). There could be no greater truism than this statement as relates to the argument which Cameroun has in maintaining territorial integrity.

Just like the case with former British Southern Cameroons, at decolonization, Eritrea gained independence by federating with Ethiopia. The latter violated the federal arrangement reducing Eritrea to a mere province of the Ethiopian empire all to the watch of the UN which was supposed to guarantee the federation. This led to a 30-year liberation struggle, without external assistance, against Soviet and US-backed Ethiopia (Bereketeab, 2009: 117; Weldemichael, 2013: 872). However, the military confrontation came up only after Eritrea had failed to find an “African India¹⁸” that could help draw the attention of the international community, thereby failing to have enough international support to outweigh Ethiopia’s outstanding international diplomacy (Weldemichael, 2013: 867). However, throughout the war, the nationalists continued to ply to corridors of diplomacy to achieve game-changing political backing, although as expected, factionalism was the order of the day.

Another semblance of both cases was the outright neglect by western diplomats of the small Eritrean territory and their seeming sidelining with the stronger Ethiopian empire (Bereketeab, 2009; Weldemichael, 2013). The complexity of international law relevant to the African continent in terms of territorial integrity, the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs of sovereign states, the existence of separatist groups in other states thereby evoking fear in different governments from supporting the Eritrean movement, were all conditions which the ongoing Anglophone war of self-determination is presently facing.

However, unlike the Anglophone struggle which has been marred by factionalism and gross individualism by most frontline actors who have vehemently refused to work with other leaders unless they are in charge, the Eritrean Liberation movement ended its splinter-groups in 1973 forming the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front, vowing to end internal squabbles and external dependence (Weldemichael, 2013: 875). The Cameroun government does not also have neighboring ‘enemies’, like in the case of Sudan and Somalia with Ethiopia, on whom the Anglophone separatist can lean for sanctuary. Instead, the diplomatic tentacles spread by the

¹⁸ Term used by George Walker Bush in 1971 when approached by Eritrean independence activists to back their quest for separation from Ethiopia. By this term, he meant that Eritrea was to look for a strong nation within Africa that would be ready to back her up in the separation just as India supported the secession of Bangladesh from Pakistan.

Cameroon government have been able to create sub-regional, regional, and international collaborators who are readily available to support her. This is exactly what Nigeria did on January 17, 2019 when they arrested and extradited the leading anglophone activists from Nera Hotel in Abuja.

PANACEA FROM THE BALKANS- UNDERSTANDING THE BOSNIAN CONTEXT

The political construct of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH) is an overly complex one being a clear *mélange of Confederalism and Consociation*. However, this article argues that a veritable lasting solution could be arrived at within the context of Cameroon if some aspects of the hybrid model of the political and economic construction of Bosnia and Herzegovina are imitated and contextualized to meet the realities on the ground.

With the disintegration of the Soviet Union following the end of the Cold War, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia which was made up of Six Constituent Republics and two autonomous provinces faced a bloody disintegration process in 1991 (Sancaktar, 2018: 212). One of these republics was Bosnia and Herzegovina which was divided into three main constituent ethnic groups (Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats) which faced serious bloody disintegration war between 1992 and 1995 culminating in the Dayton Agreement under the auspices of the US and other European countries.

It is important to look at the demographic constitution of Bosnia-Herzegovina (BH) as it is one of the main factors that must be considered for lasting peace. BH by the time of war was made of 4.4 million people of which 43.7 % were the Muslim Bosniaks, 31.1% of the population were the Orthodox Serbs, and 17.3% comprised of the Catholic Croats meanwhile a minority 7.9% saw themselves as Yugoslav. With the fragmented federation evident in the war that broke out amongst them in the quest for independence of each of the ethnic regions, the Dayton Agreement reorganized BH into two entities: The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBH) comprising of Bosniaks and Croats, and the Serbian Republic of Srpska (RS). Each of these entities has its constitution, assembly, presidency, government, and Judiciary. The FBH is divided into ten Cantons of which five are Bosniak, 3 are Croat and 2 are heterogeneous. Each of these Cantons can freely get into agreements with States and international organizations when approved by the

FBH Assembly and the BH Parliamentary Assembly (Sancaktar, 2018: 218). Equally, both the Federation of BH and the Republic of Srpska have the right to enter agreements with other states and international organizations, and each agreement signed by the president of each of these confederacies is enforced only within its specific territory.

The central power structure consists of four joint institutions namely: A three-person presidency, a bi-cameral parliamentary assembly, a council of ministers, and the judiciary. The FBH has two presidents representing the two ethnic groups while the Republic of Srpska has one president. The chairmanship of the presidency rotates every eight months. The BH parliamentary assembly is bicameral and evenly represents the constituent ethnic groups of Bosnia and Herzegovina and all legislation needs a majority vote to be approved, ensuring at least one-third of members from each territory has voted for. Concerning the council of ministers, the chairperson is nominated by the President of Bosnia and Herzegovina and approved by the BH House of Representatives. The ministers are then appointed by the chairman and approved by the BH House of Representatives. At least one-third of the ministers must come from the Republic of Srpska (Sancaktar, 2018: 219). The judiciary on its part is made of the Constitutional Court, the State Court, and the War Crime Chamber. The Constitutional Court settles disputes between the two entities, between BH and the entities and between the various institutions of BH. Three of its nine judges are appointed by the European Court of Human Rights and the remaining six representing each ethnic group. The functioning of these central institutions, however, is heavily reliant on the support of the two constituent entities of BH.

WAY FORWARD- PROVIDING A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO RESOLVING THE ANGLOPHONE PROBLEM.

In order to solve the Anglophone crisis as it is today, it is not to merely address institutional frameworks or societal constructs. The conflict, which hinges on identity, has not-surprisingly become intractable. Therefore, it is of absolute necessity to adopt a complex conflict-resolution and peacebuilding strategy that would go a long way not only to address the institutional frameworks, but target the psychological constructs which have made the conflicting parties stick to their various positions. Concerning revamping the institutions, it is the advice of the author that the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina be adopted. Having examined the reasons for the present quest

for independence by the anglophone minority in Cameroon and assessed government response to this quest; having compared it with the case of Eritrea which looks so much like the case of former British Southern Cameroon and tried to find plausible solutions from another existing conflict resolution scheme, what then can we pick from the successful conflict resolutions in order to ensure that the present imbroglio in Cameroon is not only settled but fully resolved? Many things could be copied from the BH model, but not all. This article tries to bring out some of those things that the parties in the present conflict in Cameroon can make use of in order to have a long-lasting solution to the present crisis. These are strategies that can immediately bring an end to hostilities and popular support for independence. However, if the parties do not seize this opportunity, the war will take longer and the consequences will be more devastating and may result even to a split of the country on more harsh terms than would have been if they agreed earlier.

Confidence Building Mechanisms

Confidence building strategy is the very first important thing for the parties (especially the Cameroun government) to make use of to set a good grounding for the sustained resolution of the crisis. The first essential step is for the president to expunge from the government all those who had fanned the flames of hate in one way or the other during the crisis. This should not be a mere recycle issue as has been experienced in the past where previous members of the government are called back over and over to assume new functions. This leadership must ensure new persons (young) who have proven to be more objective throughout the crisis to assume new roles within the government. The government will have to do publicly apologize for declaring a war on a faction of its population. The genuineness of the peacebuilding efforts will have to start with these “trivial” actions. They may look irrelevant but enormously powerful for the psyche.

Another confidence mechanism will be to establish shuttle diplomacy between the main warring parties. There should be a battery of international mediators, not just a single mediator. I would suggest that the mediators come from Sweden, Switzerland, Ghana, South Africa, and the United States. These should ensure they move between the parties and sell the advantage of an end to hostilities with a possible acceptable mid-point of their aspirations being met. In addition, these mediators should be able to galvanize the support of the international community as well as identify countries that are spoilers to the peace end of the conflict and approach them accordingly.

The spoiler countries are those countries that are gaining from a continued war or those countries which see their interests affected based on certain outcomes of the conflict.

Also, there is a need for the francophone civil society to get to serious work. Hitherto, many francophones have not yet understood the plight of the anglophones. In fact, they equate it to the difficulties faced by different regions of Cameroun which is a fatal mistake to make. For the few who recognize that there is a serious anglophone problem, they have hardly taken any positive steps to show solidarity. This has further made the anglophone feel the gap between the two cultural groups. If the francophone civil society organizes itself and comes out *en masse* to show solidarity to the Anglophone cause, that would be a noticeably big step in ensuring social cohesion.

A further confidence-building strategy would be to release all political prisoners who are incarcerated as a result of the crisis. So long as the people who get released do not include people like Mancho Bibixy and the members of the Nera 10, there is going to be no significant trust gained on the part of the anglophone population which holds these people as veritable icons of their quest for identity.

When these steps are taken, the next important confidence-building step to be taken is the official cessation of hostilities. The government should take this necessary first step because it declared the war on the people and proceeded to actions that proved they were determined to carry out the war. Most civilians took up arms simply because they were tired of being killed or tortured without fault. Once the cessation of hostilities has been declared, DDR would now become more effective. There should be a clear plan by the government on how they intend to reintegrate into society those who drop their weapons.

There should be quick and honest steps towards reconstructing former British Southern Cameroons. The government should make public its plan of action for the next ten years in that territory while breaking it down into manageable two-year projects for easy assessment and evaluation.

The last confidence-building mechanism which this article suggests is the independent inquiry of human rights abuses and the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. People must get to know all the truth from perpetrators and victims alike. This is going to spur social healing so that there could be peaceful coexistence between the various factions of the society.

Governance Structure

Good governance remains the bedrock of a well-functioning society. Had there been good governance in Cameroon, the present crisis would never have surfaced. Good governance ensures representation, transparency, accountability and most especially a fluid input-output of the system's machinery. This article suggests the institution of a Confederal structure complimented by consociation. The terms which former Southern Cameroons relied on before voting during the plebiscite indicated that they were ready to go in for a confederation. Even the resolutions of the UNGA pertaining to Southern Cameroons implied such an arrangement. But before the Fouban Conference, the federation agenda had become the order of the day. It would be for the best benefit of Cameroun to consider expeditiously instituting a confederation. A confederation is the only structure that can take into consideration the underlying interests of both parties for them to shift from their positions. Arrangements for a confederation will be agreed upon at a mediation meeting on neutral grounds. It has to be a confederation of two states of equal status (East and West Cameroons Confederacies), each having its government, parliament and judiciary, and a central government made of the executive, legislative, and judiciary which represent the two entities.

The government of each confederacy must be headed by the Prime Minister who is endorsed by the Parliament of each of the entities. The PM will then propose his cabinet to the parliament, and they will be sworn in by the judiciary. Each confederacy would be independent in every department of state functioning apart from National Security which shall be the jurisdiction of the central government. There should be a clear cooperation agreement between the two confederacies and stipulations of what is to obtain if one of the entities breaks the agreement.

At the level of state emblems that are reminiscent of the present state, there need to be serious changes to reflect the cultures and histories of both confederacies. All these emblems would be used by all confederacies representing the fact that it is one whole territory. The national anthem, flag, coat of arms should all be changed.

Within the confederacy of former French Cameroon, there should be further consociational arrangements for the major ethnic groups to be fairly represented in the different organs of the government. This could be the Grand North, the Central-South, and the Western parts all having

full representation within the East Cameroons Confederacy. This is because the present political dispensation has concentrated power within one ethnic group in such a way that even if the Anglophone crisis is resolved, there would be a great civil crisis among the francophone ethnic groups. Therefore, resorting to this consociational arrangement is a *stitch in time that can save nine*.

CONCLUSION

This article has dissected the bases for which the Anglophone regions are asking for external self-determination. It is the argument in the article that there are both legal and cultural grounds why British Southern Cameroons should be independent. However, the article recognizes the fact that there would be better opportunities for both parties if they agree to a confederal set-up. New societies are born out of a revolution. With the present revolution in Cameroon, it is a time and opportunity for an extraordinarily strong and new Confederation of the Cameroons to be born if the actors give a chance for it. There are diverse reasons for which the youth joined and believe so much in the separatist movement (which is their right). However, if a genuine political solution is proffered that takes into consideration the high level of autonomy of anglophones, many will be ready to lay down their weapons. Although it is very unlikely for the government to consent anytime soon to mediation efforts, the ball remains largely in its hands in which case, it needs to take the first step to build trust in people on its strategy. Failure to take the bull by the horns will ultimately lead to a separation, no matter how long it will take.

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