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# **Cameroon Coughs and Sneezes, Symptomatic of Catching Africa's Cold of Conflict: Dealing with the Dilemmas and Controversies of a Country Grappling with its History**

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**Keywords:** Conflict; Peace; Africa's Cold of Conflict; Southern Cameroons; French Cameroun; Anglophone Problem, Colonialism.

**Abstract.** This work examines events from Cameroon's life since becoming a nation to foster understanding of the worrisome political situation the country has been traversing since 2016. Bitter and unhappy with their treatment since joining the French-speaking part, many citizens of the minority English-speaking part feel fed up and desire a breakup. I show that apart from constituting an aspect of its pride, Cameroon's history is also a source of tricky challenges the country has been wrestling with since inception. I contend that issues of this kind will always be around if those in the country's cockpit fly it to a destination other than what satisfies and respects the two people – especially the one that moved the English-speaking part to opt for a joint destiny. Instead of toying with truth to score personal political points, authorities should yield to truth, operating in good faith to correct errors and heal hurt hearts so that both people will willingly, not by force, accept to work together. Contrary actions will risk the future. Happiness moves people to look at their history with pride finding things to build while pain stirs frustration and fury, moving them to search for flaws to fix or fight. I hold that both parts face almost the same challenges from unmet needs to emaciating struggles of survival. However, the English-speaking part has unique plaques that ache terribly and have nothing to do with the country's general cry of lagging development. They touch on its identity and survival, unleashing pain many out of its shoes might fail to feel and so unable to understand the degree of excruciation. I caution that though it has been a show of two regions, the likelihood of someday evolving into a ten-region revolution is certain if wise and inclusive actions are not applied. Apart from groaning in their own pain, many among the other eight are sympathetic to the predicament of the lamenting two, expressing fury, first, against the denial by highly placed authorities of the existence of any problem, and second, in their ruthless and brutal treatment of those who complain or challenge their stance. Anger increased as people's patience waned. Their calm will not last if things stay unchanged. When arguments evolve and accommodate their worries they will get on board pushing the heat to levels officials will have problems containing without facing the temptation of fighting the people they are in office to protect. I end with recommendations the state and activists might find useful. They highlight measures that can help in a heterogeneous society like Cameroon to preserve peace and save it from becoming a scene of mayhem and butchery.

## **Introduction**

Being airborne, cold is contagious and easy to catch even if one's immune system were in excellent form. It only needs anyone who is alive and breathing to be infected. Africa's history has many instances of conflict from the pre-colonial to the post-colonial periods. Evidently, the wind of change that blew during the days of colonialism only succeeded in bringing independence, not peace and stability in many cases. Instead, that of conflict and chaos came with ravaging speed, blowing ferociously through many communities in spite of strong yearnings for peace. Like the influenza virus which moves easily with air infecting anyone on its way without paying attention to any kind of boundary, conflict has been criss-crossing the continent's countries, respecting neither

colour nor culture in a manner that has left many marvelling. Country after country continue to catch *Africa's cold of conflict*, the syndrome of instability whose roots are connected to colonialism, passing it to others. The deeds of imperialism have been among the biggest generators of disputes and wars in the continent. In the current interconnected world where societies have drifted together and the nature and causes of wars have changed with uncertainty looming everywhere, it just can be anyone's turn, for no community's immunity seems to have the ability to offer complete exemption from the possibility of attacks nowadays [1,2].

Widely known as Africa in miniature, Cameroon<sup>1</sup> is fast catching the cold with deaths already recorded and brutality of worrisome degree that shows no respect to the dignity of a human being, suffered. Majority of the citizens of its minority English-speaking section are crying foul against the French-speaking side, the bigger and demographically more populous part, accusing it, among other things, of oppression, acting as the boss, owner, pacesetter and controller of virtually everything about the nation the two agreed to build as equals, insisting that enough was enough. It is worth clarifying that the government, which is predominantly composed of citizens of the French-speaking stock, is singled out as the enemy, not French-speaking Cameroonians in general. Its deeds and actions along the years have stirred the ire of the English-speaking masses melting the enthusiasm and interest that moved them to opt for a joint life.

The spirit of conflict and revolution is all over the place and the airwaves are charged. Toying with truth or playing politics about things too clear to deny; things that will not escape even the blind eyes of any sincere and honest person is not the best of strategies anyone will want to use in sensitive periods of this kind when the country badly needs redemption from patriots of good faith. Instead, calling issues by their name and confronting errors or excesses with courage and meekness are wiser moves. Peace, it should be recalled, is not hoped for but worked for with a willingness to remorsefully admit errors [3]. This puts on both victims and perpetrators or accusers and accused, as the case may be, the responsibility of facing facts with honesty, having sincere concern for society's future, its underprivileged as well as the well-being of everyone in it than seeking private gains or playing to the gallery for whatever reason.

This is not the first time the English-speaking stock is decrying the deeds of the Yaoundé government calling for reforms that respect its true status in the union, including a return to the federal system. The latter has often responded with silence, snob or direct refusal to discuss topics like federalism or the kind of reforms the people desire, arguing that the country was one and indivisible [4]. This kind of response has left many wondering and grappling with puzzles. First, until the government's attitude of silence became intolerable and offensive, the initial demand was not to withdraw from the union but to reinstate federalism. Moreover, the fact that it does not want to hear of federalism has remained baffling to pundits who are wondering what it is scared of. Federalism is not separation or a death sentence on a nation. It is not a taboo word or a disgusting and disadvantageous practice, at least, not in the 21<sup>st</sup> century where many of the great and dominant nations who lead both in their continents and around the world are federations from the United States, to Germany, Nigeria, Russia and Brazil. The argument of the country being one and indivisible has been the position of many Cameroonians, not just the government's, including even those who now desire separation. The government, composed of powerful élite who act in certain circumstances like members of a ruling club they must stay faithful to, is accused of using it as a bait to capture the masses by exploiting their patriotism to build its power base and foster its private objectives unhindered. It is equally accused to have borrowed it from the English-speaking stock without due acknowledgement, twisting it to suit its motives in a manner that instead indicts their belief in oneness. English-speaking folks quickly dismiss this as a sham and disgusting ploy from unpatriotic politicians. They hold that apart from being the ones who voted for reunification and preached strong messages of unity to convince sceptics in the French-speaking side, they were also the ones who allowed persecuted freedom fighters, lovers of unity, and people from the French-speaking side to reside in their territory and play active roles in their local politics before the two

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<sup>1</sup> Cameroon has been written differently in the text depending on the European power it was used in reference to. They did not pronounce and spell it in the same way as will be noticed.

sides got so close, even permitting their Prime Minister to appoint some of them into the highest offices on the land as a way of letting the former France-controlled trust territory understand that such moves were possible and should be encouraged for the good of the kind of country they dreamed of building for their children and for Africa that was striving for unity.

As a result of years of being ignored, the anger of many English-speaking activists has overflowed, pushing them to get harder. They are now demanding the independence of former British Southern Cameroons. During the days before independence, the government of Southern Cameroons, many keep recalling, made moves towards the people, the real custodians of power, to ensure that everything was fine. It encouraged citizens to speak their minds and empty themselves of whatever queries they had so that nothing accumulated to constitute a problem to the territory someday. Looking at current realities, they frown at what now constitutes government behaviour where even serious issues are ignored and one can suffer for their opinion even though the laws of the land including the constitution, forbid that, guaranteeing complete freedom [5].

Cameroon's history, though having some painful souvenirs including the slave trade and colonialism, is a source of pride to the country. It is a heritage and treasure both the state and people will not easily trade for anything. It is their life, their story, the very soul of who they are. It feeds feelings of patriotism and nostalgia whenever they reflect on it. The constitution cited above reiterates its value as well as the pride the nation attaches to it. However, this history is at the same time, a source of dilemmas and controversies which have continued to hunt the country. There are issues which even the country's finest academic and political minds are not agreed on. These disagreements get hot and serious at times. It is important to have some kind of unity of positions, at least, over core issues where division is not permitted because of the harm and confusion it is capable of causing. This will help the nation to make the journey into its future with confidence and a clear image of itself. For a people's story is their soul and an inseparable part of who they are [6]. Few things are as dangerous and inhibiting as not entirely knowing who one is and the exactness of one's story, be it a nation or an individual. Moreover, history is not and should never be an opinion platform where positions of preference are propagated by people. It should always be the exactness of what happened.

Moved by the disturbing political situation facing the country since the closing quarter of 2016 and the recurrent cry of the English-speaking section against Yaoundé, I took some findings from a research project I have been engaged in to produce this paper. It deals with certain dilemmas and elusive truths about Cameroon. It is an effort to shed light on certain areas of the nation's life, contribute to the quest for peace and suggest tips that can ease the procurement of solutions the country currently seeks. It is worth indicating that without a sound understanding of certain important realities needed by countries during stormy seasons or when traversing dark days, there will be a lot of struggling, gambling and turning around circles with accusations and counter accusations going up and down. This does not help when peace is the missing item society is trying to find. It instead gives conflict sufficient time to accumulate negative energy and power its destructiveness and durability. It might be helpful to note that quarrelling parties who cannot agree about something often think they are right and the other, wrong, and wonder why the other is unnecessarily unyielding and recalcitrant over something so easy and clear [2,7,8].

Also worthy of note is the fact that this is just a contribution and not a work that touches on everything there is to know. The country's challenges are many, complex and multifaceted. Some of the things currently happening, though serious and tagged the problem, are not actually the problem but symptoms of even bigger problems which have accumulated over time and will manifest in ugly ways if not wisely approached and defused. That is why this work cannot claim to have captured the entire picture. In fact, it cannot, because it is an academic piece that was bound by regulations including the obligation not to have a limitless length. That notwithstanding, it has tried to bring illumination to certain areas and foster understanding of both what the problem is and what people should not be ignorant of.

## Unacceptable Versus Unaccepttable

The past is full of lessons showing that dodging truth or not finding it in crucial moments is devastating for any society, especially political ones like states that have diversities and a heterogeneous population. Playing with decisive matters is not a good gamble at all notably when the issues at stake will affect not only current generations but those to come as well. That is why carefulness is required of all parties each time the political weather darkens because one wrong step in even the right direction has the capacity to unleash a storm whose consequences can be costly to Cameroon as a country, forcing its dream of unity to hit the rock and end in tatters.

For a long time, the game played on the country's political terrain has been 'unacceptable versus unaccepttable.' Much of what different generations of protesters and activists of the English-speaking section did while expressing their frustrations were described by the authorities as 'unacceptable'. Yaoundé uses this word a lot, as well as the language of disapproval and warnings. On the other hand, the government's attitude and what it did through the police, gendarme and army including arrests, torture and killing of protesters was described as 'unacceptable'. This has happened many times. Things have been stuck at this point for long and there is much unwillingness, especially on the part of the authorities, to sit and have a frank national talk. Both sides have instead been playing the blame game with the government having the upper hand because of its control of power and the military.

This looks unwise because it is better to talk to people when they are only angry and clamouring to be heard than when they get wild and become an unbearable torn in society's flesh. That there is anger and frustration within the population or at least, a section of it, is incontestable. But that this will genuinely die down and result to nothing serious, is uncertain and depends heavily, not on what is happening in the French-speaking or English-speaking parts or even abroad as one might be dribbled to think, but on what the authorities responsible for holding the country together do or fail to do. They are the decisive trump card to serve as the game changer. The English-speaking population might be bitter and full of a seemingly unquenchable rage but there is something the government and élite who have a voice can do which will heal bleeding wounds and bring down anger like raging flames on which cold water was poured.

This is not to buy their leaders, harass them, ignore them or use guns, for the gun invites a gun response even if the opponent of the moment is a weakling with zero gun experience. Not even guns as little as pistols have ever succeeded to be peaceful peacemakers. They all speak one language – violence and sorrow. They cause pain and activate feelings of revenge. Moreover, sealing leaking wounds instead of healing them is simply an unwise postponement of catastrophe. This is surely not what the government should do. It gives things the opportunity to build up and burst in a cataclysmic manner in the future, catching society unaware and ill-prepared to contain the chaos. Besides, the gun is the language of the insecure and intellectually weak who does not know how to win by strategy and irresistible arguments adduced with unimpeachable truths [1]. With the number of schools in Cameroon and around the world and the amount of money allocated as education budgets, this ought to be an age for the brain not that of the game of guns or the strategy of intimidation.

Honest actions that can dry legitimate tears are needed at this point because meeting legitimate demands and real needs takes them off the list of grievances, crippling the prospects of continuation of any kind of protest no matter how much life it initially had. That is why all peace strategies at this point should be void of politics that promotes business as usual. They should rather be the bubble-bursting type, crafted with wisdom, truth and sincerity. They must not try to outsmart the opponent but partner with them in good faith for the common good, keeping in mind that there are many peaces and it will be disadvantageous to be stuck at the same spot trying to attain only a particular kind when others can help the society better [9, 10]. These moves need to carry sufficient positive energy that has the capacity to defuse tension and place the country above private gains, ultimately paving the way for the healing of hurt hearts that are ready for any kind of risk including death. In addition, they should include intelligent and appealing actions like acknowledging faults and expressing the willingness to make amends – acts which can attract people of both stock to proudly and willingly align with the building of Cameroon without any kind of coercion.

Quite important, the building of Cameroon should not be portrayed as something a couple of patriotic persons are sacrificing everything to achieve while unpatriotic ones are bent on destroying and must be stopped. No Cameroonian really loves the country more than the other. This can be fact-checked many times using different methods and data. People's languages are influenced by circumstances including, for the case of many of those tagged patriotic who are in their majority members of the ruling class and their supporters, the positions they hold as well as the privileges and benefits the system has exposed them to. They are not more patriotic than those who criticise them. That is why some citizens can and will damn the state and its system in one moment and change their tone later when things change in their favour though not in favour of the entire nation.

As Cameroon's case shows, things like sports, the fight against common enemies such as Boko Haram, just to name these few, are verifiable examples which demonstrate the unquestionable patriotism of the people. Their strong love for the country suppresses whatever pain and frustrations they may have been struggling with during sporting events or when threats show up. The government acknowledges this. The last time was the head of state's 2016 end-of-year address to the nation. Patriotism is not something Cameroon is poor of. It has always moved citizens to lift the country above anything else in pride and respect. Citizens support their sportsmen and women with passion and at times, fanaticism, like members of a religious body. All around the country, when Boko Haram stroke, many enrolled into the army and those that were already there reinforced their commitment. This was not because they desperately needed a job, though many were unemployed and needed to be active, but because the safety of Cameroon was and is something Cameroonians never mind risking anything, including their lives, for. Others formed vigilante groups and others helped in whatever way they could including a heavy deployment of the power of social media against the sect. As history now holds, many from both the French and English-speaking sections paid dearly. They lost their lives, dying heroically as martyrs defending the country as support continued pouring from compatriots at home and abroad each time blood from the bodies of the boys and girls on the front line of battle oozed out.

Therefore, for anyone to think they are more patriotic than others is an arrogant and disgusting fallacy with profound consequences everyone, especially politicians and civil society groups of all sides, should be mindful of when making declarations about the nation. Those with derogatory languages and provocative actions should also pause and ask themselves critical questions about the sincerity of their love for the country – questions only they should answer in honesty and truth. In this regard, citizens of the French-speaking stock who derogatorily call their English-speaking counterparts Biafrans, Bamenda or enemies in the house and those of the English-speaking group who destroy state symbols like flags and call their French-speaking brethren, frogs, should place their actions on a balance and weigh them themselves in a just and objective manner. But if they must know, these actions are not patriotic and do not promote the Cameroonian nation. They completely fall short of helping the people to cope with their pain.

In recent times as the research for a section of this paper was underway, activists of the English-speaking section, as part of their protest, mistreated and burnt national symbols and property including tyres on some of the few tarred roads the country has. This, in certain instances, was in response to police, gendarme and army brutality and maltreatment. However, the fact remains that such profane actions should never be encouraged or justified given the degree of desecration and sacrilege they constitute. Until it legally gets out of the union with the Republic of Cameroun, the English-speaking section is still part of the country and obliged to respect every law and symbol.

The hard fact, though, is that these are things the people once revered and honoured like deities. Many who now refuse to sing the national anthem saying it is a French Cameroun thing once sang it with passion and clear voices that were not embarrassed to loudly declare: 'Oh Cameroon! Thou cradle of our fathers.'<sup>2</sup> Given that truth is an indispensable asset in the search for peace and it is vital to face facts about sensitive matters with boldness, honesty and good faith, would anyone not want to be sincere and open-minded enough to question in a neutral manner with

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<sup>2</sup>These are the first words of Cameroon's national anthem.

the goal of finding durable solutions why they changed and turned with such anger against things they once cherished and lived with? There is surely a reason. Many scholars and politicians of French-speaking background as well as highly-placed government officials of the English-speaking stock, especially at the beginning, expressed surprise towards their grievances and nationalistic behaviour, finding it hard to understand what their worries really were. Some felt they had no problem while others thought such disturbances were the work of manipulators and political losers who failed to get a share of the political cake and could not also secure a place on the nation's dining table of dignitaries [11].

Moreover, some saw the protesters and all those raising angry voices against the status quo and the political establishment in Yaoundé as an isolated group of individuals whose politico-economic conditions and inability to compete fairly and be victorious genuinely are causing them to develop feats of pyromania, burning sacred things on their way. But can it not also be that they have legitimate concerns that have been aching for long and all attempts to be heard or get a solution have either been unsuccessful or blocked by those sitting on seats of power and privilege causing pain to accumulate so much that it is now manifesting in strange ways including the carrying out of acts they previously shunned?

This study found out that there is pain within the people. Serious pain. Just as some of them are seen as pyromaniacs and victims of manipulation, so too do they quickly wave such accusations away in rage, tagging those who oppose their cause and will not understand their plight, especially those behind the political agendas instituted by the regimes of Presidents Ahidjo and Biya as people deliberately operating a philosophy of state-building designed to give them the leeway to, like kleptomaniacs, rob former Southern Cameroons of its heritage and identity. They seek to completely fuse it into French Cameroun territory-wise, deleting its history from the world's record books. This, they argue, is totally unacceptable and is a provocative violation of the vision their forefathers had which brought the two Cameroons together to make it a new and greater nation. It is on the verge of destroying one of the partners, the smaller one, in favour of the bigger. This has resulted to a kind of Cameroon which is not what the patriarchs had in mind. It is instead one which, going by appearance, thinking, features, system and culture, is the trust territory France moulded and stamped its seal on. It is a country with a private agenda, not the model bi-cultural country which two independent entities came together to build. It does not resemble the state they intended nurturing together to grow in a way many around the world will envy and desire to be like.

Given that these complaints are shared by many in the English-speaking part as well as sympathisers of the French-speaking side and it never helps to downplay truth, it is important for current and future ruling classes to put up an attitude that can win back the confidence of all English-speaking Cameroonians and their sympathisers. This is because the realisation of the Cameroonian project is impossible without the acceptance and cooperation of everyone. Anyone who tries to ignore others or force them at gunpoint to accept it is not applying wisdom correctly. Such acts program the country's future to be a victim of an inevitable chaos. The price will be high and will definitely be paid either in the short or long term. Current behaviours should rather be designed to burst bubbles, not blow them bigger. They should pragmatically tackle the anger and frustrations which have repeatedly moved people into streets and pushed others to see even death as not too high a price to pay to defend heritages no one should destroy. It is worth pointing out that what the country's government, élite and leaders of the disgruntled people do or fail to do is the veritable thing that will move matters to either the side of calm or chaos, not the current anger. The solution should not and cannot come from just one of these bodies. They all have unique roles to play.

That is why state authorities should not feel too high to descend right low to the periphery of society to get the real issues responsible for people's worries with a willingness to take away their pain. Protesters, on the other hand, must understand the procedures of expressing grievances in a state of law because anarchy, destruction and burning of costly public facilities, taint than justify claims, no matter how legitimate they may be. There are many ways of winning and securing everything one wants without killing or destroying anything [12]. Cameroon, first of all, is facing

serious crisis of infrastructure. For anyone to earmark the existing few as a target for destruction is an improper way of expressing annoyance. It instead increases the misery of the masses who will definitely need those things after just a while. From the 1990s during the reintroduction of multiparty politics to the current upheavals, a lot of property has either been broken, burnt or destroyed in the English-speaking part in places like Bamenda, Kumba, Limbe, Kumbo, just to name these few. Though this has also happened in other parts of the country, one wonders if this is the reputation any people will want to build for themselves and their struggle. If destroyers among their ranks must know, their action is embarrassing and does not represent a responsible way of asking for attention or participating in building a country in the 21<sup>st</sup> century when others are going to the Moon and Mars, moving forward in all possible ways in order to keep widening the gap between them and those who still break their own bridges or use live bullets on those who disagree with them. Restraint and discipline are required behaviours in circumstances of this nature. However, this kind of destruction should be distinguished from those carried out in response to provocation and brutality from the forces of law and order. They compounded things in a lot of situations. Genuine peace can never be achieved through force because no one likes to stoop to an opponent's brutality without raising an alarm of disapproval or responding in their own way. This is bound to happen because the instinct to resist oppression is inherent in human nature [13].

It is partly for this reason that sheer expressions of anger and the desire to have one's way at all cost should be excluded from any equation of peace and frank talks which respect the wishes of all parties, promoted. It is worth stating that merely allowing people to tell their stories or present their worries in a free manner that satisfies their inner cravings has enough power to defuse any negative energy they accumulated. It favours the development of feelings that work for peace. Moreover, if one listens attentively and expresses concern to the worries of hurt people, recognising their worth and assuring them of the determination to tackle their pain, it releases a degree of consolation which quenches inner fires, brings down tempers and sets the stage ready for sincere peace talks to thrive with ease [14, 1, 2].

This is time to openly engage one another in honest discussions, not time for mutual rejection or half-hearted engagements that seek the victory of one's position and the destruction of the opponent's. For this reason, there should be no display of any unjustified recalcitrance on the one hand, by leaders of disgruntled groups who might refuse to fully cooperate with state authorities in order not to be seen by their people as not being tough enough or, on the other hand, by the government which might not want to give in to the people's demands in order not to be seen as weak with no real guts to look at them in their eyes and talk tough in a manner that sends strong warnings to anyone planning to walk on a similar path. If either or both of these parties allow themselves to be trapped in thoughts of this kind, the peace process will suffer severely, exposing the country to the risk of slipping down a trench of violence and chaos. Even if some kind of peace is acquired, it is risky because that will not be peace but a trap into which Cameroon may fall someday. As a matter of priority, issues should be treated with the seriousness and reasonableness they deserve because time matters in matters of this kind where stakes are high and situations, volatile. Moreover, the blood of Cameroonians is more precious and of greater value than the political ambitions of any individual or group of individuals.

This is thus a period for ideas and win-win solutions which can defer carnage without disadvantaging anyone. It is possible for bitter rivals and antagonists to become great friends and inseparable co-workers. Quarrelling parties can leave a negotiation room with genuine smiles on their faces, feeling proud of themselves for winning without fighting. This is because procuring peace is always a possibility. It depends on the actions of those concerned. This is a moment for the mobilisation of all kinds of fire extinguishers, not fire feeders, bringing them on board to take care of business. Whether they come in academic, political, economic, socio-cultural or other forms, the goal, at this point, should be to promote peace and salvage Cameroon from what has ravaged others and will not spare it if its people fumble or fail to snatch it out of the fire the direction of its steps are warning everyone it is going into.



## Looking Deep into Issues

Cameroon, it should be remembered, is not Paul Biya's property neither does it belong to members of the government. In addition, it is not a private estate belonging to whoever has something against them or has a fight to fight. Dissatisfaction against Biya or disappointment against the government should not target Cameroon because the prevailing system and strategies for its survival are totally different from the Cameroonian nation. An individual is and will always be head of state but no individual is and will ever be owner of the state of Cameroon. A day shall come when neither Biya nor the government nor the one dissatisfied with their actions will be around. But Cameroon will still be there. It is home for an entire people, not just those who attend meetings in its name and sign papers for its behalf.

This is not a negative wish or a prediction of anyone's end but a frank scholarly reminder to everybody of the fact that humans are destined to give way to succeeding generations someday whether they have finished their assignments or not and whether they really want to leave the stage or not. Just as this generation was not there some years ago but is now in charge so too will the one that is not here now come on stage one day and be fully in charge. These are truths to be accepted, not fought. It is inevitable that the children of members of this generation will one day take over to make their own contribution to the building of Cameroon. It is a project the ancestors began and passed down to those who came later. If it must stay together, there are peaceful ways of making this possible. If its two main parts must part, there are peaceful ways of parting and saying good bye. Whatever the case, actions should be geared towards helping the country, not strengthening people's personal philosophies of how things must be no matter who is happy and who is not.

## Making a Struggle Understandable

Not understanding a struggle is a huge problem with severe negative consequences. One of the worries about the current upheavals and many conflicts in Africa and even the world is the fact that parties fight one another or struggle for change without separating persons from problems. The person and the problem are two distinct units that must not forcibly stay mixed. A person can be part of a problem but that only makes them part of it. In Cameroon, for instance, issues decried by the English-speaking section – fundamental issues they detest and will not accept were in many cases, mixed inseparably with administrative authorities. It made a lot of people not to clearly see legitimate problems that were there. They rather saw persons purported to be their problem. A Head of State or any other official is a person and shall exit the stage one day but problems of the kind the masses decry are products of deeply rooted systems that outlive their architects and exist separately from them. They stay even when these individuals are gone. That is why the departure of Ahidjo and the coming of Biya tricked many who had concerns about the fate of English-speaking Cameroon to think that their cries were over and matters will henceforth be fine. They thought it was a new dawn. It was truly a new dawn but not the one they expected. Consequently, they ended up disappointed.

Though being a man of his own policies and style, Biya did not change but built on what he met regarding the chosen brand of national unity and the system put in place to take it through. Many might want to know that even his departure will not change much in terms of the national unity philosophy if persons and problems keep being intrinsically intertwined. That is why many, including intellectuals and highly-placed personalities did not even know and seemed confused about what the English-speaking section was actually agitating for when it all began. Some obviously toyed with truth in a wilful manner, choosing to be political and insincere but others did not truly know what the problem was and the legitimacy of the actions of the people. They only understood as time progressed. Even while some explanations had been made, a lot of people were still confused and could not distinguish between the cry of the English-speaking part and the general cry of Cameroonians for development and improvement of living standards. This work noticed that even many of those actively protesting knew the names and could recognise and deform the photos of authorities considered to be at the centre of their problems but could not tell, in very clear terms, the exact problem of English-speaking Cameroon except in broad terms like marginalisation.

What remains true, however, is the fact that when all is not well people always know and will not need anyone to tell them. Respondents knew that things had gone wrong with one of the parties of the union even though some of them, especially those with little formal education, at times babbled as they struggled to tell in a concise and coherent manner what exactly was the issue.

It is better to identify existing problems and fix them than to manipulate situations or silence painful voices, accusing them for crying without a cause. Crying is not one of the things humans take pleasure doing except there is a cause. These are trying times for Cameroon and stakeholders should not underestimate the consequences of even a minor fault in an electrically charged atmosphere. Going by what I gathered, its disgruntled populations are not joking at all. Many stand willing to lay down their lives. The government is not joking either and so is the military it controls. Unseen issues are more numerous than many know. Helpers are always ready to intervene and support different sides depending on how much their interests will be met. Such assistance usually come with strings because international relations is more of a game of interests than a show of philanthropy and goodwill [15]. Therefore, no time can be a better moment to deploy honest actions to save the country than now. For no one but war wins in a war, not even the one that is declared winner.

It is important not to forget that the safest highway to peace is peace. Any peace procured through violence, manipulation or intimidation will be lost in the future. It is just a matter of time. Moreover, even the way to prosperity and attainment of goals which is what many engaged in wars desire, is not war but peace. To make it even more serious, the way to a happy and fulfilling life which guarantees a stable and happy future for both current and future generations is not money but peace. Therefore, as the search for durable solutions continues, it is vital to place peace at the centre and let antagonists know it is a goal they should not compromise or trade away even at the height of their fury. It takes it to achieve goals, including the ones they are seeking. It is the currency that procures real riches and makes societies to thrive on every side and at all seasons. Many are and will continue to remain in struggles, despite having much cash, because they lost peace. Cameroon should not be poor in peace, not now, else it will be poor indeed and suffer the consequences in a way even key revolutionaries of both sides will be shocked and wonder with open-mouthed bewilderment.

It is a lie and a dangerous deception to think that change or revolution can only be successful when blood is shed and lives lost. Great changes and revolutions have taken place around the world without a drop of blood. I will not start enumerating examples. Instead, I will step out of the way for the past to step in with varied examples. Just ask history in whose bosom lies all truths and events. It will respond in very clear, impartial and fearless terms that revolutions can be bloodless and tough goals achieved without the death of neither humans, animals nor other things in creation. They were made not to pay for the attainment of the objectives of humans but for a purpose that works in favour of real needs and a balanced system for all. Besides, there are many ways other than weapons with which to change people's minds and attain any kind of objective in life [12]. With all the institutes, schools and specialised training centres the current generation is a beneficiary of, people should be sufficiently rich and powerful in the head that their struggles are fought and won through strategy and irresistible arguments than through big biceps and the deployment of huge, unintelligent muscles that know nothing but the language of brute force.

As Cameroon faces this moment of heat, it is vital to contribute whatever can help stakeholders navigate through their differences without soiling their hands with the blood of those they once hugged and called brethren. It is possible for them to build the blissful future and accommodating home their forefathers had in mind. They can if they want to. This is possible if they keep crookedness, craftiness and dishonesty aside. If they cannot, it is also possible to end their joint walk peacefully. The dream these ancestors had was not a naïve but great one which, when realised in strict compliance with their vision, can make Cameroon one of the most unique places on the planet many will desire to visit or be like. This will not happen because of any kind of extraordinariness but because it succeeded in an experiment many are yet to try and might never do throughout their existence – that of having two people with completely distinct colonial heritages

live together in admirable harmony and peace. It is definitely a challenging experiment that will keep demanding a lot from every generation.

It was the wisdom and grandeur of this vision based on options that were available, not the political smartness or manoeuvres of either of the parties, that moved the ancestors of those of the English-speaking stock to choose to join those of the French-speaking side who, in turn, gladly received them with open hands of fraternity and a determination not only to put the scars of colonialism behind but to also make the arduous journey into the future together. Though many could see the future, entering into it and experiencing its bliss required a lot of discipline, honesty, good faith and selflessness from all the parties [16]. It was and remains a delicate journey with so many things to do and others to avoid so that different generations of the offspring of both ancestors will not be pushed to question, regret or reverse the actions of their parents. It is possible to regret and also possible to be proud of what was done. It depends on the deeds of each generation because the construction of Cameroon is a call to responsibility for everyone from both stock. It requires mutual respect of the values of both sides.

History teaches that dreams, whether big or small, can die or crash if those concerned do not pursue them properly or forget what they were all about. They should always be remembered in their entirety, originality and true intent. If this fails and implementers start going their own way which, though good and consumes effort, is different from what was seen, there will be issues. It is thus important for people to learn the discipline of staying true to the original intent of any project, especially those of national character like the reunification of Cameroon and the reasons which made Southern Cameroons to prefer the Republic of Cameroun to the Federation of Nigeria.

Different generations of Cameroon's rulers and citizens should understand that theirs is the task of breathing life into, not exhaling it out of, the will and dream of the ancestors of both stock who envisioned a country that could be the precursor of African unity. If the Cameroonian experiment fails, it is obvious that many questions will arise as to whether Africans, with their heterogeneous colonial heritages, can truly live together in the united Africa they dream of and have been trying to achieve. It must not succeed at any people's expense but it must not also fail because its multitude of great brains and minds could not overcome trivialities of the lowest order. They should be building with all honesty and objectivity on the foundation that was laid. For no other foundation should anyone lay than that which was laid – the one that sought the building of a united, strong, stable and thriving Cameroon composed of people not only with two distinct colonial heritages, but multiple African tribes and ethnicities that should be allowed to flourish unperturbed. It was meant to be a society distinct in its own right, not one which, in a rather desperate quest for a brand of unity propagated by some within its ruling ranks, has embarked on a mission to melt its parts into a whole that looks like a European-styled country fathered by France and having foreign features from head to toes which its people are not happy with.

The ancestors of the English-speaking stock cautioned against this at the very beginning. Though having great reverence for France, a global power whose contribution to history is immense, they declined, for example, to allow agreements the Republic of Cameroun had signed with its colonial master before reunification to have effect in Southern Cameroons or the new Cameroon they were planning to build. Desires of this nature and many others which formed the basis of their partnership with French Cameroun and powered their willingness to work with President Ahidjo have been brushed aside and new realities brought in. Their offspring knew what their parents bargained for and can tell whether their will is respected or someone is making mockery of it. There are angry voices all around. Truth, sound counsel and components of what the patriarchs actually had in mind which made them embark on this journey are needed to help Cameroonians of all backgrounds to contribute with understanding and clarity in the task of building the nation and keeping it off troubled waters. It is not strange that the people are now quarrelling because clashes are part of human societies and occur even between lovers who took an oath never to hurt one another. But it will be sad if they fail where they should have succeeded just because they could not rise above little obstacles as though they were expecting none.

### Back to the Beginning: Looking for Cameroon in Scholarly Works

When one goes a couple of centuries backward, the word Cameroon disappears. This is not because languages were still developing or universities and research centres did not exist. In fact, they were all around and had been in existence for long – as long as before and after the birth of Jesus Christ. The Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, Iran, for example, was founded around 200BC while the University of Al-Karaouine, Fes, Morocco, opened its doors in 859AD. In these early institutions and those that came later like the University of Bologna, founded in 1088, the University of Oxford, estimated to have started its teaching activities around 1096, the University of Salamanca, 1134, the University of Paris, established around 1160, just to name these few, teaching, research and the quest to break into new frontiers and know the unknown were among the key activities they undertook [17]. As a result, they touched on diverse fields including Medicine, History, Philosophy, Astronomy, Law, Government, among others. Their scholars as well as those of others ventured into virtually any unexplored area, writing on myriads of subjects to foster knowledge and increase the understanding of humans of the world around them.

Many major revolutions followed, including, *inter alia*, the Glorious, Industrial, Scientific, French and Agrarian which decisively shook the global status quo partly because of the flood of knowledge and insight brought about by enlightenment. For its part, this enlightenment undoubtedly had a direct connection with this proliferation of specialised centres of learning and the increased liberty to question virtually anything with the goal to change everything that should not stay the same.

Despite this conspicuous global curiosity to know more and the burning desire to understand better, no scholar produced any scientific piece that centred specifically on Cameroon as they did with certain places. Intriguingly, even after more than 790 years following the founding of the University of Bologna, widely known as the first modern university in the western world, which, by this time, had risen and established itself as the epicentre of global learning, no scientific article or properly researched book was published on Cameroon.

This was a bit worrisome and raised concerns because it was happening at the very time when learning was on the rise, people were on fire for knowledge, the Age of Enlightenment had gone full swing and publications were all over the place especially with the advent of the industrial revolution and the invention of the typewriter and printing press. Why was Cameroon completely absent?

As baffling as this was, it later turned out to be an easy issue that should not strain a researcher's thinking or drain anyone's brain. The answer was just around the corner and could be found even if one searched with only modest effort. It was not because scholars were biased or Cameroon was not a subject that attracted attention but because there was no Cameroon. No country bore that name. The people and territory were there, no doubt, and led their lives according to their customs and personal choices of how life should be lived [18]. They stayed in organised kingdoms and well-structured tribal political units whose leaders dealt with one another and the outside world as sovereigns on the basis of equality and mutual respect, trading and cooperating with them as such. In their own private records and political vocabulary, these indigenous people never used the noun *Cameroon* for the same reason – it did not exist and they knew nothing about it.

It only started being popular in the 15<sup>th</sup> century when the Portuguese, amazed by the great number of prawns in the River Wouri, called it *Rio dos Camarões* meaning River of Prawns [18]. The name, Camarões, stayed confined in that area for a while and then spread during the era of European colonisation as Germany, from 1884 onwards, conquered and added territory after territory to the protectorate it established. It underwent changes and appeared in different forms including Kamerun, used during the days of the Germans, to Cameroun, as the French preferred to call it, to Cameroon, one of the British renderings. Because of the period under study, both 'the people of Cameroon', to permit the use of such an expression, and the outside world can be pardoned for not focusing on the Cameroonian subject at all. Understandably, they just could not. It will be unfair to point fingers at anyone for any kind of omission or negligence. That will be like charging an entire generation for not keeping the birth and growth records of a country that was established long after they had died and had no clue if such a thing ever existed.

Today, the case is different. Not only is Cameroon the subject of many studies and is an attractive area of interest to different professionals, it has equally evolved into a country with a strong voice of its own. Moreover, it is a major player in both African and world affairs ranking as one of the powerhouses of world soccer and source of much of the cocoa that produces the world's chocolate and related products.

At this point, it is important to retain that there used to be a time when Cameroon and a Cameroonian citizenry did not exist. Independent groups, kingdoms and people, did. This only changed less than 140 years ago. Additionally, the making of Cameroon was not the deliberate decision of the people. It was a German idea and colonial initiative. Many indigenous communities were brought together to build the protectorate. In a lot of instances, this was done by force and military conquest. Some joined or accepted German rule wilfully while others came fearing to be conquered since it was obvious that they will be brought in, anyway.

### **From no Cameroon to German Kamerun to French and British Cameroons: Tracking Truths**

First of all, it is worth rectifying the error which portrays Cameroon as a country that was born instead of one that was built over time. Words are important and could be decisive, serving as the game changer that takes situations to a given conclusion instead of another. Therefore, carefulness is required in their application. Using the word *birth* or *born* when referring to the beginning of what is now Cameroon is both inaccurate and misleading because Cameroon, like many countries in Africa and around the world, was never born but built over an extended period that involved multiple processes and phases.

Things are generally born whole, not in parts. Many go through a period of embryonic development during which they exist, still, as a whole, not parts. Moreover, birth does not take place tens or hundreds of times to complete what is born. The thing comes in existence complete, lacking nothing except parts which, though there already, only show up at the appropriate time.

This was not the case with Cameroon or a lot of its African counterparts. They were not born and have not always been the way they currently are. They were built with parts brought from diverse locations as tribes and ethnic groups which existed with an organised life of their own were pulled together by colonial powers and glued, forming colonies and protectorates that met their aspirations and whose building continued with more additions or exchanges [19].

Like a building where the builder or architect has a clear image of the plan and kind of structure to be erected, Cameroon was constructed in line with a German vision which went in accordance with its ambitions and reasons for joining the Scramble for Africa. Unlike things born which come out whole and cannot be reduced, increased or modified except in special cases, Cameroon was built over time and has been increased, reduced and modified many times. This gave it different shapes and looks depending on situations and the builder who was there at the given historic moment. Because it is a building, its look can change to appear more adaptive to prevailing administrative prerogatives. That is why even internal administrative lines of demarcation like those separating subdivisions, divisions, or regions are not natural and destined to stay so but can change depending on necessity as has been the case severally. These are realities worth understanding.

### **Kamerun - The German Project**

The construction of the state started effectively in 1884. After embarking on a combination of peaceful signing of treaties, military conquests, annexations and negotiations, the Germans built a large protectorate whose surface area kept increasing as new territories were brought in. By 1900, it had attained an astonishing size which grew even bigger attaining a huge and staggering size in 1911 when France ceded large expanses of land from *l'Afrique Équatoriale Française* (French Equatorial Africa) to the Germans in exchange for Morocco in North Africa from which Germany withdrew its claims. By 1916 when the Germans left, Kamerun was such a vast territory that exceeded Germany in size.

It is helpful to highlight key truths worth noting at this point. To begin with, there was a time when Cameroon was far bigger than its current size and about twice bigger than Germany. In addition, the entities formed by the European governments were not independent countries but colonies or protectorates, depending on what applied for each. They were projects that moved according to the desires of the builders and project managers, not the people's. These entities could, at any time, change in size, shape or population depending on any meeting or agreement their owners held among or between them. That is why families and ethnic groups were split because it was not a matter of choice but that of decisions and policies stemming from western capitals and legislative houses [20]. Moreover, not all of them wanted to be used as samples and specimens for this colonial experiment. This implies that not only did many not initially want to be part of the project but the probability of some wanting to leave when the German force was removed was not zero. So before the Germans left, Kamerun was not a country whose people had a common sense of identity and accepted each other as brethren, distinct from those living in other colonial demarcations.

When the First World War broke out in 1914, it did not remain a European affair but spread to other parts of the world including Africa. Being the leader of the Central Powers, Germany was the prime enemy and target of the Allied Powers. Consequently, anything German, including its colonies and protectorates, especially those that were of great support to its war efforts, was attacked. The people of Kamerun thus woke up one day as enemies under attack in a fierce war whose intensity, devastation and consequences reached proportions that have continued to be felt even today and form part of the problem this paper is out to contribute solutions to.

The Germans were tough and not easy to overcome. Even though the protectorate was in the middle of territories owned and run by their enemies and the fact that Britain, France, Belgium and forces from their colonies jointly attacked Kamerun, the Germans, backed by Kamerunian forces, withstood the heat until 1916 when it attained roasting degrees they could no more bear. They finally surrendered and fled to neighbouring Spanish Guinea.

### **The Era of France and Britain**

Britain and France took over to jointly administer the territory. It has been described as a condominium which saw an effective governing of the territory by the two powers. This should be taken carefully, though, because studies have questioned the extent of the cooperation between the two adding that it was not really a joint administration characterised by friendship as many might think but a challenging cooperation which, on the one hand, was dominated by Britain, and on the other, exposed the rivalry that had become synonymous with the relationship between these two powers since the beginning of the Scramble for Africa [21]. When Germany completely relinquished its rights and ownership of the territory as part of the Versailles Treaty, the protectorate became a League of Nations Mandate. Not surprisingly, since history is mostly made and written by winners, the territory was officially handed to Britain and France as class B Mandate among other punishments inflicted on Germany. The two governed it on behalf of the League and submitted reports.

Meanwhile, they partitioned it into two with France taking the bigger portion and Britain, the smaller one which was further split into British Northern Cameroons and British Southern Cameroons [22]. From this point, British Cameroons, or Cameroon under British Mandate, as the British part was now known, was, for reasons said to be connected to administrative convenience, governed as part of Nigeria, a British colony bordering the territory on the west where Britain had a greater presence. France, on the other hand, governed its part which became known as French Cameroun or Cameroun under French Mandate with policies that were equally implemented in the surrounding colonies of *l'Afrique Équatoriale Française* (l'AÉF).

As can be noticed, the protectorate, after coming out of the grip of Germany, was not set free. Its people, including agitating groups which stayed just because of German superior military might, entered into new experiences with Britain and France. However, not all of them desired the departure of Germany. Some loved Germany and continued missing and showing sympathy for

Germans long after they had gone. It should be noted that after taking over control of its section of Kamerun, France quickly sliced the portion it gave to Germany in 1911 and restored it to *l'Afrique Équatoriale Française* for that was one of its main motives for taking part in the joint attack of Germany in the territory [21].

Some important truths worth highlighting at this point include the fact that though German Kamerun had grown to a large size by the time the Germans left, not all the tribes and groups became part of the protectorate on the same day. Some were brought in as early as the beginning of the project in 1884 while others, like those that came in 1911 and later, were part of the German project only for a short period. Consequently, the degree at which the people identified with the Germans and with one another differed immensely. Some saw the Germans and anything German as strange, authoritarian and not reflecting who they truly were and should be. Others were friends with Germany. Also worthy of note is the fact that Germany was in Kamerun for a comparatively shorter period than its successors.

Even after the coming of the two successors, the reservation of certain people continued but manifested differently. Because the British and the French were around for a longer period, they had more time to impact the people in very decisive ways. This is very important and crucial in understanding a lot of things in contemporary Cameroon. In addition, the people of French Cameroun started living under France as their new administrator on the same day because Germany had already done the job of conquest and had launched the building of the protectorate. So were those of British Cameroon. This was a stark and significant difference between the way things unfolded for the Germans and the other two.

The people of each section were set free on the same day when these territories gained independence in 1960 and 1961 respectively.<sup>3</sup> This significantly remade them in many ways as each came out looking totally different in terms of language, culture, mannerisms, systems, thinking and values which were inclined to France and Britain than Germany and in many cases, than even when they were under their indigenous administrations. In fact, many of the people, especially generations born shortly before and after the Germans left, knew nothing about Germany except in history texts.

This was real in both territories but had an extra touch in French Cameroun where France systematically applied policies which, among other things, targeted German legacies and contributed in deleting memories of Germany from the psyche of the people. Paris wanted them to be wholly absorbed into the French culture. Through schools and a well-established administrative system, these policies, including assimilation, worked on the minds of the people to convert them, especially at early ages, into Frenchmen and women in every manner possible. Moreover, French Camerounians, like natives of French colonies around, were groomed in a somewhat paternal manner to recognise and look up to France (*La Mère Patrie*) as an integral part of their society in a submissive, expectant and obedient manner for protection, provision, promotion and guidance as family members do their parents and patriarchs. This was because in a significant way, France saw itself and its colonies as one and wanted to treat everybody the same whether they hailed from the colonies or metropolitan France. It did not want discrimination. These overseas territories, *La France d'outre-mer* (France overseas) were brought closer even in terms of administration because there needed to be an acceptable degree of harmony between them and the motherland. It was a kind of thinking that went in line with one country, one people, one destiny, different locations. Liberty, equality and fraternity, a philosophy that sprang out of the French Revolution of 1789 was often used as the justification for why France treated its colonies as part of itself so that no one was disadvantaged in front of the law and the administration.

Despite strong arguments in support of the French and what they did, criticisms still abound regarding the sincerity and humaneness of their actions. In reality, people in France enjoyed justice and far better treatment than many in the colonies. Those in the colonies, in contrast to the purported liberty and equality, instead suffered from serious discrimination and were made subject

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<sup>3</sup>Note that British Cameroons did not exist on its own after gaining freedom from Britain. Check below for details.

to harsh policies like *indigénat* and *corvée* which stripped them of many rights and implemented a kind of forced, unpaid labour to be carried out during certain periods of the year. Even though all these criticisms are there, the fact remains that France succeeded in implanting its culture in the people, including its language. Going to France at least once in one's lifetime or studying there, especially in famous and historic cities like Paris, was considered prestigious and special.

For their part, the British used policies that were significantly different from their French counterparts. They joined the scramble not out of a gamble but out of a conscious and carefully calculated decision. Therefore, they knew what they were doing and what they wanted. Being home to great institutions which produced different classes of administrators from the modest to the sophisticated to cater for their territories around the world from North America to Asia, Africa and the West Indies, Britain released the fullness of its colonial genius on the ground. It applied policies the authorities wholeheartedly believed will produce the results the country desired. Chief among them in Nigeria and Southern Cameroons was Indirect Rule which was economically sustainable and militarily less costly. Applied by Lord Frederick John Dealtry Lugard and his aides, it sought to help Britain get the most for as little trouble and cost as possible. Though strong criticisms have been fired against Britain, some British colonial officials, in defence of what was practised, argue that their style took into consideration both the interest of the local people and the British trying as much as possible to maintain a reasonable balance because both needed the other [23].

Indirect rule did not require too many British personnel on the ground. It also reduced contact between the British and the natives, allowing communities to stay the way they were, governed by their chiefs and kings using many of their own laws and customs. Nonetheless, in administrative matters, they did not make their own decisions as before but took instructions from the British and passed them to the people for execution.

Despite the fact that the British maintained some kind of political distance from the masses and gave them space to do things their way, this was not out of sheer love but was because it was not as expensive as maintaining a bigger British presence which would have inevitably led to struggles and conflict with the people. Moreover, it was thought wise to maintain some kind of balance between their political and economic interests and not sacrifice the economic for the political by being too much at the front line of everything about the territory's daily life. Colonialism was big business and Britain knew that. Fighting with the people consumed time and had to be avoided except there was no other way. Time was a great asset that could be irredeemable if wasted on minor matters that were not part of their real reason for deploying themselves on the ground. Moreover, Britain had taken the initiative of making the move to tropical Africa, the western part of which was notoriously known as *the white man's grave*, for strong reasons which must not be overshadowed by other things. Its machinery of economic enrichment and exploitation was thus in full operation. Everything was done to make sure business boomed and profit kept flowing towards London to spread to the entire empire.

Things were established like this partly because in the British psyche they knew they were strangers who will be around for just a moment. One day the people will challenge the status quo and request their departure. The officials in London as well as those on the ground knew deep in them that this will inevitably happen though they refrained from saying it in public and preferred it not to occur quickly. They understood that the status quo was safe only for as long as the political dormancy of the territory persisted because concretely speaking, neither the territory nor its riches belonged to Britain. Legally, they belonged to the League of Nations and then the United Nations but in reality, they belonged to the natives. As a caretaker, Britain exercised restraint and did not want to labour too much or invest heavily in a place it can be asked to pack out of at any time [22].

However, they ensued that democracy, as practised in Britain but adjusted to suit the specificities of the society became part of the territory's ways. Leaders had to be strong but institutions were stronger and the people, strongest. The first two were responsible and accountable to the people. Through the people's Chiefs who were powerful with a separate legislative house of their own and their representatives who were elected from among them to represent and defend their interests, society functioned in strict compliance with an established check and balance



mechanism which maintained an equilibrium that did not permit any of the arms of government to be too strong and able to oppress or destabilise the efficiency of the others without the possibility of being halted.

When both territories eventually gained independence and came out of the control of their masters, they were so different. The German culture which had started making its way into the people was gone. French and English systems were the realities of the day. Even common German words were unfamiliar except to those who studied the language later. These differences were definitely going to have a strong bearing on the new Cameroon in the event where Southern Cameroons voted to reunify with French Cameroun. When it eventually did, that signalled a new dawn for the new country. Sincere measures needed to accompany that decision because two such distinct people and systems would definitely face challenges cruising in the same ship for long without quarrelling in a serious manner except they established a strong and satisfactory agreement by which they must live.

Read the text in German below which I acquired from a German property during one of my research undertakings in Cameroon. If you are Cameroonian, do so with honesty and objectivity to help this work. One of its motives was to acquire tested truths to assist the Cameroonian society arrive at solutions it can trust. If you are not from Cameroon, read it anyway, but show it to anyone from there asking them to be as objective and truthful as they can. It reads:

Geliebt und unvergeffen

**Cäser Paschen**

geb. 29 Decbr 1879 in Mecklb Schwerin

geft. 12 März 1905 in Kamerun

Nur fern ift, und nicht töt

Wer im Gedächtnifs feiner

Lieben lebt [24].<sup>4</sup>

If you noticed the following, then your observations matched those of this researcher: i) Many could not read it fluently ii) Almost everyone did not understand what they read except few who have studied German iii) Moreover, and quite important, they tried to understand the text by first interpreting it in either French or English, the languages of the successors of Germany which they now master. French speakers used French while English Speakers used English iv) They did not interpret it in the native languages which were in use before European arrival.

I conducted this test to help assess the impact the French and British left on their sections of Cameroon which is still real in them today and should not be ignored or downplayed in any sincere effort of nation-building that can stand the strength of storms and not cause chaos. The majority of Cameroonians are completely disconnected from the German era. They are more tuned to British and French realities – in some cases, even more than their indigenous systems. Taking them back to the German epoch, especially if the reason is solely historical, without being sufficiently careful, will generate complications of worrisome degree. Cameroon's unity should not be tied to Germany as a means of making it work because not all the people wanted to be part of the German project and not all that were part of German Kamerun are part of present-day Cameroon. In one of the sections of this paper, I offer advice and recommendations to the state and other stakeholders. It was vital to get hold of empirical realities of this type in order to have confidence in what has been recommended so that anything accepted from this work and applied can stand some chance of serving as a panacea to the society and not a gamble that will lead it to an uncertain destination.

### From the League to the United Nations

After the disintegration of the League of Nations and the founding of the United Nations, the mandates became UN trust territories with Britain and France still in charge [16]. When the time

<sup>4</sup>Translated as: Loved and never forgotten. Cäsar Paschen. Born 29 December 1879 in Mecklb Schwerin. Died 12 March 1905 in Cameroon. He whose affection lives permanently in those in the world is not dead but only lives faraway.

came and consciousness for self-government and independence built, both territories, as was the case all over Africa, broke free from foreign rule. The struggle for independence, especially in French Cameroun, came with a heavy price with many dying in the process and others like members of the banned wing of the *Union des Populations du Cameroun* (UPC) that was considered extremist in its views, continuing the fight even after independence with many taking refuge in the English-speaking section.

French Cameroon became independent on January 1, 1960 but British Cameroons still remained a trust territory as it continued working on its independence dossier. Following a series of controversies, one of which concerned questions about its size and inability to sustain itself as a viable country if left alone, the British, through the UN, advocated for it to gain independence by being linked to either French Cameroun or Nigeria. With the advantage of being a major world power and occupying a permanent seat at the UN Security Council, Britain succeeded in a lot of its desires. The UN thus organised a plebiscite on February 11, 1961 during which the people were presented two questions:

I) Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Republic of Cameroun?

OR

II) Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Federation of Nigeria?

The questions, to a large extent, were disconnected from reality because many of the voters, especially in Southern Cameroons, wanted none of them but independence [22]. One of the British supervisors of the plebiscite paints a picture of events as they unfolded on the ground in this eyewitness account:

In no way was I, or anyone else, qualified to impose such a process on thousands of people, and it was quickly made clear to me that they wanted no part of it and that they saw the whole thing as a sham, a cosmetic exercise in democracy. The only decision they were allowed to make was to choose whether to throw in their lot with Nigeria or French Cameroun, and they wanted neither of them. All the other decisions had been taken thousands of miles away by officials who thought they knew what they needed better than the people themselves [22].

Britain had its reasons for discouraging the option of independence. Apart from concerns about the territory's size, small population and questions related to inability to sustain itself as a viable state, London also had strategic and geopolitical concerns. First, John Ngu Foncha, the Prime Minister of Southern Cameroons, was getting so friendly with the likes of Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and UPC bigwigs of French Cameroun. Apart from being intolerant to colonialism, some of these nationalists were somewhat radical in their approach, always wanting their things immediately including independence. Moreover, though openly known to belong to the Non-align Movement, these leaders showed greater tendencies of friendliness with communists and socialists. Being the height of the Cold War, it was thought risky and unwise to allow Southern Cameroons to gain independence as a separate territory because the probability of ending in communist hands was not zero. The British preferred it to join Nigeria where they could keep an eye. If this did not happen, it should join French Cameroun where France was working to prevent the likes of Nyobe and those of the UPC who shared his thinking from assuming power so that trusted moderates and protégées can take over.

In British Northern Cameroons, the situation was a bit different because right up to 1959 and even beyond, the population showed greater inclination to either remaining in Nigeria or deciding their future later [25]. This meant the British were in a position that made it possible to watch over things. It should be noted that just as the Africans were bent on liquidating colonialism and did not

want it to prevail so were the British and other western powers concerned about communism, guarding against its spread especially in Africa where they had invested a lot and toiled for years.

Faced with the two questions, British Southern Cameroons voted in favour of French Cameroun while British Northern Cameroons opted for the Federation of Nigeria. Delegations from both the Republic of Cameroun led by President Ahmadou Ahidjo and former British Southern Cameroons led by its Prime Minister, John Ngu Foncha, met at Foumban in July 1961 to come up with an agreement on the running of the new nation. A constitution was adopted which established a federation comprising two states, East Cameroun, the Former French section, and West Cameroon, the former British part. Among other things, the Cameroon that emerged from the union was a new entity agreed to be built as a bicultural state where everything, from the two languages to the two cultures, will have equal status.

On May 20, 1972, through a government-organised referendum championed by President Ahidjo, the people voted in favour of a unitary state, sanctioning the end of the federation. Its name changed and became known as the United Republic of Cameroon. State policies were implemented which brought its different parts into greater fusion.

After Paul Biya succeeded Ahidjo in 1982, initiatives geared towards national unity were continued with a lot more added. Though preferring to steer the country to the direction he thought was best and not forcibly the one chosen by his predecessor, President Biya stepped up than altered much of what the Ahidjo regime began in the area of national unity. His philosophy in this area sought to eradicate the vestiges of colonialism and take Cameroon out of its divided past to the era of the Germans when it existed as one state, united in diversity. From national unity, things moved to national integration, bringing the whole of Cameroon even closer than ever. The name of the country was changed to the Republic of Cameroon in 1984. This added to the irritation of those of the English-speaking stock because it was the original name of French Cameroun when they came to reunify with it. They hold that the French-speaking side will also not be happy if they were the ones who changed the name of the whole country without their consent to the Republic of Southern Cameroons.

### **Cameroon's Dilemmas and Controversies**

Cameroon is struggling with its history. Dilemmas and controversies have been part of its story since the early days. The Germans embarked on building it after coming out of a dilemma themselves. They did not know whether to join the colonial race or not. At the initial stage, it was hard to predict if Germany will eventually make the move given the way it behaved. Despite receiving requests from its trading firms already based in the territory to come and annex it, the German government was lukewarm and undecided. It gave the impression that it was not interested [18]. Finally, it made a dramatic turn and joined the Scramble for Africa, rushing around in haste signing treaties and concluding talks with local authorities like the latecomer that it truly was.

Other dilemmas then followed. One manifested in the coastal chiefs, especially those of the Duala stock, whose territory served as the gateway for the outside world's contact with Cameroon. They had openly expressed preference for the British, writing to Queen Victoria a couple of times in this regard but because the British were, somehow, in a dilemma of their own, wondering whether to comply or not, they wasted so much time. This gave the Germans the leeway to overtake them. Since it was Germany who instead showed up, the chiefs found themselves in the position of making the tough decision of whether to wait for the British a little longer or enter into formal agreements with Germany. They accepted the latter and Cameroon's long journey began. Hewett, the British consul assigned to conclude talks with the coastal chiefs, arrived late when all was already done and concluded. Britain had to wait until the defeat of Germany in the First World War to make an official and globally recognised entry into Cameroon as the overseeing administrator on behalf of the League of Nations and later the United Nations [22].

While the chiefs faced this dilemma, controversies were sparked by the letters purportedly written by them to Britain for annexation. Many now wonder and question if such letters were actually written. If they were, who truly wrote them? Some kind of foul play is suspected. It

remains a controversial issue that continues to divide researchers. British traders or subjects with interests in the area might have written them. German traders wrote similar letters. But while the Germans put their names on theirs, the British seemed to have instead inserted the names of local chiefs to thwart truth for whatever reason. Besides, the language in some of the letters was suspicious. It suggested that the chiefs were desperate for the British and really wanted them to come and take over their territories. In actual fact, traders were instead desperate for their governments to take over territories. Unlike the chiefs, they badly feared competition from rivals and the fact that their investments will suffer if a different government took over. Even though Rudin [19] holds that British traders were not very fearful of their German colleagues, he admits that they were of the French. At the end of the day, fear and rivalry were present within trading circles and increased in certain periods, necessitating the taking of quick and wise actions to secure the future. To demonstrate this eagerness, some of the letters sounded very persuasive and appealing to fetch expected results. At times, they even bypassed the normal 'Dear Sir/Madam' commonly used as an opening greeting in official letters to 'Dearest Madam' which was rather uncommon. This sought to cajole Queen Victoria of England to do something and not be stuck in any dilemma for long if she was in any.

Even when the First World War broke out, the decision to attack Germany in Kamerun was not automatic but carefully thought of with many taking time to weigh the options and assess the pros and cons of such a move. When the Germans were eventually sent away, it took two powers, not one, to administer the protectorate though one could have done the job given that both were not novices but very experienced colonial entrepreneurs who had huge empires that stretched across the world. Some might think it was because the two jointly defeated Germany. Note that Belgium also took part in the conquest of Kamerun but never had a part of the territorial booty. It was a trend.

Moreover, after deciding to settle for just a small section of the territory, the British went ahead and divided theirs into two, though they had all the possibilities to strike a deal that avoided such an occurrence so that they could end up with one continuous territory that presented less challenges to them administratively and otherwise. It could have presented less challenges to the people too in the event that they became independent. It is worth noting that in the eyes of the League of Nations and the United Nations, British Cameroons was one territory but in the eyes of the British who administered it, it comprised two territories [16]. Taking the division further, the British split Northern Cameroons into two, with one portion in the north and another in the south [25].

This incidence of dualism continued even further. For instance, when independence was to be granted, British Cameroonians were presented with two questions even though they could have been presented with one, three or even more. Even within the questions, the answer had to be taken from two extremes – yes or no. Many certainly had answers which were not within the two poles yet they had to do with what was available.

When Southern Cameroons joined French Cameroun, the government that was established was a federal type comprising two states. Even the country itself and its institutions were established and built on a bi-cultural and bilingual foundation. In fact, this trend is observable in much about the life and story of Cameroon. When the federal system was to be abolished, the people were presented with questions which moved in line with this dual occurrence. Without a proper mastery of realities of this kind, one might miss important lessons they should not be ignorant of. Moreover, it might be challenging to get a good grasp of the evolution of the country and an understanding of crucial realities in the country's life.

As the English-speaking section decries what it considers unacceptable today, some of the recurrent words in the narratives of protagonists from both sides include 'either,' 'or' and 'if.' These and related words that connote probability and options are prevalent both in official discourses and on different media, including social media. In many instances, users were not even aware of this and how frequent these constructions featured in their language.

This should not in any way be taken to mean this work advanced these occurrences as standard happenings that should guide choices and influence behaviours, talks and businesses

related to the state. Far from that. It simply identified a trend which anyone who looks at Cameroon with keen historical eyes will not fail to see. It is observable in many areas of its life, from the beginning till date. Whether it is a consistent occurrence or mere coincidence is for individuals to assess in a subjective manner.

### **Identifying and Analysing the English-Speaking Section's Sources of Worry**

Building a strong and united Cameroon where people lived together as one and did not think of their colonial past or at least allow it to influence choices that affected the country's future was one of the key objectives of President Ahidjo. As a matter of priority, he embarked in constructing a country that was one, indivisible and united in diversity. He believed so much in this that he was willing to accomplish it no matter what it took. As a result, he carried out a series of ambitious actions which, apart from working in favour of this dream, also contained errors of colossal historical magnitude which were poised to hunt and even jeopardize the dream of unity sometime in the near or far future. As a matter of fact, many of the issues the English-speaking section now decries and denounces Biya of are things inherited from Ahidjo which were not changed. He chose not to alter them, not even the problematic ones that were bound to be threats to the country's peacefulness given that no matter how long they stayed, English-speaking citizens will not accept them.

To begin with, are questions connected to identity and history. Though voting to join the Republic of Cameroun on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February and gained its independence in 1961, the English-speaking part is not allowed to celebrate any of these milestone events in its life. Those who have attempted to dance, rejoice or do things others do on their independence day have often met with stiff resistance from the forces of law and order, resulting to shootings and deaths. The exact reason the government acts this way is not very clear but it is likely that it sees it as an act that rekindles memories of the past which the state does not want and has been trying to blot out. In addition, it is probably seen as something which promotes feelings that exalt the part instead of the whole.

Anniversaries, be they personal like birthdays or collective like historic occurrences in communities, are things humans generally esteem highly and desire celebrating or at least, remembering in their own way. Denying anyone the right of celebration, especially if they consider the event of high significance, is opening the way for a conflict that will be fought indefinitely. Humans are noted to rarely give up on such fights no matter how costly they may be. As a matter of routine, tension and incertitude rise when such anniversaries approach and abase when they pass, feeding feelings that manifest in more devastating ways in the future.

Since the early years of re-unification, the governments of Presidents Ahidjo and Biya embarked on measures to wipe these dates and events from the people's psyche. Most likely, their motive is not because they want to reduce English-speaking Cameroonians to a people with no history. They are equally not against them as enemies. As was the case with Ahidjo, Biya is their president and has feelings for them as he does the rest of the nation. These statesmen undertook those actions with consciences that strove to build a united Cameroon where souvenirs of aspects of the past, thought to have the power to work against national unity, will be completely wiped out. That is why the 1<sup>st</sup> of January is celebrated in French Cameroun as New Year Day, not Independence Day, even though that was actually the day it gained independence. To the statesmen, that is what is best for the nation. As head of state and protector of the nation, Biya, and Ahidjo before him, worked hard in this regard fighting anything that came in the way as an obstruction because they believed that their strategy placed the interest of the country above that of its parts. But they are human and can be wrong.

In reality, while their intentions are noble, the approach is problematic and can shatter their good dream. They are fighting a controversial fight which is instead destroying the nobility of their unity aspirations. Such severe and draconian measures, truly speaking, do not promote but threaten unity because in reality, they are more of a fight against history than against colonialism. No one ever fought history and won from the days of the ancient civilizations passing through the Roman Empire to the Nazis. Once history is made, it is made. Flowing with it is wiser and more rewarding

than going against it. People can manipulate or smear the truth with distorted details but the history in them, which is the exact thing that happened, always stays untouched and indestructible. No individual, no matter their power or educational level, can turn back the hand of time and erase an event that occurred from occurring. They can only deny but cannot cancel the fact that it occurred. The plebiscite in Southern Cameroons took place on Saturday the 11<sup>th</sup> of February, 1961. Southern Cameroons also fought and won its independence from Britain. That is history and so shall it always be. The easier and more beneficial action is to accept and be proud of every aspect of the nation's history.

Consequently, for Ahidjo and Biya to have instead embarked on such a fight against history as part of their national unity strategy was to set Cameroon up for challenges that were inevitably going to threaten the unity they spent their whole careers working for. For those who understood and could read the invisible handwriting on the wall, the different agitations of the English-speaking stock have never been a surprise but something expected.

While Independence Day is a public holiday marked by great celebrations spiced with different artistic and cultural displays involving all citizens in other countries that once lived under foreign rule, former British Southern Cameroons is not permitted to do that. The 1<sup>st</sup> of October has instead become synonymous with tension and militarisation. Even while under British rule, the territory celebrated events like Empire Day among others. Independence Day, from the thinking of the masses, ought to be a bigger event given that it marked the moment freedom came, the shackles of the master dropped and the people's necks were pulled out of the noose of the oppressor permitting them to begin a new life. To deprive them of the joy connected to this freedom is not something they will take lightly.

Even the historic significance of the 11<sup>th</sup> of February was thwarted and instead called Youth Day characterised by celebrations in honour of young people. Inasmuch as Cameroonians desire to see their youths celebrated, they, including many of the youths, are not ignorant of the fact that something does not look right with the choice of date. Truly, it ought to be a day of celebration but what is celebrated was brought in to ensure that it flushed out what should be celebrated so that it stayed forgotten and erased from the mind of the masses.

These things provoke and irritate the English-speaking group and many in the French-speaking section. No matter how silent and peaceful they stay, they are dissatisfied. They read and understood the direction the country was heading to right from the beginning of the reunification journey when President Ahidjo started going his own way, fighting their history in the process as a victory strategy for unity. It is wiser to work and defuse the turgid state of their grudging minds through justice and rectification of wrongs than toying with things too sensitive and dangerous to exist in a nation striving for oneness and peace. The temptation to cover matters up or say there is no problem will always be there but it is safer to side with truth and honesty in the face of reality. Embarking on any political game or playing to the gallery in a dishonest and hypocritical manner is both unwise and calamitous because it is like sealing the mouth of a leaking wound making the spot to look good and normal whereas the flesh inside is decaying and its effects, certain and unalterable.

In addition, the 20<sup>th</sup> of May, which many in the English-speaking section see as the day President Ahidjo hit the political jackpot and won his biggest battle against the existence and memory of former Southern Cameroons, was instituted by him and has stayed till date as Cameroon's National Day with big celebrations organised at home and abroad. Of course, like other countries, Cameroon should have a day when such high level celebrations take place in memory of a milestone event in its life. But many from both the French and English-speaking sections question if the 20<sup>th</sup> of May is actually the most deserving date. One wonders if what happened on that day in 1972 was the most significant historical event in Cameroon's life.

While many in the English-speaking part see it as the day the regime dishonestly pulled them to fit into Ahidjo's manoeuvres and dream, some in the French-speaking side think it is more of a celebration of Ahidjo's achievements than of Cameroon's most memorable moment because other events like the signing of the Germano-Duala Treaty on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July 1884 which gave the kick-off to the building of what is now known as Cameroon and the 11<sup>th</sup> of February which marked the

reunification of the French and English-speaking sides to form Cameroon the way it is currently known globally are packed with greater significance, both historically and otherwise, than the 20<sup>th</sup> of May. The latter simply marked an internal re-arrangement of government, fusing the two federal structures into a unitary government with Ahidjo as the headman. It enabled him to grow influential with sweeping powers which Buea could not hinder as before with its different approach and Yaoundé endured and tried to cope with.

Additionally, the English-speaking section, though not against national unity and integration, is uncomfortable with the way it is pursued. Some disgruntled voices hold that the terms 'national unity' and 'national integration' in the first place, are nice and appealing linguistic constructions used to disguise and legitimise the annexation and complete takeover of the former British trust territory into an independent Republic of Cameroun. The latter had an already fixed vision of the direction it wanted Cameroon to go even before the reunification deal was stroke. This has placed the English-speaking side in a tight position because it thought they were together to build together as brethren. It has been pushed to the position of only contributing to the accomplishment of the kind of life the French-speaking side conceived long ago. It cannot alter it to meet its own cravings as a fellow partner in a union of equals. This has led to the rise of many worried voices challenging the patriotism and sincerity of the Yaoundé regime. To attempt fusing the entirety of the country into one large ball is disadvantageous to the English-speaking section and much of what it brought into the union because it is not only smaller size-wise but also demographically. Unity is not forcibly fusion. Besides, being one should not destroy the uniqueness of the parts.

Fusing the two sides in the way the government has been trying to do is like putting a teacup of fresh water into a large drum of salt water with the aim of forming one solution that neither looks nor tastes like the fresh or salt water. Though it seems like an ideal act, the reality is that it will be salt water. The fresh water will disappear under such circumstances.

Consequently, while it is important for Cameroon to be united, melting its parts is an indirect and subtle way of causing the English-speaking part and its heritage to cease existing giving French Cameroun the freedom to cement its dream with no grounds of being questioned or reprimanded given that all legal and judicial requirements would have been met legitimising every action it takes from that point onwards. Looking at the course of things since the beginning of the re-unification journey, this disappearance seems to have been one of the yearnings of the Yaoundé authorities given that it is quite easy to see how it has been happening step-by-step with precautions taken to prevent interruptions. A Vice-Prime Minister once said: *“À un moment donné effectivement, on a commencé à oublier que les Anglophones étaient là; on a eu l'impression que les Anglophones s'étaient déjà francophonisés”*<sup>5</sup> [11, 26]. This, the people of the smaller section noticed and started raising protests against since the Ahidjo era. Individuals from all backgrounds were vocal against it, calling for a brand of unity and integration that respected both territories and ensured the preservation and survival of the good heritages they brought into the union so that a model bi-cultural country can emerge.

The use of nice words and appealing constructions as a means to easily attain objectives is not new in politics and business. International financial institutions, for example, used nice-sounding constructions like Good Governance, Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative and others to have their way in many countries. These terms brought hope to the poor and were quickly accepted by many governments. But they neither defeated poverty nor saved the countries from their economic malaises as promised. Instead, they benefited their implementers and élite in certain cases leaving some countries in more debt, poverty and economic struggles.

It should be realised that because the French and English-speaking sections came out of different cultures, even their ways of doing things as well as their expectations of the new Cameroon have always had stark differences. For example, while both consider education to be fundamental to the country's development and ability to compete with the rest of the world, their approaches are not the same. In the English subsystem, through British influence, formal education

<sup>5</sup> Translated as: “At a given point, we started forgetting that Anglophones too were around: we thought that Anglophones had already been made Francophones.”

came to be regarded with so much reverence as something whose value was not only high but must stay high and continue rising. Because of its worth, families, till date, do not see it as something cheap or one to be done anyhow. Even when they are made to pay only a token or nothing for it, the reason was not because education was cheap but because someone, probably the government, was paying for it. Families have programmed their minds to know this. They deeply believe that school was not just a place to study Mathematics or Geography but one that shaped minds and determined the course of lives and the direction the society will eventually head to. It equally influenced morals and imparted manners, helping people to build attitudes that made them relate with others properly and also helped them to become valuable contributors to society's welfare.

Therefore, from the shoes, to the socks, underwear, uniform, teeth, nails, hair, neatness of dormitory bed, manner of talking to others and sense of discipline, everything was checked in a careful manner till graduation day. This was crowned with a big celebration worth the effort. Everything must be in order. Most of all, the one assigned to teach or oversee the development of the learners must be very qualified in every sense of the word, recruited not because they needed employment but because they had a passion for the job and could do it with unquestionable effectiveness. As a matter of obligation, they must speak fluently, having profound mastery of the subject with good morals the learners can emulate. Once there was a loophole or flaw of any kind, no matter how small, it was a big, intolerable issue. The system was designed not to permit it. It gave parents the power to question such occurrences and demand or support the procurement of an instant solution. They do not only desire the best for their children but pay the cost. Therefore, there must not be any gamble or experimentation to compromise expected result.

It is worth noting that meeting all these school requirements can be costly especially in private and mission schools but parents still pay, hoping for the best. As they hold teachers responsible and accountable, so do the teachers hold education authorities responsible for providing the type of enabling environment and condition to help them meet the high expectations and standards of the public. These authorities, acting in the name of the state, played their role and expected the best from the teachers and other members of the system. It was a long arrangement stretching from the state to the parents with each having an active role to play. Any issue anywhere could distort the flow. It could result to loud cries of disapproval.

Consequently, if any member of the system protests against anything, one of the first and helpful things to do was not to question the patriotism of their action or go hunting for legal arguments to undermine the legitimacy of the complaint but to check through the system and see if everything was okay. Most likely, something might not have been working. If a fault was identified, it was expedient to tackle it immediately in the most sincere of manners so as not to give it time to accumulate negative energy and manifest in a harmful way. If nothing worked after a good repair was done, then it was something else. Unless there was genuine fixing, there was bound to be genuine problems that will hunt the system and eventually, the society.

### **The Twelve Recommendations**

I often have issues with researchers who reveal issues and refrain from giving suggestions of what to try against them. Inasmuch as diagnosing a problem is good, eradicating it is better. That cannot happen when no remedy is provided to treat the discovered malady. Now, I stand in that challenging place too. Providing recommendations that are adaptable enough to Cameroon is certainly not one of the easiest assignments at this moment but based on the severity of what this work found and the importance of the country not losing its peace, twelve things stand apart. Elaborated below, they can provide immense help if applied. My approach is not prescriptive like a medical note or settled like a judge's verdict, but suggestive like a peace researcher's contribution, laying no claims of infallibility. The recommendations were made taking into consideration the kind of future Cameroonian children and upcoming generations should have when they come of age. One day, they will get on the national stage having no choice but to face the realities of their country. Whether they live in peace or not will depend a lot on whether their parents and ancestors laid a foundation of peace for them or not.



Today, the USA is so great that even detractors who never admit the existence of anything positive in the country admit and yield to truths about its greatness. If one keenly looks at its current opulence, they will see the enormous sacrifices and selfless contributions of their ancestors. They built the country thinking more of their children and unborn generations than themselves. Today, their offspring are possessors of a great country that is making different contributions to the working of the global system. This did not happen by chance but by conscious and vigorously pursued plans crafted with a patriotic spirit. It should be noted that building a successful and enviable future is not a hard thing. It can be done by any people who do what they should. When anyone labours to salvage the future, they end up salvaging the present as well. But anyone who ignores the future and tries to salvage just the present and guarantee their well-being end up exposed to the risk of forfeiting both the present and the future. This happens because selfishness is never a guarantor of prosperity nor an insurer of posterity; selflessness is. In state-building, thinking of everyone makes the society to move faster as a united family than maintaining one's privileges at the expense of the masses. It holds society hostage, depriving everyone, both those in and out of power, of real peace. For Cameroon to step into a future of rest and bliss, enjoying real stability with citizens who complement and not crush one another, it is vital to observe the following:

1. First, the conflicting talks as to whether there is or there is no problem in Cameroon affecting the English-speaking former trust territory should be put to rest. There is a problem and it is serious. It is not hard to see and does not need a specialist to tell anyone. Unlike the country's general cry for development, this issue is unique to the people and section of the country that was under Britain. It touches on the territory's soul and survival as an entity within the Cameroonian union. It came into the union with a heritage and history its people cherished and preferred to see respected, not eroded and destroyed in favour of the other former trust territory's. Inasmuch as everybody is entitled to their position and no one's opinion should be held as the absolute truth or another downtrodden as a disgusting fallacy, refusal to uphold truth in the face of falsehood, honesty in the face of reality, patriotism in the face of politics in all things about Cameroon, not only what is now widely known as the *Anglophone Problem*, can hurt and bruise the country so badly that it will pay a high price that should have been avoided if its people had lifted it higher than their private wishes and displayed sufficient maturity vis-à-vis unsubstantial trivialities. The nation needs its true patriots now. Those who can deny themselves and the collective will of their immediate communities, choosing to place country above kinship and tribe. It needs individuals who can help it survive storms and challenges, not advantage seekers who refrain from calling things by their name even when they know that truth is more therapeutic to Cameroon at this moment than politics and melodious praise of powerful personalities.

2. Secondly, state authorities should refrain from using the military to tackle internal upheavals. This should be written in Cameroonian laws. One of the prerequisites for holding any position of internal security should be the ability to solve problems and contain the anger of armless citizens using any of the multitude of ways that are available without being militaristic. Cameroon has a large police force. Its size can be increased and more training offered if lapses currently exist. A large, well trained and properly equipped police can meet the needs of the nation without stress. The police should know and do just what the job of a police requires. This is the 21<sup>st</sup> century and it is neither fashionable nor funny for the military to be facing their own people every now and then with heavy artillery in a war-like manner. The army is a war-time force. Except in very extreme cases where they are the last resort, they should never be used against citizens. Their role is instead to fight the enemies of the citizens and protect the nation from harm. In many countries, it is hard to even see a soldier or military officer. I remember looking at an army officer with so much curiosity the first time I saw one in a country in the south of Europe. It was such an uncommon sight. One does not see them but police and other experts of security. Being too quick to deploy a country's army, including even specialised units, against civilians creates an atmosphere of war and fear which attracts hatred against the government and the army thus arousing feelings that feed rebellion and civil disobedience. Let there be friendship and true fraternity between the citizens, army, police and government. It is possible to work as a team. That is what unity in diversity is all about. It is also the way things were meant to be.

3. Leaders, especially heads of state, should be assessed justly and objectively based on the complete picture of issues, not sentimentally, based only on their flaws or excesses. Like President Ahidjo, President Biya cares for the English-speaking part of the country not only for economic reasons. Though some of their policies are responsible for the people's current discontents, they were not directly targeting them to destroy what they brought into the union, but the vestiges of colonialism. They strove to build a united country full of peace and free from its troubled and dissimilar colonial experiences. They understood that the colonial mind can inhibit Cameroon's progress and thus sought to clear it off the way. In doing this, they made mistakes. These mistakes should be admitted by them and their aides. It should be remembered that the job of head of state in a diverse and heterogeneous society like Cameroon with hundreds of languages and tribes that came together only recently during the colonial era is definitely not one of the easiest. It can be hard to always be right and never miss the mark no matter how hard one tried. While this is no justification of their flaws, it will be unjust not to look at the entire picture and their ultimate intentions when weighing their actions. Of course, it is true that there are many things former Southern Cameroons used to have and was proud of which are no longer there but objectively speaking, there are also many things that are there now which were not there. Anyone who does an honest check with a mind that desires peace will surely see something praiseworthy.

4. Common law lawyers should be allowed to form a Common Law Bar Association and civil law lawyers granted the same opportunity. This will not weaken but strengthen the Cameroon Bar Association as both will be sanitised and spared the embarrassment of having unripe and unqualified elements leading their ranks or handling complex and demanding assignments in courts and other spots within Cameroonian judicial circles. There should also be a flexible bi-legal system where applicable from the Supreme Court to the rest of the courts.

5. Cameroon should be proud of its past and accept its history wholeheartedly with delight. Whatever happened to it certainly contributed to its current greatness. Therefore, it should look at its experiences with a positive eye and not try to hide, erase or be ashamed of anything it went through. In this regard, neither the French nor English-speaking sections should be forbidden from celebrating their independence day or other such events if they want to. It is history and will remain an everlasting truth. In addition, the 11<sup>th</sup> of February, which is one of the greatest days in Cameroon's history, should be called by its name and accorded the true importance it deserves. The people of Nigeria, French Cameroun and especially British Cameroons will never forget that date and the effervescence it caused. They will always remember how suspense filled the atmospheres in Buea, Yaoundé and Lagos as people looked in expectation of what the day will bring. It resulted to Southern Cameroons joining French Cameroun to give Cameroon its current look and composition. To be thwarted and thrown in the dustbin is neither fair nor constitute a patriotic act of state-building. Both French and English-speaking Cameroonians will not forgive anyone who did that, especially if the intention was to destroy history to promote unity. No unity can ever be successful or promoted through the destruction of history. It is their story – the day one side decided to join the other and the latter fraternally accepted to receive it. They actually made one of their most decisive decisions as a people. The two are now together because they agreed to be. No two can ever walk together except they agree to. The government should instead immortalise the day, building museums and art villages simulating what happened and how things were conducted to educate the current generation and make it connect with its past. It could get plebiscite ballot papers, voter's cards and similar materials to rekindle memories, keeping things fresh. Make the people to be proud of their history and take delight in it.

6. Heads of state should embark on active research and writing. In an atmosphere of silence and academic inactivity, a head of state and the state they lead, drop and become impotent. They come under the mercy of those who write and communicate their findings to the masses. It is possible for leaders to suffer from cleverly developed untruths and misinformation. Writing and research compel them to be well informed and current about every important event in both the life of the country and the world around them because they will not want to ridicule themselves in front of intellectuals and others who read their publications. This puts on their shoulders the

responsibility of travelling within the country to have first-hand understanding of the daily realities of the lives of those they govern. Without this, they might be dormant and depend on others for crucial information. This exposes them to the risk of being lied to, making them to take decisions that will be counter-productive and fail to meet needs. Well-researched works from them, though cannot be swallowed hook-and-sink like divine truth, compel them to sit up if they were not, provide illumination to many of their actions and real intentions. This is a useful counterweight to obscurity, guesses as well as information that breeds confusion and instability. One might wonder where heads of state will have the time to embark in laborious research and writing given their busy schedules. They can do it if they want to. Just a quick example: President Nkrumah, though being one of the busiest leaders of his time, travelling the capitals of the world and addressing high level meetings almost all the time, wrote and published many books some of which are helping researchers till date. They permitted the world to understand and accurately weigh his actions and those of other leaders of the 'African bad boys clique' like Sekou Touré, Modibo Keita and Gamal Abdel Nasser, who were not in the good books of certain western powers, placing things within their proper context. He was forced to know Ghana and Africa so well in order to be able to write in a manner acceptable to even critical intellectuals and detractors. Some of these leaders were put in troubled political waters that were at times too hot. Many of them ended as victims of foreign-sponsored coups including Nkrumah himself. It is worth clarifying that asking leaders to do research or write books is not because their works are really needed but because it compels them to know a lot of things they ought not to be ignorant of. An ignorant leader is more dangerous to a nation or an organization than stockpiles of arms in the enemy's possession. Just as a school certificate is demanded of people not because the piece of paper is really needed but because it serves as a way of making them to study and know things that will make them useful to society, so is reading, research and writing to leaders. Whenever they are not doing this it will be easy to know given the way things will be going in their nations or organizations.

7. The president should abolish the death penalty from Cameroonian laws and initiate bills to reduce the number of years in a presidential term as well as that of a head of state's duration in office. It is not the best of things if what exists now is passed down to the next generation. The world used to have many countries who killed their people as punishment for certain offences. Because of its cruelty and barbarity, many abolished it, going for alternative solutions that produced more beneficial results. Only few still use it with some at the verge of abolition. There are more humane ways to deter crime in civilised societies. Given that many Cameroonians are highly learned with some ranking as holders of the highest certificates existing in their different fields, the country should feature among those who win with the brain, saving lives, not destroying them as a strategy of peace. Legalising killing in Cameroon was not only a backward move but contradicted the strong reverence for democracy and freedom President Biya's regime came to be known for since taking over from Ahidjo. Also, in such a diverse and heterogeneous society, a span of seven years is too long for a presidential term. In societies of this nature, a term should be four years. If for any reason it gets too long, it should not exceed five. Moreover, no one, no matter the kind of genius they may be or how they are loved by the people, should rule the nation for more than a decade. Long terms promote vices than virtues. Moreover, they make elections a do-or-die matter in societies with great diversities because the waiting period for a contrary agenda to be in operation unchallenged is too long. At times, individuals contest the victory of their rivals not really because they did not win but because they just wonder where they will get the strength to wait until the next election. If after waiting, the next election does not still favour them that might be the end of their political career. They thus raise angry voices citing foul play and irregularities to back rejection claims. Though this is not always the case, long terms are a huge problem overall. Things should be made better for the sake of the future generation so that theirs can be a model of democracy with regular and smooth transfer of power other countries can desire emulating.

8. Given the significant contribution of the diaspora to the country's economy and the specialised training many have acquired in some of the world's best institutions, the country should draw that community even closer, making it an active and recognised partner in the nation's

development and political life. One of the ways this can be done is to allocate seats in the national assembly and senate for the diaspora making it possible for citizens abroad to vote and be able to serve as MPs and Senators from their bases. They could be divided into regions and seats allocated either according to region or the size of a region's population. For example, there could be a Scandinavian Region, Region of Southern Europe, Region of North America, Region of South-East Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, etcetera. This makes citizens to stay together as one people in spite of distance, moving in the same direction with everyone contributing their own quota to nation-building in a joyful and patriotic manner. Besides, people will not feel disconnected from home once leaving the national borders or be trapped in thoughts of being forgotten folks who only get remembered when help is needed. The world is getting smaller and there should be new ways of building a country that goes beyond old school methods. All its people, no matter where they may be, should directly contribute to its greatness and help it cope with the competition and rapid pace of others. This is necessary because the diaspora is a rich resource with so much to offer. Other countries will tap it if the owner shows no interest.

9. While unity is a good thing, being wrongly united is painful and demands emaciating endurance that is a threat to peace. Like other countries, Cameroon should prioritise unity. The integration of its people should also be a key objective. However, there are different kinds of unity and integration, not just one. The kind that suits Canada or Saudi Arabia, fetching them great results will not necessarily do so for say, Nigeria, Egypt or Cameroon. Societies are different and respond differently to policies. It is vital for each to understand its peculiarities and composition so as to know what brand to subscribe to. The American colonies, after gaining independence from Britain, were quick to understand this. Despite being moulded by Britain and having much of the latter's features, both the type of government and brand of unity they opted for were completely different from what existed in Britain. Because it suited their context, the country quickly grew to become a leading voice in the world surpassing even Britain, as more territories were pulled to it, not away from it. Cameroon needs to go for unity that suits it. From reunification till date, as an effort to combat colonialism and tribalism, there have been conscious and even desperate moves to completely unite all its ethnic groups, tribal units and political parts, including the French and English-speaking regions to form a homogeneous society without paying sufficient attention to fundamental, omnipresent differences that cannot be ignored or erased. This has led to a kind of struggle against many things tribal and ethnic including rich traditions and cultures that could add value to the country. Of course, tribalism and nepotism are bugs any country dreaming of greatness should keep away. But tribalism is different from tribal realities. Many of these realities are not vices but virtues the state needs. Many Asian countries understood this and drew strength from it to power their current global opulence. The kind of oneness the authorities seem to have fallen in love with will have problems coping in a setting like Cameroon. It ignores a lot and just wants everybody to be one, quickly. Inasmuch as it is important for the country's parts to be brought together to consolidate the whole, the peculiarities of each, including their rich heritages, must not be sacrificed. Even more serious is the fact that this desire for rapid fusion is extended to the French and English-speaking parts in a hasty way. So much is done to make them one, smooth whole, as quickly as possible. Ideally, it looks good and reasonable but practically, it is a state-building flaw which instead constitutes a threat to the country's stability. Except the state that is produced is a model country that neither looks like French Cameroun nor Southern Cameroons but a true offspring of the intercourse between the two, it will struggle to survive. One of them will combat it and opt to pull back as the English-speaking side is currently doing. This is because for its people to survive in such a state, they will first be assimilated and brainwashed to become those of the other territory from language to virtually everything. This might be called national unity or integration but truth remains truth. Its identity does not hide even in darkness.

10. Appointments into key posts that directly affect the life of the nation and its people should not be a one man affair. The Head of State can do the selection but it should be submitted as a proposal to the people's elected representatives who should, taking into consideration the desires of those they are representing and who these appointees will govern, scrutinise the suitability of

such choices to ascertain that meritocracy and qualification were sufficiently taken into account and not sacrificed. The head of state can then proceed to confirm the appointments, making them binding. This fosters people's sense of unity and inclusiveness, bringing the government and people closer together as a team with a common heritage and destiny. Also, the head of state should be properly protected by the laws of the land and granted sufficient security both while in and out of office. No grounds should be given for them to be molested or treated inhumanely after leaving power be it by individuals or judicial bodies except on very special cases where they were a complete threat and enemy of the nation in every respect. The job of president is not one of the easiest. No matter how much they work and how hard they try, they always have passionate haters. Strong and trusted guarantees of a peaceful and dignified life should be accorded them by law. It is a blessing and not a curse to serve one's country and people. Apart from taking away real threats and guaranteeing their safety, it makes them bolder, fearless and freer to function for the people. It also empowers them to overcome temptations of staying in power for long, being fully persuaded that there is safety and a good life on the other side. The world is a political space. There are many schemers who can manipulate an entire country to hate and approve the destruction of its leader who served it passionately and sacrificially for reasons completely different from what they people are told.

11. No section of the country's population should be made to appear more patriotic than others, having the responsibility to watch and protect the state from destruction, especially if others are seen as the possible source of this destruction. In this respect, the country's military and judiciary, from top to bottom, should reflect Cameroon's rich demographic diversity. Its security needs should truly be the responsibility of all its people. Never should any tribe, ethnic group, region or linguistic unit, dominate or be made to feel that they are the ones in charge and have the final say because they love and care for the nation than others. In addition, the privilege and responsibility to serve as Head of State should be formally or informally assigned to the nation's main divides. This will reinforce every people's sense of belonging and no one will feel as though they are merely working for or escorting others in the Cameroonian journey. It should move between the French and English-speaking sections. Even within these sections, the people themselves should agree for it to move between their main divides. In the English-speaking section, for instance, it should alternate between the North-West and South-West Regions with each having its turn while in the French-speaking section, it should move between the Grand North and Grand South with each having its turn. In a large and pluralistic society like Cameroon, it is a trap to say the best person whom the people love should be president. It sounds and looks good but is unwise and dangerous. It is possible for this best person to always be a particular person. Or, it could be folks from a particular ethnic group because in democratic settings, an entire country can be politically taken hostage by those who hold power and master how to play their cards. It can cause every generation to experience incidents of fighting as the country evolves further. Laws should be made clearly outlining the shared responsibility and equal access of its parts to its throne of glory in a manner that minimises struggles and wars. This, in a way, gives Cameroon the chance to operate its own brand of democracy that sufficiently takes into consideration its specificities and pluralistic character. No one should be deceived by the friendship and fraternity that now exist between the North-West and South-West Regions. They are tightly together because they have a common enemy. In this research, I found out that many people in the South West are careful when treating with those of the North-West, saying they quickly takeover and fill every place with their people if given the chance. Just to cite two examples from my diary: PAMOL and CDC. It was revealed that when citizens from the North West ran these companies they filled them with their people in no time. Individuals even went back home to bring their people. The North-West also has strong worries against the South-West. Though divide-and-rule has been deliberately used against them by Yaoundé, they have real differences. In the French-speaking side, it is the same scenario. One will be naïve to think that the Grand North and the Grand South are perfect lovers who can sacrifice their lives for one another. The two are different in many ways and fiercely antagonistic. Each is jealous of its heritage and wants to be respected as such. It would have been nice if there was

genuine oneness because that is what every nation needs. Unfortunately, that is an idealist thought which does not connect with the reality on the ground. Deep issues and rivalries will show up if they face real tests. Besides, never having the chance others are having in a nation one is part of can cause issues. It is on the basis of these truths that this work has argued that the future generation will be spared many of the woes of the current and will stand a better chance of enjoying real peace and stability if the current generation makes laws stating clearly that each section has its chance. It is not division but contextualised wisdom that fosters unity in diversity. It will make Cameroon's democracy unique, appealing and strong enough to withstand great storms that will batter others and leave them in tatters.

12. The future of children and the unborn should be properly secured. Given the good life and blissful future reserved for children and future generations in countries which, though having no natural riches, are thriving and stand as examples of economic success in the world, Cameroon can secure the future of its children if it wants. It is endowed with riches which exist in huge quantities both in and above its soil. It has a dynamic and growing population with young people who are able and willing to work. From the findings of this paper, many parents do not care much about themselves as they do their children. If their children can be fine with guarantees of a future that is bright with every possibility of dreams being realised, they find it okay. It will make them feel pleased with minds full of peace and rest. It does not cost much to change the fortunes of a country if its people, especially those who manage its affairs, truly decide to. If they honestly display the kind of patriotism which places the nation and the collective above the personal, Cameroon will be driving on the fast lane and will be where its people are dreaming of in no time. Many of the countries they travel to and toil to make ends meet are poorer than their country in terms of net value and real wealth. Yet they are far better than Cameroon in terms of living standard and opportunities. What makes the difference? It is simple – the management of what each country has. It is never about what one has but how well and wisely they manage it. It is also not about one's power or size but an excellent and proper distribution of what is available to the people. Consequently, securing the future is very possible. It should be a priority with clear steps of getting there. Once this is done and the next generation is sure to live as a people blessed with what their land has, being able to experience a successful and fulfilling life that reflects what a Cameroonian deserves, the country will step in the position of enjoying the kind of peace and stability that give societies the means to rest, relax and expand even in a global environment of contraction and turbulence.

## Conclusion

Cameroon has been a tough case for a while. Debates of varied kinds have been organised with dissimilar positions advanced and defended with passion and effort. Given the realities on the ground, all is definitely not well. Saying the contrary can only be academically permissible given that all opinions count. It will not be empirically true, though, because the facts and reality are too clear to debunk. There is disappointment and pain. The Cameroon which the ancestors had in mind is not what exists now. The country might head to a regrettable direction one day if wisdom is not applied to extract the bitterness and pain that has accumulated along the years in people.

With a divided past and having waged the struggle for independence in two completely different ways, the country's English-speaking section and the French-speaking-dominated government are, unsurprisingly, not in agreement over many fundamental issues. This is not strange given that disagreement is part of human societies and shows up even between intimate partners who are determined not to hurt one another. What will be surprising, though, is if the country fails in front of its challenges. All countries have theirs. In fact, every country in the world, no matter their tranquillity and outward opulence, is going through something. They are all struggling with a sleep-depriving issue that is squeezing so much out of decision makers and senior state authorities.

Given the sensitiveness of issues, it is important for inclusive actions to be carried out by Cameroonian officials. This is not time for errors and experimentation which can aggravate pain and foster alienation. They can draw from Africa's rich methods of solving issues inclusively to

calm hot tempers and the frustrations of the disgruntled English-speaking masses. This will curb the chances of things spilling over or staying quiet as though well whereas nothing is well and everything is just a dormant explosive. Outwardly, citizens of this section looked fine over the years but that did not reflect their real state. They have been nursing worries connected to the way the country, since the early days of reunification, has become French Cameroun, the trust territory that gained independence from France, at the expense of British Southern Cameroons, the smaller one that gained independence from Britain and reunited with it. Their frustrations are not about Cameroon's lagging development level for that is a general issue all over the country.

The journey which took the nation to this point where its English-speaking section is now angry neither occurred by chance nor began now. It was properly planned and carefully carried out as part of a strategy that sought to unite a diverse society composed of people with a disjointed and dissimilar past, moulding them into a strong nation that should remain one and indivisible. The motive was noble because no country will break from the shackles of imperialism and choose to stay in the shadows of its troubled past when there was the possibility to move forward and grow into a strong politico-economic voice the world can respect. This same vision was shared by the leaders of Southern Cameroons who were deeply moved by the wave of freedom sweeping across Africa in the 1950s and 1960s resulting to different oppressed communities regaining their freedom and becoming independent states which yearned to unite and form a stronger and more competitive Africa. Therefore, after the plebiscite of 1961, the government and leaders of Southern Cameroons did not have much problems accepting to sacrifice both their power and privileges to permit unity to thrive. This was observable in the way they did a lot of things. They re-united with the Republic of Cameroun aiming to form a model and successful bi-cultural state that was built in a manner which the rest of Africa and the world will look at with interest.

This high hope began diminishing as early as the beginning of the re-unification and state-building journey because the government and leaders of the Republic of Cameroun, though also desiring the building of a bi-cultural state that was strong and prosperous, had a different understanding of unity. Their approach and strategies were both embarrassing and unappealing to the Southern Cameroonian stock who began wondering if both were truly in for the same business. The two parties thought they were but the reality on the ground soon showed they were not. For example, while the English-speaking stock saw the union as the beginning of a new dawn that should result to a new Cameroon which was neither British Southern Cameroons nor French Cameroun but the product and true offspring of the intercourse between the two, the French-speaking part, in a very significant way, saw what happened as the return of one of the parts of Kamerun that was separated and taken away by imperialists. Consequently, the Republic of Cameroun was home – the main family; while Southern Cameroons was the returnee. There was joy and celebration on both sides during re-unification but their reason was not the same as things later testified.

Being the bigger in terms of size and population, French Cameroun, whose politicians equally took the lead in the new nation, has been the bigger beneficiary with more influence. Its politicians governed the country with this thinking. They sought to unite and harmonise its parts to erase divisions brought in by imperial forces so that the home can function again as a united whole. Paradoxically, they did so not using German or a strictly Cameroonian approach but a French model, replicating French systems and institutions yet arguing that the English-speaking stock, not they, still had a colonial mentality they needed to get rid of so that Cameroon could be built. This led to the taking of serious and at times desperate measures including a brand of unity and integration which, among other things, sought to make the returnee to adapt quickly and be acquainted with the affairs of the house in order to fit in as every other family member, feeling happy, free and at home. They were willing to help in every way. In fact, they worked with passion, devotion and zeal trying to please everybody in the house. Yet the more they multiplied their effort, the more the English-speaking stock continued to get frustrated and angry, refusing to be transformed into Francophones, making repeated warnings to leave the union if nothing changed. This made many in the French-speaking section surprised and unable to understand the attitude and

worries of the English-speaking folks. Many even said they had no problem and their complaints were unjustified. This did not help but pushed the anger to higher levels that became concerning indeed.

Part of their frustration is linked to what they thought the union was all about and should have been but is currently not. By uniting with French Cameroun, they thought the two former trust territories were to produce a new country that was unique, prosperous and flying high that others who were scared and not treating the question of unity, especially of Africa, seriously, will do a rethink. But they were shocked because while they allowed many things in Southern Cameroons to disappear in order to give way to the new state, French Cameroun did not disappear. Its leaders did not allow it or its institutions to cede the way for a new Cameroon to emerge. They instead caused it to grow stronger, absorbing Southern Cameroons and taking over every aspect of national life like a hydra.

Things have gone round passing through different stages and well-planned policies. Even the name of the country is now the Republic of Cameroun, the house's original name which the returnee met – a kind of indication that its assimilation is complete and it is now part of the house. Based on how the parties agreed for things to go, these are not only actions but errors that are poised to hunt Cameroon and expose it to tough times because it will be challenging to perpetually tame those of former British Southern Cameroons to stay subject to these deeds. Those of the French-speaking side will equally not accept it if, in a reverse manner, this was happening to them. This is because the instinct to resist injustice and oppression is inherent in human nature and will respond whenever these vices show up. Those responsible for choosing a different path instead of the one that was originally chosen by the ancestors actually set the country up for ugly experiences it will always grapple with except there is a change. Problems generated by injustice or grave misuse of power usually manifest in ways that remind observers and those affected that truth and honesty are better ingredients in state-building because of the stability and tranquillity they bring than crookedness, manipulations and dishonesty whose gains last only for a while and fall apart later.

While Southern Cameroons gave away its sovereignty and expected French Cameroun to do same that was not the case in practice. The latter only made slight adjustments to accommodate the newcomer. Prime Minister John Ngu Foncha, in a gesture to push the dream of unity forward, accepted to step aside and not covert the driver's seat of the new Cameroon, believing that new bottles should be filled with new wine, not old, because a new Cameroon needed new and fresh blood. French Cameroun did not reciprocate actions of this kind. Many Southern Cameroonians expected President Ahidjo to have been the first to make the withdrawal move or at least emulate Foncha but he did not. Instead, he maintained his position as the key man of the new nation whose power grew in length and breadth attaining a level where he could do and undo unquestionably. The English-speaking section did not find this funny. Southern Cameroons also abolished its currency not wanting to be tied to the British fiscal system in the new dawn. It expected a new currency for the new nation that will serve its specific needs and interests in the competitive global monetary system. Bafflingly, French Cameroun did not go in that direction. The CFA Franc, initiated by France and connected to it, is the currency Cameroon has used till date.

Be it in the United States, Canada, Nigeria, Ghana, India or other territories, when the British left, they truly left. They connected with these places strictly on diplomatic basis or as friends within the Commonwealth who, though having mutual reverence for one another and contrary to what the word commonwealth might trick one to think, succeeded and failed as individuals, not as a group. This was because from the moment they asked and were granted independence, each country became its own master with the final say in both its foreign and domestic affairs. In some countries like Ghana, when the people asked for independence and the British consented, their departure was so quick that some opposition party leaders complained why they were leaving with such haste as though driven. In Southern Cameroons, this was replicated. When Britain left, it was for real. The territory had to learn to carry itself along both at home and abroad because independence was not just freedom but a responsibility. That was why even in some of its negotiations and constitutional talks with the Republic of Cameroun, Southern Cameroons had to learn to do things without Britain no matter how crucial they were.



People who had lived through realities of this kind find it hard to understand the constant presence of France not only in Cameroon but in its former colonies. From the military to the socio-economic and political spheres, France is so much around raising questions as to whether it went or is still planning to go. In a country like Cameroon, the activities of any world power need to manifest in respectful and helpful ways that promote instead of threaten the fragile peace and unity of its heterogeneous groups.

In addition, Buea, the Capital of German Kamerun, was not adopted as the capital of the new Cameroon even though those were some of the compromises French Cameroun should have made to prove its sincerity and commitment to building a new country. Realising the dream of the new nation was bound to be an impossibility except the old was sacrificed for the new. Many compromises were required of both sides. Yaoundé, the capital of French Cameroun, was made the capital of the new country. Moreover, French, a language accepted to co-exist with English on an equal basis as the new nation's two official languages, basically became the country's administrative language. From the army, police, gendarme to other institutions of public life, French was and is still the main language of government business. At the beginning, the pace with which these events were happening constituted a nightmare to former Southern Cameroonians. Even they themselves were compelled to use it because it was hard to do otherwise. This was because a scenario was created where it was hard to cope at the highest level as a Cameroonian civil servant without a knowledge of French but possible without English except in cases where one was working with strictly English-speaking communities.

Other important aspects like its police, government institutions and things that made Southern Cameroons the autonomous state that it was were given away to build the new Cameroon. The frustrations of its masses can be understood given that anyone who gives so much away never want to settle for less. The people expect honesty and reciprocity. Things have rather moved in a way that has left many angry and asking questions. A new Cameroon has truly been built but it is not the one they thought of but an expanded version of French Cameroun, the trust territory they reunited with.

Given that the real enemy of the two territories has never been the populations of both sides but imperialism and a powerful political élite which exploited and herded them like flocks of one's private pasture, both will be losers if at the end they fail to make real peace that touches real issues. If French Cameroun is exalted at the expense of Southern Cameroons, Cameroon will lose. If, on the other hand, Southern Cameroons is exalted at the expense of French Cameroun or leaves the union, the Cameroonian dream the forefathers had will die. But if a true offspring, the product of a sincere union between French Cameroun and Southern Cameroons emerges, Cameroon will win with guarantees of durable stability and peace. This is not impossible. If the country wins and all its people are happy, it will inspire other countries to choose the path of unity and not be suspicious or scared. This victory is easy if people put aside divisive politics and embarrassing denials of truths, facing facts honestly and uniting against the strength of trivialities that have so far pitted brethren against brethren, having the better part of them.

The authorities should apply much wisdom because if things are not properly tackled and fighting begins, it will not be only between the English-speaking stock and the government but many French-speaking Cameroonians will, out of sympathy and solidarity, join the cause of the English-speaking population, putting the government and its backers in very hot water. It should be hinted that Cameroon's context is unique compared to other African countries. If things deteriorate and violence kicks in, it will be chaotic because the army, police, gendarme, civil service and civil society have many English-speaking folks who are deeply concerned about the plight of their brethren, many of whom are the reason they work and toil so hard daily. Many are in pains. They might not be speaking but are bleeding. Moreover, many French-speaking folks are either best friends to English-speaking citizens or are sympathetic to their cry and vice versa. Any Cameroonian war will be one of Africa's most difficult and unorthodox wars which will not follow regular patterns of conventional warfare. Different parties will help one another whenever they can. It will result to a kind of fighting that will be hard and challenging to master. Parties will not clearly know who their true enemy is.

This is the 21<sup>st</sup> century where a lot is expected to have been learned from what the world has suffered over the years. War should be avoided and other options engaged in a sincere manner for everyone's good. Going by what this work discovered and the things that might happen if actions fall short of what is required, I do not find it monotonous repeating myself: no one but war wins in a war, not even the one that is declared winner. Restraint and mature measures that are inclusive and respectful are expected of all sides in order to curb the chances of the Cameroonian nation suffering from issues which injustice, oppression, abusive use of power and twisted thinking compelled others to be victims of. Societies should not expect to harvest peace when that is not what they are sowing. For Cameroon to come to the point of enjoying genuine unity, peace and prosperity, its people, especially the ones making policies and wielding power, should be sowing these seeds and nurturing them to flourish. These results never come automatically when what should be done is not done. Accidents only happen *in countries*; they never happen *to countries*. All of them reap what they sow. They might be quick to shift the blame to others or wash their hands off situations saying their misfortunes are the work of their enemies. But no one was born an enemy and no one goes around choosing in a haphazard manner those to make their enemy. Actions and decisions from one side, birth enemies at the other side and nurture them to get harder and uncompromising. Societies claiming to have many enemies should check their actions, not the rising number of enemies. Those that are dissatisfied with or do not like what they are reaping should change what they are sowing. Except this is done in a genuine manner, they will be stuck in the same bitterness, insecurity, fear, and fighting costly fights that should not have been. The choice is always theirs and the solution, never far away. Once it stops being business as usual it will stop being results as usual so that dreams can eventually become reality for societies to become what they truly desire and deserve.

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