

From Nonviolent Resistance to Violence: A Critical Analysis of Conflict Escalation in an Authoritarian Regime

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ABSTRACT

The decision by the separatist movement in the English-speaking part of Cameroon to employ the strategy of nonviolence in achieving external self-determination was yet another opportunity for nonviolence methods in conflict resolution to prove its efficacy over the choice of violence. However, as the conflict persisted, it was proven that some intricacies were not taken into consideration before adopting this strategy. This study situates itself within the ambits of the Consent Theory of Power as well as the Rational Actor Model of the Game Theory. It finds out that the escalation of the crisis from a nonviolent manifestation to a violent one is mainly due to the government's application of unpopular strategies to resolve the crisis. On several instances, the government has shown her unwillingness to solve the crisis with the right parties such that most of the solutions proffered by the government have been to address the symptoms of the crisis rather than target the root causes. The study suggests amongst others an inclusive dialogue on neutral grounds called by a neutral arbiter. It equally suggests a person who is best suited for mediation and the conditions under which mediation should be carried out.

Key words: Nonviolence, Violence, Authoritarian Regime, Conflict, Conflict Transformation

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Those who make peaceful revolution impossible
will make violent revolution inevitable

J.F Kennedy

1. INTRODUCTION

Most literature existing in the domain of conflict almost relate, in all, to the fact that violence is the most effective means to solve a conflict. However, recent authors such as Erica Chenewoh and Maria Stephan have argued that nonviolence for many years and in many cases also represents an important aspect of human resistance (Chenewoh & Stephan, 2011: 4). A study shows that from 1900 to 2006, out of 323 movements which were examined, nonviolent movements recorded more than 53 percent success as opposed to the 26 percent recorded by the violent movements (Victoria & Richard, 2016:164).

Civil resistance, which takes many forms, have occurred throughout history and have most especially become rife in the past hundred years. In most cases, reasons such as decolonization, democratization, racial equality, and poor governmental policies are listed as some of the major reasons for these protests (Roberts & Ash, 2009:1). The French philosopher Etienne de la Boetie rendered civil resistance popular when he emphasized on the potential consequences of disobedience and non-cooperation with the authorities. He said;

Resolve to serve no more, and you are at once freed. I do not ask that you place hands upon the tyrant to topple him over, but simply that you support him no longer; then you will behold him, like a great colossus whose pedestal has been pulled away, fall of his own weight and break into pieces (cited in Schock, 2015: 14).

Increasingly, nonviolent resistance has been embraced by many as the most suitable route in achieving a desired societal change. Collective civilian-based campaigns to bring about social change has been recorded throughout history and its choice of being used keeps increasing as well. Between 1987 and 1991, nonviolent secessionist movements contributed to the independence of Estonia, Latvia and

Lithuania from the Soviet Union. The same goes with Kosovo which gained its independence from Serbia. East Timor is yet another example that got its independence from Indonesian occupation through armed guerrilla warfare (Schock, 2015: 83).

Drawing analogy from previous successful nonviolent movements that sought independence, the crisis that rocked the two English regions of Cameroon from October 2016 and has persisted till date was in the hope of achieving the same goal. The leaders of the Anglophone Movement, who are predominantly found out of the Cameroonian territory and who are making use of the modern tools of globalization, began by embarking on *Ghost Towns* in the two Anglophone regions of Northwest and Southwest. The days which civilians were expected to respect such ghost towns fluctuated weekly based largely on events or planned activities by the government for that week. However, Mondays were, and are still maintained as ghost town day whether or not the government has any major activity to carry out in any of the regions. On such days, there is complete shutdown of activities in every sector save for the civil servants who were permitted or compelled by their status to go to their offices (at least for the earlier part of the crisis).

As the crisis progressed, a central leadership of the resistance was formed and more strategies were brought up intended to coerce people to respect the ghost towns as well as force the government to succumb to the demands of the Anglophones. Schools were forced to shut down, business owners were prohibited from paying taxes to Council authorities, lorries transporting raw materials from the English speaking regions to the French speaking regions were intercepted and burnt, people who were suspected of collaborating with the regime were kidnapped and some of them killed by suspected armed militias who were referred to as the "Amba Boys".

In order to increase the popularity of the resistance, a TV Station (Southern Cameroons Broadcasting Corporation,

SCBC) was created and hosted in South Africa, several groups to promote the course were created on social media and an alternative development plan for the 'new state' was circulated. It became somewhat an issue of surprise, yet a reality, how the locales unquestionably respected the orders of these leaders who were not even on *ground zero* as opposed to the orders from the government which was/is present and had/has the powers to coerce anti-government propaganda. This led the government to increase repressive strategies to curb the activities of the resisters which had in the meantime morphed from a subtle demand by Lawyers and Teachers for better working conditions and protection of an Anglo-Saxon culture and identity to the demand for a return to the Federal System of Government [1961 to 1972] and finally into a demand for outright separation as the case was prior to 1961.

In mid-2019, there were more than sixty thousand refugees in Nigeria and more than eight hundred thousand internally displaced persons (UNHCR, 2020). Close to a thousand Anglophones were being detained in prisons in Yaounde. More than 106 localities were razed down and the inhabitants of those localities forced into the bushes. The number of civilian as well as military casualty is very unclear but stands already above four hundred. There is no day that passes without a civilian being shot and killed for no cause (Nkongho, 2018). These figures keep rising and have more than doubled since 2018 as innocent civilians are trapped between the pro-independence fighters and the government soldiers. How did we get to this level?

1.2 Background of the Crisis

What has come today to be known as the Anglophone crisis was not a mere happenstance. Rather, it is a clear manifestation of how a latent conflict can over the course of time become violent if proper responsive mechanisms are not put in place. Although Anglophone resistance to injustice and inequality within the union with French Cameroun could be traced as far back as the 1980s, it had never reached the magnitude of that which was ignited on 8th November 2016 by a protest march put up by the Lawyers in Bamenda as a follow up of what they had had on the 11th October 2016. The Lawyers were putting the regime to task on the persistent planned erosion of the Common Law (a typically Anglo-Saxon cultural heritage) inherited by British Southern Cameroons at independence in 1961 from Britain. Gendarmes violently dispersed the crowd of protesting Lawyers who carried placards bearing very peaceful and reforming messages and arrested some motorbike riders (*Okada boys*), who then barricaded the roads with burnt tires and clashes between them and the gendarmes left several

people wounded (International Crisis Group, ICG, 2017 Report).

On 21st November 2016, the Teachers Trade Union in Anglophone Cameroon joined the Common Law Lawyers in a sit-down strike. Teachers were protesting against what they termed the 'francophonization' of the English subsystem of education since independence and reunification of the two Cameroons in 1961 (Aljazeera, 2016). They were immediately joined by thousands of sympathizers who came in with diverse grievances such as lack of roads, economic and political marginalization of Anglophones. It is worth mentioning that one of the leading protesters who ignited great revolutionary reforming spirit in thousands of disgruntled youth in Bamenda town was a private teacher and local radio reporter, Mancho Bibixy who appeared in the public with a coffin, stood inside and informed the entire public of the need for improved reforms in the town. This made the revolution to be christened "The Coffin Revolution". This manifestation too, met with lots of repression from the government and it recorded two deaths, hundreds injured, and dozens arrested (Report of the NCHRF cited in ICG 2017 Report). It soon spread to the Southwest region on 28th November when the University of Buea students did a peaceful march to the Central Administration to ask for the payment of the yearly presidential grants of fifty thousand francs to each student, protesting against the banning of the Students' Union and the introduction of payment of tuition fees through MTN Mobile Money services before semester results were given to each student and a heavy penalty for late payments. As a matter of policy, these unarmed student protesters met with heavy police brutality on the orders of the then Vice Chancellor Nalova Lyonga (Scholars at Risk Network, 2016 Report; The Observer, 2016).

The government responded to some of the worries addressed by the teachers and lawyers. Concerning the teachers' worries, the government brought out measures such as re-assigning some francophone teachers who were in the English regions back to the French regions, launching the recruitment of one thousand bilingual teachers, creating the Bilingualism and Multiculturalism Commission, granting 1 billion CFAF as subsidies to private institutions of learning. As for the Lawyers' worries, the government revised and produced the English version of the OHADA Law, transferred some francophone lawyers and magistrates from English speaking Cameroon and appointed many others, created a new bench of the Common Law at the Supreme Court, and opened new departments at the National School of Administration and Magistracy (International Crisis Group 2017 Report).

However, these corrective measures were nipped at the bud when the protest, which was the initiative of only teachers and lawyers, was hijacked by other movements which had long been decrying the marginalization of the Anglophones in Cameroon. These groups included the Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC), the Southern Cameroon Peoples Organization (SCAPO), the Southern Cameroon Youth League (SCYL) and other Civil Society Organizations (Ngamfon, 2013: 36-38) and Trade Unions such as the Drivers' Syndicate who all accused the government of applying window-dressing solutions to the pertinent problems that has plagued the country for more than half a century. The demands were therefore transformed to meet up the expectations of not only the teachers and lawyers, but a vast majority of society who had become very disgruntled with the excesses of the various government departments. That is how the representative body called The Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC) came to be created. The Consortium became the motor of the revolution and received increasing support from the entire public in the two English speaking region.

Empowered by the Anglophone community to articulate on their behalf, this group was comprised of people from different walks of life and Barrister Nkongho Agbor Balla, a prominent International legal expert, was its president. While Fontem Neba, a university don, was Secretary General and Wilfred Tassang (an English literature teacher by profession), who was then the sitting Secretary General of the Cameroon Anglophone Teachers Trade Union (CATTU) was made programs coordinator. The government was therefore in negotiation with this group in to appease the Anglophones. When they could not arrive at a negotiable end after so many visits and meetings in Bamenda town and in Yaounde due to the complexity of the demands tabled both in the educational, legal, socio-cultural and to some extent political domains, and the unwillingness of the government representatives to look into the root causes of the conflicts, the government resorted to the use of force and repression (Fonkam, 2019).

The then Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization, Rene Sadi outlawed The Consortium on January 19th 2017 and orders were issued in that instance to the immediate arrest of its leaders and anyone who was involved in one way or the other with the activities of disturbing what they called 'the peace of the nation' (The Economist, 2017; Africa Times, 2017). This was heavily criticized and the criticisms proved to be valid when barely few months later in March 2017, and with persistent government crackdown on peaceful protesters as well as the rise of different groups with diverse interests to articulate

and demand for Anglophone rights, the civilians started picking up arms for their self-defense given the number of deaths that were recorded on daily basis as a result of clashes between government forces and unarmed civilians. This was more or less 'The Game Changer', the demands for equality, legal cum educational reforms had morphed into a demand for federalism.

Those asking for federalism were termed as 'enemies of the state' for questioning the form of the state and were thus incarcerated. Top ranking Anglophones officials such as Hon. Justice Ayah Paul Abine, who were merely suspected to be sympathetic with the Anglophone cause were summarily arrested and thrown into the most dreaded SED prison in Yaounde. In spite of all calls from different bodies, both national, ecclesial and international, the government persisted on the strategy of clamping down on the federalists. In the meantime, more and more people were getting to understand the reasons why Anglophones were protesting, so much so that it was not too difficult for them to embrace the option of separating from French speaking Cameroun which has come to be the main contention till date.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

In order to do a better assessment of the transformation of the conflict from peaceful resistance to violence perpetrated by both actors, this article makes use of a blend of the *consent theory of power* as well as the *Game Theory of the Rational Actor Model*. The consent theory of power as expounded by Gene Sharp, assumes that the power of authorities depends largely on the obedience and cooperation of the subjects. Without obedience, governments would not exist as it is the heart of political power. The idea which Sharp pushes forth is the symbolism of turning the tables where the weak take power from the strong (Talentino, 2005: 490). The subjects therefore use this power relation which is grossly characterized by dependence by the government to dictate and try to determine the outcome of the crisis (Schock, 2015: 15). The regime's response to manifestation is also a heavy determining factor of its outcome. If its response is largely oppressive and backfires, this increases the potentials of more empathy with the struggle leading to more protesters thereby decreasing the legitimacy of the regime.

Although the consent of power theory has been criticized on grounds such as its tendency to overlook other challenges that inhibit the collective withdrawal of consent through protest; disobedience and non-cooperation; not considering other sources of state power like relations with other states; and not being able to explain resistance to economic and

systemic inequalities where there is no clear dichotomy between the oppressor and oppressed (Schock, 2015: 17), this theory very much finds relevance as a tool of analysis in this study. Primarily so because the modus operandus of the resistance was aimed at blocking all the sources of government dependence in the Anglophone regions. This was in a bid to make the government succumb to their demands. Moves such as non-payment of taxes, intercepting lorries exporting raw materials from the region, paralyzing transportation and many others especially blocking children from enjoying their rights to education, were carried out either to bring the government 'begging' or to paint her bad in front of the international community in order to delegitimize her. This theory also finds relevance because it helps to prove that the escalation of the crisis was possible due to the way the government responded to the manifestation. Arbitrary arrests, torture, killing and massive imprisonment of innocent civilians all contributed to the civilians seeking ways of protecting themselves. Therefore, Sharp's explanation of backfire perfectly suits the context of how the nonviolent movement in Cameroon metamorphosed into violence.

Another theory to compliment the consent of power theory is the *Game Theory of Rational Actor Model*. Developed by the mathematicians John Von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern in 1944, the game theory has come to be applied in several behavioral relations addressing strategic interactions between rational decision makers from the 1950s (Ross, 2008; Pochkhua, 2010: 85). Generally, it is viewed as zero-sum where the gains of one means the loss of another.

The chicken game variant is more apt in explaining the scenario. The name "chicken" originates from a game where two drivers drive towards each other on a collision course: one of the drivers must deviate, or both may crash. But if one driver deviates and the other does not, the one who skewed will be called a 'chicken' which means coward. The best option therefore for each driver is to make sure not to skew in order to make the other person the coward (while a crash is avoided). On the other hand, a crash can be the worst outcome for both drivers if they are determined not to deviate. This results in a situation where each driver, in attempting to secure their best outcome, risks the worst. In order to show to the other how desperate they are for a win, one of the parties engages into a 'mad' demonstration by removing his steering to prove that he is out of control. The opponent is left with the choice of either doing same or swerving in order to preserve his own life. This model is of absolute importance because in the crisis ongoing in Cameroon, the principal parties involved (The government and the Separatists) are in this present situation. On the one

hand, there is the government which has her international and national credibility to preserve but is faced with the decision of either changing the form of the state which it had stated was non-negotiable and on the other hand, there is the separatists whose manifestations have brought untold suffering to a vast majority of Anglophone civilians whom they set out to protect. Each side is focused on making the other person succumb. Any party that backs off will have different consequences to face- reason why a dialogue has not been accepted as panacea by either party. Yet the consequence of non-cooperation will be disastrous, not only for the parties involved, but for the whole country.

2.2 Conceptual Clarifications

2.2.1 Nonviolent Resistance

Nonviolent resistance are civilian-based campaigns which are aimed to bring about societal change. When this happens out of the conventional political channels and without the use of violence, it is known as Civil Resistance (Schock, 2015:1). It can take a number of forms from sit-ins, pickets, nonviolent obstructions, nonviolent sabotage, blocking transportation, developing alternative markets or even establishing parallel institutions, boycotting some products, withholding taxes, destroying identity cards issued by the authority whom they are protesting against, illegally hoisting the flag, disobeying orders from constituted authority, creating parallel TV Stations, developing alternative governments, curriculum and development plan (Schock, 2015: 7).

Two main schools of thought exist within the nonviolence field: principled nonviolence and strategic nonviolence. While the former refers to the rejection of violence based on morality or religious beliefs, the latter sees nonviolence as the most effective tactic of conflict, not mainly due to some religious belief (Chenewoh & Stephan, 2011: 34; Victoria & Richard, 2016:164). Summy Ralph outlines six main guidelines for an effective nonviolent demonstration.

1. Respect everyone- including yourself. If you try to humiliate the other party, more resistance would be bred.
2. Always include constructive alternatives by initiating feasible and symbolic projects. This is to enable you gain more independence from your successor and it helps establish you better whenever the oppressor has been defeated.
3. Have clear long term tactics and be ready to change them according to the changes experienced.
4. Look for win-win solutions
5. Be careful with the way you use power. Make use of the power of patience and persuasion for one who is

persuaded remains so while one who is coerced waits for an opportunity for revenge.

6. Claim your legacy (Summy, 2005:7)

2.2.2 Violence

The word violence derives from the Latin roots “*Vio*” which means force and is generally applied to human actions which tend to imply pain or injury intentionally inflicted on someone or something (Barash, 2001: vii). It is the direct, intentional, and unwanted physical interference with the bodies of others such as bodily injuries, unlawful detention, killing, abduction, bombing, destruction of property, all in a bid to alter the position or behavior of another through force (Schock, 2015:4). Violence differs from its counterpart nonviolence in the sense that it operates through the use of coercive physical force and its consequences are irreversible. On the other hand, nonviolence targets social power and the human mind by using appeals, manipulation and nonviolent coercion (Schock, 2015:5).

There are many causes or reasons why violence occurs, although it is an unwanted phenomenon. Barash sees that the primary causal sequence in political violence is first the development of discontent, second the politicization of the discontent and finally the actualization in violent action against political actors of which the discontent arises due to relative deprivation (Barash, 2015:231).

However, in most manifestations, there is hardly a clear-cut difference between violence and nonviolence. In some instances, violence is used within some communities in order to enforce participation in nonviolent protests. Such was the case in apartheid South Africa where boycotts were enforced through force and “regime collaborators” were viciously murdered (Schock, 2015:28).

2.2.3 Conflict

The term “conflict” has been variously interpreted. The ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework sees it as contradictions inherent in power relations with one another and with nature in the pursuit of limited resources or opportunities (ECPF section III (8):7 cited in Ngamfon, 2014: 17). For a more inclusive understanding of this concept, considering the definition of Billings and Watts would be ideal. They hold that conflict is a natural periodic state of affairs that exists between people and its causes are complex ranging from competition for resources, power imbalances, and the incompatible explanation of others’ behaviours (Billings & watts, 2007; Ngamfon, 2014: 17). Most conflict situations are always viewed from the bargaining prism where one person’s gains depend largely on the decisions

and choices which the other person makes (Barash, 2001: 216).

2.2.4 Conflict Escalation

Conflict can be distinguished into latent conflict, manifest conflict and aggressive manifest conflict. Latent conflicts represent those conflicts that are developing, and have not yet manifested in a perceivable manner, even to the actors. Manifest conflict refers to the conflicts that have developed to an observable extent but have not been expressed in a violent manner yet meanwhile aggressive manifest conflicts refers to those which have escalated from manifest to the violent level of expression (Cheldelin et. al., 2008: 43).

3 ESCALATION OF THE CRISIS

With the play of time, the Anglophone crisis metamorphosed both in strategy and quest. As earlier mentioned, when the Anglophone crisis started, it had little to do with the form of the Cameroonian state (at least as could be observed). However, the coordination and transformation of the demands from equal chances to federalism and then to outright separation and/or independence as well as the resources galvanized to ensure the attainment of the ultimate goal suggest the contrary.

The peaceful protest which was scheduled for November 2016 by the Lawyers of Anglophone origin was met with police brutality. This had the concomitant effect of radicalizing more people and increasing popular determination to acquire what they needed. In the weeks following, a disorganized and uncoordinated struggle could boast of a unique leadership with a well-structured authority which directed the general population on what had gone wrong and what had to be done to reshape and/or change the status quo.

3.1 Nonviolent Strategies Adopted

The Direct Action Training Manual defines nonviolent action as techniques out of institutionalized behaviour for waging conflict using methods of protest, noncooperation, and intervention without the use of or threat of injurious force (Casino-Free Philadelphia Direct Action Training Manual, 2008: 4). The Anglophone movement registered itself in the books of history as one of those crisis situations that made use of this strategy which had proven to be successful in different continents. Only, they had not been able to diagnose contextual challenges of implementing them within the Cameroonian cultural as well as administrative contexts. Some of these strategies are discussed below.

3.1.1 Ghost Towns

The earliest main tool used by the Interim Government (I.G) to put forth their demands was the imposition of *ghost towns*. Ghost towns refer to a complete shutdown of activities in a particular town or region with the goal to paralyze the smooth functioning of the town and eventually the government departments. Ghost towns were communicated through social media and they were as effective as decrees or *arêtes* signed by a governor or president. It warranted people to stay indoors from morning until evening at about 6pm. Generally, ghost town days were Mondays. But the days were modified or prolonged based on the activities to be held in the town during that particular week.

Although this strategy became boring and void of any observable positive change, it was clear that it had passed across its message to the government. The economic activities of the two English speaking regions dropped drastically in returns. This was paralyzing to the government given especially that the region of the South West most specifically contributes close to 60% of the GDP in terms of its mineral and plantation wealth (Neba Aron, 1999: 147-158). This is what Schock refers to as power relations where the subjects try to take advantage of the dependence of the government on them in order to press for specific needs (Schock, 2015: 15). Ghost towns have however produced many counter effects on the population itself and is losing much popularity. Many people left the English speaking zones due to hunger. Prices of commodities dropped drastically and the livelihood of the people has become very difficult. This strategy, although still in use, has greatly been criticized for its lack of dynamism and innovation.

3.1.2 Use of Blockades

The use of blockades has been rife in several instances of civil disobedience or manifestations in the world. The Anglophone crisis actors tried making use of this in order to articulate their cries. In most cases, blockades are either used in order to stop something which people believe is evil or in order to constrict the fluidity of activities thereby increasing numbers affected who would likely mount more pressure on the government.

In the specific case of the Anglophone crisis, blockades were used in order to prevent cars, heavy-duty trucks from transporting timber as well as other natural resources (oil and gas) from the English-speaking zones to the other parts of Cameroon. In other instances, blockades were made on the roads to stop movement of people from one town to the next. This was mostly used during the later phase of the conflict. Blockades were mostly done by cutting down heavy trees, using trucks to carry loads of large rocks to pour on the

major roads, cutting bridges linking main towns of the regions to the peripheries at night and dumping any other heavy weight materials which could distract and halt movements of administrative and army vehicles circulating in the regions.

3.1.3 No Education Policy

The no-education policy till date remains one of the most contested strategies which was adopted by The Consortium and later, the Interim Government (IG). This policy required every child schooling in the English-speaking side of Cameroon as well as the teachers to stay at home without going to school. To them, it was an ideal way of expressing their dissatisfaction with the subservience of the Anglophone sub system of education. Worthy of note is the fact that The Consortium had adopted it because the teachers needed reforms to be done in the educational sector. To them, halting school was to be a temporary issue pending on Government's flexibility in solving the issues raised. However, the government's solutions were criticized of being window-dressing and more of cosmetic solutions by The Consortium.

With the banning of this body by the government, the subsidiary body that took over the leadership of the movement maintained the no-school policy which has been on for two academic years and counting. Although in some remote places, schools were going on 'clandestinely', majority of the schools especially in the key towns of Bamenda, Kumba, Mamfe, Bali, Mutengene, Buea were closed down. Most of the students and pupils migrated to the French speaking cities for studies. Some more who braved the odds at the start soon migrated too due to increasing shootings and targeted killings in the towns. Very recently, another strategy of kidnapping school administrators and pupils/students has been adopted in both remote areas and central towns of the English-speaking regions. This has led to the disappearance of many persons who have become the baits and sacrificial lambs of the conflict between government forces and so-called 'Ambazonia militiamen'.

3.1.4 Elections boycott

Boycott of elections by majority of the people in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon was the greatest proof by the Anglophone communities that they were no longer interested in the union which has existed since 1961. Never in the history of Cameroon has an entire region boycotted from elections. It was officially reported that less than 5% of the people who registered in the two regions ended up voting. However, even this figure has been contested by many people as they put forth that most

Anglophones, who live in the bushes, did not participate in the elections. More so, the polls were heavily militarized and the few people left in towns were scared of not only the military, but the “Amba fighters” who had passed several circulars asking everyone not to dare step out of their homes on that voting date. In the February 2020 Municipal and Legislative elections, the same scenario was experienced which led to the massive win of the ruling party in both Anglophone regions (Journal du Cameroun, 2020).

3.2 Response from Government

Although the government began addressing the worries of Anglophones beginning from December 2016, not long after the crisis started, the physical response which it gave to the Anglophone protesters became a route that radically transformed the conflict to what we have till date. The government took a number of peaceful measures in the light of striking a comfortable solution to the demands of the Lawyers and Teachers Unions. There were several meetings sponsored by the government between December 2016 and July 2017 in Bamenda and Buea headed by government Ministers. All these meetings did not yield the expected fruits because the parties could not reach a consensus. When it became crystal clear that government attempts to satisfy the different parties had failed, the strategy to force the union leaders to accept this package resulted in the banning of The Consortium. Perhaps were it not for the violent reprimand from government departments beginning from 22 September 2017, proving that the government could go any extra mile to maintain what it believes to be the territorial integrity of the State, even at the cost of Anglophone lives, this conflict would not have created such determined belligerent groups.

3.2.1 Ruthless crack down on Protesters

As it is typical with the Yaounde regime on such events, when the crisis started with the peaceful protest of lawyers, the government force machinery fell on them and brutalized them. Some had their robes torn, some were beaten and their wigs seized. Sooner than later, what was a ‘purely legal demonstration’ drew public sympathy (Tapuka, 2016). More unionists such as Teachers Union, Drivers Union, and syndicates joined and sooner than later, an umbrella association to articulate the demands of the Anglophones emerged as The Consortium. The government failed to strike a deal with them after several meetings which held in the city of Bamenda and instead proceeded to outlaw the association. From that moment, the government began systematic crackdown of sympathizers to the course whom they had already classified as “terrorists” in order to hang them. Political pundits hold that the ban and consequent

arrest of a constituted leadership which represented the Anglophones was the first major blunder of the government.

Youth were targeted by government forces and arrested, masked and whisked overnight straight to SED prison in Yaounde and hundreds of them are not accounted for till date (VOA, 2017). During a peaceful strike of students of the University of Buea in November 2016, police brutality of the first degree was recorded; cases of rape, manslaughter, inhumane treatment especially of unarmed student protesters. Their hostels were raided and both boys as girls were beaten and asked to roll in the mud (Fatunde, 2017). The treatment that was given to these student protesters and to those who were later transported to the Buea central prison and SONARA detention camp thereafter was seen by national and international media community as the highest level of inhumane treatment. On December 9, 2018, the government freed 289 of those who were detained. This move came at the heels of the establishment of the heavily criticized and controversial Commission of Disarmament and Demobilization. It was hoped that the Anglophones would judge these moves as honest endeavours by government to bring about a favourable end of the conflict (Amnesty International, 2018). However, this was not the reaction. The creation of the commission was criticized as putting the cart before the horse. Meanwhile the setting free of 289 detainees was simply under-looked as being grossly insufficient compared to the thousands of people who are in jail and the many others who are still not accounted for yet.

3.2.2 Use of Hate Speech

Apart from denying parliament to discuss topics related to the anglophone crisis, the government had thought that making use of repression both in speech and action would force the Anglophones to surrender. Government top officials such as Issa Tchiroma, Jacques Fame Ndongo, Atanga Nji, Laurent Easo, Ngolle Ngolle Elvis, Okalia Bilai are cited to have used words which rather than soothe the hearts of Anglophones in such a crisis moment, created more sores and made them more determined to prove themselves. Minister Fame Ndongo is frequently recalled to have said that Anglophones were just like “two cubes of sugar in a basin of water which will all melt yet have no effect on the water,” while the then Governor of the Southwest region Okalia Bilai referred to the population as ‘dogs’ and that if ‘dogs’ came out on the streets, they were going to be killed (JNews, 2017). In other instances, metaphors such as cockroaches and rats were used by either French journalists or other top-ranking officials. These words of hate came to the people of the two regions as a direct rebuff made by the regime to the Anglophones which the latter considered as a challenge in order to prove that they were not going to back

off easily as the regime was thinking. It therefore acted instead as a bolster to the resistance than an intended distraction by these government officials. In most instances, Anglophones keep reminding the regime that the two cubes of sugar have not yet dissolved.

3.2.3 Internet Cuts

The Anglophone quest for self-determination could be termed as an internet revolution. This was because all the information (pictures, videos as well as instructions on what line of action to follow) were dished out mainly on social media. It became very necessary for the government to counteract such actions. Like the case in Egypt where Facebook became the major tool that the youths used to galvanize and eventually gathered at Tahirih Square to force out of power a long standing dictator, Hosni Mubarak from power way back in 2010 (Takor & Cheo, 2015: 134). Fearing a repetition of such scenario in La Republique, the government cut internet from March 19, 2017 and it was only after 92 days that the internet was restored. However, this sole action, although it had helped to limit the proofs of the gross human rights violation going on in Cameroon to the international community, it had as well exposed the government to the International Community as big violators of human rights as the internet has become part and parcel of basic human rights. Equally, this move had gone to further increase the resilience of the Anglophones who developed alternative methods of sending information either by using regular calls, regular text messages, or traveling to the nearest francophone town to install applications such as VPN in order to be able to change IP address and have access to the internet (Ritzen, 2018).

3.2.4 Use of scorched earth policy

The military embarked on destroying anything useful to the local inhabitants of the Anglophone regions. This strategy had been used in the past in several countries, the only difference was in its manner of application. In most of those instances where they were used, food crops, road networks and water supply were destroyed in order to render an advancing enemy helpless. Sometimes, the policy was carried out in one's own camp while withdrawing from there. In the case of Cameroon however, the military resorted to punitive destruction of civilian houses and property. Several cases have it that many homes were even burnt not only with occupants in it but also their property including grain (BBC, 2018). This continued to cause enormous pain, suffering and starvation on the local population especially the ageing persons.

At the beginning, it was interpreted as a mere sign of frustration on the part of the military who could not find the

'Amba fighters' and then resorted to vent their anger on the innocent civilians. This continuous practice has left more than eight hundred thousand people homeless as more than one three hundred localities have been razed by flames set by military forces loyal to the present regime. This further went to increase the determination of even those who yet undecided to join the radical wing. The military is on a systematic neighborhood to neighborhood destruction and killings. The most recent killings which made wave were the Ngarbuh massacre of 14th February 2020 which saw the killing of more than twenty-one people, women and children being the majority (Craig, 2020). With many youths who had fled to the forests, there was ample time and opportunity to train and take revenge for what had been done to them. This aspect of burning down villages remains at the center of the multiplicity of the militia groups. Frustration due to homelessness, loss of family members and property have increasingly forced young persons mostly to resort to joining the local militias against the military and the magnitude of the crisis have remained unimaginable during the recent months.

3.3 Radicalization of Actors and the Demand for Independence

The disbanding of The Consortium, which many people used as a point to prove the government's indifference towards looking into the plight of the Anglophones, never killed the aspirations of the Anglophones. Rather, it permitted the emergence of interest groups which came up to champion the course. This time around, it was no longer an issue of equal opportunities or participation, but matters concerning the form of the State.

It was not only the demand posed by the Anglophones that changed, their reliance on peaceful protests changed as well. Until then, those leading the strike, through social media after the arrest of the members of The Consortium and later Interim Government, had been asking the people to refrain from violence. This was judiciously followed by the denizens of both regions. The height of respect for the orders given by this 'Social Media Administration' was proven when they called for a massive protest to be carried out on the 22nd of September 2017 and the 1st of October 2017 (Africanews, 2017). The citizens of both regions came out massively in every Regional Headquarter, Division, Subdivision and most villages. They held peace plants as well as placards denouncing the government and expressing their willingness not only for peace but also to separate from La Republique. On this day, many unarmed civilians, women, men, children were shot and killed with live bullets, many

more arrested and ferried to Yaounde. From that time, the military resorted to sporadic home-breaks and brutalization of males, in some cases minors.

However, the continuous clampdown by the government on innocent civilians made their feelings and adherence to nonviolence to change, reminiscent of the words of former South African freedom fighter Albert Luthuli who advocated for what he called appropriate moral defense from aggression (Vinson, 2019). Youth were butchered in some parts of their bodies, some were summarily killed and abandoned to rot in bushes, others were abducted and have never been found, some still, were arrested for trivial or no crime at all and sent to underground prisons in Yaounde. The youth resorted to radicalize themselves. In less than no time, attacks from the Cameroonian Military met with reposts from the civilians. Some people who were good at the craft of producing dane guns were hired in order to produce more of them. While arming themselves, the youths too resorted to using 'charms or black magic' for protection. Most of them went to Nigeria in order to *armour* themselves with traditional concoctions which were meant to protect them. As of now, around 10 of such groups exist without a unified command and they have been a serious threat to the military (Fröhlich & Köpp, 2019). Some of the local militiamen with the general name as 'Amba Boys' have identified and called themselves differently in several localities some of which are; 'The Tigers', 'Red Dragons', '7 Kata of Bafut', 'Black Ninjas of Santa-Pinyin' and the 'Naked Angels of Batibo. These charms, it is believed can either divert military bullets away from the target or for the military guns not to trigger at all. As the sad case of the 'Maji-Maji Revolt' of the people of Tanganyika against the Germans, the case of the 'Amba Boys' and the military in Cameroon is a story not to be told. Hundreds of thousands, both military and militiamen have been killed and this crisis has been likened by many to the Rwandan Genocide of 1994.

Conclusion

This work is a clear demonstration of how a conflict can transform itself due to the exigencies posed by factors such as response to manifestation as well as strategic planning. Although the government response to manifestations was a principal cause of the transformation of a nonviolent movement to a highly radicalized one, it is clear nonetheless that the nonviolent movement as intended by the leadership

obviously was not well planned. This is for obvious reasons that those leading the strategies simply seized the opportunity that presented itself through ill-fated government responses to an initial protest, which ended up having popular sympathy. A well-planned nonviolent movement takes into consideration the cultural cum administrative realities of the place where it is to be carried out and has to ensure that it is nonviolent throughout the struggle until the ultimate goal is reached. With the extreme radicalization of different groups, it is a huge challenge for any negotiation prospects and a possible return to peace and stabilization of the regions even if their quest is met. It is, therefore, no doubt that even the 'amba' fighters themselves constitute a time-bomb created by this crisis which even the simmering cauldron of NW/SW divide is non-comparable to. This will render an eventual social reconciliation and reintegration effort very difficult.

As a recommended step for every stakeholder both national and international, let them press for an inclusive dialogue on neutral grounds (not national dialogue in any means) with the minimal preconditions laid by either party met. This would be the necessary step before the neutral arbiter calls for disarmament. It is not either party's role to call on the other to disarm. This research strongly recommends group mediation comprised of mediators from Norway, the US, Switzerland and Germany.

It is of the strongest opinion of these researchers that this crisis cannot be resolved if matters concerning the form of the state are not allowed to be discussed at the mediation forum. As a recommendation for the form of state, the government should expeditiously resort to a confederation (a solution which is midpoint to federalism and independence), fault of which it would be difficult for the separatists to renege from their independentist stance, which is their right. It is also of absolute necessity that the president of Cameroon flushes his entire government and appoint totally different people. This is because most people around the president are those who had created for themselves chunks of stolen wealth which they seek to protect by all means. Some of the means they have resorted to, is either feeding the president with lies or not informing him adequately on the real situations on the ground as pertains to the Anglophone crisis. This has contributed to aggravate the crisis. These, with other confidence building mechanisms, are a necessary precondition for effective conflict resolution.

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