History Never Dies, How Silent Past Returns: Southern Cameroons/"Ambazonia" ▢

Gallous Atabongwoung*

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Introduction

Post-colonial Cameroon is located between West and Central Africa. Cameroon has ten administrative regions with an estimated population of 24,910,930 inhabitants living on a surface area of 475,442 square kilometres (CIA, 2018). Geographically, Cameroon shares borders with Nigeria to the West, Chad to the North, Central African Republic to the East, and Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Congo-Brazzaville to the South. Before Europeans arrived present day Cameroon in the 15th century, the borders of Cameroon were limited to the coastal areas along the Gulf of Guinea. The Bantu-speaking ethnic groups inhabited the area before colonisation. Post--colonisation Cameroon presents a highly diverse society with significant internal, cultural, linguistic and ethnic plurality (Eriksen, 2010: 5-15). This makes it difficult to construct a shared/homogenous ethnicity (Eriksen, 2010: 5-15). Shared ethnicity is not a necessary foundation for a successful nation building project (Eriksen, 2010: 5-15).

Ilustração 01 – Map of Cameroon showing its Administrative Regions and Boundaries.

1.1. The History of Cameroon before and after Independence

History has it that a Portuguese navigator by the name of Fernando Po discovered Cameroon as a colony in 1472. This statement somehow seems problematic when fit into the broader African history which Toying Falola and Tyler Flemings (2009) have argued that the people of Africa lived in the continent for quite some time before the arrival of the European explorers. Africans used iron tools to mark the significant moment of progress in their civilization. As iron tools enhanced weaponry which allowed various ethnic groups to clear and manage the dense forests, plow fields for farming to better their everyday lives. As a consequence, iron tools allowed Africans to flourish in every environment, and this allowed them to expand their communities which led to the formation of ancient states and kingdoms (Falola and Tyler, 2009). By virtue of the formation of these states and Kingdoms came an eventual progress in the African modern civilizations with common languages, belief and value systems, art, religion, lifestyle and culture (Falola and Tyler, 2009). However, unlike most Euro-Asian civilizations, African societies favoured oral tradition because as of that time, very few African collectives possessed written languages (Falola and Tyler, 2009). Therefore, African stories and oral histories documented the past, and were handed down from generation to generation. Through such intellectual practice, it was obvious that the oral-based linguistic past of Africa would remain simultaneously promising and problematic in documenting Africa's pre--colonial past, as many of these oral histories have either been forgotten or distorted after being retold by each passing generation (Falola and Tyler, 2009). Therefore, in the absence of the beauty of written sources, Africanist scholars of this era have had to be creative in discovering new sources to document the continent's precolonial past. As research in genetics, archaeology and linguistics increases, we will know more about early African civilizations. This is not to say, however, that we know little (Falola and Tyler 2009). Therefore, to affirm Fernando Po discovered Cameroon as a colony in 1472 could either be an issue of semantics or a colonial project that attempt to erased the history of Cameroon before 1472. Notwithstanding, when Fernando Po arrived the Bight of Biafra, he sailed up the Wouri River in the coastal regions of Cameroon. Fernando Po was surprised to see large numbers of prawns in the Wouri River and named the Wouri River *"Rio dos Camarões"* ("river of prawns"). But the presence of malaria in most of West Africa including Cameroon (*West Africa was referred to as "the White Man's Grave")* impeded Fernando Po from exploring and making further conquests into the hinterland (Raper, 1995: 1186-89). Cameroon therefore derives its name from the Portuguese lexicon *"Camarões"*. The name became *"Kamerun"* during the German annexation of 1884-1916 after the Germans signed the Germano-Douala treaty in July 1884. The treaty granted the Germans full legitimacy to administer Cameroon as a German protectorate until March 1916 when the Germans were defeated in the First World War (1914-1918), and dispossessed of most of its African colonies. The name '*Kamerun*' was then changed to 'Cameroun' by the French and 'Cameroons' by the British after the territory was partitioned into East Cameroon and West Cameroon under French and British colonial administrations respectively (Elango, 1985: 658-60). The partition gave the British one-fifth of the territory and the French four-fifths of the territory (Elango, 1985: 658-60). East and West Cameroon later became the League of Nations mandates in 1922 and the United Nations trust territories in 1946 (Ngoh, 1979: 28). The French ruled East Cameroon from 1916 until East Cameroon gained independence in January 1960 to become *"La République du Cameroun."* The British on the other hand, ruled West Cameroon from 1916 until February 1961, when British West Cameroon gained independence through unification/[re]-unification with French East Cameroon to form a
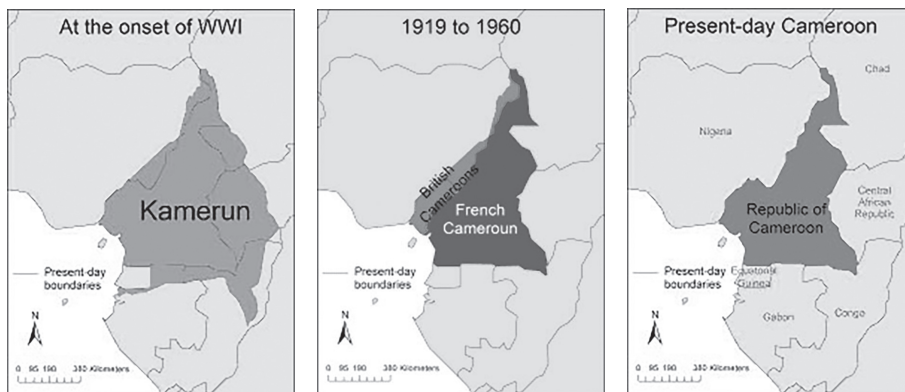
Ilustração 02 – Shows the Map of Cameroon before and after the (re)-unification.

federal union called the Federal Republic of Cameroon. From observation, Cameroon is called "Africa in miniature" owing to its geographical, linguistic and cultural heterogeneity. As the country is host to one of the highest literacy rates on the continent. Africa in miniature is a phrase that view Cameroon as a space that is home for all in the sense that it is believed everything feature or human groups in Africa is found in Cameroon because Cameroon exhibits all the major ecological features of the continent: coast, desert, mountains, rainforest, resources, and savanna.Even though Cameroon is a country of enormous human and material potential its economic and political prosperity has been hampered by long decades of corrupt of Francophone authoritarian rule a perennial source of conflict with the Anglophones. Anglophone political representation and economic development as part of the Cameroon federation have been deprived through policy that consistently eroded since 1961. Instead, the British Southern Cameroons/Ambazonia has been referred to as a minority collective in the wholesome Cameroon society. As mockery to the Anglophone, no minority rights have been given to them. Notwithstanding, the complexity of Cameroon is in the nature of its ethnic identity. Accordingly, there are about 250 ethnic groups in Cameroon with diverse origins, cultures and traditions. The most famous are; the Bamileke, Bassa-Bakoko, Bata, Duala, Fang-Beti, Kirdi, Mbororo, Pygmies, Shuwa Arabs, and Tikar. The country has four cultural zones: Sawa, Grassfield, Fang-Beti and Sudano Sahelian (Gordon, 2005). It has been a great challenge to unite all the various ethnic groups in Cameroon because of the fact that the ethnic groups are involved in the socioeconomic and political divide in the country. This divide is as a result of the partition of Cameroon in 1919 (Kofele-Kale, 1980). For before 1919, Cameroon was administered under the Germans as a single political entity.

Post 1919, until the reunification, Cameroon had two political capitals -Yaoundé the capital of French Cameroon and Buea the capital of British Southern Cameroons (See Ilustração 02 above) (Kofele-Kale, 1980).

1.2. The Reunification of Cameroon

Some scholars and politicians saw the re-unification of French East and British West Cameroon as an example of political expediency. Here were two previous colonies with varying socio-political experiences; the British *"indirect rule"* and the French *"policy of assimilation",* and from two distinct sociolinguistic backgrounds of French and English

which were the two official languages that would be included in the federal union. After experiencing more than four decades of British and French colonial rule which promoted their political ideologies, cultures and lifestyles in the separate territories. Erudite scholars like Bernard Fonlon would not resist idealizing the glories of the reunification as "the crucible of African unity" (Fonlon, 1963: 4). Such a sentiment is contrary to that of Le Vine who described the re-unification of Cameroon as mundane (Le Vine, 1964: 273). In his academic prophecy, Le Vine argued that the reunification of Cameroon was an *"imperial design"* because it undermined the distinct socio-political realities of the two states, and was evident that it would compromise peace in the near future (Le Vine, 1964: 273). Hence, the reunification question of the early 1960s, prompted Le Vine (1964: 273) to coin the metaphor for West Cameroon as the *"bride"* and East Cameroon as the *"bridegroom"*. Le Vine's metaphor was to show a relationship of incompatibilities between a weaker in-group (English Speaking/Anglophone Cameroonians) vis-à-vis a dominant out-group (French Speaking/Francophone Cameroonians). In terms of surface area, demography, language and level of development, French East Cameroon was ten times the size of British West Cameroon. French East Cameroon had four times the population of West Cameroon and a higher level of economic development (Le Vine, 1976: 273). Moreover, Le Vine reiterated the huge socio-political incompatibilities between the two previous colonies would compromise future peace of Cameroon. Le Vine however, envisaged the emergence of minority and marginalization sentiments, raising the possibility that Francophone Cameroonians would see Anglophone Cameroonians as a minority group in terms of language differentiation and the small size of the Anglophone population resulting from the partition of Cameroon. Le Vine further states the inevitability of Francophone Cameroonians turning on, and marginalizing their Anglophone counterparts, since there is always tension in a majority – minority relationship in any given socio-political landscape (Le Vine, 1976: 273).

However, irrespective of Le Vine's assertion, the then African politicians hailed the reunification of Cameroon as appropriate (Le Vine, 1976: 273). Through a plebiscite on 11 February 1961, the Federal Republic of Cameroon was born. East and West Cameroon that previously existed as distinct political entities were now collapsed into one. The new Federal Republic would transform the two political entities into a single Federal State. The first constitution of the Federal Republic of Cameroon came into force on October 1961. The constitution was supposed to ensure that the new Federal Republic maintains its originality as two autonomous federal states, given Cameroon's bi-jural, bicultural and bilingual nature inherited from colonialism. But the new Federal Republic quickly became a *"Unitary State"* in a 1972 referendum dominated by East Cameroon deputies. The deputies voted in favour of a unitary state. The vote was in violation of article 47 of the first Federal Constitution of 1961 because it dismantled the federal structures that advocated for separate autonomy of East and West Cameroon (Kale, 1967: 70). On June 2, 1972, the United Republic of Cameroon was born. The United Republic of Cameroon would maintain the status quo of French East Cameroon, while British West Cameroon would become two administrative regions/provinces under one central government led by French East Cameroon. English would remain the official language of the two newly designated regions/provinces of West Cameroon (Ngoh, 1987: 257). Ahmadou Ahidjo (the first president of postcolonial Cameroon) said that, "the federal structure was collapsed to a conformist unitary state to promote national development because managing a two--state federation was a hindrance to various national development efforts because it was cumbersome and expensive." The inadequately rationalized and harmonized public and town planning were already hindering agricultural production and urban development

policies which came from the old federal structures (Chem-Langhëë, 1995: 23). However, worth noting that the argument tabled by President Ahidjo was refuted by Mr. John Ngu Foncha (the then prime minister of British Southern Cameroons). President Ahidjo therefore replaced Mr Foncha with Mr S. T. Muna because both Ahidjo and Foncha were at loggerheads. This came at a time President Ahidjo realized Mr Muna would agree to his suggestions.

The seemingly successful reunification of Cameroon caught the attention of supranational organizations, including the then Organization of African Unity – OAU (present day African Union-AU) to reward Cameroon for its peculiar Pan-African approach (Awasom, 2000: 91-119). The OAU proceeded to appoint two Secretaries General from Cameroon; Mr Nzo Ekanghaki (1972-1974), and subsequently Mr William Eteki Mboumoua (1974-1978) (Awasom, 2000: 91-119). There was growing perception that the reunification of Cameroon was a great political achievement, "the apotheosis of African nationalist struggles par excellence" (Awasom, 2000: 91-119).

Furthermore, in 1984, under President Paul Biya, the name of the country was changed from the United Republic of Cameroon to the Republic of Cameroon. If translated into French verbatim, this means *"la République du Cameroun"* which alludes to the original state of former French East Cameroon after independence (Ngoh, 1979: 93-98). The name change was and remained a blow to Anglophone Cameroonians who felt that their British West or Southern Cameroons statehood was dismantled and stripped of its autonomy according to the federal constitution. Even their inherited *"Anglo-Saxon"* culture was under threat. The act of the name change therefore heightened the feeling of *"exclusion and marginalization"* already experienced by the Anglophone collective less than a decade after the reunification (Ngoh, 1979: 93-98). Contrary to the promise made by President Ahidjo in one of his official visits to the Anglophone town of Tiko on the 17 July 1960 where he declared, "French East Cameroon is not going to annex British West Cameroon in the reunified Cameroon nation" (Ngoh, 2001: 136-173). But the subsequent name change by Ahidjo's predecessor Mr Paul Biya in post reunified Cameroon only exacerbated anxiety and tension among Anglophone Cameroonians. Worth mentioning is Paul Biya's manipulation of parliament to pass a controversial amendment in 2008 allowing him to run for office again and again, with his party, the Cameroonian People's Democratic Movement (RDPC) which has a long history of manipulating Cameroon's electoral body, the "Elecam" to rig landslide majorities in every parliamentary election since 1992. And his new seven-year terms in 2011 and 2018 in votes marred by widespread irregularities and rigging by international observers (Reuters, world news, 16 October, 2018) only added salt to the severe injuries of Southern Cameroons. It has, culminated in to the now prolonged political crisis/civil war which before its bloody nature, scholars like Konings and Nyamnjoh had already coined the anglophone anxiety as the *"Anglophone problem"*. This problem remains at the heart/core of the civil war in Cameroon. It is therefore imperative to contextualize the Anglophone problem.

2. The Anglophone problem in Cameroon

The Anglophone problem that was dormant in the first two decades after independence and reunification, is dominating the current political landscape of the country. The Anglophone problem poses insurmountable challenges to the various attempts that post-colonial Cameroon has made in order to forge national unity and integration (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997: 207). As the root cause of the problem that led to the civil war in 2016 dates back to the political history of Cameroon. When it was time to form the

Federal Republic of Cameroon, there was no precise indication as to the actual nature and involvement of the *"would-be federation."* The federal republic did not provide effective institutions that could guarantee and preserve the equal partnership of the two previous colonies as envisaged in the first federal constitution of 1961 (Kale: 1967: 70). As a consequence, it was obvious that the would-be federation would not be able to guarantee the preservation of the dual colonial systems that was passed down. Notwithstanding, another contention was the huge imbalance in terms of socioeconomic and political development between East and West Cameroon as a result of the different socioeconomic and political policies that were inherited and adopted between 1961 and 1966 (Ardener, 1967: 309-335). The policies gravely undermined the socioeconomic progress of West Cameroon (Ardener, 1967: 309-335). This created poor socioeconomic state in West Cameroon (Ardener, 1967: 309-335). And therefore, the British West/Southern Cameroons became dependent financially on the federal subsidies, largely generated from the more advanced economy of East Cameroon after the reunification (Ardener, 1967: 309-335). This dependency therefore added complexity to the nature of the republic of Cameroon. Walter Rodney as far back as 1975 stated, "when two societies of unequal level of socio-political and economic development interact which each other at any level, the more advanced one would exert total influence on the less advanced one" (Rodney, 1975). It was therefore evident that French East Cameroon would dominate the British Southern Cameroons resulting exclusion/marginalization. That is why hitherto, the increasing consciousness of Anglophone exclusion and marginalization within the context of *forceful assimilation* of the Anglophone population into a Francophone-dominated state in terms of language and population has resulted in a bloody civil war (Lazar, 2019: 1-2). In addition, the complexity of Anglophone exclusion, marginalization and forced assimilation into a Francophone dominated state are not some stand-alone facts. The duality of Cameroon history has severe impact in the way issues of national *"belonging"* one negotiated in Cameroon. This also heightens and presents an interesting feature of how language attitudes in such a complex sociolinguistic landscape like Cameroon can shape or deny one's being to belong to a particular space of belonging. Post-post the name changes in 1984 by President Paul Biya, Anglophone Cameroonians don't feel they belong to Cameroon. The primary way belonging is expressed in Cameroon through language/language attitudes. Hence, it is important to revisit the role of language in the war in Cameroon.

3. The Sociolinguistic dynamics of the war in Cameroon

Cameroon is globally and officially considered a bilingual country with French and English as the two official languages (Gordon, 2005). Nevertheless, "to be Francophone or Anglophone in Cameroon denotes a new kind of ethnicity that transcends conventional ethnic ties" (Anchimbe, 2005: 1). French and English exert a stronger influence on Cameroonians who are originally Francophone or Anglophone. Such influence created language attitudes which shape the way Francophone and Anglophone Cameroonians express their belonging. And determines what language must expand or decay, restore or destroy among the two languages (Ngefac, 2010: 149-164). The politics in Cameroon has also compelled French to dominate English which in return is influencing the behaviour of Anglophone Cameroons to an extent (Abongdia, 2009). Fonlon had argued against the dominance of French by stating much earlier in 1969 that "the dominance of French in Cameroon is due to the attitude of the government to elevate French to dominate the entire socio-political and economic landscape" (Fonlon, 1969: 43). This was achieved because the government of Cameroon has shown to have no regard for English. The government appoints more

Francophone Cameroonians than Anglophones to key positions in public administration (Fonlon, 1969: 43). Even government official texts and speeches are in French first, before being translated into English. Sometimes the English translation is so poor that it does not capture the ideas and intentions of the original text. The attitude of the government to undermine English makes the majority of Francophone Cameroonians to operate in the system without any need of English, thereby causing Francophone Cameroonians to perceive English as inferior and French as a superior language (Mforteh, 2006: 16). This has created further complications where by Anglophone Cameroonians are increasingly perceived to be inferior/ lower-class citizens (Ngefac, 2010). This has added anger within the Anglophone communities contrary to some distorted narratives of the role of language in the war in Cameroon that I will highlight in the subsequent paragraph.

3.1. Language in a distorted narrative

Some people have presented a problematic claim regarding the issue of language in Cameroon. The problematic renders the very essence of the role language plays in the war in Cameroon to be blurred and void of originality. Many Francophone writers in Cameroon consider the sensitivity of the political context, time and space in which they find themselves when writing on any subject on Cameroon during this time of a civil war for fear that their analysis may be taken out of context. And there could be some repercussions as is the case of many journalists and activists that have been jailed or killed for speaking truth to power. The truth of the matter is it is obnoxious when speaking "truth to power", or "challenging the powers that be", or "questioning existing status quo". They try to distort history by presenting a false narrative on the reality of the situation. Any distortion of historic facts like what has been happening in Cameroon for more than 4 four decades would not remain silent forever. This is because there is a lot of evidence that history has always had a way of returning to the society. This we have seen in many states how the suppression of history became a "silent past," and how many silent pasts have returned in different local and national communities in a very regrettable manner. Therefore, how we represent our collective past to ourselves and to others determines how such past would shape our actions, identities and understandings in a way that individual-level processes would peacefully interact with collective ones and vice versa etc. Interestingly, we are ethically and politically obligated to remember our past/history, and the consequences of meeting, or failing to meet, these obligations in terms of respecting where we come from as a people with a history. In addition, in the case of Cameroon, history has become a reference to the subjective experience of time. Whereas history should not be a replay of a string of moments, but 'an enlivening and reconfiguring of past and future that is larger than any individual' (Barad, 2017). The distortion of present-day history of Cameroon is done by Francophone majority who dominate the socioeconomic and political realms of Cameroon. Anchimbe (2005) argues the dominance of Francophone in Cameroon is *de facto* because majority of Cameroonians are French speakers [80 %] as a result of the partition of Cameroon at the end of the First World War in 1919. It must be reiterated that it is a result of French dominance Anglophone Cameroonians continue to see English as an enabler to create a symbolic zone for themselves. There is no effective government policy that maintains equal status of English and French as agreed in the 1961 federal constitution (Chumbow, 1996: 5). Somehow the government of Cameroon has managed systematically to relegate English to second place below French within state organs and has associated French with more benefits than English (Truong, 2012: 8). In line with this, the government has also been unable to reinvent a common

lingua franca that could be used by all Cameroonians as a way to forge national unity in post-independent Cameroon. This inability to unify the country through a common language or an elevation of the two official language to remain equal in the eyes of Cameroonians only adds complexity in the already existing ethnolinguistic divide in the country (Makoni and Meinhof, 2003: 1-4). Even when the government instituted and pretended to promote French and English official "bilingualism at all levels, it only remains a *"child's play"* in the face of logic as many government documents are published in French (Republic of Cameroon, 1998a). Hence, years later Kouega (1999: 112) observed that Cameroon bilingualism was unidirectional – a one-way bilingualism where speakers of English increasingly operate in French, while their French-speaking counterparts remained largely monolingual". Achille Mbembe (2016: 36), argues *'monolingualism'* was a way of perpetuating colonialism in Africa because it involves imposing one's language on others irrespective of their knowledge of that language. It could therefore be argued that, Cameroon government has discreetly embarked on a naïve strategy that geared at *internal colonialism.* Notwithstanding, both French and English – official bilingualism gained traction immediately after independence for the following two reasons:

(a) Post-reunification, Cameroon political elites considered French and English as non--ethnic weapons to quell inter-tribal conflicts and ensure a shared national belonging.

(b) French and English helped to avoid conflicts that might have arisen in the attempt to choose a local language as a common *lingua franca* to be used for the entire nation in the midst of multiple local languages.

In one view, it was obvious that when attempting to choose a lingua franca for the nation, there might be contention among local language groups with political powers because of the gross linguistic plurality in the country. Many political elites might have preferred their local languages to that of other groups for the entire nation (Bitjaa, 2001a). This would have brought chaos as Ngũgĩ wa Thiongo (1985: 109) states that, "language choice in a multilingual society is critical because language shapes the way people think and see the world" (Ngũgĩ wa Thiongo, 1985: 109). The view presented by Ngũgĩ wa Thiongo was upheld by Migge and Léglise (2008: 1-2) who state that any language chosen in a multilingual society can create prejudice in the same way. That is why in Cameroon or outside Cameroon, Cameroonians often identify themselves primarily as Francophone or Anglophone in terms of official languages (Anchimbe, 2005: 1). This is because the official languages of Cameroon serve as identifiers and political markers with strong borderlines that facilitate the way Cameroonians negotiate their belonging at all spheres of their public life in a manner that is stronger than the sense of shared national belonging (Anchimbe, 2005: 1). Alidou also had argued, "The bond of unity existing among Cameroonians is confined along official linguistic borderlines (Alidou, 2006: 9). This means, overtime, "Cameroonians have demonstrated strong emotional linguistic attachment to French and English more than their local languages" (Anchimbe, 2005: 1). In addition, this tendency has made French and English transcend conventional ethnic ties because they have become the symbols of in-group/out-group solidarity (Anchimbe, 2005: 1). For example, the ubiquity of the *Anglophone problem* has caused Anglophone Cameroonians to create borderlines along English. That is why both Anglophone lawyers and teachers could not take it anymore in 2016 but appealed to the government against its continual deployment of Francophone lawyers and teachers to Anglophone courts and schools respectively. Such contestation among Anglophone collectives towards the government might encourage linguistic conflicts and unhealthy identification that tend to be the hallmarks of the day, when people start identifying themselves on the basis

of colonial official languages which striped them of their *"Africanness"*. It should also be acknowledged that the act of deploying Francophone lawyers and teachers to Anglophone courts and schools was an attempt to create new forms of identification and acceptance which in effect was imposing French language on Anglophones irrespective of their knowledge of it. The government cynically was forcing Anglophone Cameroonians to accept French which would have resulted in some form of *"force assimilation"* (Alobwede, 1998; Anchimbe 2007: 71). It is a subconscious phenomenon that in any given society where there are multiple languages, there is an unconscious competition among collectives on the question of language dominance – language that must be used in the context of linguistic integration (Ngefac, 2010: 149). Hence Francophone Cameroonians have always emphasized the dominant use of French (Anchimbe, 2007: 71-72). The evidence is "when you travel in Cameroon you get a sense of the increased pervasiveness of French in terms of language in socio-political and economic spaces, media, dress code, food, and items for sale in shops" (Anchimbe, 2005: 1). However, contrary to what some writers have been claiming on the question of language divide in Cameroon, the war in Cameroon is not a problem of linguistic division between English and French [or between their speakers]. It is a political problem. After 37 years under President Paul Biya, Cameroon continues to divide along politics with deep fault lines that keep getting deeper. When Anglophone lawyers and teachers went on a peaceful protest in 2016, the government suppressed the peaceful demonstration with the full might of the military. The government of Cameroon arrested prominent lawyers such as; Felix Agbor Balla, Fontem Aforteka'a Neba and Paul Ayah Abine following the protest march of 2016. These individuals only advocated genuine political and inclusive governance that would consider the interests of both political cultures in Cameroon. Their suggestions to the government were to take the nation back to the 1961 constitution that created a two-state federation. This was the turning point of their arrest. However, the case of their arrest was tried under anti-terrorism laws enacted to combat Islamist Boko Haram militants in the north part of the republic. This act stoked tensions in the North-West and South-West regions which deepened opposition to President Paul Biya's mainly French-speaking government. However, after a long period in incommunicado "The decision (to end the prosecution) was made by a presidential pardon as a hypocrisy of resolving the senseless war through a questionable peaceful solution to end the crises". The victims and many others pleaded not guilty in February to charges that included complicity in hostility against the homeland, secession, civil war, and campaigning for federalism. They had faced a potential death sentence if convicted. This act of gross injustice fuelled an unquenchable anger within the Anglophone collective. There are also much horrific evidence of extrajudicial killings by security forces that emerged including the burning down of thousands of Anglophone villages which has kept millions of Anglophone in a *"do or die"* position. It is important also to note that it is the government of Cameroon's approach to the grievances of the Anglophone post- the arrest and the skinning of Anglophone lawyers and teachers that escalated the issue into a bloody war. While language has always remained a tool of communication between Anglophone and Francophone Cameroonians with evidence of emerging *makeshift languages*. The current political cloud that leans towards pro-independence struggle of the Anglophone nation with unsurmountable challenges such as; senseless killing and imprisonment of Anglophone Cameroonians without being fair trials in a *"war without end"* destroys every further effort to forge national unity and integration (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2019). In addition, the arrest of the Anglophone leader Sisiku Ayuk Tabe and nine others in a hotel in Abuja, Nigeria and transported to Cameroon where they are kept in a dungeon waiting their last breath on earth violates their unquestionable and inalienable right to

self-determination as protected by Article 20 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights which was ratified by both Nigeria and Cameroon. It has fuelled tension all over Southern Cameroons.

The Anglophone question therefore must be looked upon in the context of legality that must only be answered through the lens of justice in the midst of decaying political realities. The prolongation of the crisis through political shyness in terms of confronting the situation head-on through inclusive, progressive and ethical dialogues from historical truths may break Cameroon in the long run because the root cause of the problem dates as far back as the political reunification [federation] of the two Cameroons (Anyangwe, 2009). It is also important to emphasise that every attempt to define the root cause of the conflict as an object of language difference would misconstrue the basis for seeking political progress. Such attempt would only linger to pathos for a while because it is already late to try to re-write the history of Cameroon in the midst of international archives in the United Nations Security Council. It must be also be noted that the ongoing struggle for the independence of British Southern Cameroons is not an accident. It has a long history. It started with the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) that has a history of supporting any attempt towards the independence of the two Anglophone regions, Northwest and Southwest regions. The Southern Cameroons National Council is a non-violent organization that was established in the early 1990s as a result of disagreements within the Social Democratic Front during the arrival of multi-party politics in Cameroon. It rose to political prominence around 1995 with a sole focus on the independence of the former British Southern Cameroons. There are two factions of the SCNC, the genuine one that is for Anglophone nationalism and the state sponsored one that seeks to discredit the genuine one. The genuine one tries to foster the argument that Southern Cameroons was an independent state between 1954 – 1961 a way of attracting genuine conversation with the government of Cameroon. However, until now there had been no dialogue between the government and the SCNC. In 1999, the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) declared, mostly symbolically, an independent Republic of Ambazonia, citing a 1995 non-binding referendum on independence in which separatists won out with 99 %. Even though the majority of anglophone campaigners and a few lone rangers from French Cameroon want the country to resume a federalist system – an approach that followed the 1961 unification that was later scrapped in favour of a centralised government run from the capital Yaoundé. No nation building efforts have succeed in Cameroon. It is "*high tide*". The government and the people of French Cameroon must gaze their eyes beyond the conflict and must return to the original rules of the game – "the drawing board of the 1961 federal constitution". The international community can also facilitate the return of the two-state federation. This is because the state of the nation building post reunification is abysmal.

4. The abysmal nation building efforts in Cameroon

More than 5 decades now, political repression, economic marginalization and cultural and linguistic exclusion by the ruling regimes have resulted in the heightened expression of divergent sentiments of nationalisms typically the – Anglophone nationalism (Jua and Konings, 2004). While the majority Francophone seek to force everyone into an outright Cameroonian nationalism – a conscious identification of the state of Cameroon. An attempt that has been misleading because it ignores the danger of the rising *politics of belonging* that is invading the Cameroonian society (Fonchingong, 2005). The fact is that the politics of belonging has the ability to overturn the progress of national unity. The

result of the politics of belonging in Cameroon is that it has become the "mainspring of internal xenophobia and destructive sub-nationalisms" (Boone, 2003: 1). As it creates forms of spatial variability and draws attention to the treacherous nature of *autochthony*, which is subject to constant redefinition against new 'others' at ever-closer range (Ceuppens and Geschiere, 2005: 385). The spirit of autochthony is most prevalent in French Cameroon because its stability is also at the brink.

Furthermore, there is a form of autochthony that is echoed by political elites of French Cameroon. This form of autochthony has aggravated the socio-economic and political divide amongst French Cameroonians. Notwithstanding, the situation of Cameroon is peculiar, unique, and instructive in terms of revisiting and comparing nation-building and governance efforts in various postcolonial Africa states. Cameroon harbors a complex colonial history in the sense that it had entanglements/encounters with three European colonial powers – Germany, Britain and France. These countries still have legacies in the political evolution of Cameroon. While at the same time, during the wind of change that ushered *decolonization* in Africa, Cameroon was faced with the difficult challenge of integrating its more than 250 collectives with different ethnic backgrounds (Gordon, 2005) into a single postcolonial state. It should be mentioned that ethnic collectives in Africa were more or less ethnic states. These states had political systems and culture orientations before colonization. Therefore, to tactfully manage these ethnic states remains an ever-pressing challenge to the nation of Cameroon with a high level of ethnic chauvinism. Therefore, Cameroon's success or failure hinges on redressing its pertinent regional, linguistic and ethnic cleavages. It is critical at this point to realize that in spite of the prolonged tensions that accrue from the Anglophone revolt, Cameroon remains one of the few African countries whose leaders have never been deposed through a military coup or by civilian elements. This is because of the ethnic composition of the state as a whole, the multiplicity of crises and the rise of "*the politics of the belly*" (Young, 1999).

Previously, the international community had falsely claimed that Cameroon was among the most stable countries in Africa. This claim distracted a lot of attention from the decaying Cameroon political landscape. The claim therefore assists the government of Cameroon in it's attempt to create a new pattern of nation building with an encompassing sense of being a Cameroonian around the national football team – The Indomitable Lions of Cameroon in the early 1990s. However, this was non-sustainable owing to the deteriorating economic situation that came with the democratic transition of 1990 (Krieger, 1994). Critically speaking, the nation building efforts in Cameroon are further resisted by linguistic cleavages in urban cities. The cleavages portray the fragmented state of its nation-building project. This is heightened by linguistic and cultural differences that will forever remain a salient factor in Cameroon's nation building effort.

The international community particularly the two previous "*colonial masters*" of "*servitude-Cameroon*" have prevented the state from resolving the present crisis with the historical burden of colonialism. French Emmanuel Macron who was five years old when Paul Biya became President of Cameroon in 1982 not only endorsed the legitimacy of Biya's presidency when he took office. He has also been playing double standard all this while. Criticising Paul Biya while at the same time reinforcing Cameroon military might with French squadrons. The British government has also followed the tune of this music. Even though the crisis in Cameroon has been raised many times in the British House of Commons with many requests from the British government in terms of what it is doing for the situation. The British government has only been able to express its concern over the situation in a manner that is good for literature and visual optics by encouraging the government of Cameroon to embark in a process of an all-inclusive dialogue in order to resolve

the deadly violence. However, the British government has not done any better in terms of resolving the war. It must be noted that Paris and London are at the centre of the war in Cameroon. Their decision to grant the former British Southern Cameroons independence by converging with *La République du Cameroun* was the apogee of human negligence and colonial satanism. Meanwhile the international community should have encouraged the government of Cameroon to move towards an all-inclusive dialogue that welcomes debates on the form of the state. It was expected that the international community should have been a key player in this event. It was under the watchful eyes of the international community that the government of Cameroon created the dubious "National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multi-culturalism" as part of the government measures to resolve the war in Cameroon. Even though it was very clear that such commission would not succeed because it lacked the ethics and moral to speak truth to power. The war in Cameroon is only a reflection of the effects of neo-colonialism in the larger part of Africa. The war has made a critical announcement of what Cameroon is, or what it represents, in combination of its true historical experience, and long abuse of power by its leadership. Following decades of renewed political manipulation along ethnic, regional and linguistic lines that has been sustained by the previous colonial powers. However, the reality is that, finally the collective citizens of Cameroon Anglophone and Francophone – have become disillusioned with the manipulations of the Cameroonian nation-state (Gros, 1995 e 2003). What will happen hence forth will be presented as recommendations in my conclusion.

5. Conclusion

The war in Cameroon has significantly increased various political movements within the Anglophone collective. There are those in support of outright decentralization of power (two-state federalism). And those in support of outright independence (self-determination). The latter constitute amongst them those who have taken up arms as a reaction to the massacre of innocent Anglophone Cameroonians. Therefore, because the war has colonial implications in terms of the failed process of "decolonization" of British Southern Cameroons, it is required that the British government should take the lead in seeking solution to the current conflict. The strongest recommendation in ending the war is that Cameroon must return to its 1961 Federal constitution and must continue to exist in a two-state federation. This must not be replaced by any other form of the state. It must never become a ten-state federation or a new decentralized state. The later would not keep Southern Cameroonians at peace owing to the new face that French Cameroon has shown them. Alternatively, there should be a referendum for self-determination of Southern Cameroons.

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