

POST-COLONIAL CAMEROON



Politics, Economy, and Society

Edited by **JOSEPH TAKOUGANG**
and **JULIUS A. AMIN**

Foreword by John M. Mbaku

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*This book is dedicated to Cameroonians at home
and the Diaspora, whose struggles for democracy, justice,
equality, and respect for human rights remain
the centerpiece for a strong and prosperous Cameroon.*

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Foreword

Cameroon is one of Africa's most ethnically and geographically diverse countries with an extraordinarily rich mix of cultures, customs, and traditions. The country's greatly diverse cultural background can be traced to its various ethno-cultural groups and languages, as well as to the influence of European colonialism, Christianity, Islam, and a variety of other external factors, including globalization. On July 14, 1884, the German imperial flag was raised on the Cameroon River District, marking the official founding of the colony of Kamerun. Germany subsequently lost Kamerun to Allied Expeditionary Forces, and by July 1922, the bulk of the colony was officially declared League of Nations Mandates under British and French administrations. In 1946, following the demise of the League of Nations and the founding of the United Nations, the two Mandates became UN Trust Territories under French and British administrations. The French mandate was generally referred to as the UN Trust Territory of Cameroons under French administration, and the British mandate was divided into the UN Trust Territory of Northern Cameroons under British administration and the UN Trust Territory of Southern Cameroons under British administration. On January 1, 1960, the UN Trust Territory under French administration (also referred to as French Cameroons) gained independence and took the name *République du Cameroun* (Republic of Cameroon). In 1961, UN-supervised plebiscites were held in the British-administered territories; Northern Cameroons voted to join the now independent Federation of Nigeria, and Southern Cameroons opted to gain independence by joining the independent *République du Cameroun* to found a federation called the Federal Republic of Cameroon (*La République fédérale du Cameroun*), the latter becoming effective on October 1, 1961.

The federation was characterized by a very competitive political system with several political parties competing for positions in the federal and state governments. However, in June 1966, Ahmadou Ahidjo, the federation's first president and a northern Muslim, cajoled leaders of the country's various political parties to join him in creating a single political party called the Cameroon National Union (CNU)/(*Union Nationale Camerounaise*, UNC). The only party that was left out of the political arrangement was the *Union des Populations du Cameroun* (UPC), which is credited with forcing the French to grant independence to the UN Trust Territory of Cameroons under French administration. Ahidjo, with the help of French troops, decimated the UPC and forced it out of existence. It was only able to reemerge in the early 1990s when multiparty democracy returned to the country.

In 1972, Ahidjo abolished the federation and created a unitary state called the United Republic of Cameroon. In June 1975, Ahidjo appointed Paul Biya, a southern Christian, as prime minister. On November 6, 1982, Biya constitutionally succeeded Ahidjo after Ahidjo voluntarily decided to retire from politics. Immediately after he took office as president of Cameroon, Biya engaged in a series of institutional reforms to enhance his ability to maintain a hold on the presidency. In 1984, Biya changed the name of the country from the United Republic of Cameroon to the Republic of Cameroon, and in 1985 he changed the name of the country's only legal political party, the CNU, to the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM). In March 1992, Cameroon held its first multiparty legislative elections since political competition had been abolished in 1966. Thirty-two political parties participated. In 1996, the country adopted a new constitution, which limited the president to two seven-year terms in office. However, in 2008, Biya, who had been president of Cameroon since 1982 and who was expected under the terms of the 1996 constitution to leave office in 2011, had the constitution changed so that he could serve another term in office. As a consequence of the 2008 constitutional amendment, Biya remains Cameroon's president to this day.

The present volume, edited by two highly skilled and competent historians who specialize in the study of Cameroon in particular and Africa in general, presents a rigorous analysis of Cameroon, its politics, economy, and society. The contributors are scholars of international repute who have taught and continue to teach at important universities throughout the world. In addition to the fact that these individuals have published extensively on various aspects of Cameroon history, economy, culture, and traditions, they also have first-hand knowledge of the country and its diverse subcultures. Some of them are scholar-activists who have used their education and training to fight for democracy and peaceful coexistence in Cameroon.

This volume is significantly different from other scholarly monographs on Cameroon for several reasons, the most important being that it provides a relatively comprehensive overview of the country and deals with the major issues that are critical to all of the country's relevant stakeholder groups. Specifically, the contributors focus on issues that inform our understanding of modern Cameroon: gender and the rights of women; economics and development; the struggle for democracy and the rule of law; the environment; human rights and the right to self-determination, especially as it applies to the case of the Anglophone minority; religion; language and education and their role in the modernization of the country; agriculture and challenges in rural development; Cameroon's role in the world, including the emerging relationship between the country and the People's Republic of China; the role of international governmental agencies, such as the US Peace Corps, in Cameroon's transition to a modern state; brain drain; and issues surrounding Cameroon's extremely large youth population.

Most recent books on Cameroon have tended to place emphasis on the president of the Republic, Paul Biya, who has occupied the presidency since November 1982, but in the process, these books have neglected to examine and analyze other issues, such as the country's institutional arrangements, which have made it possible for Biya to maintain a monopoly on the supply of legislation. The contributors to this volume, however, have done an excellent job of providing a comprehensive examination of the multifarious problems that confront the country. Perhaps, more importantly, they have provided refreshing, rigorous, and informative analyses of Cameroon politics, economy, and society. Although the analyses are quite rigorous, the writing style is easily accessible, even to general readers. Finally, each contributor has provided practical and effective policy options for dealing with the various issues examined. This is a highly recommended volume for students of African political economy, with specific interests in Cameroon.

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Joseph Takougang
Julius Amin

Introduction

Fifty-eight Years of Independence and Counting

Joseph Takougang and Julius A. Amin

Cameroonians old enough to remember will never forget November 6, 1982, the day Ahmadou Ahidjo, the nation's founding father, resigned as president and in a peaceful ceremony transferred power to Paul Biya, his protégé and prime minister. It was a glorious moment in Cameroon and in Africa as a whole. Occurring at a time when strongman rule and military takeovers were routine in Africa, Ahidjo's move, which had been preceded only by a similar action by President Leopold Sedar Senghor of Senegal on December 31, 1980, was both inspirational and refreshing in post-colonial African history. In Cameroon, there was a renewed spirit of optimism as people welcomed Biya's pronouncements of rigor, morality, and new deal, a sharp contrast to his predecessor's authoritarian regime. As Biya toured the country soon after ascending to the presidency of the republic, people lined the streets, cheered, celebrated, and danced in ways reminiscent of the biblical welcoming of the messiah. More importantly, they rejoiced because, unlike other nations in the region, the transfer of power was civil and represented a sign of a young nation coming of age.

But everything was short-lived. Within a few years Biya consolidated power and reverted to the authoritarian tactics of his predecessor. Cameroonians had been fooled. By the end of his first decade in power, Biya had forced Ahidjo and other dissidents into exile, taken a solvent nation into insolvency, amended the constitution to ensure his grip on power, and pursued a domestic policy that guaranteed a lifetime presidency. Like his predecessor, who had been dependent on Northern barons, Biya turned to his Bulu/Beti ethnic group.

His neoliberal economic policies were directed by global financial institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund and had a

devastating impact on the economy and the population. Cameroon slipped into recurring recessions, with no end in sight. There was chronic unemployment, corruption at all levels, and a feeling of general malaise. But that was just part of the story. There was a paradox of some sort. For all the negatives, there were also positives. At a time of rising crime in other African nations, Biya's policies curbed crime and maintained the peace. He moved to ensure that each of the ten administrative regions in the country had a public university, a far cry from the days when the nation had only one university for almost three decades following independence. Thus Biya may easily be nicknamed the "education" president. He promoted gender issues, recruited more women into management positions, allowed religious freedom, and tolerated a measurable level of press freedom. Though Cameroon has oil, President Biya—like his predecessor—did not neglect the agricultural sector of the economy, thereby sparing the nation of the consequences of the dreadful Dutch Disease. Existing literature dismissed those leaders as tyrants whose policies led to the political, economic, and social castration of the nation. While not rejecting that argument, this study argues that they acted within a historical context, examining the various forces that shaped their actions, as well as the role of ordinary Cameroonians in shaping their own history. It is instantly a political, economic, and social history. It asks a series of questions in attempts to understand the nation's post-colonial experience. For instance, what was the political formation of Ahidjo and Biya, and how did they change over time? Even in an age of rapid transformation and change, Biya has emerged as one of Africa's longest ruling "strongmen." Frederick Douglass famously noted that "The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress" (Philip Foner 1950, 437). Other questions: How does the tyranny of Ahidjo and Biya inform our understanding of the Cameroonian people? In what ways did global and domestic events compel Biya to respond to such environmental and social issues as gender, youth culture, religious freedom, and much more? How do we construct Cameroon's national identity, and how has that identity changed over time?

Despite the pattern of continuity, change, and endurance in the nation's fifty-eight year history, the historical literature has been limited. Studies available on Cameroon overwhelmingly focus on Ahidjo and Biya's politics without taking into consideration a broader historical context. And there is a larger context to the story. Irrespective of the policies instituted by political leaders, ordinary Cameroonians continued to forge and build their communities and traditions. Theirs was and is a story of community-building, fortitude, resilience, determination, courage, and migration as Cameroonians sort to create a better life for themselves and their country. Yet it is not captured in the existing literature. This book is, therefore, different from others. It cap-

tures the voices of ordinary Cameroonians. It examines post-colonial Cameroonian society through a broader lens, and as such it makes an important contribution to post-colonial Cameroonian and African historiography. This collection of chapters by leading experts on Cameroon intends to answer those questions and more with hopes of showing how that historical experience has shaped the present. Each author examines the topic within the larger context of the nation and shows how its past can contribute to a better understanding of Cameroon's contemporary society. The research is based on extensive primary and secondary sources, and contributions come from practitioners on both sides of the Atlantic.

Moreover, unlike other studies that have focused almost exclusively on the post-colonial political history of Cameroon, this volume focuses on some of the major issues that inform our understanding of contemporary Cameroonian society, including gender, economy, and the environment. It shows how Cameroonians organized and experienced their lives under Cameroonian leadership and how they responded to that leadership. Such an approach will stimulate and encourage others to ask similar questions in other African nations. It is only through these kinds of case studies that we can begin to make broad generalizations of the life and times of ordinary people in post-colonial Africa. This volume is therefore an important addition to the literature on African and Cameroonian history. It has five sections: Politics, Economy, Society and Culture, International Relations, and Migration.

In the foundational chapter in Section 1, Moses Tesi examines the political dynamics in Cameroon by dissecting politics in the country as a basis for explaining why the Cameroonian state has fared so poorly on the index of political democracy. In doing so, he focuses on the process of state formation, Cameroonian nationalism, postindependence politics and institution building, the erosion of pluralistic politics and its rebirth in the 1990s. He argues that in order to understand the failure or stalled democratization process in Cameroon, we need to focus on the nature and character of politics in the country as a whole, a politics that is associated with incessant pursuit of control and domination, a politics in which there is no middle ground, only winners and losers. There were no mutual gains in the process. As such, foremost in the thinking of the country's political leaders was the control that access to state power would yield them. For party leaders, it was the control that they had over their parties and the visibility and sense of importance that they felt by being considered party leaders. Such sense of control would translate into much higher control and power if their parties won the presidential elections. This phenomenon created a political culture that preserved or considered contests for the office of president to be contests that only party leaders should participate in. As a consequence, the founding leaders of parties in Cameroon

became the ones contesting presidential elections under the party banner, as opposed to opening up the process and identifying winnable candidates to run. This may explain why John Fru Ndi, leader of the SDF, has never contested elections for mayor or for the national assembly. Following this logic, his thinking must be that those positions are of too low a level for him. Thus, in addition to other factors besides the role of the state (as important as the state's role is), the discussion in this chapter also focuses on opposition parties' roles in the stalled democratization process in Cameroon.

Despite the perception of a politically stable and economically viable nation, Augustine Ayuk argues in chapter 2 that politics in Cameroon has remained susceptible to ethnic, linguistic, and regional tensions. That has been evident since the rebirth of multiparty politics in the early 1990s. The chapter offers a conceptual framework that explains how such powerful social pastimes as food, football (soccer), and alcohol have contributed in maintaining political stability in the country. Nevertheless, Ayuk points to what he characterizes as "the Anglophone quandary" as an important unresolved issue that continues to undermine stability in a fragmented society such as Cameroon.

One of the burning issues in the history of post-colonial Cameroon is the perceived marginalization of Anglophones. In chapter 3, Carlson Anyangwe, whose extensive research has focused on the "Anglophone problem," criticizes the African Commission's decision in *Gumne et al v. Cameroun* on the right of the people of erstwhile British-administered Trust Territory of the Southern Cameroons to self-determination under the African Charter. The narrative is firmly anchored in the law of self-determination and contributes, first, to the clarification of the Southern Cameroons Independence Question and, second, to the general discourse on the applicability of the right to self-determination beyond the context of European decolonization in Africa. The basic thesis of his argument is that, in arriving at its decision, the African Commission did not apply its mind to the following critical matters which would have impelled it to arrive at a different decision had it done so: proper construction of Article 20; République du Cameroun's active policy and practice of colonization, exploitation, repression, domination, and pauperization of the Southern Cameroons; its structural discrimination and violence; and its active process of Gallicizing all aspects of life in the Southern Cameroons to conform to French models and its concomitant agenda of de-identification of the people of the erstwhile British Southern Cameroons. He concludes that the situation obtaining in the erstwhile United Nations Trust Territory of the Southern Cameroons is a cruel case of post-UN Charter annexation and occupation with a people trapped, subjugated and oppressed under a new colonization, and that the only available remedy to this dire situation is the assertion by the people concerned of their inalienable right to self-determination.

Fonkem Achankeng I also addresses the Anglophone problem in chapter 4, exploring the resistance of ex-British Southern Cameroons in the Cameroon Republic (*La République du Cameroun*) by the Southern Cameroons Peoples Conference in North America (SCPC-NA) through a letter to Cameroon Republic's prime minister while on a state visit to the United States. By analyzing the letter as the basis of his argument, together with data from primary and secondary sources, Achankeng I examines the resolve of a people who, through protests and struggle in North America, desire to ensure that the gap between the promised freedom and liberty of ex-British Southern Cameroons to ensure that their homeland is guaranteed. Important to the analysis is the fact that the exiles and their people are not bound to an unjust historical past, a past that impacts their present as they imagine the independence of their territory, a former UN trusteeship. The chapter concludes with the argument of the need in qualitative research to use data collection forms and methods of causal analysis to enhance the struggles of less powerful groups theorized by Sandra Harding's perspective in standpoint methodologies.

Chapter 5 begins the second section dealing with the economy. This chapter focuses on the coffee industry, which for decades was the main export from the northwest region of Cameroon. Emmanuel Kengo argues that, even though the liberal economic policies introduced in the early 1990s contributed to demise of the industry in the region, other factors—including the difficult birth of the crop, post-colonial government policies, the co-operatives, marketing improprieties, and internal bickering among various parties in the industry—also contributed to the collapse of the coffee industry in the regions.

Based on secondary data from a review and content analysis of historical, legal, and policy texts, Lotsmart Fonjong examines in chapter 6 the extent to which legal and structural reforms have accumulated over time to shape the landscape for environment and nature protection in Cameroon. His analysis reveals that colonial and postindependent policies and frameworks are similar in their inadequate thought and knowledge of local realities. As a result, the multiplication of laws, coupled with the constant institutional mutations in the domain of environmental management, is yet to impact fundamentally on the environmental problems of the country. He attributes existing environmental glitches to poor framing and lack of a comprehensive legal and administrative framework that integrates nature protection, local aspiration, and government political and economic interests.

Section 3, on society and culture, begins with chapter 7 by Honore Mimche, Achille Yonta, and Nobert Tohnain. Their discussion centers on efforts by Cameroon women to unshackle themselves from the long-held perception by scholars that women are “social juniors” relative to their male counterparts, who in contrast are perceived as “social seniors” whose authority is linked to

their age, their position in the family, and their possession of symbolic and material resources. In fact, as a result of various social change factors (education, urbanization, the implementation of population policies and gender policies, professionalization and employment of women, and the role of media and communication technologies) as well as the transformation of authority relations in families, some women have been forced to take on new roles as heads of families, entrepreneurs, leaders of opinion and politics, or charismatic religious figures. Indeed, for several decades now, there has been a kind of inversion in the dynamic labor market, one characterized in particular by women who have entered the public sectors formerly reserved exclusively for men. This mix at work was particularly visible in public life by the presence of women alongside their male counterparts in new social roles. This chapter thus seeks to understand the profound changes in female roles. It analyzes the relationship among women in their respective spheres and examines how they negotiate their responsibilities, including various survival strategies in the contexts of insecurity and violence.

In chapter 8, Jeanette Wogaing, Rose Nnanga, and Rose Abassi explore the concept of femininity as conveyed by Cameroonian authors. By focusing on women in Bamileke, Bassa, and Duala cultures, the authors demonstrate how women are still defined by the physiological and sociocultural changes that they undergo from early childhood to adulthood: first as girls, then as women, and finally as mothers. Indeed, these social changes are quite different and often occur at a different rhythm from the biological changes in a woman. It is from this perspective that they analyze the different ways in which femininity and motherhood are represented among these groups.

One of the most striking developments in Cameroon and throughout sub-Saharan Africa, especially since the early 1990s, is the rise of New Religious Movements (NRM). In chapter 9, Honore Mimche and Christian Bios Nelem examine the genesis of these new religious movements and their strategies for evangelizing. As part of the global setting of religious modernism, Cameroon is no exception to these upheavals. The country's religious scene has also witnessed an unprecedented growth, especially since the early 1990s. Today there are no monotheistic spaces controlled by a single religious denomination. Emerging religions inscribe their dynamics within a counter initiative that seeks to redefine existing family identities. In essence, they shake the existing family structures at their roots to test their solidity. At the same time, as they promote new values, these new religions challenge the values that inform traditional belief systems. To that extent, they have significant implications for the family. The new religious space has become a new laboratory in which the social sciences examine the far-reaching changes taking place in society.

In chapter 10 on the “Cameroonization” of education, Roland Ndille argues that the effect of the “Coloniality” of knowledge in independent and reunified Cameroon was instrumental in the creation of an official bicultural education policy in post-colonial Cameroon. By focusing on the history and language curriculum, especially in the former British Southern Cameroons, Ndille demonstrates how efforts at “Africanizing” and “Cameroonizing” the curriculum have been unsuccessful. He attributes the failure partially to the colonial nature of the educational system under which many of the political and policy leaders were educated. He concludes that until the nation realizes that such a system was not in the benefit of the state and then breaks away from it, the desire and calls for an educational system that would lead to genuine development and guarantee the nation’s 2035 goal will remain an illusion—or what is popularly known in Cameroon as “throwing water on a duck’s back.”

Chapter 11 begins the section on international relations. Peter Ngwafu focuses on Cameroon’s Foreign Policy and Inter-African Relations in the post-Ahidjo era. Drawing mostly from secondary sources, he argues that the foreign policy principles that shaped Cameroon’s relations with other African countries during the Ahidjo presidency were largely continued under Paul Biya. However, he posits that, while Cameroon has recorded successes in its relations with other African nations under Biya, it has been beset by some challenges that must be addressed in order for Cameroon to achieve its regional and continental foreign policy goals. He concludes that the same determinants and core principles of Cameroon’s foreign policy that have earned it the reputation as a stable and peaceful regional power during the presidencies of Ahidjo and Biya must be sustained, under proper leadership, if Cameroon intends to maintain its status as a stable and respected regional polity.

Chapter 12 focuses on the changing nature of Sino-Cameroon relations. Based on an extensive review of primary documents and interviews conducted in Cameroon, Julius Amin argues that Beijing’s wide pronouncements of win-win gain, equal partnership, Afro-Asian solidarity, self-centered development, and peace, equality, justice, and freedom have been more matters of rhetoric than of action. From the early 1970s, when many African nations recognized the communist regime of the People’s Republic of China, China has systematically exploited Cameroon’s raw materials and in exchange dumped cheap manufactured goods in the region, thereby destroying emerging industries. China’s economic policy is partly to blame for Cameroon’s economic drift. And Cameroonian leaders have remained mute over Beijing’s policy because China has abided by its pronouncement of “respect for sovereignty and non-interference” (citation needed here). Unlike other major powers, China has been less critical of Paul Biya’s corruption and the undemocratic policies that have been so dominant during his

more than thirty-four years in power. The importance of this is that it helps us to understand the ideology behind Cameroon's foreign policy toward the major powers. Since the constitution grants Cameroonians the right to peaceful protest, my chapter challenges Cameroon's general population to increase its voices of protest over unfair business practices from Beijing in the hope that consciousness will filter into other aspects of unfair treatment in contemporary Cameroonian society.

Julius then examines the role of the United States Peace Corps in post-colonial Cameroon in chapter 13. Based on extensive review of primary sources on both sides of the Atlantic, he argues that, while the services of the Peace Corps were critical in the early days of independence, their presence and relevance in Cameroon in the twenty-first century need to be questioned. He concludes that returned Peace Volunteers who served in Cameroon and other African nations became Cameroon's best unofficial ambassadors in the United States, perhaps even more so than Africans living in the United States.

Since the early 1990s, international migration has been one of the most significant developments in the history of post-colonial Cameroon. Chapter 14 begins the section on migration. Joseph Takougang here examines the reasons for the increased migration of Cameroonians, especially to the United States. He argues that, because of the social, political, and economic difficulties at home and the allure of life in the West perpetrated through the Internet and television programs, Cameroonians are searching for Nyanmjoh's fictional *Muzunguland*, one of several global destinations where they hope for a better life for themselves and for family members back in Cameroon. These emigrants—or *bushfallers*, as they are known in Cameroon's creative pidgin English—represent symbolic hunters in the village who go hunting with the goal of returning with a kill to feed the family. For many *bushfallers*, the new hunting grounds extend beyond the traditional European destinations and now include the United States, Canada, South Africa, Asia, China, India, and the Gulf States.

In chapter 15, Zacharia Nchinda discusses the burial preferences and the motivations of Cameroonian immigrants in the United States, the concept of the word *homeland* and the meaning of death to Cameroonians, and the motivations of those who prefer the repatriation of their bodily remains. It highlights the challenging role that *Solidarite Agissante* (SAGI)/Active Solidarity Ltd, a burial association, plays in fulfilling these death wishes. Using data from structured telephone interviews with SAGI members, the chapter points out, that despite the strong urge to migrate, many Cameroonians still have a sacred attachment to their homeland and envisage it as their final resting place, a place where they believe their souls could be at peace with themselves and their community. The result shed lights on the practice and

motives advanced by those immigrants who prefer home burial and the role played by a burial association in fulfilling that wish. Finally, the findings of this study heighten the thorny question of immigrant allegiance and the social and cultural meaning of burial.

Returned youth migrants from the Gulf States is the focus of chapter 16. Here, Walter Nkwi examines the dynamics of female youths who have returned to Cameroon either voluntarily or who were repatriated without their accomplishing what had motivated them to leave the country. Nkwi questions the dynamics that led to their migration in the first place, the role played by recruiting agents and visa brokers in the migration process, the experiences of the migrants in the Gulf States, and their reasons for returning to Cameroon. The chapter also observes how these migrants are perceived by society and the state upon their return.

The conclusion by Julius Amin and Joseph Takougang focuses on the ongoing crisis that has plagued the Anglophone Northwest and Southwest regions that began with a strike by lawyers and teachers in October 2016, and the administration's apparent unwillingness to seriously address the grievances of citizens in both regions.

List of Acronyms

- AAC: All Anglophone Conference
AAU: Association of African Universities
ACHPR: African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights
ADAF: Appropriate Development for Africa Foundation
ADD: Alliance for Democracy and Development
AEF: *Afrique Equatoriale Francaise*
AFGRAD: African Graduate Fellowship Program
ANC: African National Congress
AOF: *Afrique Occidentale Francaise*
ASPAU: African Scholarship Program for American Universities
ATM: *Association de Transporteurs par Moto*
AU: African Union
BCA: Bamenda Co-operative Association
BCMA: Bamenda Co-operative Marketing Association
BEPC: *Brevet d'Etude du Premiere Cycle*
BIR: *Batallion d'Intervention Rapide*
BMM: *Brigades Mixtes Mobile*
BURECOM: *Bureau Charge des Relations Commerciales avec la Republique Populaire de Chine*
CAMCCUL: Cameroon Cooperatives Credit Union League
CAMWATER: Cameroon Water Utilities Corporation
CAPTAC: Cameroon Anglophone Parents and Teachers Association
CAR: Central African Republic
CATA: Cameroon Anglophone Teachers Association
CDC: Cameroon Development Corporation
CDU: Cameroon Democratic Union

- CED: Center for the Environment and Development
CEMAC: Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa/*Communaute Economique et Monetaire de L'Afrique Centrale*
CENAFOR: National Center for Forest Development
CFA: *Communauté Financière Africaine*
CHADWET: Chad Wetlands Initiative
CICAM: Cameroon Industrial Cotton Processor
CIG: Common Initiative Group
CITES: Convention on International Trade and Endangered Species of Wild Life, Fauna and Flora
CNU: Cameroon National Union
COBAC: Central African Banking Commission
COMIFAC: Conference of Ministers in Charge of Forests in Central Africa
CONAC: National Anti-corruption Commission
COS: Close of Service
CPAC: *Caise Populaire pour l'Agriculture et Commerce*
CPDM: Cameroon People's Democratic Movement
CPNC: Cameroon Peoples National Congress
CRM: Cameroon Renaissance Movement
CUC: Cameroon United Congress
DHS: Department of Homeland Security
DLP: Diversity Lottery Program
DOs: Divisional Officers
DRC: Democratic Republic of Congo
ECCAS: Economic Community of Central African States/*Commonaute Economique des Etats de L'Afrique Centrale*
ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States
ELECAM: Elections Cameroon
ENAM: National School of Administration and Magistracy
ENSPT: *Ecole Normale Supérieure des Postes et Télécommunications*
ESOCAM: *Evolution Sociale Camerounaise*
ESSTIC: *École Supérieure des Sciences et Techniques de l'Information et de La Communication*
FAR: *Force d'Action Rapide*
FIFA: Federation of Association Football
FOCAC: Forum on China-Africa Cooperation
FODIS: *Fonds Commun d'Investiment du Sud*
FONADER: National Fund for Rural Development/*Fonds National de Développement Rural*
FPUP: *Front Populaire pout l'Unite et la Paix*
FRELIMO: Front for the Liberation of Mozambique

- GCE: General Certificate of Education
GPC: *Groupe de Progressistes Camerounaise*
GTZ: German Agency for Technical Corporation
HCVs: High Conservation Values
ICCPR: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICJ: International Court of Justice
INBO: International Network of Basin Organizations
INE: Institute of National Education
INJS: *Institut National de la Jeunesse et des Sports*
INS: Immigration and Naturalization Services
IOM: International Organization for Migration
IPAR: Institute for Rurally Applied Pedagogy
IRAD: *Institut de Recherche Agricole pour le Developpement.*
IRIC: International Relations Institute of Cameroon
ISIL: Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ITCZ: Inter-tropical Convergence Zone
LBA: Licensed Buying Agents
LCB: Land Consultative Board
MC2: *Mutuelle Communautaire de Croissance*
MDP: Movement for Democracy and Progress
MDR: Movement for the Defense of the Republic
MFI: Microfinance Institutions
MIDENO: *Mission de Developpement de la Province du Nord Ouest*
MINEF: Ministry of Environment and Forestry
MINFA: Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MINEPDED: Ministry of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable
Development
MINFED: Micro Finance for Development
MINFOF: Ministry of Forest and Wildlife
MJTF: Multinational Joint Task Force
MRC: Cameroon Renaissance Movement
NAB: National Archives Buea
NAs: Native Authorities
NBSAP: National Biodiversity Strategy Action Plan
NCOPA: National Coordination of Opposition Parties and Association
NDI: National Democratic Institute
NEC: National Executive Committee
NEO: National Election Observatory
NFAP: Cameroon National Forestry Action Program
NGOs: Non-Governmental Organizations

NIS-CAM: National Investment and Savings-Cameroon
 NPMB: National Produce Marketing Board
 NRMs: New Religious Movements
 NTFPs: Non-Timber Forest Products
 NUDP: National Union for Democracy and Progress
 NWCA: North West Co-operative Association
 NWDA: North West Development Authority
 OAU: Organization of African Unity
 OIF: International Organization of Francophone States
 ONADEF: *Office National de Développement des Forêts*
 ONAREF: National Reforestation Service
 PCV: Peace Corps Volunteer
 PMO: Produce Marketing Organization
 POWERCAM: West Cameroon Electric Power Company
 REDD: Reduction of Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
 SAGI: *Solidarite Agissante* (SAGI)/Active Solidarity
 SAPs: Structural Adjustment Programs
 SAWA: Elite Association of Peoples of the Coastal Areas
 SCAPO: Southern Cameroons People's Organization
 SCDP: *Societe Camerounaise des Depots Petroliers*
 SCNC: Southern Cameroons National Council
 SCPC: Southern Cameroons Peoples Conference
 SCPC-NA: Southern Cameroons Peoples Conference-North America
 SDF: Social Democratic Front
 SED: Small Enterprise Development
 SEDOC: *Service des Etudes et de la Documentation*
 SELC: Secondary Education Leaving Certificate
 SDOs: Senior Divisional Officers
 SED: Small Enterprise Development
 SNC: Sovereign National Conferences
 SNEC: *Societe Nationale des Eaux du Cameroun*
 SNH: Societe Nationale des Hydrocarbures
 SONARA: *Societe Nationale de Raffinage*
 SWAPO: Southwest African Peoples Organization
 SYNES: National Syndicate of Teachers of Higher Education
 TAC: Cameroon Anglophone Teachers Association
 TOEFL: Test of English as a Foreign Language
 UC: *Union Camerounaise*
 UCCAO: *Union des Cooperativse de Café Arabica de l'Ouest*
 UDEAC: Customs & Economic Union of Central Africa
 UDEFEC: *l'Union Démocratique Femmes Camerounaises*

UDHR: Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNCCD: United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNCBD: United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity
UNDP: United Nations Development Program
UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNGA: United Nations General Assembly
UPC: *Union des Populations du Cameroun*
WCMB: West Cameroon Marketing Board
WCNU: Women Cameroon National Union
WCPDM: Women Cameroon Peoples' Democratic Movement
WIDF: Women's International Democratic Federation
WRI: World Resources Institute
WWF: World Wide Fund for Nature

Section 1

POLITICS

Chapter One

The State, Politics, and the Struggle for Democracy in Cameroon

Moses K. Tesi

INTRODUCTION

Politics in Cameroon, like Cameroonian society itself, has not been static since the independence of the former French trust territory in 1960 and its reunification with the former British Southern Cameroons in 1961. But the changes that both these elements have experienced have not been dramatic enough to completely transform lives in the country. Indeed, a more credible characterization of Cameroonian politics and society is to view them in terms of change and continuity. At the center of the continuity in the country's politics and society is the state. The Cameroonian state has been a retarding force in both the societal and political aspirations of Cameroon.

Politics has a universal attribute—that is, the decision that comes out of the political process is used to address problems in society. The state is the organizational structure within which political decisions are made in an independent territory. It has two constituent elements: society and government. Society is a collection of individuals who identify with each other based on certain common features or interests; government is the administering authority for society. Thus, the government and society of a territory constitute the state. While political scientists use various related definitions for politics (Dahl 1984; Hague et al. 2016), a straightforward way to view it is as the process that individuals in groups use in making decisions for the provision of public goods, a process that uses debate, bargaining, negotiations, and sometimes compromise. In other words, addressing various societal problems requires discussion. However, for such discussion to be meaningful, it must be freely carried out by individuals—either alone, in groups, or in media—and the discussion must be based on credible information, access to which must not be

hindered, and throughout which the rights of the individual are guaranteed. A state in which this takes place is what political scientists refer to as a liberal democracy, as opposed to an illiberal democracy in which individual participation in government takes place, but the process is not free, and rights are not guaranteed components (Zakaria 1997 and 2004). This distinction implies that politics does not take place in a vacuum. It takes place in groups or society, and the most important territorial society is the state. Political scientists consider the state to be the ultimate institution that regulates the use of force within its territory (Dahl 1984). The organization and activities of the state and various societal tendencies in the political process in Cameroon are the focus of this chapter.

The first part presents the formation of the Cameroonian state, its institutional setup in the immediate postindependence era, and the impact that this setup has had on politics and political outcomes in the country. The second part explains the erosion of democratic politics, the institution of personal rule, single-party politics, and the new political culture of fear, intimidation, and silence during the first three decades of independence under President Ahmadou Ahidjo and his successor Paul Biya. This section also assesses the role and impact that colonial experiences played in the development of the Cameroonian state and politics. Part three then examines the democratic challenge to the state, a challenge that comes in two phases; the first phase concerns the struggle during the 1990s, followed by the phase of developments during the first decade and a half of the twenty-first century. After dissecting that challenge, assessing the impact and outcome, and raising critical questions on why the democratic challenge failed to produce leadership change, the study ends in an examination of the ways ahead.

STATE FORMATION

State formation in Cameroon was a long, tedious, and often violent process. Although more than 250 ethnic groups inhabit the territory, it was European colonizers that laid the foundation of the modern Cameroonian state. Germany's acquisition of the territory at the 1884–1885 Berlin Conference was the first step in what eventually became the Cameroonian state. German control was terminated, however, in 1916 by British and French invasion, occupation, and partition after World War I. The colonial system, with its focus on serving the interests of the colonizers, caused much social, economic, and political disruption in the two territories even though there were differences in the level of such disruptions between them. Land seizures, the introduction of the cash economy, excessive taxation, the absence of political participation,

forced labor, social inequality, and the destruction of indigenous social and political institutions alienated Cameroonians from their colonizers and sowed the seeds for nationalism in each of the territories during the 1940s (Gardinier 1963). For instance, nationalism in French Cameroon was violent and bloody and resulted in the outlawing of the *Union des Populations du Cameroun* (UPC), which French colonial authorities accused of political violence (Gardinier 1963; Rubin 1971; Joseph 1977). The ban forced the UPC leadership underground—a leadership that included, among others, Um Nyobe, the Party Secretary General; Dr. Felix Moumie, its President; Earnest Ouandie, its Vice President; and Abel Kingue, President of the Youth Wing. From underground, they directed the party's struggle against French colonial rule and the demand for independence and reunification with the British Cameroons. The former French trusteeship gained independence on January 1, 1960, under Ahmadu Ahidjo's party, the *Union Camerounaise* (UC). Nationalism in the British Southern and Northern Cameroons was more peaceful, but the outcome in the two territories was different. In a United Nations-sponsored plebiscite on February 11, 1961, voters in the British Southern Cameroons, led by John Ngu Foncha's Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP), cast their votes overwhelmingly (233,571 for and 97,741 against) in favor of reunification with *La République du Cameroun*, the former French colony, which had gained its independence on January 1, 1960 (Joseph 1977; Le Vine 1964; Johnson 1970; Rubin 1971). For many Cameroonian nationalists, however, the formation of the Cameroonian state through the reunification was a bittersweet achievement because, in a similar United Nations-sponsored plebiscite, the British Northern Cameroons had decided to achieve independence by joining with Nigeria and not the newly independent *La République du Cameroun*/Republic of Cameroon.

POSTINDEPENDENCE INSTITUTIONAL SETUP AND POLITICS

Cameroon adopted a federal system of government under the 1961 Constitution drawn in the city of Foumban, in the Western Region of Cameroon. Under this constitutional arrangement, the former British Southern Cameroons became West Cameroon, while the Republic of Cameroon became East Cameroon. Each of the federated states had its own legislature, its own executive branch led by a prime minister, and its own judiciary based on its colonial heritage and the various customary laws of the various groups in the country. The legislature in West Cameroon was bicameral, made up of an elected House of Assembly and a non-elected House of Chiefs that included

paramount chiefs from the major ethnic groups. The federal structure of government was composed of a Federal Executive branch led by a president elected for a five-year term, a National Assembly, and a federal judiciary. The setup established French and English as the country's official languages. The school systems in each part used the colonial educational system and the language of instruction of their former colonizers—French for East Cameroon and English for West Cameroon. In fact, West Cameroon, the smaller of the two territories, had insisted on a federal system of government and bilingualism as guarantees that its Anglo-Saxon identity and way of life would be preserved and protected. Other provisions of the federal constitution ensured that if the president came from one of the federated states, the vice president must come from the other state (see, Part 3, Section 9 of the Federal Constitution) and that the French legal system would be maintained in East Cameroon, while the English legal system should function in West Cameroon.

The federal setup was replaced with a highly centralized unitary system in 1972. The new constitution abolished the state governments and their civil services in favor of a single system. It consolidated the president's power by giving him unfettered authority over the legislative and judiciary branches of government. It also stipulated no term limit for the president. The constitutional guarantee requiring shared executive rule at the highest level between Anglophone Cameroon and Francophone Cameroon, and forbidding the president and vice president from originating from the same federated state were both eliminated when the post of vice president was abolished after the 1972 Constitution came into effect. Above all, the way the constitutional change was initiated was inconsistent with the Anglophone tradition of consultation and debate on such important matters, as was the case under colonial rule on such key issues as the separation of the then British Southern Cameroons from Nigeria in 1961, and on the provision of regional status to Southern Cameroon in the Nigerian Federation in 1958 (Gardinier 1963; Le Vine 1964; Johnson 1970; Rubin 1971). In fact, the way the 1972 referendum was handled did not allow the various political tendencies in the country to debate the merits and demerits of the changes before giving citizens the opportunity to decide the outcome in a referendum. Instead, the president announced his intentions to Parliament and proceeded to organize the referendum. And although bilingualism remained the official government policy, it was in name only since the French language became the dominant vehicle for the administration and other governmental activities.

Despite dissatisfaction, especially in the former West Cameroon (Anglophone Cameroon) over the change from a Federal to a Unitary system—a dissatisfaction that was muted by the stringent control that the state exerted over society and whatever remained of politics—the Ahidjo government went

on to implement the provisions of the unitary constitution to the fullest. Indeed, what emerged was a highly centralized and controlled state in which the single official party, the Cameroon National Union (CNU), created in 1966 under Ahidjo's leadership, became synonymous with the state, with nothing in between to mediate and provide an alternative outlook. The party was synonymous with the state, and the state was synonymous with Ahidjo and those courtiers surrounding him who promoted the myth of him as "father of the nation." This phrase, "father of the nation," meant he knew it all and only he knew what was good for Cameroon. Richard Joseph (1977) likened Ahidjo's Cameroon to Gaullist France, referring to the highly centralized Fifth French Republic under Charles De Gaulle. The difference, however, was that under De Gaulle there were mediating forces, such as the media, trade unions, and civil society groups, as well as a credible electoral system that society could and did use to say no to De Gaulle when that was necessary. In Ahidjo's Cameroon, that was not the case, and he remained in power until his resignation in November 1982.

Under Paul Biya, the politics of personalism, centralization, and control continued throughout the 1980s. Centralization's effects included that of working to assimilate the Anglophone minority, as well as of steadily eroding key institutions and aspects of their identity, including the English language, their legal system and educational system, and the creative innovation that came with their governing themselves.¹ The Anglophone problem is not, however, the only identity problem in Cameroon. Several groups, the most prominent among them the Bamileke, also see themselves as the subject of excessive discrimination and political marginalization despite the relative size of their population and their significant part in the socioeconomic life of the nation.² But the Anglophone problem is far different from the others because it is the direct result of the unilateral abrogation of the legal framework and the agreement that the two parts of Cameroon had reached in the construction of the post-colonial state. Thus, while the Anglophone problem is part of a broader Cameroonian problem resulting from autocratic rule, its source makes it different from the other identity problems in the country.

Agitation for political change in the early 1990s, as will be discussed below, forced the government to liberalize politics and society and to revisit the nation's constitutional arrangement. Refusing to make any changes that would tamper with the centralized character of the system, the government chose to embark instead on cosmetic modifications. Prior to the 1996 Constitution, the president's term in office was five years, with no term limit. The 1996 constitution changed that to a seven-year term, renewable once. But in 2008, the constitution was again amended, eliminating presidential term limits and making it possible for the president to run for multiple terms.

The 1996 constitution had also made provisions for a bicameral legislature made up of a National Assembly and a Senate, and it had provisions as well for loosening up the highly-centralized nature of the state by decentralizing it into Regions. However, the changes that were introduced were, as previously noted, largely cosmetic. For instance, although decentralization was introduced in 2008, the government merely changed the names of the ten administrative divisions that the state was divided into; these divisions were no longer to be called Provinces, but Regions. Decentralization also devolved some revenue functions to local councils. Meanwhile, the Senate did not become operational until 2013. Meetings of the Assembly and Senate were required to take place three times a year, March–April, June–July, and November–December, with each session limited to thirty days. The short duration of the sessions diminished their effectiveness because of the limited time that members could put into the important legislative tasks of studying and debating bills before voting on them. Another handicap is the fact that the Assembly hardly carries out enough investigative or fact-finding functions, functions that modern legislatures depend on, such as conducting hearings on issues through testimonies to help them in their law-making functions besides question time with Ministers. Despite the constitutional provision for private member bills, the Assembly's rules make the sponsorship of such bills almost impossible. As of 2015—that is, twenty-five years since the rebirth of multiparty politics—only one such bill, a bill on rules Governing the Protection and Preservation of Water Catchment Areas, Watersheds and Wetlands in Cameroon, introduced by SDF member Cyprian Mabya Awudu, has successfully been passed by the chairs committee to the next level in the process for a hearing and vote. However, even this one bill was rejected on frivolous claims.³ The lack of success by individual members of the House of Assembly to introduce private member bills that make it through the Chairs Conference⁴ before being considered by the Assembly has been the result of such structural factors as the limitations placed by the constitution and the weak capacity of legislators in performing their job.

EROSION OF MULTIPARTY POLITICS: PERSONAL POLITICS AND POLITICAL DYNAMICS

Politics and political dynamics in postindependence Cameroon can best be understood in phases. During the immediate postindependence era, the political arena in Cameroon was sufficiently pluralistic to warrant being termed *democratic*. For instance, approval of the new constitution of *La République du Cameroun*, the former French territory that had gained its independence on

January 1, 1960, was approved in a referendum on February 21, 1960, with 60.03 percent of the votes cast supporting the new constitution while 39.97 percent voted against.⁵ Moreover, although Ahidjo’s UC won a decisive victory two months later in the 100-seat legislative election of April 1960, an election that saw a 69 percent turnout by the electorate, the various opposition parties also won seats (see Table 1.1). Table 1.1 also shows the regions where each party prevailed and the total number of seats it held in the legislature.

Although the 1960 constitutional referendum and the legislative election in the former French territory were competitive, this was more so in the Southern regions of the territory than in the North. That is because the electoral law had been manipulated in favor of Ahidjo’s UC. For instance, the government used two different electoral systems to conduct the 1960 legislative election as a means of guaranteeing that the UC would secure most of the seats it had won when it came to power in the December 1956 election. In fact, High Commissioner Jean Ramadier was transferred to Cameroon in 1958 with the goal of ensuring Ahidjo’s ascension to power (Krieger 2015; Joseph 1977). Upon his arrival, Ramadier told Ahidjo to ask members of his party who were in Mbida’s government to resign (Joseph 1977; Krieger 2015). This had the effect of bringing down the government and thus the ascension of Ahidjo to Prime Minister because his party was the largest in the Assembly. By design, France had also allowed East Cameroon to gain independence without a Constitution. In so doing, Ahidjo, who was already Prime Minister, automatically continued in power. His administration was also responsible for organizing the first postindependence legislative election, one that his party had to win

Table 1.1. *La Republique du Cameroun: First Legislative Election, April 1960*

<i>Party</i>	<i>Total Number of Votes</i>	<i>Percentage of Votes Cast</i>	<i>Number of Seats won by Each Party</i>	<i>Regions</i>
<i>Union Camerounaise (UC)</i>	606,000	45	51	North, East
<i>Front Populaire pour L’Unite et la Paix (FPUP)</i>	145,752	10.8	19	West
<i>Parti des Democats Camerounaise (PDC)</i>	139,780	10.36	12	Center
<i>Official Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC)</i>	151,379	11.22	8	West, SW
<i>Groupe des Progressistes Camerounaise (GPC)</i>	60,686	4.5	7	SW, Center
<i>Independent</i>	11,853	0.88	3	West, SW
<i>Others</i>	233,789	17	–	

Source: African Elections Database—Cameroon

in order for him to continue in power. In order to be successful, Ahidjo used the List System in the electoral process in the Northern Region, the Region that was the base of support for his UC party. For the Southern Region, he used the Single Member District Plurality system in each constituency. Based on the list system, the North was one electoral constituency. Accordingly, parties that contested for seats in the North had to come up with a single list of candidates, but the candidates were not tied to a district. Therefore, the party list that got the most votes would gain all the seats of the various districts of the Region. Through this electoral manipulation, the UC could use its overwhelming victory in districts where it had strong support to upset any low showings in districts where it had competition, thereby ensuring victory by winning all the seats from his home base in the North of the country. On the other hand, by subdividing the Southern Region into separate electoral districts to be represented by a single member, the ethnic bases of the parties ensured that no single party emerged with a large enough number of seats at the regional level to compete with the UC because different parties dominated the districts that made up their ethnic areas. In other words, because the UC was weak in the South, its ability to get the most seats in the Assembly was to ensure that opposition parties in the South contested among themselves, resulting in a split in the number of seats in the region.

In addition, because French colonial authorities were determined that Ahidjo should lead a postindependence Cameroon, new elections were not organized after the December 1956 legislative election to determine who would lead the country at independence.⁶ In fact, the 1956 election was contested on entirely different issues, including the new *Loi-Cadre* that gave limited self-government to the country, and on issues pertaining to French colonial practices and policies (Le Vine 1964, 157–163). By not holding elections until after independence, the French guaranteed Ahidjo's position as leader of an independent Cameroon. In fact, not only were French authorities determined that there would be no election to determine the level of support for Ahidjo as leader of an independent Cameroon, but they also allowed the country to gain independence without a Constitution. The result was that, while the Constitutional committee represented various districts of the country, Ahidjo used his appointment as prime minister to appoint members to the committee who were in favor of the type of constitutional arrangement that he wanted (Le Vine 1964, 184–188). And because the Assembly was also responsible for electing the President, UC's control of the Assembly assured its leader, Ahmadu Ahidjo, victory over any would-be competitors. As it turned out, the vote for president was not even close. Ahidjo was elected by eighty-nine votes, which was much higher than the fifty-one seats held by his party. By contrast, in the British Southern Cameroons, elections were held on all important issues

affecting the territory. For instance, Endeley and Foncha were compelled by the British to hold elections to solicit support in their demand for a separate region for Southern Cameroon. The same applied to the question of reunification with the Republic of Cameroon or with Nigeria. Meanwhile, the 1961 elections on December 30th in the West Cameroon House of Assembly also revealed that the process was competitive. The KNDP won 24 of the 37 seats, Cameroons Peoples' National Congress (CPNC) 10 seats, One Kamerun (OK) 1 seat, and the Independents 2 seats.⁷ The process for electing the President was changed during the March 1965 presidential election. The President was to be elected by popular sovereignty, not by the National Assembly as had been the case in 1960. In that latter situation, Ahidjo chose Foncha to run on a single ticket, with Ahidjo as President and Foncha as Vice President. And although issues of development, education, and infrastructures were the fundamental issues, the banned UPC party continued waging its armed struggle against the government on the basis that Cameroon was not independent because the government of Ahmadu Ahidjo was a French puppet who needed to be overthrown for Cameroon to gain real independence.

This UPC insurrection consumed the government's energy until 1970, when it was finally put down with the capture and execution of Ernest Quandie, the party's last leader. It also made Ahidjo less tolerant of dissenting views and of the motives of opposition parties. In the name of national unity, the government pursued members of opposition parties, co-opting them into the government, or arresting those who challenged the government's position on the subject. In 1962, it arrested a group of opposition leaders for challenging Ahidjo's call for a one-party system (LeVine 1964; Johnson 1970; Rubin 1971). These politicians, hereafter known as the Gang of Four, included Andrei Marie Mbida, former Prime Minister; Charles Okala, the one-time Foreign Minister; Dr. Marcel Bey Bey Eyidi; and Theodore Mayi Martip, leader of the Legal wing of the UPC. This Gang of Four had served in the government with Ahidjo, but were now considered threats to the country because they contended that the government's agenda for a one-party state was a step toward dictatorship (Le Vine 1964; Johnson 1970; Rubin 1971). They were ultimately tried and sentenced to long prison terms. Indeed, by early 1963, the pluralistic character of politics in East Cameroon had slowly been dismantled by President Ahidjo. Another example of the campaign against opponents or ambitious individuals who were viewed to be threatening was the arrest and trial of Victor Kamga, architect of the nation's postindependence economic policy. Kamga was Finance Minister and had provided vision to the country's economic strategy at independence. He was transferred to the Ministry of Information, which was not as prestigious—nor as challenging. Accused of circulating a pamphlet suggesting that he was demoted because he was about

to uncover improprieties by senior officials of the government, Kamga was tried, convicted, and sentenced to jail in 1968 (Rubin 1971).

Political pluralism remained in West Cameroon. However, in 1966, under pressure from Ahidjo, the various parties operating there—the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP), Cameroon Peoples National Congress (CPNC), and Cameroon United Congress (CUC)—fused with UC, the only party in East Cameroon to form the Cameroon National Union (CNU). With the merger, Cameroon officially became a one-party state, with the CNU as the only party allowed in the country. Additionally, various laws were passed that restricted individual freedom, freedom of association, and press freedom during the 1960s and 1970s. The state often justified these restrictions on grounds of protecting national unity. It also argued that the one-party system had not been imposed from the top but had been willed by the people. Yet, people's fear of the government's security forces, forces that were often on the lookout for opponents of the regime, created a political culture of acquiescence and resignation. The aforementioned Gang of Four and the Victor Kamga cases are testimony of this. Indeed, for more than two decades, politics in Cameroon centered around Ahmadu Ahidjo, who was perceived as "God" sent to Cameroonians.

POLITICS UNDER BIYA TO 1990

Politics under Biya could be divided into three periods: the period between November 1982 and April 1984, the period between April 1984 and 1990, and the period after 1990. The period between November 1982 and April 1984 marked the early phase of Biya's presidency. He had worked all his life close to Ahidjo and had held the key positions of Secretary General at the Presidency and Prime Minister (PM). While the Constitutional amendment of 1979 had designated the PM as the next in line to be president if there was a vacancy, Biya did not seem to be consumed by the prospect of that happening (Ejedepang-Koge 1985, 17). Consequently, Ahidjo's sudden resignation in November 1982 did not give Biya enough time to think about the presidency or to articulate an agenda or plan of action for his administration. In fact, during the early months of his presidency, Biya continued with Ahidjo's agenda and policies. Although he had implemented changes in his cabinet, he retained many of the cabinet members whom he had inherited. He also retained the CNU as the only party in the country. But unlike the situation under Ahidjo, Biya was Head of Government but not President of the CNU party. Ahidjo retained the position of President of the Party. Because of the blurred nature of the relationship between the party and the state under Ahi-

djo, Ahidjo's plan, as it later became evident, was to try to control the state from behind the scene (Ejedepang-Koge 1985, 18; Ntemfac 1983).

Biya's challenge was in trying to separate the role and function of the party from that of the state. For Ahidjo, the state existed merely to carry out policies defined by the party. As he put it at a press conference in April 1983, "the party defines and elaborates policy while the government applies and executes it" (Ntemfac 1983). Biya saw it differently: the state was separate from the party, the state defined its own agenda, and then the state proceeded to carry it out. From Biya's perspective, the state used the party merely as a mechanism to gain power and not to define policies. In other words, the task of the party ended when its leaders acquired power. The disagreement between the two men led Biya to be suspicious of Ahidjo, and in June of 1983, he dropped all members of his cabinet who were considered close to Ahidjo, including Prime Minister Bello Bouba Maigari (Ntemfac 1983). Bello Bouba was replaced by Luc Ayang as Prime Minister, but the post was then eliminated in December 1983. The cabinet reshuffle came only two days before the state visit of French president Francois Mitterrand. Mitterrand's response to Biya's welcome remarks came with Mitterrand's statement that, with Biya in power, he felt at home in Cameroon, a statement that was an apparent repudiation of Ahidjo and one that added fuel to fire (Ejedepang-Koge 1985, 18). Two months later, on August 22nd, Biya announced that a plot implicating Ahidjo to overthrow him had been foiled, and Biya moved rapidly with measures to consolidate power. An extraordinary Congress of the CNU party was held in September of 1983 during which Biya was elected party president (Ejedepang-Koge 1985, 19). Subsequently, in 1985, at its General Congress in Bamenda, the party's name was changed to the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM). Biya also abolished the post of Prime Minister and changed the name of the country from the United Republic of Cameroon to the Republic of Cameroon. In December 1983, he announced a new presidential election scheduled for January 1984 to seek his own mandate rather than continue to govern under his predecessor's mandate. He reorganized the military, creating an Armed Forces General Command. Continuing, he split the Northern province into three provinces and the Central South into two provinces (Ejedepang-Koge 1985, 18–21). Ahidjo had maintained the North province, the most populous in the country with 30 percent of the population, as a single administrative unit that he could mobilize for political support against his political opponents who were mainly from the Southern regions of Cameroon (see the earlier discussion on the 1960 election and the Gang of Four incident). Biya's calculation was that the split, and governmental resources that were associated with the provision of services at the level of provinces, would gain him support and good will from the people and from

the leaders in the new provinces. Moreover, in order to curry favor in the provinces where the foiled coup plotters came from, Biya also commuted their death sentences to various prison terms, including that of Ahidjo, who had been tried in absentia and given a death sentence (Ejedepang-Koge 1985; Randal 1984). His punishment was commuted to life imprisonment.

Despite the power consolidation measures, Biya did not have complete control of the system to secure his position. On April 6, 1984, just after his taking measures to consolidate power, the Republican Guard, the unit of the armed forces that provided presidential security and was commanded by Colonel Ibrahim Saleh, a fellow Northerner like Ahidjo, together with the complicity of some civilians, police, and gendarmes loyal to the former President, tried to overthrow Biya (Randal 1984). In fact, even though many members of the 1,500-strong Republican Guard were from Ahidjo's North province, Biya had made no attempt to replace them. This fact was not lost in the utterances of Minister of the Armed Forces Andze Tsoungui and Armed Forces Commander General Pierre Semengue, who stated that the coup was a Northern coup, even though Biya's public statement sought to unite the country by referring to the coup as not the work of a single region or religion (Randal 1984). The coup was brutally put down by paratroopers from various units outside Yaounde, and with this success Biya could now operate without challenge to his authority and legitimacy. Even though Biya had changed the party's name to the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) in 1985, Cameroon remained a one-party state until 1990, when a combination of factors, including a rapidly deteriorating economy, a frustrated and angry population unwilling to accept political subjugation anymore, and external pressure, forced Biya to engage in a process to introduce multiparty democratic reforms (Takougang and Krieger 1998; Djio n.d.).

THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY AND THE POLITICS OF CHANGE IN THE 1990S

As in Benin and other French-speaking African states, the various political parties, individuals, and civil society groups in Cameroon that were involved in the democratization process sought to achieve their objective through a Sovereign National Conference (SNC) that would establish a framework for democratic change and the mechanisms for realizing it through elections. The national conference would also appoint an interim government that would organize elections under the new framework. Biya refused the national conference route to democracy. Instead, he argued that elections rather than an SNC could bring about change. With pressure from activists, opposition

parties, university students, and civil society groups, the government used its power to stall, frustrate, manipulate, blackmail, and even punish pro-democracy activists for not going along with his plans for change, which was essentially change through controlled reforms. However, persistent protests and demonstrations ultimately forced the government to meet pro-democracy groups halfway. Although Biya would not agree to a national conference, he organized tripartite talks between the government led by Prime Minister Saidu Hayatou, various political parties, and civil society organizations. Among other things, the tripartite talks paved the way for a new constitution, the release of those who had been arrested during Ghost Towns strikes, and a lifting of the ban on human rights groups (Takougang and Krieger 1998). But even the reforms that were introduced were done incrementally, with each increment being the result of incessant pressure from pro-democracy groups. Thus, the agitations for democratization in Cameroon which began in 1990 continued through most of the decade.

Although the reforms introduced in 1990 brought about many changes, including a proliferation of political parties, civil society organizations, newspapers, press freedom and freedom of expression, they were insufficient and did not lead to genuine change. Of the more than forty political parties⁸ that emerged following the 1990 liberalization to challenge the ruling-CPDM, only the Social Democratic Front (SDF), the National Union for Democracy and Progress (UNDP), the *Union des Populations du Cameroun* (UPC), the Movement for the Defense of the Republic (MDR), and the Cameroon Democratic Union (CDU) had respectable followings through membership, as well as victories in legislative and municipal elections. However, according to Table 1.2 below, the number of seats held by opposition parties had decreased significantly since the 1992 multiparty legislative elections when

Table 1.2. Legislative Elections: Number of Seats Won by Parties 1992–2013

<i>Party</i>	1992	1997	2002	2007	2013
<i>CPDM</i>	88	116	149	153	148
<i>SDF</i>	–	43	22	16	18
<i>UNDP</i>	68	13	1	6	5
<i>UDC</i>	–	5	5	4	4
<i>MDR</i>	6	1	0	0	1
<i>UPC</i>	18	1	3	0	3
<i>MRC</i>	–	–	–	–	1
<i>MLJC</i>		1			
<i>MP</i>				1	
<i>Total</i>	180	180	180	180	180

Source: African Elections Database—Cameroon.

the ruling-CPDM won 88 seats, compared to 68 seats for the UNDP, 18 seats for the UPC, and 6 seats for the MDR. The SDF, the largest opposition party at the time, refused to participate in the elections.

The same is true for presidential elections, as Table 1.3 shows. In the 1992 Presidential election, John Fru Ndi (SDF) got 35.97 percent of the votes cast, against Biya's 39.98 percent, while Bouba Bello (UNDP) got 19.22 percent. The 1992 presidential election was a special case, however, because most international observers believed that John Fru Ndi, leader of the SDF, won the contest; but when the official result was announced, he was declared the loser (see report by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs 1993). Because Fru Ndi, Ndam Njoya, and Bello Bouba boycotted the 1997 presidential elections, Biya got 92.57 percent of the votes cast. The lopsided victory by Biya was repeated in the 2004 and 2011 elections. Legislative and municipal elections followed a similar losing trend for opposition parties.

In fact, as early as 1997, Paul Biya's CPDM party controlled the National Assembly, the Executive, and over two-thirds of the local governments. In terms of raw numbers, the ruling CPDM party controlled around 223 local councils after the 1996 local government election, while the combined opposition parties controlled 104 councils.⁹ However, opposition-controlled local governments were councils of the major cities and economic centers—Douala, Bafoussam, Bamenda, Garoua, Nkongsamba, Garoua—and many medium-sized cities across the country, except in the South, Center, and Eastern provinces.¹⁰

Another dynamic that came out of the election was the ethno-regional character of the results that reflected the leadership of the different parties. For instance, the ruling CPDM victories were mostly in rural councils and in councils in the East, Center, and South provinces where the party's leader and President of the country, Paul Biya, was from. By contrast, the SDF, whose leader was Fru Ndi, an Anglophone and himself from the Grand West consisting of the four western provinces, carried the two Anglophone prov-

Table 1.3. Presidential Elections, 1992–2011 (Votes by Percentage)

<i>Name of Candidates</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>1992</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2011</i>
Biya	CPDM	39.98	92.57	70.92	77.99
Fru Ndi	SDF	35.97	–	17.40	10.71
Bello Bouba	UNDP	19.22	–	–	–
Ndam Njoya	UDC	3.62	–	4.48	1.73
Hogbe Ndlend	UPC	–	2.5	–	–
Samuel Eboa	MDP	–	2.44	–	–
Garga Haman	ADD	–	–	3.74	3.21

– Candidate did not run that year

Source: African Elections Database—Cameroon

inces (Northwest and Southwest) and the remaining Francophone Littoral and Western provinces, which also contained most of the country's large economic centers. A similar ethno-regional dynamic continued to play in the three Northern provinces, where Bello Bouba Maigari was a native son, and whose UNDP party carried the councils in the major commercial centers. Opposition control of municipal councils in the country's major cities and economic centers did not, however, translate into control over municipal policies and finances. The government used a combination of antiquated laws that existed during the period of one-party rule, complemented by pressure from the so-called natives of the soil elite population to appoint government delegates (i.e., Administrators) to run the major cities that were under opposition party control (Musa 1996).¹¹ The SDF party's victory in Douala, the country's economic powerhouse, gave the party control over five of the city's six local government councils (Vubo 2006), all of which were now under SDF mayors of Bamileke origin, a reflection of the large numbers of Bamileke in the party and in Douala. This prompted angry reaction from Douala elite, who saw such control as an example of the hegemonic goals of the Bamileke, who already controlled economic activities in the city and were now extending such control into politics (Vubo 2006).

But whether the reason all five mayors were elected was because they were Bamileke or because the Doualas that contested the election did not belong to the SDF is unclear. What is clear is that the election victory created another fallout in Cameroon's often contentious democratization process in diametrically opposite directions. Sawa chiefs wrote Biya complaining about non-indigenes serving as mayors in their city, a factor that indicated that the indigenes' hospitality was taken for granted. They explained to Biya that such acts threatened national unity (Vubo 2006). Meanwhile, within the SDF itself, a crisis arose concerning their victory and control in Douala. The party came down on the side of Douala indigenes against Bamileke officials of the party, whom the party found not to be adhering to party positions and directives requiring indigenes to lead in their areas of origin. In one case in July of 1996, Vubo notes that a banker of Bamileke origin was dismissed from his position of deputy coordinator of the Littoral branch of the SDF for his antiparty activities. When the banker's supporters traced the dismissal to the coordinator, who was a Sawa, he was reminded that he held his post because of Bamileke votes in a predominantly Bamileke district. The reminder prompted the indigene Sawa Coordinator to ask his Sawa brethren to stop the anti-Bamileke activities (Vubo 2006). In another case, Souob Lazare, of Bamileke origin and one of the five SDF mayors elected during the 1996 local government election in Douala, was asked by the SDF party hierarchy to give up his position to Mpeh Elie, a Bassa, one of the Sawa indigene groups

in Douala. The SDF hierarchy argued that the victory was for the party, and so mayoral positions of the five councils should be divided such that two go to Bamilekes, and one each to a Douala, a Bassa, and an Anglophone (Guini 2004). When Souob Lazare refused to step down and hand his position to Mpeh Elie, the party expelled him (Guini 2004). The SDF later accused Souob Lazare—whose district was majority Bamileke—of tribalism. Souob Lazare responded that he was putting his constituency's interest first as he was elected by the people and should represent them.¹²

Whether it was taking advantage of the ethnic tensions brought to the surface in the city between indigenes and Bamilekes, or within the SDF resulting from its victory, or whether it was reacting to its own losses in the election, the Biya government appointed government Delegates in ten of the country's major cities where the CPDM had lost. The government also appointed financial officials that were answerable to the Government Delegates rather than the elected mayors or councils. Thus, the Government Delegates and not the mayor of the city councils sanctioned the release of funds for municipal projects.¹³ This left many of the opposition-controlled local governments unable to carry out needed projects because the government used the release of such funding as punishment against local governments in opposition strongholds. That was the case in Bamenda and the city of Bafoussam, once the third largest city in Cameroon, which suffered politically motivated, socioeconomic neglect since it had been a stronghold of SDF support, especially in the early 1990s.¹⁴

POLITICS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 21ST CENTURY: CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

Until the main impediments to genuine political change in Cameroon are removed, the prospects for democracy remain bleak for the twenty-first century. Such impediments have varied depending on the period, particular areas of the country, and circumstances of the democratization process. During the 1990s, for instance, different forms of electoral manipulation, abuse, and dishonesty were employed by the regime to ensure its continued hold on power. The first and most blatant of electoral frauds occurred in the 1992 presidential election when John Fru Ndi, leader of the opposition SDF, was perceived by many observers—including representatives from the US-based National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), who had been sent to monitor the democratization process in Cameroon—confirmed that Fru Ndi had indeed been deprived of victory (Takougang and Krieger 1998, 149). A second tactic the government used was to appoint Government Delegates to administer large cities that were opposition strongholds, as previously noted. This enabled the

government to ignore the elected mayors of the cities, who were for the most part members of the opposition parties, by engaging directly in local matters, partly to entice them to its side for control purposes and to foster the perception that it [government] was indispensable when it came to the provision of public goods. In yet another tactic aimed at neutralizing opposition parties, Biya carved out new administrative districts for his supporters in order to ensure that his party gained seats in opposition strongholds. For example, the former Mifi department in the Western province that included Bafoussam, the provincial capital, was split into three departments: Mifi, Koung-Khi, and Hauts Plateaux. Under this new arrangement, Bafoussam, a stronghold of the SDF and opposition politics, was split from the other two districts of the department that had rallied around their leading elite, businessman Victor Fotso in Koung-Khi, and Augustin Kontchou Koumegni in Hauts Plateaux. The two men were members of the CPDM and staunch supporters of Paul Biya. In yet another case, shortly before the 1997 elections, in the Diamare Division in the Far North province of the country, the government created new constituencies without some opposition parties knowing about the changes.¹⁵

Additionally, throughout the 1990s, the regime also encouraged the creation of new opposition parties by providing financial support to anybody who was interested in creating a party. By creating as many opposition parties as possible, the regime hoped to forestall the emergence of a single strong opposition party, while also increasing its chances of victory in elections.¹⁶ That was the case prior to the 1992 legislative election. In an effort to have as many opposition parties as possible participating in the election, the administration offered FCFA \$500 Million to each party that participated in the election. The money did the trick. The UNDP with Bello Bouba Maigari as its president, the Kodock faction of the UPC, and the MDR led by Dakole Diassala took the money and participated in the election (Mbah-Ndam 2015). Although the SDF had refused to participate in the elections, the fact that the three other major opposition parties participated in the elections diluted opposition support and increased the chances of victory by the ruling CPDM (see Table 1.2 on the result of the 1992 legislative elections).

The absence of transparency in the organization and in the conduct of elections was another factor. This was partly because a government agency, the Ministry of Territorial Administration, was responsible for organizing elections, and also partly because employees of the Ministry who worked on elections were often pressured by their superiors to ensure that election outcomes favored the ruling party (Takougang 1993). The Ministry employed any combination of tactics, including the process of compiling and revising the electoral register, determining the location of polling stations, or stuffing ballot boxes, to assure victory for the ruling party (Takougang 1993).¹⁷

In other cases, the CPDM used public media to get its message out without giving equal time to opposition parties. The state also used the tactic of collectively punishing and intimidating districts, communities, or regions considered opposition strongholds by withholding public funds for development in such areas (Takougang 1993).

Associated with the practice of withholding public goods from opposition strongholds was the misuse of the government's taxing power to attain political gains. The practice started during the strikes of 1991, known as Operation Ghost Towns, and continued throughout the 1990s against businessmen who were sympathetic to the opposition.¹⁸ In response to the situation, the government doubled the taxes to be paid by many of the businesses. It also conducted audits during which it came up with back taxes that the business owner allegedly owed the government.¹⁹ Along the same lines, there were a series of arsons in markets located in the strongholds of the ruling party, including Mbalmayo, Ebolowa, and Sangmelima (Djio n.d.; Rupert 1997). The victims of the fires were mainly Bamileke shop owners who were generally perceived to be supporters of the opposition parties. Although the government promised to investigate the incidents and issue its findings, no report was published. The effects of electoral manipulation and intimidation were evident by the late 1990s, especially in the Western, Southwest, Littoral, and the Grand North provinces that were once strongholds of various opposition. By 2000, for example, many of the elected mayors in some of the major municipalities in the Western province, including Victor Fotso in Bajoun, Joseph Defosso Kadji of Bana, Paul Wamba of Nkong-Zem, and Jean Nylord Kuete in Mbouda, were billionaire businessmen who were also staunch supporters of the CPDM. Altogether, opposition parties controlled only ten of the forty-one mayors in the Western province by 2000.²⁰

The decline in support for opposition parties was also reflected in the ratio of the votes they received in subsequent elections. During the 1992 presidential elections, for instance, Fru Ndi of the SDF got 1,066,602 or 35.9 percent of the votes cast, while President Biya got 1,185,466 or 39.98 percent of the votes. The other two opposition party leaders, Bouba Bello Maigari of the UNDP and Ndam Njoya of the UDC got 569,887 or 19.22 percent and 107,411 or 3.65 percent, respectively.²¹ Although the SDF, UDC, and UNDP did not contest the 1997 presidential elections, they contested the 2004 and 2011 elections. However, as shown in Table 1.3, the percentage of votes received by the SDF and UDC in each of the elections decreased significantly from what they had received in 1992. The same was true for the legislative elections in which the CPDM also increased its margin of victory since its narrow victory in the highly competitive 1992 elections. Many foreign observers agreed with the assertion of many Cameroonians that these victories

by the ruling-CPDM could be associated with election irregularities by the regime (Rupert 1997; Wache and Mbunwe 2004).

Indeed, because of the large margin of CPDM victories in these elections, the government was reluctant to address many of the electoral problems, including restriction to media access, campaign financing, multiple voting, creation of an independent electoral commission to organize and manage elections, voter registration, location of polling stations, and other forms of electoral fraud, all issues that had been introduced in order to diminish the effectiveness of the opposition parties (Ni John Fru Ndi 1997). However, in order to mollify the opposition, the regime often took half-hearted corrective measures, but it often delayed their implementation until convenient for it to do so. That was the case with the establishment of the electoral commission that would have taken over control of the electoral process from the Ministry of Territorial Administration, especially since establishing such a commission would have transferred the electoral process from the regime to an independent body. The failure to make the change was the main reason that some opposition parties (see Table 1.3) boycotted the 1997 presidential election on grounds that, without an independent electoral commission to organize and manage the elections, the government would steal victory just as it had done in the 1992 presidential election. As discussed earlier, despite the boycott, the government went ahead with the election without serious and credible challenges.

In 2000, the government reluctantly created the National Election Observatory (NEO), a body that merely served as an observatory and supervisory body but was not charged with organizing elections as the opposition parties had demanded. In 2006 the president signed a law finally creating an independent electoral commission called Election Cameroon (ELECAM). By 2008, when the Commission became operational, the CPDM was in complete control of all major political institutions in Cameroon, including the presidency, the legislature, and most of the major municipalities in the country.²² Its control was so complete that, even if elections were conducted fairly and freely, it would have been difficult for the opposition to make any significant political inroads in the legislative assembly. In short, by the end of the twentieth century, Cameroon had become a dominant party state.²³

OPPOSITION PARTIES IN CAMEROON'S STALLED DEMOCRATIZATION

The role of opposition parties in Cameroon's failed democratization should not be treated lightly, even as the context in which they operated made their

efforts more difficult. Even though Biya and his collaborators must bear the brunt of the responsibility for the type of politics that exists in Cameroon, the reality is that opposition parties and other elements of society have not been bystanders. The responsibilities of the opposition parties should be assessed from the perspective of what they did or did not do to give Biya and his collaborators the opportunity to do as they did. It is true that opposition parties and other civil society forces could do only so much against an autocrat that had the resources and had no hesitation to use such resources to do all it took to stay in power. This was the case during the height of the Ghost Towns' strikes when Biya resorted to governing the country via military governors in the provinces (now Regions).

The main criticism of the opposition parties pertains to their own crisis of internal governance, including ethno-regionalism and crisis management. Cameroon's parties are largely ethnically based. The persistence of Biya's being in power was because when the country mounted the effort to get rid of him in the early 1990s, the three provinces that shared a lot more culturally with him (South, Center, and East) doggedly supported him. At the same time, he used his control over the state to sow further division among the other regions and groups. He did so by engaging in collective punishment, such as withholding development monies for provinces and municipalities that did not vote for CPDM (Djio n.d., 25).²⁴ At the same time, he rewarded people from the three regions that formed the base of his support with powerful Ministerial positions and more development projects.²⁵ Takougang has analyzed the ethnic basis of the elections in Cameroon during this time, and he has shown the depth of ethno-regional voting pattern (Takougang 1992).

The mobilization of ethnic identities through cultural symbols and elite associations, and even through constitutional language such as *indigenous* and *minorities*, made an issue-based politics much too difficult to dissect in the country. In many ways, as the democratization process increasingly became challenging to the state in the 1990s, state officials moved to fight the battle for control of the political process along symbolic cultural identities—between the “us” and “them” in terms of whom they saw as the problems. Ethnic labels like Nordiste, Essigan, SAWA, and Anglo-Bami, labels that had been dormant during one-party rule, were used to wedge in issues for political gains, separating supporters of the state from so-called troublemakers, and strangers—those who did not support Biya and the CPDM and did not belong where they were. For those from regions where Biya enjoyed strong support, including the South, Central, and Eastern regions, the term *traitor* was used not only to describe them, but also to make them stand out and perhaps be shamed by the rest. The so-called troublemakers were also the ones who were the target of the requirements in municipal politics

that chairs of local or municipal councils must be indigenes or the so-called sons of the soil and not the strangers (Djio n.d., 22). Because the source region of most internal immigrants in the country was disproportionately the Western, Northwest, and the three Northern regions, and their destination the Littoral, Southwest, Center and South regions, there was little doubt that the target of such requirements were Cameroonians from the sourced regions. With ethno-regionalism in voting behavior, the requirement was to ensure that indigenes who were outnumbered in their areas of origin continued to retain power in their districts. But it was also to ensure that the CPDM would control executive functions in districts with large unsupportive populations since people from other parts of the country referred to as “strangers” tended to be opposition supporters. Ignoring such issues, as the opposition parties largely did, made electoral contests far more superficial on one hand, and on the other hand, the requirement led to the abandonment of basic elements of every state: its citizenry and the rights that comes with citizenship. The government in that case saw some as citizens and others as noncitizens since, for political reasons, they could not hold certain positions in parts of the country.

The situation shows how complex the political landscape is on dealing with ethno-regionalism. Success at the polls therefore also requires that ethno-regional concerns be understood and managed through articulating policies that stress inclusiveness. The opposition parties’ own practices of inclusive politics were not much better than the practices of the government. Top leadership positions of the various parties have been held by the same persons who founded or were founding presidents. Ethno-regional distribution of meaningful top leadership positions has been uneven and has favored people from regions of the founders of the parties. To project an image of inclusiveness, the parties create several deputy positions, which they dish out along ethno-regional lines to attract a following from people of other regions and ethnicity. But it is not clear how successful the approach of inclusive leadership via deputy positions has been. A bolder approach at inclusive leadership would be policies that enable members from other regions than the region where the leader of the party is from to lead the party as well, seeing what results such an approach brings (*Cameroon Tribune*, April 16, 2016).

The saying that “a house divided against itself cannot stand” is nowhere better exemplified than in Cameroon’s opposition politics. The opposition in Cameroon politics is so weak in internal governance, with minor conflicts within the parties tending to splinter them. In fact, because political parties are generally a collection of individuals, groups, and various interests, internal disagreements are normal. But the fact that such disagreements often lead to divisions and breakups within a party suggests that the principles and vision that had brought the groups together in the first place is not strong

enough to withstand personality conflicts, ambition, or weak internal regulatory mechanisms. Various Cameroonian parties that started up strong, reflecting the spirit of coming together for a common political good, failed to live up to that spirit. In the process, they became too divided and weak to take on the government. None of the major political parties have been spared this predicament. For example, the UNDP whose founders represented the diversity of the country, split in 1992 before the party could engage the regime. The split was partly an issue of ambition and ego, but it crystallized also into a North-South issue: Samuel Eboua from the Mungo Department in Littoral brought Southerners into the party, while Bouba Bello Maigari from Garoua in the North brought in Northerners. Eboua, a former Minister under Biya and former Secretary General in the presidency under Ahidjo, had nurtured the party during its founding in February 1991, when Bouba Bello Maigari was still in exile. However, upon his return from exile, Bouba Bello Maigari was elected president of the party by the majority Northerners at the Party's Congress in Garoua in January 1992. Eboua reacted by quitting the party in protest and went on to organize his own party, the Movement for Democracy and Progress (MDP). Further splits in UNDP instigated by the award of Ministerial positions by Biya to certain members further weakened the party, at the same time expanding CPDM and Biya's access to some important Northern districts.

Similar splits happened in the UPC even as far back as the 1960s between the Bassa and the Bamileke wings. In the 1990s, with the birth of democratization, the party split between Fredrick Kodock's and Henri Hogbe Ndlend's wings under the chairmanship of Ndeh Ntumanjah. Kodock, who was General Secretary, was expelled from the party due to the party's poor performance in the January 1996 municipal elections (Europa World Year Book 1998, 787). But rather than accepting the party's decision, Kodock continued his claim as the Secretary General, which resulted in a split between the legitimate wing of the party and Kodock's followers. These divisions expanded and strengthened the ruling CPDM. Ambition, trust, personality, and philosophical conflicts have also weakened the SDF even more, leading to several expulsions and resignations from the party, including its first Secretary General Siga Asanga, followed by Tazoacha Assonganyi and Elizabeth Tamanjong and other expulsions (Belibi 2015). In a similar way, Saidou Maidadi Yaya, former First Vice President of the party, Pierre Kwemo, former Vice President of the National Assembly, Bernard Muna, Edith Kahbang Walla, and others left the party and either formed their own parties or, as in the case of Saidou Maidada Yaya, joined another opposition party, the UNDP (*Cameroon Tribune*, April 16, 2016).²⁶ Other officials, including Pierre Kwemo, who became the mayor of Bafang, Bernard Muna,

and Kahbang Walla formed their own parties. These incidents made it difficult for opposition parties to concentrate on the key issues facing the country, instead spending their energies on dealing with internal squabbles. The splits also reduced rather than increased party loyalty among members, a factor that is crucial for electoral victory. Such splits in opposition parties, together with some of the aforementioned factors, only worked to weaken them further in their struggle to dislodge the ruling party. The net effect of opposition parties' weaknesses was the doubts such weaknesses sowed in peoples' minds about the credibility and trustworthiness of the various opposition parties, with the result being that the ruling CPDM's own efforts at winning disaffected opposition supporters in the 2000s were more successful than had been the case in the early to mid-1990s. For some Cameroonians, fatigue had set in to such an extent within their political calculations on the struggle for change that they gave up on political opposition and reluctantly accepted the ruling party, just to carry on. As one former activist now residing in Strasburg, France, told this author, "Biya does not want us because we were asking for change, so we have left the country for him to do as he pleases."²⁷ Of course many people who did not leave the country simply went along with the CPDM, not only because the opposition had disappointed them, but also because that was the only way to survive in the system. For example, a businessman on his way from Bafoussam to Dschang, where he had a contract to run the University of Dschang's Food Services in February 2002, explained that he was a CPDM committee member in Bafoussam where he had other businesses. He said his heart was with the SDF, but to be able to survive as a businessperson, he had to become a CPDM member. He also indicated that, if he did not join the CPDM, the government might come after him by concocting business taxes,

Table 1.4. Declining Performance of the SDF in National Assembly Elections in the Northwest Region

Year	Total Seats Won Nationally	Total Seats in Northwest	Seats Won by The SDF	%
1997	43	20	19	95
2002	22	20	19	95
2007	16	20	11	55
2013	18	20	13	65

Source: African Elections Database-Cameroon.

IPU PARLINE database: Cameroon (Assemblée nationale:

Cameroon Government Releases "Preliminary Election Results, July 24, 2007.

Armand Essogo, Premières Tendances Favorables au RDPC, *Cameroon Tribune*, Yaounde, 24/07/2007; Political Parties; Fai Cassian Ndi, Municipal/Legislative Elections: Here are the Stakes, Implications, Outsiders, Favorites and Sure Bets in NW, *The Eye Newspaper*, Thursday August 1, 2013.

backdating them and levying such taxes against his businesses.²⁸ And there have been other business leaders who became militants of the ruling CPDM in order to establish connections that would shield their businesses from taxes or duties, and enable them to operate without harassment.²⁹

Another government employee, someone who was running to be a Councilor in the Galim subdivision of the Western Region during the 2013 Municipal election, when asked why he was running as a CPDM member, said he could not run as an opposition candidate because he did not want to be transferred to the Far North region.³⁰ But while government's own actions siphoned off public support from opposition parties, the latter did not give sufficient reasons why people should support them after the heydays of the 1990s. Consequently, practical survival issues for many people became real and seemed to translate to votes.

This was the case in legislative and municipal elections in the Northwest region. Even though the region maintained its support for the SDF, the party experienced an erosion of its support and the number of seats that it won in the 1990s and early 2000s decreased in the 2007 and 2013 legislative elections (see Table 1.4). The region showed a similar trend in municipal elections. For instance, while the SDF won 26 (76.4 percent) of the 34 council in the region in the 2002 municipal elections, it won only 16 (47 percent) in the 2007, and 15 (44.1 percent) in the 2013 elections. Meanwhile, the CPDM increased its victory from 53 percent in 2002 to 55.8 percent in 2013.³¹ In other words, by corrupting members of the opposition parties through bribes and other incentives, the CPDM was able to maintain whatever support it had in the region while simultaneously splitting allegiance to the SDF.

Because the country is a highly centralized Presidential system without any checks, and because since the 1997 legislative election the ruling CPDM party has controlled the National Assembly with an overwhelming majority, a coalition government has been destructive rather than contributive to democracy—or to policy initiatives. Because the CPDM party had not won a governing majority of seats in the 1992 legislative election, it could only govern by going into a coalition with another party. The coalition it formed with the MDR party was thus a necessary arrangement. However, since the 1992 coalition, the government has controlled the legislature by very large margins and can now govern and pass legislation without support from opposition parties. And yet, despite its legislative advantage, the government has included members of the opposition in the cabinet, ostensibly as a way to splinter the opposition parties still further. In fact, one reason why some members of the opposition (the UPC, NUDP, and MDR, for example) have been all too willing to join the administration is more out of the desire for personal gains by the party leadership than in the thought that they would affect policy. Indeed,

Biya's success in bringing some opposition party officials into the government revealed their quest for wealth and power rather than their commitment to party convictions and principles.

Opposition parties in Cameroon also faced problems of transparency and internal dissent. For nearly a quarter of a century, most of the opposition parties, including Fru Ndi (SDF), Bouba Bello Maigari (NUDP), and Adamu Ndam Njoya (UDC), are still led by the same leaders that founded the parties in the early 1990s. Democratic politics holds that leaders must always give way to new leaders; that way the party is always revitalized with new leadership and with new ideas and approaches to accomplish the goals of the party.³² In the case of the SDF, those who have challenged Fru Ndi's leadership have often been expelled from the party (Krieger 2008). That these parties have remained under the same leadership for so long has led some critics to question how these leaders can claim the mantle of change, if, like Biya, who has been in office for more than three decades, they themselves have retained power through undemocratic means.

Another reason for the stagnation of politics in the country is the failure of opposition parties to coalesce behind a single leader in presidential elections. In the 1992 Presidential election, for instance, the combined votes received by Fru Ndi, Bouba Bello, and Ndam Njoya was 58.84 percent. At a time when the country was clamoring for change, that percentage would have made it difficult for Biya's CPDM to steal the election result *if* the opposition had united behind a single candidate. Although an attempt was made to unite the oppositions during the 2004 presidential election, the effort fizzled because of the unrealistic conditions that were proposed in order to establish a single opposition candidate to run against President Biya. One of the critical issues was the suggestion that the selected candidate be bilingual in English and French. This criterion appeared to have been a veiled attempt to exclude Fru Ndi, who, despite not being bilingual, was the leader of the SDF, the largest opposition party in the country. Fru Ndi subsequently withdrew from the effort and ultimately ran under his party's banner. This event clearly demonstrated the shortsightedness of the opposition parties, which has clearly not served them well.

Another weakness of the opposition parties has been in the lack of a clear political platform for the country. Besides the euphoria of the early 1990s that galvanized popular support for the opposition, the opposition parties have been unable to articulate a clear vision and direction for the country if Biya is replaced. Simply chanting that "Biya Must Go," as was the case in the early 1990s, turned out not to be a convincing reason for change. In fact, after failed attempts in the 1990s, there seemed to be resignation in the country that there is nothing that the opposition can do, and that Biya may not be such a bad leader

after all. Many Cameroonians apparently would prefer the devil they know in Biya to the devil they do not know in the opposition. Still another weakness of the opposition parties since the height of the democratic movement in the 1990s is the fact that these parties are active only when elections are approaching. In other words, they seem to go dormant and do not actively recruit members to the party or articulate sustained and coherent policies on important issues affecting the country. For example, they have not been persistent at challenging the country's electoral system, a system that allows a president to be elected with a minority rather than a majority of the votes cast; in which case, a second round of voting would be required where the election of the president must be based on winning at least 50 percent plus one vote. The UDC's attempts through a private member bill in the National Assembly to change the electoral law by introducing second rounds of voting went nowhere, yet the party has not made it a more prominent and persistent issue on its agenda. Had second rounds been required during the 1992 presidential election, for example, there would have been a run-off between Biya and Fru Ndi since neither of them had more than 50 percent of the votes cast. Also absent is opposition demand for proportional representation in legislative elections, a representation that is more democratic than the list system, which often favors the ruling-CPDM.

Costly miscalculations have been another problem with the opposition's approach, especially with the SDF that has had the opportunity of defeating Paul Biya and the CPDM. Just as policy is critical in determining success or failure in politics, especially when everything else is equal, timing is also important. Due to poor judgment, the SDF failed to build on its momentum as a major opposition party when it mattered most. At the height of the pro-democracy movement in 1992, when the party's popularity with Cameroonians was at its apex, it decided to boycott the first multiparty legislative elections since the creation of a one-party state in 1966. The consensus among Cameroonians, based on the results of the 1992 legislative elections, is that the SDF would have won the most seats in the legislature simply by garnering victory in the West, Northwest, Littoral, and Southwest provinces where it had the strongest support. Thus, the best chance of the opposition parties carrying the legislature was missed. A similar judgment call was made in 1997 when Fru Ndi decided to boycott the Presidential elections that year. Having stolen the 1992 results, Biya ran in 1997 with much ease. Although he had lost the 1992 election, Fru Ndi still enjoyed popular support and goodwill in many parts of the country, support that he might have parlayed into the presidency. But rather than contesting the election, he boycotted it on grounds that many of the reforms demanded by the opposition remained unfulfilled. While the decision was a matter of principle for Fru Ndi, the boycott conceded the stage to Biya, who went on to win easily against weaker candidates.

THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

How democratic a political system is depends not only on voting rights, on voter participation, and on how free and fair the elections are, but also on whether elections lead to more people participating in the decision-making process or on their promotion of a diversity of views (Dahl 1971; Bratton and van de Walle 1997; Przeworski 1999; Diamond 1999). This calls attention to the electoral system and how it defines who wins an election, or who loses. Cameroon's electoral system is a combination of the list system used in legislative and municipal elections and the winner-takes-all system based on plurality in presidential elections. It makes winning an election very difficult for parties that are not established or are out of power. It is, however, very effective in instituting dominance, especially by parties that are already in power. The list system has been discussed earlier as it related to the 1960 legislative election after independence. Suffice it to say that the simple process of putting together a list of candidates for a party during an election in Cameroon is time-consuming and unnecessarily complex. Furthermore, under the list system, victory is not always dependent on the strength of each individual candidate but on the entire list of candidates. While the requirement that party lists should be inclusive does help to deal with the problem of ethnicity and regionalism, the list system practiced in Cameroon that is based on the winner-takes-all principle (even if the victory is a plurality and not absolute), is biased in favor of the majority party against minority parties. This approach stifles representation since a significant segment of the population that might not have voted for a particular list of candidates is left out.

From the onset, the list system used in the country's first election to the 100-member Senate in 2013 gave opposition parties very little chance to capture the 70 percent non-appointed seats in the Senate because of the winner-takes-all plurality system. Because members of the Electoral College were affiliated with particular parties, unless the parties had very weak rules governing party discipline, the results were predictable once the parties had met all the requirements of the electoral system. In other words, with strong party discipline, each party's group of electors were expected to vote the party line, meaning that the party that controlled most of the local councils and/or the most number of electors (councilors) would win. Had the electoral system been a list system based on proportional representation, some regions that lost the election—even though they lost by only a few votes—would have had senatorial representation proportional to the votes they received. For such reasons, the SDF's loss in the Northwest should not have come as a surprise if the electors took their party affiliation seriously. The CPDM controlled the most councils in the Northwest. It also had more councilors

than the other parties. So, from a strictly party-principle perspective, it would be predicted to win. If, however, there were councilors of the various parties who were willing to consider other choices besides those of their own parties, the CPDM seemed to have had a much more focused and targeted campaign strategy to convince councilors from other parties to vote their list. The SDF directed its messaging to the public of the regions through mass rallies, with the expectation that electors' relatives, families, and public would put pressure on them to vote the SDF line (Fosong 2013). John Fru Ndi, the party leader, explained the adoption of that strategy on grounds that the party did not have the money to conduct a door-to-door type campaign.³³ This strategy was quite the opposite of that adopted by the CPDM. Its campaign team visited nearly all the local government councils to solicit the councilors' votes (Fosong 2013). Thus, in the SDF stronghold of the Northwest Region, (see Table 1.4), the party lost all seats to the CPDM. Additionally, the fact that 30 percent of the Members of the Senate were appointed by the president was indicative of the government's lack of commitment to democracy. Although Article 20 (2) of the Constitution sanctions this, the fact is that the setup does not require the President to consult with or solicit names from the main political parties or associational groups to ensure a balance. Thus the Senators appointed after the election of 2013 were all members of the ruling CPDM party. Consequently, the party was assured its control and dominance in the Senate. But the situation also exposes the flaws of the Constitution for making that possible; the defective basis upon which the system is built can produce only defective politics.

As discussed earlier, the provision of the electoral system governing who wins in presidential elections also works to stifle democracy because it allows the candidate who wins the plurality of votes cast to become president. Such electoral arrangements allowed Biya to win every presidential election in Cameroon since the reinstatement of multiparty politics in the early 1990s. That was especially true during the critical years of the pro-democracy movement in the early 1990s when his regime faced serious challenge from the opposition parties. That the opposition parties ran multiple candidates in the 1992 presidential election ensured victory for Biya, even though he garnered only 39.98 percent of the votes cast. For a country such as Cameroon that does not have a democratic tradition, only one opportunity may be required to bring about leadership change, and if that opportunity is missed (as was the case in 1992), it may be very difficult, or it may take a long time to get another opportunity to bring about change. This system also allows an incumbent president to manipulate election results in order to stay in power. For instance, after the narrow victory in the 1992 presidential election, Biya made sure that his victories in subsequent elections were large enough to

dissuade any suspicion. Simplifying the electoral system would be much to the advantage of democracy and would also make elections more competitive. For instance, in Presidential elections, the system should be made more democratic by instituting provisions that require the winner of an election to have an absolute majority of the total votes cast—that is, a fifty-percent-plus-one-vote threshold. This way, second round voting will be required between the two highest vote winners if no candidate receives more than 50 percent of the votes in the first ballot.

GOVERNING BY DISCRETION

A principal feature of the political system in Cameroon is the role that presidential discretion has played in the political process. This was true under Ahidjo's presidency, as it is under Biya. During the formative years of the country's postcolonial history, on some key issues such as the institution of one party rule, Ahidjo had allowed debate. It was during the process of such debates that the Gang of Four incident arose (discussed earlier). Another such contentious debate took place in the last session of the 1959 legislative Assembly on the issue of granting the president full power to govern by decree at independence before a draft Constitution was written and debated (Le Vine 1964, 184–188). Charles Okala, as Justice Minister (although not a UC member), had run the debate for Ahidjo's coalition government. The irony is that Okala became victim of such discretionary powers as one of the members of the Gang of Four who was arrested, tried, and sentenced on fabricated charges (Gardinier 1963, 124). Ahidjo continued with such discretionary rule when he abolished the Federal Constitution and replaced it with a Unitary Constitution, without much consultation, especially with key politicians in West Cameroon,³⁴ and without subjecting the proposal to a national debate. He continued this practice when he abolished the provision in the Unitary Constitution requiring the President of the National Assembly to assume power upon vacancy in the Presidency and to conduct elections in which he could not be a candidate within ninety days. In 1975, he again changed the constitution by creating the post of Prime Minister, to which he appointed Paul Biya. The Prime Minister was subsequently designated to assume power in case of a vacancy and then complete the remaining term of the president. Thus, Biya became President in 1982 when Ahidjo resigned. But unlike under the Federal Constitution, when the Vice President was an elected position, the Prime Minister was an appointed position in the unitary system. In that case, the President was free to appoint whoever he wanted to succeed him, as Ahidjo did when he appointed Biya, without any debate about the merits of

the appointment. The one party and the highly controlled nature of Cameroon politics meant that a debate and a vote on the appointment would have made very little difference on the outcome.

Biya continued with the practice of governing by discretion, using it to thwart efforts by his political rivals to undermine his regime without appearing to be undemocratic. In fact, apart from the structural elements of democratic governance, such as associational groups and organizations, parties, media, rules, and so forth, democratic practice and process must be predictable to ensure fairness by allowing everyone or every group an equal chance and opportunity of victory. Biya consistently made key decisions during the turbulent 1990s abruptly and without consultation with other government constituencies or representatives of major opposition parties. His actions and decisions, especially as related to elections, were calculated to catch the opposition parties by surprise, thereby giving them very little time to mount an effective challenge against him. Some of the consequential decisions he took to foil efforts by opposition parties in the democratization process include the following:

1. Giving only three months' notice for the first legislative elections during the post one-party era. The government announced the date of the election in October 1991 and it was to be held in February 1992 (Europa World Year Book 1998, 784.) The election was later pushed to March 1, which was not much different from the February date. This decision was taken without consultation with opposition parties and ignoring opposition parties' demand for extension to May (World Year Book 1998, 785).
2. Announcing the date of the 1992 Presidential election only two months before it took place. The election was announced in August 1992 and was scheduled for October. The anticipation was that it would take place in May 1993, which would have marked the end of Biya's term since his election in 1988 under the one-party electoral system. In order to improve his chances of winning, opposition parties were forbidden from forming alliances to contest the election.
3. Appointing of Government Delegates to replace elected mayors in Yaounde, Douala, Bafoussam, Bamenda, Garoua, Limbe, Kumba, and other large cities after opposition parties took control of the municipal councils and mayoral positions after the January 1996 municipal elections. Government Delegates had during the one-party rule been appointed only for Yaounde and Douala because of their political and economic importance. This time, it was invoked to deprive opposition parties from having any power base in the key provincial cities.
4. Postponing of legislative elections of 1997. The election was to take place in March of 1997, but was postponed in January without a set date. How-

ever, in April, the government unexpectedly rescheduled the election for May 17, giving parties only a few weeks to prepare.

5. Announcing the date for the 1997 presidential election in September only weeks before the scheduled date of October 12.

This approach to politics continued into the 2000s, when Biya finally created an Independent Electoral Commission, even though the law governing it did not separate it from the Ministry of Territorial Administration that had managed previous elections. In 2006, the Government created Election Cameroon (ELECAM), a national election body to replace the National Election Observatory (NEO). The NEO had been created in 2000 in an effort to address demands by opposition parties for an Independent Election Commission after they boycotted the 1997 presidential elections, on the grounds that the government would rig the results of the elections as it had done in the 1992 presidential election. But instead of giving the NEO full authority to organize and manage the electoral process, the government mandated it to merely monitor, document, and report irregularities during elections. The creation of NEO in 2000 therefore became another half-hearted and discretionary measure that the government employed to stall, frustrate, and defeat its opponents instead of creating a truly independent electoral commission. By 2006, when the government finally created Election Cameroon (ELECAM), it had already established support in many regions of the country, including some opposition strongholds.

The expectation among the opposition parties that ELECAM would be the answer to free and fair elections remained unfulfilled. The creation of ELECAM was also controversial because of the President's power to appoint its members, including the organization's Chairperson. And as it turned out, many members of ELECAM, including Samuel Fonkam Azu'u, the chairperson, were former members of the CPDM or people who had held senior-level positions in the administration. In response to protests by opposition parties and civil society groups, Biya expanded the Commission from twelve to eighteen members and brought in some Civil Society leaders, including the Catholic Bishop of Bafoussam, Dieudonne Wation.³⁵ ELECAM organized the 2011 presidential elections, and the 2013 Parliamentary, Senatorial, and municipal elections in which the CPDM had lopsided victories. The CPDM won 56 Senatorial seats, or 80 percent of the 70 elected seats; its closest competitor, the SDF, won 14 seats, or 20 percent of the seats. Indeed, Commonwealth Election Monitor during the 2013 legislative elections noted that ELECAM's ability to manage elections had improved significantly since the 1990s.³⁶ The report also noted that the country had made significant progress in organizing elections since the early 1990s. While the observers did get

complaints about the conduct of the elections, they considered the problems to be minor and would push the authorities to address them.

Another issue of contention was whether Biya would respect the term limit enshrined in the 1996 Constitution at the end of his tenure in 2011. Some members of his party came out in support of the constitutional changes to enable him to run for a third term. This issue—as no other issue since the early 1990s—generated demonstrations and strikes against the government to stop the action. This had happened before in other African countries, including Uganda and Chad. In Nigeria, it took a near popular uprising by the people to prevent President Olusegun Obasanjo from amending the constitution to allow him to run for a third term. The idea of amending the constitution could not have come at a worse time for Biya. The economy was in very poor condition, with high food and fuel prices and massive youth unemployment creating a socioeconomic dynamic that was blamed on Biya's leadership and that also threatened that leadership.³⁷ In response to high fuel prices, the Transport Union and the Urban Transport Unions organized a strike on February 25, demanding a reduction in fuel prices.³⁸ The following day, February 26, the government reduced fuel prices by six cents per gallon. But by then it was too late to contain the country's anger and frustration that had been brewing in youths for lack of jobs and incomes even when they had acquired the education that should have enabled them to find decent jobs. Many continued the demonstration, and some engaged in vandalizing property, looting, setting cars, shops, and even government buildings on fire. The president's response to the crisis was akin to his responses to the various challenges of democratization in the 1990s, which included defiance, demonizing his opponents, going after the press, and cosmetic reforms (Takougang and Krieger 1998).³⁹ He blamed the crisis on opposition parties, arguing that the opposition parties were trying to obtain by violence what they could not through the ballot box. Continuing, he said they were "using the transport strikes for political end," and that he would use "all legal means at his disposal to reestablish order."⁴⁰ In the end, over 100 people lost their lives, and over 1,650 were detained,⁴¹ among them Lapiro de Mbanga, a popular and activist musician known for his anti-Biya stance. Equinoxe Television station in Douala and FM 94 radio in Yaounde were shut down on charges that they were operating without a license. But journalists insisted that the shutdown of the stations was because of the debate they were holding about the Constitutional Amendment to allow Biya to run for a third term.⁴²

Despite massive opposition, in 2008 the National Assembly amended the Constitution on Biya's urging, eliminating presidential term limits so that he could run for a third term. In so doing, the Biya administration had come full circle to where he was in 1997. The result of the 2011 presidential election was

a foregone conclusion, as Table 1.3 indicates. His closest opponent, John Fru Ndi got 10.71 percent of the votes, while Biya received 77.99 percent. As was the case in 2011 when he ran for a third term under the amended 1996 constitution, Biya's partisans began calling on him in 2015 to run again in 2018. He did not rule that out. Whether he runs or not, one thing is clear, politics and society in Cameroon reflect one step forward and two steps backward.

CONCLUSION AND THE WAY AHEAD

Despite the problems highlighted here, change will eventually come to Cameroon. What is unclear is the nature of that change. At eighty-three years old, Biya cannot live forever. This means that in one way or another Cameroonians will in the next few years be engaged in an uncertain political dance in which Biya may be an important partner if he chooses to run in 2018. But if he decides not to run, he may be the most important power broker in the country's history. In that case, Cameroonians will have no option but to deal with his designated successor for a long time. But if Biya were to have no control over his succession, the question then would be whether the institutions that he nurtured for so long are strong enough to manage change in a new direction, allow the rise of another strong man, or lead in his absence to political instability. Because the current breed of opposition leaders—except for Maurice Kamto, President of Cameroon Renaissance Movement (CRM), the newest opposition party in the country—are also so unpopular, and because Biya by design ensured that no other leaders emerged under his shadow to present future options for the country, it is likely that Cameroon might experience a long and uncertain political future. A major reason for that uncertainty is also because, after much hope and optimism in the early 1990s, the opposition parties appear to have lost credibility among Cameroonians. Many of the leaders are perceived as selfish individuals more interested in their political fortunes than in the welfare of the Cameroonian people. Under the prevailing political environment, a major effort toward recapturing the support that opposition parties enjoyed at the dawn of the democracy movement will require that opposition leaders put away their differences and unite behind a consensus candidate to challenge President Biya in the next presidential election if Biya decides to run again. At the same time, the parties must rebuild grassroots support and develop clearly defined programs that address the needs and aspirations of the people. As it relates to legislative and municipal elections, opposition parties will need to cooperate with each other to back common candidates who have good prospects of winning instead of allowing separate candidates to run in different regions. However, such

cooperation requires trust and reciprocity. In other words, SDF should support UDC candidates in areas of the country where UDC candidates have a better chance of winning than SDF candidates. Similarly, UDC should support SDF candidates in parts of the country where SDF candidates have a better chance of winning than UDC candidates. Finally, all the parties should require reform of electoral laws and process as a prerequisite for a truly democratic change. Only by addressing these issues can the opposition parties hope to achieve meaningful electoral victory in Cameroon.

NOTES

1. For a more detailed discussion of the Anglophone problem, see Dickson Eyoh, 1998, "Conflicting Narratives of Anglophone Protest and the Politics of Identity in Cameroon," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 16 (2): 249–276; Piet Konings and Francis Nyamnjoh, 1997, "The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 35 (2): 202–229.

2. See Dieudonne Zongnong, 2002, "La question Bamiléké pendant l'ouverture démocratique au Cameroun: retour d'un débat occulté," UNESCO Discussion Document No. 61, <http://digital-library.unesco.org/shs/most/gsd/cgi-bin/library?e=d-000-00-0most-00-0-0-0prompt-10-4-0-11-1-en-50-20-about-00031-001-1-0utfZz-8-00&a=d&c=most&cl=CL1.2&d=HASH4b7c796bedd71136112121>.

3. For more information on the Bill, see Ndi Eugene Ndi, "National Assembly CPDM Dominated Committee Throws Out SDF Private Member Bill," *News Watch Cameroon*, April 7, 2015, newswatchcameroonblogspot.com/2015/. (Accessed June 20, 2017). See also George Mbella, *Cameroon Tribune*, "Cameroon: National Assembly—Water Catchment Protection Bill Rejected," April 6, 2015, <http://www.cameroon-tribune.cm>. (Accessed June 20, 2017); and "SDF frustrated over blockade of private member's bills," *The Post Newspaper* of November 24, 2014 posted on *Cameroon Web* at <http://www.camerounweb.fr/Cameroon>. (Accessed June 20, 2017) and "How a Foolish Majority Denied Cameroonians Water," in *The Eye Newspaper* Lundi April 13, 2015, posted on *Cameroonweb* at <http://www.camerounweb.fr> (Accessed June 20, 2017).

4. The process of introducing legislation is governed by constitutional requirements that stipulate that bills begin with the Chairs Conference. The Chairs Conference is made up of Presidents of Parliamentary groups, Chairs of Committees, and members of the Assembly's bureau. See Article 18 (1) and (2) of the 1996 Constitution.

5. African Elections Data Base—Cameroon: africanelections.tripod.com/cm.

6. The heated debate in the Assembly on granting Ahidjo the power to rule by decree, and setting up the mechanisms for drafting a Constitution after independence would have been unwarranted had the appropriate procedure been taken by the French administering authority to have elections held before independence and for a new government to lead the country at independence.

7. African Elections Data Base—Cameroon, africanelections.tripod.com/cm.

8. The number of political parties had risen to 167 in 2001.
9. See Tansa Musa, 1996, "Cameroon Politics: Opposition Digs In, Ruling Party Loses Ground," *IPS News Service*, Yaounde, January 26, 1996 at <http://www.ipsnews.net/1996/01/cameroon-politics-opposition-digs-in-ruling-party-loses-ground>. (Accessed June 20, 2017); "Cameroon, A Transition in Crisis," Article 19, Global Campaign for Free Expression, October 15, 1997 at <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/publications/cameroon-a-transition-in-crisis.pdf>. (Accessed June 20, 2017).
10. Tansa Musa, "Cameroon Politics: Opposition Digs In, Ruling Party Loses Ground"; "Cameroon, A Transition in Crisis," Article 19, Global Campaign for Free Expression. Kribi, Edea, Ngaoundere, Garoua, Maroua, Bertoua, and Ebolowa are the other towns with Government Delegates today.
11. The two cities of Douala and Yaounde under the country's first president had a Government Delegate as supervisory authority who also had the authority to override the locally elected council authorities or mayors. What was new after the 1996 local election was the extension of that practice to other cities that were controlled by opposition elected mayors and councils.
12. *La Nouvelle Expression*, No. 452 du 09–12–98: 6–7 cited in Owona Guini, *Le Social Democratic Front*, 154.
13. Interview, Mayor Bonaberi, Douala, March 15, 2003; also see "Cameroon: A Transition in Crisis," *ibid*.
14. Besides Bamenda, Bafoussam and Dchang remained the only major urban cities since 1996 that consistently had SDF-dominated Councils and mayors after the CPDM onslaught in once opposition-dominated area until the 2013 municipal election when the CPDM was able to capture two of the three Bafoussam Urban Councils. See Emmanuel Nzeté, the Government Delegate for Bafoussam's analysis in Joseph N. Olinga, "Communauté Urbaine de Bafoussam," *Le Messenger*, Thursday May 11, 2017.
15. SDF Press Release signed by John Fru Ndi, chairman of the party, May 18, 1997.
16. Interview Yaounde, Kumba, Mbouda, Dschang, and Douala, June 20, 2002.
17. The Governor of the Eastern Province, Achu Mufor, resigned due to the direct instruction from his boss, the Minister of Territorial Administration to him and other Governors on ensuring that they made sure through various fraudulent tactics assured a victory of 60 percent.
18. For a discussion of the Ghost Towns, see J. Takougang and M Krieger, 1998, *African State and Society in the 1990s: Cameroon Political Crossroads*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 126–131.
19. Interview, Douala, June 22, 2003.
20. Personal communication with Tchoungang on several occasions since 2002 when the CPDM swept the races in the region. Tchoungang lived in Douala and would travel to Galim whenever he had to, a distance of over 270 kilometers.
21. African Elections Database—Cameroon—<http://africanelections.tripod.com/cm.html>; http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2053_arc.htm.
22. See Europa, *Africa: South of the Sahara 2003* (32nd edition) (London: Europa Publications, Cameroon), 149–172.

23. In a dominant party system, many parties exist and participate in the political system and elections but only the dominant party, in Cameroon's case the CPDM, has the chance of winning.

24. Djio notes that Peter Mafany Musonge and Simon Achu Achidi, who were both appointed Prime Minister by Paul Biya, are said to have related to well-wishers at their appointment that nothing goes for nothing. Biya will look after those who support him.

25. All the most powerful Ministerial positions in the Cameroonian government: Defense, Finance, the Economy and Plan, Delegate of National Security, Secretary General at the Presidency during the 1990s and the first decade of 2000 were held by people from the Center or the South.

26. *Cameroon Tribune*. April 16, 2016.

27. Roger Jantio, Cameroonian Professor of the Sociology of Sports, Strassburg, France, July 10, 2006, I am indebted to Middle Tennessee State University, Faculty Diversity Fund for my research trip to France in the summer of 2006.

28. Personal communication, CPDM businessman, Dschang, April 15, 2003. I am grateful to the Fulbright program for the opportunity to teach at the University of Dschang in 2003 that enabled me to conduct interviews in Bamileke country on the democratization process in Cameroon.

29. For example, Joseph Defosso Kadji in the early years of the democratization protests in the 1990s was in the opposition camp. But the government went after his businesses for not having paid taxes. Interview, Flaubert Matio Tefoung, an accountant in Douala, who had worked for Kadji and many top corporations in Douala including, Chococam, Renault, and Messa Press in Douala, June 20, 2015. Kadji who owns UCB Brewery, hotels, and other companies in Cameroon is the mayor of Bana, his hometown in the West.

30. Personal communication with Dioudonne Tessie, Agricultural Extension Delegate, Bafang, Haut Nkam Division, the West Region, Cameroon, June 20, 2013. Dioudonne Tessie did win as part of the CPDM Local Council list for Galim, Bam-boutos Division.

31. For more information, see Armand Essogo, *Premières Tendances Favorables au RDPC*, *Cameroon Tribune*, Yaounde, July 24, 2007; Patience Elango, ELECAM, Election of Municipal Councillors, <http://www.elecaml.com/en/civic-education/election-of-municipal-councillors.html>; http://web.archive.org/web/20070930015521/http://www.spm.gov.cm/elections/minicipales2002/maires2002%20_nord_ouest.htm; Fai Cassian Ndi, "Municipal/Legislative Elections: Here are the Stakes, Implications, Outsiders, Favourites and Sure Bets in NW," *The Eye Newspaper*, Thursday, August 1, 2013, <http://cameroonlatest.blogspot.com/2013/08/municipallegislative-elections-here-are.html>; Blaise Whumo, "SDF Shares Northwest with CPDM," *Postline .com*, October 13, 2013, <http://www.cameroonpostline.com/sdf-shares-northwest-with-cpdm/>; 2013 Municipal Elections—No clear winner in NW, <http://bamendaonline.net/2013municipal-elections-no-clear-winner-in-nw/>.

32. This has been the main reason for the push for term limits in US politics. It was the reason for the passing of the 22nd Amendment to the US Constitution in 1947 after President Franklin D. Roosevelt had run for an unprecedented fourth term

and won. Although the 22nd Amendment is law, the practice of serving for a certain time frame and stepping down has not been as successful in non-chief executive type positions in many democracies.

33. Ibid.

34. West Cameroon politicians were in agreement because the act meant a complete reversal of the agreement to safeguard the identity of the region as a basis of reunification. John Ngu Foncha said he was never consulted on the establishment of the Unitary State by Ahidjo; See John Ngu Foncha, *The Cameroon Unification Revisited*, Excerpts (3): The John Ngu Foncha Declaration, (Yaoundé, December 1994) reproduced by Dibussi Tande, Scribbles from the Den, Archives, Commentares, What Not in 2006 on the net at http://www.dibussi.com/2006/02/unification_rev.html.

35. Kini Nsom and Leocadia Bongben, 2009, "SDF to Challenge Swearing in of ELECAM Members, Up Station Mountain Club." January 19, 2009: <http://www.postnewsline.com/2009/01/sdf-to-challenge-swearingin-of-elecaml-members.html>; *The Economist*, August 12, 2011, "Mr. Biya Appoints Six additional members to Elecam."

36. Report of the Commonwealth Expert Team, Cameroon Legislative and Municipal Elections, September 30, 2013. London: The Commonwealth Secretariat.

37. "Anti-government rioting spreads in Cameroon," *The New York Times*, February 27, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/27/world/africa/27iht-27cameroon.10504780.html>. (Accessed June 20, 2017).

38. For a detailed discussion of the strike, see Julius A. Amin, 2013, "Cameroonian Youths and the Protest of February 2008," *Cahier d'Études Africaine*, 677–697.

39. This was the same type of rhetoric he used during the 1990s, during the Ville Morte strikes.

40. AFP, Yaounde, February 28, 2008, "Army patrols capital after days of unrest in Cameroon."

41. Tansa Musa, "Cameroon activists say riots kill more than 100," *Reuters*, March 5, 2008.

42. Tansa Musa. Yaounde. February 29. "Cameroon Government Accused of Muzzling Media Over Riots." *Reuters*.

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Chapter Two

The Roots of Stability and Instability in Cameroon

Augustine E. Ayuk

INTRODUCTION

Current research on political stability and instability attempts to explain the underlying causes of political unrest in polities, with the goals of predicting where far-reaching changes are likely to occur and of making policy recommendations that regimes could undertake in order to retain control of power (Goldsmith 1987). The political disposition in postindependence Cameroon was characterized by a strong ruling party, the Cameroon National Union (CNU), and a strong individual, President Ahmadou Ahidjo. Devoid of any ideological support mechanism, the emerging state was held together by a highly centralized executive and a well-oiled patronage machinery (Barkan 1994). Since gaining independence in January 1960, Cameroon has enjoyed two rare and remarkable achievements: political stability and a robust economy. These achievements were possible in part because of the vision and actions of the patriarch and first president, Ahmadou Ahidjo, and his successor, Paul Biya, who used the levers of power to control and accommodate the many demands of Cameroonians. This chapter aims at providing a theoretical framework for explaining the simultaneity of political stability and persistent fragility in the Cameroonian society. It examines both the factors that have contributed to political stability in Cameroon since independence, as well as some of the reasons for periods of instability that the country has experienced since the transfer of power in 1982. By such observations, this chapter offers an analysis of the factors that have held together this complex multiethnic, multicultural, and diverse religious patchwork for over half a century; a peculiar accomplishment when compared with many of Cameroon's counterparts, including Nigeria, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan,

and Somalia, countries that have experienced political upheavals. Indeed, for decades, President Ahidjo and his successor, Paul Biya, were skillful in advancing the myth of the Cameroon reality at home and abroad (*West Africa*, 1987). The United Nations Development Program (UNDP 1993) even described Cameroon as a “showpiece for other developing countries.” Milton Krieger, a seasoned scholar of Cameroon, notes the following:

Cameroon . . . is one of the very few countries to emerge from the first twenty years of independence with a healthy economy, and a polity still unscarred by the all too common traumas afflicting its neighbors—civil war, coups d’état, military dictatorship, brutal tyranny, and it has done so, even more remarkably, with its early leadership in core still relatively intact. (2015, 39)

Despite this glowing representation of the “Cameroon miracle,” Irving Markovitz (1977) argues that . . . this rosy picture of uninterrupted postcolonial history characterized by political stability and peaceful change tends to conceal significant discontinuities and contradictions within the Cameroonian polity and gloss over tensions of a potentially disruptive nature. More importantly, this obsession with peace and stability leaves unanswered the all-important questions: stability for whom, at what price and for whose benefit? In fact, by the late 1980s, the pendulum swung in the opposite direction as Cameroon’s political and economic fortunes started crumbling, largely due to internal undercurrents and external exigencies that few scholars and ardent admirers of the country could have predicted. While the country appeared to be unified, peaceful, and economically buoyant, there were tensions that slowly undermined the image of a tranquil and prosperous nation. This analysis begins with a brief discussion of Cameroon’s intricate political history since independence and an examination of Ahidjo’s presidency, which provides valuable perspectives in our understanding of Cameroon’s complex political system and the institutional weaknesses that would become apparent under Biya’s presidency. Biya’s “New Deal” presidency will then be examined, with particular attention to his liberalization policies. Also explored are the roles played by food, football (soccer), and *makossa* (a popular Cameroonian dance music) in maintaining peace and stability in Cameroon. And the final observations examine some of the external factors that helped in reshaping a stability narrative in Cameroon.

CAMEROON: BRIEF HISTORY AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Cameroon was occupied by Germany in 1884, during the European scramble for Africa. But then the Germans lost control of the territory following its

defeat by the Allied powers in World War I. As a League of Nations mandate, the former German colony was divided between British and French administrations, and later, following World War II, as United Nations trusteeships. While France occupied nearly four-fifths of the former German Kamerun, Britain's share included two tiny discontinuous portions along the eastern border with Nigeria, areas that became known as British Northern Cameroons and British Southern Cameroons (Mbaku 2004). On January 1, 1960, the former French trusteeship gained its independence and was renamed *La République du Cameroun* (Republic of Cameroon). Meanwhile, the former British Southern Cameroons decided in a plebiscite in February 1961 to join *Republique du Cameroun*.¹ From 1961 to 1972, Cameroon was governed under a federal system, with two separate parliaments in East Cameroon (former French Cameroon) and West Cameroon (former British Southern Cameroons). Under the federal arrangement, Cameroon became a bilingual country, with English and French as its official languages. In May 1972, President Ahidjo, the country's first president, orchestrated the dismantling of the Federation and replaced it with a highly centralized unitary structure. Until his resignation in April 1982, President Ahidjo remained head of state and chairman of the nation's only party, the Cameroon National Union (CNU).

STABILITY IN CAMEROON UNDER AHMADOU AHIDJO: 1961–1982

Although Cameroon possesses many of the ethnic, regional, geographical, and religious diversities that have contributed to political instability in many postindependence African states, it avoided similar challenges thanks to Ahidjo's leadership and political skills. In fact, DeLancey (1989, 53–57) posits that Ahidjo was able to maintain a peaceful and united Cameroon because of his ability at co-opting his political enemies and creating an effective centralized political and administrative system based in the capital, Yaounde, with Ahidjo as the ultimate authority in the nation. The president also utilized coalition building in maintaining stability in the country, galvanizing support from local and regional leaders, members of the military, the bureaucracy, the petite bourgeoisie, urban dwellers, and a variety of northern-based elements (DeLancey 1989, 57). Furthermore, the president adeptly used the clientelistic and neo-patrimonial strategy in consolidating power, forging social integration and achieving his goal of nation-building. Commenting on Ahidjo's notable political skill, Le Vine notes that:

Ahidjo's ability to include almost all important politically active people in the country or at least secure their acquiescence coupled with visible measures of

social and economic progress, plus the operation of what appears to be a relatively honest governmental system have all helped maintain political stability in Cameroon, when countries elsewhere in Africa have been less fortunate. (1971, 182)

Like other postindependence leaders on the continent, Ahidjo also used the military, the gendarmes, and the secret service police to stifle dissent in the country. According to DeLancey (1989), the regime created two agencies, the Service de Documentation (SEDOC) and the Brigades Mixtes Mobile (BMM), to ensure internal intelligence and security efforts. Indeed, while SEDOC served as a political police force with an extensive network of informers both inside and outside Cameroon, the BMM was “responsible for the imprisonment and interrogation-torture of those considered suspicious of by SEDOC.”(DeLancey 1989, 64). Under Ahidjo’s presidency, reports of gross human rights violations were known, but hardly talked about in the open. The president also employed a variety of repressive tactics against individuals who attempted to challenge his regime and authority, tactics including torture, economic deprivation, and disappearances. Government spies and informants were present all across the country and could be found in off licenses (drinking spots), cafés, and in various institutions of higher learning, including the University of Yaoundé. Press freedom was also scrutinized under a law of presales censorship, under which editors had to submit a copy of their publications to the Senior Prefect (Préfet) for approval before putting such material on sale (DeLancey 1989, 64). But perhaps the most important tool used in maintaining stability in Cameroon was Ahidjo’s ability at co-opting the military. However, Krieger (2015, 40–45) argues that three other factors accounted for political stability in Cameroon: luck, leadership, and economic good health. He posits that the country’s revolutions—or its baptism of civil violence—occurred before it became independent. At the same time, the failed bloody uprising by the *Union des Populations du Cameroun* (UPC) and its calculated suppression by the regime made Cameroonians more amenable to the regime’s authority, creating what Professor Willard Johnson referred to as an “integrative backlash” (cited in Krieger 2015, 40). Krieger believes that the political cataclysms witnessed by Cameroonians through the prism of the Nigerian civil war, the unrest in Equatorial Guinea/Rio Muni, Chad, and the Central African Republic, with “thousands of people killed and many more thousands displaced as refugees, all served as important reminders to Cameroonians that no matter how bad their regime was, it was less brutal and it managed to keep internal peace” (Krieger 2015, 41). Meanwhile, the nation’s stability could also be linked to good leadership, operated under an autocratic system that was led by President Ahidjo. Jean-Francois Bayart (1978, 6), a fervent critic of the Ahidjo regime, argues that the president had

constructed a “Bonapartist” state and that his autocratic régime was rebuked not only by old nemeses like Abel Eyinga, but also by contemporary Cameroonian intellectuals (Kreiger 2015, 41). The president also maintained stability by controlling party undercurrents. As Daniel Compagnon (2010, 37) notes, “the president played party members off one another, skillfully pitting the younger generations against old guards to allow them to keep an upper hand.” Furthermore, the president brought people closer to his power base but also “ousted those whom he perceived as threats to his regime” (Moore 2015, 133). Political participation in the country was restricted, except in support of the regime, and although periodic elections were held, they were designed to serve as rituals of affirmation of voters’ loyalty and political display (Moore 2015).

Other mechanisms used by the president to secure stability in the country included co-option of many of his political rivals, especially in the 1960s. He neutralized many of his rivals through political leverage, and effectively exercised his constitutional powers in appointing the vice president as well as all the ministers, governors, and heads of parastatal organizations. These ministerial appointments were important because the ministers had access to political powers as well as material resources, which they could use to satisfy different ethnic and regional enclaves, as well as to support aspiring politicians. Meanwhile, members of the cabinet used the resources they controlled to build formidable patron-client networks, which in turn assisted the regime in maintaining stability. Ahidjo’s selection of cabinet members and parastatal directors was shaped by his belief in ethnic and regional balance in the government. Decraene illustrates Ahidjo’s balancing philosophy with appointments in some of the nation’s important financial institutions:

It’s a northerner who runs the *Banque Industrielle et Commerciale du Cameroun*, a man from the coast at the head of the *Société Camerounaise des Banques*, while the heads of the *Banque Internationale pour l’Afrique Occidentale*, the *Société Générale des Banques* and the Cameroon Bank are from the south-central, western, and English-speaking regions of the country, respectively. (Decraene 1979, 12)

Finally, Kreiger (2015) argues that Cameroon’s stability can also be tied to pro-capitalist economic policies that were less supportive of labor. For instance, the regime did not encourage or support trade or labor union movements, viewing them with disdain. It also associated union activities with the radical opposition and was determined to prevent such meddling in politics. The economy was also bolstered by a group of Cameroonian entrepreneurs involved in trade, transportation, farming, and other sectors of the economy who owed their wealth and success to government assistance and protection. And because these businessmen were often guaranteed government loans and

fewer regulations on their business activities, they worked tirelessly to ensure stability in the country.

Cameroon's strong economy was also critical in maintaining the nation's political stability during the early decades of independence. Before the discovery of oil, Cameroon was primarily an exporter of agricultural products. And unlike other African economies that may have depended on the production of a single crop, Ahidjo emphasized diversification in the production and sale of its natural resources. In fact, although the economy was largely based on the production and sale of its export crops, the oil production that began in the early 1980s also provided substantial financial leverage to the economy, especially in the mid-1980s when commodity production dropped, largely due to the droughts and other diseases that affected many export crops (DeLancey 1989). According to Benjamin and Shantayana (1986), oil became the main source of revenue, which increased from less than 5 percent of foreign earnings in 1980 to 40 percent in 1984. Ultimately, because of its relative political stability, Cameroon also attracted substantial foreign development capital (Krieger 2015, 45–46). While the aforementioned factors were important in maintaining political stability in Cameroon, it is germane to include such important cultural factors as food, football (soccer), alcohol, and *makossa* as crucial factors in the country's stability.

FOOD, FOOTBALL (SOCCER), ALCOHOL, AND MAKOSSA

Although these factors may at first sound trivial, I argue that they have played a significant role in maintaining national unity and political stability in Cameroon. In fact, food shortages and high food prices have often sparked riots and led to political instability in many African countries, including Algeria, Mozambique, Ethiopia and Niger. In Algeria, for example, riots broke out in the country in 2011 because of food price inflation and high levels of unemployment. The primary cause of the riots included the high cost of cooking oil, flour, and sugar, whose prices doubled within two months. In Mozambique, natural disasters caused by the Inter-tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ) was a contributing factor to food shortages in the country. The (ITCZ) is often responsible for either prolonged periods of rainfall or no rainfall in a region. According to the World Food Program (2010), while floods ravaged the northern section of the country in 2000, 2001, 2007, and 2008, the southern part of the country experienced severe droughts from 2002–2008. Both factors impacted food production that led to severe crisis

in Mozambique. Cameroon has been lucky to avoid such shortages. In fact, Cameroon is endowed with rich alluvial soil that has not only allowed farmers to produce abundant food to feed the population, but also allowed the country to export food to neighboring countries. For example, Gray (1998) estimated that Cameroonians supplied almost 75 percent of Gabon's food needs in 1981. The administration also adopted preemptive policies aimed at mitigating instability, including implementation of a controversial policy of keeping fuel and food prices artificially low in the urban areas, as well as the regular announcement of salary increases for urban workers and the declarations of special holidays with pay (DeLancey 1989, 63).

Soccer, however, is perhaps the single most important unifying factor in Cameroon. When the national team, "The Indomitable Lions," plays, Cameroonians, irrespective of their regional, ethnic, religious, or political affiliation, often rally to support the team. Thus one approach President Ahidjo and his successor used in maintaining national unity was declaring a public holiday every time the national soccer team won a major tournament. Victory for the national team meant Cameroonians were assured of a national holiday, which gave them an opportunity to enjoy their makossa into the early hours of the morning, consume more alcohol, and pay less attention to politics. In 1982, for example, the Indomitable Lions qualified for the FIFA World Cup tournament for the first time. The Lions defeated Morocco in the first round of the competition in the city of Kenitra, Morocco, on Sunday, November 15, 1982. President Paul Biya declared Monday, November 16, a holiday. When both teams met again on November 29th in the second leg of the tournament in Yaounde, the Lions defeated Morocco (2–1), in a packed stadium of almost 100,000 spectators from all over the country. President Biya, who also attended the match, extended the feasting by declaring Monday, November 30th, a holiday (Mfomo, Mono Ndjana, and Badioung 1994, 29). Occurring at a time when some politicians were privately questioning the November 6th transfer of power to Paul Biya (Takougang and Krieger 1998), the victory, the drinking, and the celebration may have served as a temporary distraction from politics. As illustration, between 1982 and 1990, I recorded the number of crates of beer sold by "Sister Alice," an off-license owner in "Old Gendarmes Quarter" Mamfe, during major soccer tournaments. The average weekly sales were 13–15 crates of beer. Table 2.1 shows that each time the national team won a major soccer tournament, alcohol consumption increased significantly, as some Cameroonians continued feasting and celebrating until 4:00 or 5:00 a.m. In addition to drinking, people listened and danced to makossa music all night and ate an inordinate amount of food, especially pepper soup.

Table 2.1. Number of Crates of Beer Sold by “Sister Alice” during Major Soccer Tournaments

<i>Major Soccer Tournament and Post-Tournament Holiday</i>	<i>Winners</i>	<i>Average Weekly Sales (crates of beer)</i>	<i>Number of Crates Sold during major tournament</i>	<i>Difference</i>
November 15, 1981, Cameroon v. Morocco: First League in Morocco (World Cup Qualifier) <i>November 16, holiday</i>	Cameroon 2–0	13–15	58	43
November 29, 1981, Cameroon v. Morocco: Second League in Cameroon. December 1, 1981 holiday	Cameroon 2–1	13–15	69	54
March 18, 1984, Cameroon v. Nigeria in Ivory Coast (Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) <i>March 19, 1981, holiday</i>	Cameroon 3–1	13–15	65	50
March 21, 1986, Cameroon v. Egypt in Egypt, (AFCON) <i>(no holiday)</i>	Egypt 5–4, penalty shootout	13–15	53	38
June 8, 1990, Cameroon v. Argentina, Current World Cup Champions Opening Match <i>June 9, 1990 holiday</i>	Cameroon 1–0	13–15	96	71

Source: Compiled by author.

PAUL BIYA’S METEORIC RISE TO POWER

Paul Biya owes his rise to the presidency of the Republic to President Ahmadou Ahidjo. After his studies at various French universities, Biya returned to Cameroon in 1962, where, for over a decade he served in the upper echelon of the civil service and at the Presidency of the Republic. In 1975, Ahidjo created the post of Prime Minister, a position that had been abolished following the creation of the unitary state in 1972. Then in 1979, he initiated a change in the constitution designating the Prime Minister as successor to the

president. And on November 2, 1982, in a move that surprised many Cameroonians and the international community, President Ahidjo announced his resignation as president of the Republic, effective November 6th, 1982. In a peaceful transition to power, a rare occurrence on the continent at the time, Paul Biya succeeded Ahidjo as the second president of the Republic. In fact, Ahidjo would be the second leader in Africa to relinquish power peacefully following a similar decision by President Léopold Senghor of Senegal in 1980. Other noteworthy successions in Africa include: William Tubman to William Tolbert in Liberia, Jomo Kenyetta to Daniel arap Moi in Kenya, and Leon Mba to Omar Bongo in Gabon (Kreiger 2015, 77). Although no official reasons were given for Ahidjo's abrupt decision to step down, rumors and speculations pointed to advice given to him by his French doctors of his poor health, recommending that he needed rest (Krieger 2015, 65).

In appointing Biya as his successor, President Ahidjo had inadvertently created a "political Frankenstein," a technocrat whom the ex-president thought had no political following and no base of support other than Ahidjo's patronage (DeLancey 1989, 66). In the ex-president's calculus, Biya as president would remain loyal to him while Ahidjo himself would actually retain control of the government (DeLancey 1989). Two factors appear to support this claim. (1) The former president retained the all-powerful position of Chairman of the single party, the CNU. This position gave Ahidjo, not the president, the platform and the opportunity to dictate decisions and directions on major policies of the country. (2) The ex-president had also ensured that there was no change in the constitution when he resigned. Indeed, DeLancey (1989, 66) noted that the most significant change that occurred was Biya's appointment of a northerner and Muslim, Boubou Bello Maigairi, a cabinet minister to the position of prime minister. This move was seen as a way of mollifying and reassuring northerners who might have been nervous about a southerner assuming of power.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

The transition from the former president Ahidjo to President Biya originally looked like a fairy tale because the leaders appeared to be collaborating in order to reassure an apprehensive Cameroonian public of continued peace and stability. Both leaders engaged in separate speaking tours to different parts of the country to calm fears and concerns from the public. Paul Biya also retained many of his predecessor's close associates and supporters in important cabinet and government positions, including Sadou Daouda, Samuel Eboua, Victor Ayissi Mvodo, Guillaume Bwele, Joseph Charles Doumba, Boubou Bello

Maigari, Nji Yakoubou, and prominent Anglophones like Emmanuel Tabi Egbe and Solomon Tandeng Muna. At the same time, some of Ahidjo's supporters and party officials who were worried about the transition and opposed to Paul Biya's ascension to power were dismissed from the party by Ahidjo, who retained his position as head of the party (DeLancey 1989, 67). Although President Biya started asserting himself as president of the republic away from the shadows of his predecessor, he did not fundamentally deviate from the system he had inherited. Biya retained the authoritarian machine and practices, he kept the old decrees that concentrated powers in the president, and he also preserved the coalition of regional and local leaders who created the ex-president's patron-client network. Furthermore, Biya retained most of Ahidjo's "barons" to assure continuity and stability in the country. These changes in Cameroon prompted a major newspaper in Nigeria to comment that:

Therein lies Mr. Biya's problem. He has inherited a system he can't change. A whiff of democratic air and things fall apart. Ahidjo has certainly played his last political hat trick. Cameroon after him will determine whether he evolved a system to serve himself or his country. (*New Nigerian* 1982, 6648)

But while Cameroon has so far remained an island of stability in an ocean of instability and political change, it has nevertheless experienced periods of instability. The following section looks at instances in which the nation's unity and stability were threatened especially since Biya's ascendancy to the Presidency in 1982.

PAUL BIYA: CHANGE AND INSTABILITY, PHASE 1

Early in his presidency, Biya proposed a series of reforms, called for the opening of the political space to democracy, and initiated bureaucratic reforms that would enable growth and prosperity in the country. These goals were later outlined in his 1987 book *Communal Liberalism*, in which he also echoed his support for the single party until such a time that the country was mature enough to commence multipartyism (Biya 1987, 43). While supporting the one-party system, Biya expressed his intention to introduce a new approach to governing through his motto of "Rigour" and "Moralization." This new policy initiative was unnerving to many of the "barons," who were terrified of Biya's stripping them of their wealth, powers, and privileges. On April 12, 1983, the president made his first major cabinet reshuffle without adhering to Ahidjo's recommendations (Takougang and Krieger 1998, 69). Many of the former president's clients or associates were replaced with Biya's young technocrats. The new president was also at odds with his predecessor over

the legislative electoral process. Biya wanted multiple candidates to compete for their positions within the single-party structures, which was contrary to the old list system in which the electorate simply voted to approve a list of candidates that had been approved by the party's executive. A disagreement between the two leaders over appointments to important government and administrative positions also generated a tense atmosphere in the country. Ahidjo accused Biya of appointing too many southerners and of not taking into consideration the "barons" of the old regime. Finally, Ahidjo was not pleased with Biya's fast pace of reforms, particularly his decision to allow a certain degree of freedom of speech and the press (DeLancey 1989, 68).

The Failed 1983 August Plot

Disagreements between Ahidjo and Biya would culminate in the "August Plot," designed to destabilize Biya's government. The former president met secretly with ministers from his northern stronghold and asked them to resign from Biya's government, a move that would have seriously weakened Biya's presidency and potentially led to its collapse. This plot was uncovered, however, and President Biya announced over national radio a plot linking the former president and two of his security personnel (Major Oumarou and Captain Salatou, both northerners). The conflict between Ahidjo and Biya reached new heights on August 23, 1983, when the former president denounced Biya over French radio and in a press interview during which he conjured a possible north-south conflict (DeLancey 1989; Takougang and Krieger 1998). Four days later, Ahidjo announced his resignation as Chairman of the CNU party. This feud no doubt reverberated not only in Cameroon, but throughout the continent and the international community. Cameroon's enviable record of a "stable political system" was undergoing stress for the first time since the UPC uprising in the 1960s. A major reaction to the Plot was the president's decision to diffuse powers in the once largest province of the republic, the North province—and a stronghold of the former president—by breaking it into three separate provinces: Adamawa, Far North, and North. Similarly, the Center South province was broken up into two entities, the Center and South provinces. In early 1984, the former president was tried in absentia for his role in the "August Plot." He was found guilty and sentenced to death. President Biya later commuted the death sentence on Ahidjo and his collaborators in the coup attempt to life imprisonment.

During the extraordinary Congress of the CNU that was held in Yaounde on September 14, 1983, President Biya was elected Chairman of the party. His election as Chairman was an opportunity to implement his policies and

also extricate himself from Ahidjo's shadow. He embraced democratic governance, relaxed restrictions on the press and on individual freedoms, and also restricted police and gendarme brutality on civilians. Biya's "New Deal" reforms caught the attention of international observers, including Jonathan Derrick, a student of African Affairs, who noted that "Cameroon is surely seeing the start of a Prague Spring or a Portuguese 'Flower Revolution'" (Derrick 1983, 2273). Another bold move by the president was his initiative to amend the Constitution, allowing non-party members to run for president of the republic.

The Coup of April 6, 1984

As mentioned, the 1983 attempt to undermine Biya's government was unsuccessful. Additionally, many members of the old regime, including senior government officials, directors of parastatal organizations, businessmen and industrialists who had enriched themselves through government preferment during Ahidjo's presidency, felt threatened by Biya's new policies (Krieger 2015). With no other options left, these individuals saw a military putsch as their best chance of success against the Biya regime (Krieger 2015, 64). Although the Elite Republican Guards, made up mostly of young men from the former president's hometown of Garoua and responsible for protecting the president, had not been impacted by the changes ordered by the president following the August Plot, their presence at the presidency was now seen as a potential threat to the regime. Ultimately, the president's decision to disband and redeploy members of the Republican Guard played into the unhappiness that was looming among the former president's loyalists, and this change in the Guards' roles is generally believed to have been the trigger for the April putsch. On April 6, 1984, members of the Elite Republican Guard, led by the northerner Colonel Ibrahim Saleh and supported by some members of the gendarmerie, army, and police, initiated a coup against President Biya and his government. Forces loyal to the president launched a counterattack and foiled the coup.

Although the coup lasted for two days, April 6–8, its repercussions were huge for the country, particularly for President Biya. It is estimated that about 1,000 to 1,600 civilians and military personnel in Yaoundé and its environs died during the attempted coup. Another consequence of the coup was that Cameroon's enviable attractiveness as one of the most stable countries in Africa suffered, as foreign investors became apprehensive investing in Cameroon, which in turn led to a further decline in the country's struggling economy. It also forced the regime to divert resources from other areas, such as education, healthcare, infrastructural development, and other social welfare programs, in order to strengthen the military.

FROM "DEMOCRAT" TO "DICTATOR": AFTERMATH OF THE FAILED APRIL COUP

The failed coup against Biya forced the president to embark on a series of policies designed to protect the country from any future coup attempts, including rolling back some of the democratic reforms that he had introduced when he came to power in 1982. DeLancey (1989, 72) has enumerated some of the measures taken by the president to ensure the nation's political stability and the survival of his regime: (1) The declaration of a six-month state of emergency in and around the city of Yaoundé, the nation's capital, and beefing up security apparatus throughout the country; (2) The elimination of the post of Prime Minister and the removal of government officials who had been connected directly or indirectly with the coup; (3) The hurried trials of individuals suspected of involvement in the coup, followed by the executions of those found guilty. And although Biya had promised individual freedoms for Cameroonians and freedom of expression and of the press in his National Charter of Freedoms, journalists were frequently arrested and detained. The administration also banned books and newspapers that were deemed critical or less supportive of the regime (*West Africa* 1987). (4) The president also proposed changes to the Constitution, particularly Articles 1, 5, and 7. Under Article 1, the country's name was changed from United Republic of Cameroon (a name that had been adopted in the 1972 Constitution), to the Republic of Cameroon (a name that had been adopted by French Cameroon in 1960, after French Cameroon gained independence from France). Article 5 of the 1984 Constitution abolished the post of Prime Minister, which had been reinstated in 1975. And Article 7 of the new Constitution established the Speaker of the National Assembly as interim president for forty days in case the president was unable to perform his role as president before new elections could be held. The final phase in asserting his authority and his control of state institutions occurred in March 1985 at the party Congress in Bamenda, Northwest Province. During the Congress, Biya replaced Ahidjo's CNU party, that had existed as the sole national party for almost two decades with his own party, the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) or the *Rassemblement Démocratique du Peuples Camerounais* (RDPC). With this, the last vestige of the Ahidjo regime was done away with, and the period of uncertainty was averted—at least for the time being.

CHANGE AND INSTABILITY, PHASE II: THE ECONOMY

Although Paul Biya and his regime had survived the "August Plot" and the failed coup of April 6, 1984, the president still had to deal with an ailing

economy, a profound effect that would serve as a cause of concern and a new source of instability to his regime. For example, the global economic recession of the mid-1980s resulted in a significant decline in revenue due to a decline in the demand for one of Cameroon's chief exports, aluminum, that had far-reaching consequences for the country's economy. Furthermore, the rise in inflation as well as a decline in the price of oil in the world market, impacted Cameroon's revenue stream (see, for example, Jua 1991; Takougang 1993). Additionally, the uncertainty of the April coup caused some Cameroonian businessmen, particularly the Bamilikes, to withdraw huge amounts of monies from the banking system, leading to insolvency and pushing the economy into deep recession (van de Walle 1994). As if Biya's problems were not enough, the government was under intense pressure from international financial institutions, particularly the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, to adopt and execute the terms of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP). Cameroon's SAP strategy, which, according to Nicolas van de Walle, included "the conventional prescriptions of cuts in public sector expenditures, increased state revenues and the compression of consumption coupled with the promotion of selective investments to foster long-term growth" (van de Walle 1994, 159). John Mbaku argued that SAP ". . . consist of two connected elements: policy changes which are designed to help the economy achieve both internal and external balances and are considered the purview of the IMF; and reforms that force the economy to rely more on markets for the allocation of resources." (2004, 401) The program also called on countries to devalue their domestic currencies in order to make the country's exports more competitive globally, to promote economic liberalizations policies, to reduce government subsidization of domestic consumption, and to encourage free trade by getting rid of protectionist laws and statutes (The World Bank 1981; Danaher 1984). Despite Biya's resistance in implementing these draconian measures, he later capitulated. The immediate impact of these prescriptions was a steady increase in unemployment, particularly among university graduates. However, instead of blaming the interference by external players in the country's economic problems, most Cameroonians were enduring and believed that the president's "Rigour" and "Moralization" policies were responsible for the economic paralysis in the country. To deal with the economic problems, the government announced that university students would no longer be receiving their stipends, and that, instead, each student would be required to pay an annual registration fee of FCFA 50,000 (\$100.00). The decision sparked widespread strikes, protests, and demonstrations on university campuses throughout the country—protests that expanded to include bendskin drivers (local motorcycle owners who use their motorcycles as urban taxis), who were protesting the cost of petroleum products and regular shakedown at police checkpoints (Amin 2012, 31).

INTERLUDE FOR BIYA: THE INDOMITABLE LIONS AND THE 1990 WORLD CUP

Paul Biya's political troubles needed a hiatus, and the 1990 FIFA World Cup Soccer tournament in Italy provided that breathing space to the embattled president. The national team, the Indomitable Lions, qualified for the tournament, and many of President Biya's antagonists traveled to Italy to lend their support to the national team. Biya used his position as president to exert pressure on the coaches of the national team to include a retired thirty-eight-year-old Roger Milla, a Cameroonian and African soccer icon, in the squad. Although this was a controversial decision (executive interference in football matters), the team nevertheless reached the quarter-finals, the first time that any African country had attained that level of success in the tournament. More mesmerizing was Cameroon's victory over Argentina, the defending World Cup Champions by 1–0, on the opening day of the competition. This was followed by victories over Romania (2–1) and Colombia (2–1) and then a loss to the Soviet Union (0–4). Although Cameroon lost in the quarterfinals to England (2–3), its success and overall performance in the tournament were hailed as major milestones for African and international soccer. More importantly, Roger Milla's outstanding performance in the entire tournament—in which he scored four goals, including his enthralling *makossa* dance display at the corner flag post after one of those goals—was a performance that brought recognition, fame, and respect to the player and his teammates. As noted earlier, this success, at least for the time being, unified the nation during a period of rising political tension and instability. Indeed, the word on the street was that Biya's presidency may have survived because of the team's performance at the tournament.

FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL AND IMPLICATIONS FOR AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES

The collapse of the Iron Curtain in Eastern and Central Europe in 1989 had profound consequences throughout the world, including Cameroon. The susceptibilities of the single-party system and the refusal by the military to use force against populist demonstrations in many authoritarian regimes in the former Soviet empire revealed a growing political undercurrent, which would later spread to other parts of the world. A series of events in 1990 threatened the regime's resilience and political stability. It all began in January 1990 with the arrest of Pius Njawe, editor of a newspaper, *Le Messager*, in the economic capital, Douala. Njawe had written a critical piece about pervasive corruption in government. A similar incident occurred in February when a prominent

barrister from the city of Douala, Yondo Black, was also arrested when he tried to form a new and independent political party (Krieger 2015, 128). The trials and subsequent convictions of these two individuals served as a catalyst for political awakening in Cameroon. Then in March 1990, John Fru Ndi, a bookstore owner and a former parliamentary candidate for President Biya's CPDM party in Bamenda, launched his own party, the Social Democratic Front (SDF). Violent demonstrations also flared up in Bamenda when a renowned Anglophone lawyer, Fowgum Gorji Dinka, was arrested for distributing what the government claimed was "inciteful literature denouncing the Biya regime as illegitimate, and unconstitutional, and called for the creation of a confederal system" (Gorji-Dinka 1985). On May 26, 1990, John Fru Ndi and his newly formed SDF party organized their first rally in Bamenda. The administration responded with disproportionate force that led to the death of six young Cameroonians. This tragic incident sparked violence and elevated John Fru Ndi—before this a little-known individual and a political lightweight in Cameroon politics—to major recognition as "resistance leader," later becoming known as "Ni John" (Krieger 2014, 128).

CHANGE AND INSTABILITY, PHASE III: POLITICS

The lull caused by the distraction and by Cameroon's great performance at the World Cup tournament did not last for long. By late 1990, opposition to the regime had resumed as the various forces continued their agitation and demands for democratic reforms. Finally, on December 5, 1990, under tremendous domestic and international pressure, the National Assembly passed legislation introduced by President Biya allowing press freedom and political liberalization. Specifically, Law No. 90/056 reversed Biya's stand against multiparty politics and, in fact, created a procedure for the formation of new parties (Takougang and Krieger 1998, 109). The state, however, still retained the will and residual capacity for ad hoc repression (Krieger 2015, 129). By mid-1991, more than fifty political parties, as well as dozens of civil society organizations, dominated the country's political landscape. The major opposition parties, working together against the ruling CPDM party, called for a *Sovereign National Conference* to discuss the nation's political future. Biya's refusal to organize such a conference led to calls for more protests and demonstrations. The president responded swiftly to the call for a national conference by addressing the National Assembly on June 27th, and defying opposition demands on live television and radio. His message to the opposition was clear: "*Je l'ai dit et je le maintiens, la Conférence nationale est sans objet pour le Cameroun.*" (translated: "I have said it and repeat it, the National Conference

has no purpose for Cameroon”). But Biya’s emphatic “*sans objet*” became a catchphrase for the opposition and resistance movement, which called for a general strike in the major cities of Cameroon, including Douala, the nation’s economic capital (*Le Message* 1991). The strike, referred to as *villes mortes* or ghost towns, hit hardest in Douala, which was not only the economic capital, but also the main seaport in charge of dispensing more than 80 percent of goods in Cameroon and other landlocked countries like Chad and the Central African Republic. According to Takougang and Krieger (1998, 13), the president’s defiance resulted in a shutdown of all but the most basic security responses throughout most of the four-province heartland of the strike. The strike also impacted other sectors of the economy, including transportation, banking, and commerce. This strategy resulted in economic paralysis and contributed to capital flight, further weakening the economy. Politically, it caused a major rift among supporters of the president, with some loyalists supporting a national conference, which the president still vehemently opposed, while others simply abandoned the CPDM and formed their own parties.

Fortunately for Biya, division among the opposition parties revealed their inability to agree on a single strong leadership capable of challenging the regime. A major issue that caused fierce disagreement among the opposition was extending the strike and boycott to schools. Biya capitalized on this fractured opposition and announced that parliamentary and presidential elections would be held respectively in March and October 1992. The major opposition party, SDF, boycotted the parliamentary elections on grounds that the regime would manipulate the results. This decision by the SDF was widely criticized locally and internationally. Then in October 1992, presidential elections were held, and in a highly questionable result of the outcome, Biya and the ruling CPDM won by a narrow margin, notwithstanding ballot rigging and fragmentation of the opposition. Takougang (2003, 421–435) attributed Biya’s victory, among other things, “to the power of incumbency, to skew the system to his favor and paints a picture of an ethnically fragmented political opposition desperate to be bought off.”

DISCONTENT, POLITICAL ACTIVISM, AND REPRESSION: THE NGOA-EKELLE EXPERIENCE

Another significant element of the 1990s was that created by clashes between students of the University of Yaounde and law enforcement officers. On April 2–3, 1991, a student movement known as *The Parlement* was created close to the old university restaurant, near “Carrefour Orly.” The students demanded the release of fellow students who had been arrested and detained by police

and gendarmes, as well as an end to torture and rape of female students and cessation of all forms of violence toward students (*Parlement*, April 18, 1991). The student protest movement was supported by a majority of the faculty at the University, as well as members of the public. On May 6, 1991, thousands of students gathered in front of the Chancellor's office to demonstrate against attacks by vigilante groups loyal to the president and the CPDM. According to the *Cameroon Post*, "hundreds of heavily armed troops launched an assault on Bassorah, a location at the university of Yaoundé, where security forces launched the most brutal crackdown in the university's history" (*Cameroon Post* April 11–18, 1991). The paper also reported that orders came directly from the presidency and regime hardliners, who believed the crackdown would lead to the capture of leaders of the *Parlement* and to the weakening of the student movement. Reports indicate that soldiers, gendarmes, and police—as well as pro-government student groups and the Beti vigilante (*comité de vigilance*), headed by a Beti native, Joseph Manda Fils—participated in the brutal campaign, which targeted Anglophones and Bemilekes. It is estimated that 1,000–1,600 students were arrested and hundreds more severely wounded in this crackdown (*Cameroon Post* April 11–18, 1991). In the wake of this brutality, the leadership of the student movement officially launched what became known as "Operation Ghost Campus," on May 10, 1991. Movement leaders urged students to go home to their parents in the provinces in order to avoid further confrontation, injuries, and possible death by the security forces. This strategy led to the exodus of more than 20,000 students from the University campus. Many of the students, however, continued their antigovernment protest in their respective provinces, calling for the government to meet their demands, especially an end to police and gendarme brutality (*Cameroon Post* April 11–18, 1991). Antigovernment rallies and demonstrations gained traction in major cities like Douala, Bafousam, Limbe, Bamenda, Buea, and Garoua, as well as in Bertoua, in the Eastern province, which was considered to be a pro-regime stronghold. The brutal assault on student protesters by the police, gendarmes, and members of the security forces emboldened the students' resolve to continue with their activism. On May 12, 1991, representatives of the student movement joined human rights associations and other opposition political parties to form the National Coordination of Opposition Parties and Association (NCOPA).

BIYA AND THE ANGLOPHONE QUANDARY

The biggest challenge faced by Biya and the Francophone-dominated regime in Cameroon is what has been described by Konings and Nyamnjoh (1997) as

the “Anglophone Problem.” The Anglophone region constituted 9 percent of the territory and 21 percent of the population (Kofele-Kale 1986, 62). In fact, since the abolition of the Federation and its replacement with the unitary state in 1972, the English-speaking population had expressed continued resentment at their marginalization (Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997, 218). Political liberalization in the 1990s presented an opportunity for Anglophones to openly express their views regarding their unequal treatment in the country. In the wake of the pro-democracy movement in 1993, citizens of the former British Southern Cameroons organized the All Anglophone Conference (AAC) in the city of Buea. This conference brought together various Anglophone factions from the Southwest and Northwest provinces. The goal of the conference was to develop a common strategy for demanding change. In its final document, known as the Buea Declaration, the representatives outlined grievances about Francophone domination and called for a return to the federal state structure (*Cameroon Post* 27, 1993). Meanwhile, Anglophone students at the University of Yaoundé who supported political liberalization and the Social Democratic Front were described by some of their Francophone counterparts as “*les ennemis dans la maison*” (translated: “the enemy in the house”). Indeed, the Minister of Territorial Administration, Ibrahim Mbombo Njoya, a Francophone, is quoted to have said, “If Anglophones were not satisfied with ‘national unity,’ they should go elsewhere.” The frustrations of Anglophones is echoed by John Ngu Foncha, former Vice President of the Federal Republic and one of the architects of reunification:

The Anglophone Cameroonians whom I brought into the union have been ridiculed and referred to as “les Biafrais,” “les ennemis dans la maison,” “les traîtres” etc., and the constitutional provision which protected this Anglophone minority have been suppressed, their voices drowned while the rule of the gun replaced the dialogue which the Anglophones cherish so much. (Mukong and Foncha 1990, 155)

Francophone arrogance, marginalization of Anglophones, inequitable distribution of economic resources, the calculated strategy of not appointing Anglophones to important cabinet positions, and domination of the French language as the sole lingua franca are just some of the burning issues that continue to ignite discontent and threaten the stability of the country. One school of thought among some Anglophones is that the Francophone regime is determined to recolonize British or Southern Cameroons (e.g., see Anyangwe and Fonkem’s chapters in this volume). Adherents of this view strongly support secession from the polity, while others continue to advocate for a return to the pre-1972 federal structure (Asuagbor 2004). It is apparent from all the preceding discussions that political stability in

Cameroon remains on shaky grounds and is likely to collapse if serious corrective measures are not taken to mitigate it.

CONCLUSION

Cameroon's political development in the waning years of the twentieth century witnessed dramatic political, social, and economic changes that were marked by leadership and power transition, corruption, prolonged economic paralysis, violence, and instability resulting from flawed democratic elections, a failed coup attempt, and a brutal crackdown on the student protest movement. Although the magnitude of Cameroon's problems pale in comparison to the experiences of such other African countries as Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ivory Coast, Rwanda, and Sudan, these problems have no doubt revealed some of the dangerous political undercurrents in deeply divided societies such as Cameroon. This chapter reveals some of the problems associated with political change in Africa, especially in times of economic austerity. Although repression, co-option, and effective patron-client networking by Ahidjo and Biya may account for some degree of the stability in the country, it is also clear in the argument here presented that social pastimes such as football, alcohol, and the country's abundant food production have also been invaluable in maintaining stability in Cameroon. However, the "Anglophone Problem" remains one of the most important challenges that need to be seriously addressed for the long-term survival of the union.

NOTE

1. For details on the struggle for independence in Cameroon see Victor T. Le Vine, 1964, *The Cameroons: From Mandate to Independence* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

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Chapter Three

The Right to Self-Determination in the African Charter

A Critique of the African Commission's Jurisprudence in Kevin Gumne et al. v. Cameroun

Carlson Anyangwe

INTRODUCTION

In 1961, the French-speaking State of *La République du Cameroun* annexed by subterfuge the adjacent UN Trust Territory of the British Southern Cameroons (Cameroun 1961 Constitution, preamble; Ahidjo 1962 *Discours* at UC Congress in Ebolowa; Aboya 2002; Sindjoun 2002; Mbome 1992; Messmer 1998; Gaillard 1994; Stark 1976; Vanderlinden 2000; Benjamin 1972; Deltombe et al. 2011). This underhanded act resulted in the colonial occupation and administration of that territory, and the subjugation, domination, exploitation, oppression, and common suffering of its people. Over the years, this continuing melancholic condition has provoked an impressive academic writing on the Southern Cameroons Decolonization Question or what is often denoted as the “Anglophone” Problem (Elong 2013; Anyangwe 2013; Anyangwe 2009; Chem-Langhee 1995; Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997; Nkwi 2004; Fonkem 2014; Eyoh 1998; Konings 1986; Lyombe 2016; Bayart 1978; Konings and Nyamnjoh 2003; Ebai 2009; Jua and Konings 2004). It has also led to a spate of communications before relevant human rights monitoring bodies by citizens of the former British Southern Cameroons (*Mukong v. Cameroun* 1994; *Dinka v. Cameroun* 2005; *Afuson Njaru v. Cameroun* 2007; *Gumne et al. v. Cameroun* 2009 and *Akwanga v. Cameroun* 2011). These communications expose the oppression, repression, domination and exploitation in the

Southern Cameroons. Invariably, the complainants successfully alleged a wide range of systematic egregious individual human rights violations by the respondent State. In *Gumne et al. v. Cameroon*, however, self-determination was additionally claimed for the people of the Southern Cameroons. Sadly, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights declined, on legally indefensible grounds, to uphold the claim.

This chapter is a robust critique of the ruling on that specific point. It argues that the Commission misdirected itself on that issue, and that it would certainly have upheld the self-determination claim of the people of the Southern Cameroons had it properly applied its mind to the complainants' cogent argument articulated around the following points: a proper construction of Article 20 of the African Charter, the territory of the Southern Cameroons being firmly secured by international boundary treaties, the failed UN-UK decolonization process in the British Southern Cameroons, and the facts of annexation, colonization, domination, and oppression by *La République du Cameroun*.

The chapter is divided into five parts. After this introductory section, the second section briefly disposes of the concepts of internal and external self-determination with reference to three sets of cases that have come before the African Commission; the third section dwells on self-determination in the context of black-on-black colonization; the fourth section seeks to unravel the meaning of Article 20 of the Charter; and the concluding fifth section submits, on the good authority of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), that the national sovereignty of the former UN Trust Territory of the Southern Cameroons belongs to its people, and that when trusteeship was ended without transfer of power to the elected government of the people of that Homeland, sovereignty simply went into abeyance and has remained so and will remain so until the moment of independence, which must inexorably come at some point in time.

The right to self-determination is a fundamental principle in human rights law and also a continuing collective human right by virtue of which a people freely determines its political status and freely pursues its economic, social, and cultural development (see, for example, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, art. 21 and African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, art. 20). Furthermore, it is a right held by people rather than by governments alone (*Western Sahara case* 1975; Danspeckgruber 2002). Self-determination was at the heart of the decolonization process spearheaded by the United Nations in terms of its Charter provisions (UN Charter art. 1 (2): 55, 73, and 76; Griffiths 2003, 1). It is enshrined as a fundamental human right in common article 1 of the ICCPR and the ICESCR, as well as in article 20 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

For many years after the coming into force of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the work of its implementing body, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, centered mainly on first-generation rights—civil and political rights. The impression was therefore gaining grounds that certain rights in the Charter were beyond enforcement. The Commission seemed aware of this developing sentiment, and in *Social and Economic Rights Action Centre & the Centre for Economic and Social Rights v Nigeria* (Communication 155/96) it seized the occasion to dispel it. It declared that no right in the Charter is beyond enforcement. This welcome clarification is couched in the following terms:

The uniqueness of the African situation and the special qualities of the African Charter imposes upon the African Commission an important task. International law and human rights must be responsive to African circumstances. Clearly, collective rights, environmental rights, and economic and social rights are essential elements of human rights in Africa. The African Commission will apply any of the diverse rights contained in the African Charter. It welcomes this opportunity to make clear that there is no right in the African Charter that cannot be made effective.

In the authoritative view of the Commission, therefore, “there is no right in the African Charter that cannot be made effective.” How, then, has the Commission fared in the enforcement and implementation of the right to self-determination guaranteed under Article 20 of the Charter? The Commission's mandate to enforce the rights in the Charter is one thing; its power to ensure implementation of its own decisions is another. Indeed, both the African Commission and the African Court lack a proper enforcement mechanism. As a result, a major challenge of both human rights treaty bodies is the implementation deficit of their rulings, these being simply ignored by many countries—a clear case of the gap that exists in the African human rights system between the setting of norms and the implementation of norms.

The Commission's “decisions,” “views,” and recommendations are not formally binding on AU Member States. Since they are not binding in the judicial sense, they tend to be treated with levity. There are no consequences for non-compliance. For example, in *Gumne et al. v. Cameroun* (Communication 266/2003), the Commission recommended in 2010 that the Respondent State, *La République du Cameroun*, “enters into constructive dialogue with the Complainants, particularly the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) and the Southern Cameroons People's Organization (SCAPO)” to resolve the Southern Cameroons dispute, and that it should “report on the implementation of the aforesaid recommendations within 180 days of the adoption of this decision by the AU Assembly.” *La République du*

Cameroun dismissed the recommendation and there have been no attendant consequences for its defiance. Eight years on, the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government has not been able to do anything about this flaw. Under article 5 (1) (a) of the Protocol on the African Human Rights Court, the Commission is entitled to submit cases to the Court. Unfortunately, the Commission has so far declined to do so. For many observers, this silence by the Commission and the Assembly is tantamount to a challenge to violence.

When the Commission reaches a decision on the merits in a complaint submitted to it, the Commission becomes *functus officio*. Part of the reason why enforcement of the Commission's decisions is elusive (Wachira and Ayinla 2006, 465) is that the African Charter has no provision on enforcement of decisions. Much to the chagrin of complainants, the Commission has no mechanism for ensuring the implementation of its decisions. The rapporteur of a matter decided on the merits could initiate dialogue with the relevant government or even collaborate with his or her UN counterpart to help implement the Commission's recommendations. But this route is seldom taken, if at all. What the Commission usually does when its decisions are disregarded is to reflect that fact in its Activity Report to the Assembly in the hope that the Assembly would ensure implementation. For example, in its Activity Report for 2012 to the Assembly through the Executive Council, the Commission lamented the fact that "Member States generally do not comply with the decisions of the Commission or implement its recommendations" (combined 32 and 33 Reports). Whether by design or default, the Charter gives no guidance on how the Assembly could ensure compliance with the Commission's decisions. Member States therefore continue to consider compliance merely as an optional treaty obligation. Perversely, then, while Respondent States readily accept the benefits of the Commission's decisions that are in their favor, they often decline to acknowledge the burden of decisions that are against them. In the current circumstances, the victims, having exhausted all peaceful means of redress to no avail, then rightly feel entitled to resort to self-help or other measures to vindicate their rights.

The Commission has thus sometimes come under criticism, perhaps unfairly, for being timid or weak in discharging its protective mandate (Mutua 1993, 5). This was one of the major factors that prompted the establishment of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (Protocol African Court 1998). The Human Rights Court, being a court of law, has power to render binding and enforceable decisions (art. 27 and 30, Protocol African Court), unlike the Commission, which can only express "views" and make "recommendations." Initially, decisions of the Commission were qualitatively weak, but over the years they have, generally speaking, improved, though still cautious in nature. Decisions have become more elaborate, well-reasoned, and of

greater jurisprudential value. Much, however, still depends on the calibre and learning of the individual rapporteur of a communication. That is why from time to time one still finds decisions that are wanting in terms of style, quality, and creativity. The Commission's rules of procedure do not provide for collective drafting of decisions; nor do they provide for separate or dissenting opinions, unlike in the case of the African Human Rights Court where Article 28 (7) of the Protocol makes allowance for separate or dissenting opinions. The decision in each communication before the Commission is deemed to be the collective wisdom of the Commission as a whole, sitting together *in banc*, as it were. But the penmanship of each decision is in fact that of the rapporteur of the communication.

Another contributory factor that weakens the standing of decisions of the Commission is the provision of Article 59 of the Charter, the confidentiality clause. That Article requires all measures taken within the provisions of the Charter to remain confidential until the Assembly decides otherwise. However, it requires that the report on any such measure shall be published by the Chairman of the Commission if the Assembly so decides. The same Article requires the Activity Report of the Commission to be published, but again, only after the Report has been considered by the Assembly. This confidentiality requirement in effect means that the Assembly can embargo any decision by the Commission, or any part of it with which it is dissatisfied or uncomfortable. Alive to this reality, the Commission, consciously or unconsciously, tends to self-censor its own decisions. In other words, it tends to be cautious and guarded about what it decides, irrespective of the merits of a complaint before it. One of the early, but unsuccessful, battles of NGOs was to have this confidentiality requirement removed. That battle was informed by the fact that the more serious and massive human rights abuses in a country are, the less willing the country's government would be to publicize them. NGOs may have failed to have the confidentiality clause of the Charter expunged, but they now have greater access to the Commission, which itself has abandoned its earlier practice of concealing its decisions on complaints submitted to it. The Commission no longer hides behind the confidentiality clause of Article 59 of the Charter.

One critical factor that inhibited the work of the Commission was the outlook of the Commissioners themselves. Partly because it is not a requirement for membership of the Commission that a person should have a legal background—even though the Commission is a quasi-judicial body—many of the early Commissioners were generally government functionaries who were seconded to the Commission, and few of them were grounded in human rights law. Some Commissioners concurrently held ministerial or ambassadorial positions in their countries. Not surprisingly, they studiously avoided

taking any position they intuitively believed would likely be construed by the Assembly of Heads of State as politically incorrect. Each decision of the Commission effectively ran the gauntlet of political censorship. These Commissioners were in fact “conflicted.” They were in a conflict-of-interest situation since an individual holding a position in government is unlikely truly to act at the same time as an independent member of a body which is itself holding governments accountable for their actions. Legitimate self-determination claims that come before the Commission face one huge hurdle: the instinctive pathological phobia of secession erected by some African political leaders.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SELF-DETERMINATION

Self-determination has two interconnected aspects, one internal, the other external. The external aspect refers to the right of a people freely to determine their place in the international community (European Union 2002, 2) and is governed above all by international law. The internal aspect defines the right of a people freely to determine their political status and to pursue their cultural, social, and economic development. Three types of self-determination cases have come before the Commission. In one type, exemplified by *Sir Dawda Jawara v. Gambia*; *DRC v. Burundi*, *Uganda and Rwanda*, the right to self-determination is alleged to have been violated, but the variant of self-determination involved is not mentioned, although the facts in both cases suggest that some aspect of internal self-determination was at issue. The Commission has found little difficulty in upholding the right to internal self-determination but, unfortunately, without specifying its core content. In another type of self-determination cases, of which *Cabinda v. Angola* and *Katanga v. Zaire* are examples, a constituent part of a Respondent State asserts a right to establish a separate independent state, in fact a secessionist self-determination claim. In a third type, an example being *Kevin Ngwang Gumne et al. v. Cameroun*, colonization *de novo* is alleged, and it is argued that this situation gives rise to an indisputable right to decolonization, as in the case of saltwater colonization.

Sir Dawda Jawara v. The Gambia

In *Sir Dawda Jawara v. The Gambia* (Communications 147/95 and 149/96), the Complainant alleged a violation of a number of rights in the Charter, including Article 20, following the military *coup d'état* in The Gambia in July 1994. The Commission held that the *coup d'état*, even if it was without bloodshed, constituted a grave violation of the right of the people of The

Gambia under Article 20 (1) freely to choose their government. The Commission thus interpreted Article 20 (1) as involving the right of a people freely to choose their government. But that provision does not deal with the right to freely choose a government. It guarantees two core rights of peoples: the right to existence; and the right to self-determination, which entails the right of a people to “freely determine their political status and . . . pursue their economic and social development according to the policy they have freely chosen” (ICCPR and ICESCR art. 1). Freely choosing a government, which is more of an electoral right, is not the same thing as freely choosing a political status. The Commission incorrectly interpreted the words “determination of political status” to mean “freely choosing a government,” that is, voting a government into office. *Jawara* is nonetheless significant in its recognition of the availability of the right to self-determination in a post-colonial context, at least in circumstances where the military has overthrown the established government of a country and seized power. Unconstitutional accession to power covers not only situations of *coups d'état* (Anyangwe 2012), but also covers cases of insurgency takeovers, overstay in power without elections or through sham elections, and indefinite stay in power through rigged elections.

Democratic Republic of Congo v. Burundi et al.

The interstate communication *Democratic Republic of Congo v Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda* (Communication 227/99) arose from the occupation of and activities in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1998 by the armed forces of the three Respondent States. The Respondent States did not deny their military occupation of the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, but they argued that the occupation was necessary in order for them to safeguard their interests. The Commission rejected this argument, holding that “such interests would better be protected within the confines of the territories of the Respondent States.” It went on to hold that the occupation of the territories of the Complainant State was a flagrant violation of the right of the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo to self-determination. However, the Commission failed to elaborate on this brief finding. As in *Jawara*, the word *people* in this case has the constitutional law meaning of the sovereign people as a whole.

Cabinda and Katanga

The two cases *Cabinda* and *Katanga* raised serious legal questions of another dimension, namely, the relevance of Article 20 of the African Charter in the context of external self-determination for a constituent unit of an independent

state. An open question is whether Article 20 applies at all or to what extent in the context of remedial secession, given the general consensus among jurists that secession is neither legal nor illegal under international law (Anyangwe 2009, 151). The vexed question is whether—and if so, the extent to which—the right to self-determination will permit secession of part of the territory of a state (Bucheit 1978; Osterud 1985; Pavkovic and Radan 2003; Pavković and Radan 2007; Lehning 1998).

Cabinda. In April 1988, the National Union for the Liberation of Cabinda filed a complaint against Angola claiming, under Article 20 of the African Charter, self-determination (independence) for the exclave of Cabinda. Cabinda, formerly known as Portuguese Congo, is an oil-rich territory. It is situated in the southeast coast of Congo Brazzaville and north of Angola proper, separated by a 60-km-wide strip of Congo Kinshasa territory at the mouth of the Congo River. The Portuguese constitution of 1933 designated Angola and Cabinda as overseas provinces. Up until 1950, administrative reforms by Portugal divided Angola into districts, Cabinda being one of them. Though physically separated from Angola proper, Cabinda is a contested but integral part of the Angolan State since the date of achievement of independence from Portugal in 1975. The case *Union Nationale de Libération de Cabinda v. Angola* (Communication 24/89) was declared inadmissible because at that time Angola had not yet subscribed to the African Charter.

Seventeen years later, the Cabinda self-determination question again came up before the African Commission in *Communication 328/06: Front for the Liberation of the State of Cabinda v. Angola*. Complainants alleged denial of the right to self-determination by Angola in violation of Article 20 as well as of Articles 14, 19, 21, 22, and 24 of the Charter. The Respondent State, Angola, ill-advisedly declined to make any submissions on admissibility. The Commission proceeded to consider the communication on the basis of the submission of the Complainant and on information at its disposal.¹ In December 2011, the Commission held that there was constructive exhaustion of local remedies by Complainants and declared the communication admissible for consideration on the merits. Seven years on, a decision on the merits is still awaited. It will be interesting to see how the Commission eventually decides this case.

Katanga. This case presented a unique opportunity on the question of external self-determination. But the Commission shied away from a robust interrogation of the concept, the normative content, and the scope of the right to self-determination under the Charter. Its decision is cryptic and uninformative; there is no reference to authority; and there is no persuasive argument (Ankumah 1996, 164). In extenuation, *Katanga* came at a time when the Commission strictly adhered to the confidentiality clause of Article 59

of the Charter. The brief facts in *Congrès du Peuple Katangais v. Zaïre*—since renamed Democratic Republic of Congo (Communication 75/92)—are straightforward. In 1992, Gerard Moke, President of the Katangese People's Congress, submitted a communication to the Commission requesting recognition of the Katangese People's Congress as a liberation movement entitled to support in its efforts to secure independence for the Zaïrian region known as Katanga. Also requested was recognition of the independence of Katanga and assistance in persuading Zaïre to withdraw from Katanga. The communication hinged on Article 20 (1) which deals with the right to existence a self-determination. Apart from the allegation of a denial of the right to self-determination, the communication made no allegation of specific breaches of other human rights. After considering the case, the Commission ruled that there was no evidence of violations of any right under the Charter, and that the quest for independence for the Zaïrian province of Katanga had no merit under the Charter.

It took about three years for the Commission to reach a decision. This was a difficult case over which the Commission evidently agonized (as it did in *Gumne et al. v. Cameroun*). The difficulty arose from the much-flogged rhetoric at the time by African governments about sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national unity and their pathological phobia for secession. Moreover, at that time self-determination was considered as essentially a political right, even though the African Charter, inspired by common Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), elevates the principle to the level of a human right. But even as a legal right, it was thought that its implementation fell within the realms of politics. In the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, a number of scholars argued that, even as a human right, the right to self-determination was unavailable in a non-colonial context as it would otherwise offend against the principle of territorial integrity and the doctrine of national sovereignty (Ermacora 1968; Satpal 1970; Emerson 1971; Smouts 1972; Sinha 1974; Szasz 2000; Franck and Hoffman 1976; Haile 1986).² The Commission's cryptic decision reflects a mix of these conflicting tendencies. The decision further reflects a conceptual confusion when it states: "Self-determination may be exercised in any of the following ways: independence, self-government, local government, federalism, con-federalism, unitarism or any other form of relations that accords with the wishes of the people *but fully cognisant of other recognised principles such as sovereignty and territorial integrity.*" The Commission appears to suggest in the italicised words that the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity always trump a claim to any form of self-determination. This can hardly be correct. First, the Commission itself asserts that independence is

one legitimate form of the exercise of the right to self-determination. A sub-national entity cannot assert its independence from the parent state of which it is legally a constituent part and at the same time profess respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of that same state. Second, the Commission states by necessary implication that Katanga would have been entitled to claim independence from Zaire if the Complainant had adduced concrete evidence of violations of individual human rights in Katanga, including evidence of denial to the people of Katanga of the right to participate in the government of Zaire. Had this evidence been forthcoming, the territorial integrity of Zaire would surely have been called into question. In other words, Katanga's claim to self-determination would have trumped Zaire's appeal to the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. It follows from the Commission's own admission that there is a right to remedial secession in the circumstances indicated by it in the case as those that would give rise to secession. In the *Kosovo Advisory Opinion case* (2010), the International Court of Justice was careful not to dismiss the idea of a right to remedial secession. The court noted the existence of radically divergent views on whether international law provides for a right of remedial secession, and the circumstances that would give rise to such a right. In the view of the Court, the matter is highly contentious. However, it found no need to decide the issue in the case before it (*Kosovo Advisory Opinion* 2010 ICJ paras. 79–83; Stromseth 1992; Buchanan 2007) for the view that reasons for secession would be compelling in exceptional circumstances as the appropriate remedy of last resort.³ It held Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence to be valid.

The ruling in *Katanga* was not grounded in any authority. It was “without persuasive legal arguments” (Ankumah 1996, 164). On the whole, the ruling may have been correct on the facts as presented to the Commission. But this does not mean self-determination is unavailable in a non-colonial context. There is nothing in the Charter to warrant such a conclusion. The *travaux préparatoires* and the record of adoption of the Charter attest to the fact that its framers and African leaders were well aware of the possibility of interpreting the provision on self-determination as extending beyond the colonial context (Anyangwe 1998; Blay 1985). Moreover, at the time the Charter was adopted, the era of classical colonialism in Africa was drawing to an end. The OAU's focus on the realization of the right to self-determination in a colonial context, and to the elimination of racial discrimination, had narrowed down to the two issues of Namibian independence and the liberation of South Africa from apartheid and white minority rule. If, therefore, the framers of the Charter had intended self-determination to be confined to the context of white colonialism, they would have said so. Further still, many African countries do recognize that self-determination is an ongoing right, claimable not by

colonized peoples only (Higgins 1993, 5–55). In addition, there is no small number of writers on international law who posit that there are exceptional situations in which reasons for secession by a people from an existing state are particularly compelling (Cassese 1995; Stromseth 1992; Okeke 1986; Brilmayer 1991; Haile 1994; Nanda 1981; Klabbers 2006). In fact, some writers argue that the genuine enjoyment of human rights must include a right to secede (Deborah 1992; Cristescu 1980).

SELF-DETERMINATION IN THE CONTEXT OF BLACK-ON-BLACK COLONIZATION: *GUMNE ET AL. V. CAMEROUN*

By 2003 the African Commission had evidently become more settled in its work, more exposed to the idiom of human rights, and had more lawyers within its ranks. The Commission was soon presented with another golden opportunity to pronounce itself clearly and authoritatively, it was hoped, on the vexed question of self-determination. This opportunity arose in *Kevin Ngwang Gumne et al. v. Cameroun* (sub nomine *the Southern Cameroons Case*). This case was instituted by the late Dr. Kevin Gumne, Chairman of the Southern Cameroons People's Organization (SCAPO) and several others, on behalf of themselves and the people of the Southern Cameroons. The Commission made a number of correct and significant findings of fact in this case. First, it found that there was an unresolved dispute between the Southern Cameroons and *La République du Cameroun*. The Constitution of *La République du Cameroun* and various policy statements by the government of that country lay claim the Southern Cameroons as part of *La République du Cameroun*. This claim is vigorously rejected by the people of the Southern Cameroons as annexation and colonization, pure and simple. Second, and more importantly, the Commission found that, contrary to the claims of *La République du Cameroun*, the inhabitants of the erstwhile UN Trust Territory of the British Southern Cameroons constitute indeed a *people* within the meaning of international law, and consequently enjoy the inalienable and unquestionable right to determine their destiny:

The Commission finds that “the people of Southern Cameroon” qualify to be referred to as a “people” because they manifest numerous characteristics and affinities, which include a common history, linguistic tradition, *territorial connection*, and political outlook. More importantly they identify themselves as a people with a separate and distinct identity. Identity is an innate characteristic within a people. It is up to other external people to recognise such existence, but not to deny it. . . . *It is incumbent on State Parties, therefore, whenever faced with allegations of the nature contained in the present communication, to*

address them rather than ignore them under the guise of sovereignty and territorial integrity. (paras. 181 and 183)

Third, the Commission found *La République du Cameroun* guilty of discriminatory practices against the people of the Southern Cameroons; guilty of consistently transferring accused persons from the Southern Cameroons for trial in a military court in *La République du Cameroun* in French and under the French legal system (thus in a foreign country, in a foreign language, and under a foreign legal system); and guilty of denial of economic self-determination by its policy of economic non-development of the Southern Cameroons, non-investment, and non-location of economic projects in the territory. In addition, the Commission held *La République du Cameroun* in violation of various individual human rights in respect of citizens of the Southern Cameroons.⁴

However, the Commission erred grievously when it turned its attention to the all-important question of whether the people of the Southern Cameroons are entitled to claim and exercise the right to self-determination (i.e., the right to decolonization from annexation and colonial occupation by *La République du Cameroun*), it erred grievously. Disappointingly, the Commission failed to rise to the occasion. Human rights watchers were hoping for a groundbreaking ruling of the type that often defines and wins a judicial or quasi-judicial organ high approval and respect.⁵ The expectation was particularly legitimate because the circumstances of the case were distressfully unique, the situation *sui generis*, the legal arguments exceptionally strong, and the matter cogently argued. The Commission took close to 5,000 days to reach a decision. But the expectation kindled by the case turned out to be an evanescent hope.

Background to *Gumne et al. v. Cameroun*

The background to this case is an account of an incredible, gigantic state-level fraud and duplicity by colonial forces in a huge conspiracy to wipe out a people and their homeland. The Southern Cameroons⁶ is a former United Nations Trust Territory administered by the United Kingdom for close to fifty years. It has a land area of 43,000 sq. km, an estimated population of seven million inhabitants, and is sandwiched between Nigeria to the west, and the French-speaking State of *La République du Cameroun* to the east. The Anglo-German Treaty of March 11, 1913, supplemented by that of April 12, 1913, and the Anglo-French Declarations of July 10, 1919, and January 9, 1931, define, determine, and delimit the frontiers of the Southern Cameroons. This territorial framework was confirmed by the Mandate and Trusteeship

Agreements relating to the territory and was inherited by the Southern Cameroons when its trusteeship status was terminated on October 1, 1961. The Southern Cameroons, of which the much-publicized oil-and-gas-rich Bakassi Peninsula is an integral part, is rich also in minerals such as gold, diamonds, and bauxite; timber; medicinal plants; food crops; and such agricultural export crops as rubber, bananas, tea, oil palm, and coffee. Southern Cameroons' huge oil and gas wealth, and its other natural resources are the reason for its continuing colonial occupation by *La République du Cameroun*, which fears the loss of prime sources of revenue—revenue which that country's political leadership and elite squander in foolish and tasteless ostentatious living and in vulgar conspicuous consumption.

The Southern Cameroons was self-governing from 1954 to 1961 under British rule, and then from 1961 to 1972 during the first ten years of annexation and colonial occupation by *La République du Cameroun*. During those years, from 1954 to 1972, the Southern Cameroons operated a Westminster-type parliamentary democracy. It had a bicameral legislature and a ministerial system. It held five free and fair elections and experienced a peaceful change of government. Its Constitution, the Southern Cameroons Constitution Order-in-Council 1960, was based on the values of democracy, an efficient and responsive health and educational systems, the rule of law, an independent judiciary, a lean and efficient and effective public service, a well-trained and effective police force, a free and open society, an active civil society, a free press, freedom of expression and movement, human rights, and accountability by public office holders. After seven years of self-government, from 1954 to 1961, the British Southern Cameroons was poised for sovereign statehood consistent with Article 76b of the United Nations Charter and the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (UNGA Resolution 1514 (XV) of December 14, 1960, UN Doc. A/4684 (1960)). Shockingly, in an act of great historical wrong, the territory was denied independence—even though the people expressed their wish for it at a plebiscite and even though the UN endorsed that decision.

On February 11, 1961, a plebiscite mandated by and held under the auspices of the UN took place in the Southern Cameroons. The plebiscite question, a Hobson's choice formulated by the UK Government together with the UN and imposed on the people of the territory, demanded whether the people of the British Southern Cameroons wished “to achieve independence by joining” Nigeria or *La République du Cameroun*. The phraseology of the question clearly underscored the fact that the plebiscite was first and foremost about achieving independence, consistent with Article 76b of the UN Charter. “Joining” was a secondary matter and was to take place, if at all, only upon certification that the Southern Cameroons had voted to attain independence and only upon

agreed and finalized terms with the country concerned. The agreed interpretation (by the Southern Cameroons, the UK Government, *La République du Cameroun*, and the UN) of the expression “by joining” *La République du Cameroun* was that the Southern Cameroons would become independent, and at the same time form with that country a constitutive federation of two states, equal in status (*The Two Alternatives* 1960; *Report of the U.N. Plebiscite Commissioner* 1961). It was clear from Principle VII of UNGA resolution 1514 (XV) of December 15, 1960, that the concept of “achieving independence by joining” meant a “free association” between two independent states. That principle is authoritatively couched in the following terms:

- (a) Free association should be the result of a free and voluntary choice by the peoples of the territory concerned expressed through informed and democratic process. It should be one which respects the individuality and cultural characteristics of the territory and its peoples, and retains for the peoples of the territory which is associated with an independent State the freedom to modify the status of that territory through the expression of their will by democratic means and through constitutional processes.
- (b) The associated territory should have the right to determine its internal constitution without outside interference, in accordance with due constitutional processes and the freely expressed wishes of the people. This does not preclude consultations as appropriate or necessary under the terms of the free association agreed upon.

In terms of this resolution, had there been a legally valid political association between the Southern Cameroons and *La République du Cameroun* (rather than annexation, colonial occupation, and domination), the Southern Cameroons would have retained its individuality and cultural characteristics, retained its government, retained the right to determine its internal constitution without outside interference, and retained the right to modify the status of its territory, possibly toward separate independence in pursuance of perfecting its self-determination.

However, no sooner had the results of the plebiscite been announced than *La République du Cameroun* began plotting secretly on annexing the Southern Cameroons, even though it had given assurances in a formal statement made at the UN that it had no intentions of annexing the Southern Cameroons. Two months after the plebiscite, on April 21, 1961, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 1608 (XV) in which it endorsed the people’s vote in favor of independence for the Southern Cameroons.⁷ *La République du Cameroun* voted against that resolution, that negative vote signifying in law its rejection of political association with the Southern Cameroons and the

maintenance of its frontiers with the Southern Cameroons as unchanged. The same resolution 1608 (XV) of April 21, 1961, set October 1, 1961, as the date of termination of trusteeship over the British Southern Cameroons upon its association with *La République du Cameroun* in a federation of two states, equal in status. Other procedures mandated by the UN were ignored by both Britain and *La République du Cameroun*.

La République du Cameroun scuttled a bilateral meeting in July 1961 that would have drawn up an agreed federal constitution for the future federation. It declared the Southern Cameroons, a once-lost part of its territory returned to it (Ahidjo 1980, 143) by Britain and the UN. It made good this declaration by carrying out military incursions into defenseless Southern Cameroons. On September 1, 1961, it enacted a law amending its March 1960 Constitution for the purpose of providing for the annexation of the Southern Cameroons. It declared that document a so-called Federal Constitution, and extended its applicability extraterritorially to the Southern Cameroons. The Southern Cameroons was still a British-administered UN Trust Territory at the time. It had no say in the making of that law. In the same month of September, the French-led forces of *La République du Cameroun* marched into the Southern Cameroons and occupied the territory which could only have been with the conspiratorial acquiescence of the British government. To this day *La République du Cameroun* remains in military and civil occupation of the Southern Cameroons. Mendacity, fraud, duplicity, and violence are the hallmarks of the *modus operandi* of *La République du Cameroun* aimed at maintaining the people of the Southern Cameroons in colonial subjugation. But the people of the Southern Cameroons have consistently opposed and continue to oppose annexation and colonial occupation as actions that offend against international law, their humanity, their dignity, and their existence as a people.

Britain, in its inexplicable, indecent flight from the British Southern Cameroons, did not hand power to the government of the Southern Cameroons as required by the law of the UN on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Peoples and Territories and as ought to have been in this case. Instead, the UK Government on the night of September 30, 1961, invited to Buea, capital of the Southern Cameroons, the President of a foreign State, *La République du Cameroun*, and handed power to him. The President of that country immediately placed the Southern Cameroons under the overall administration of his country's pro-consuls known as "*Inspecteurs d'Administration*" and later "*Gouverneurs*." As successor colonialist, *La République du Cameroun* lost no time in implementing repressive and oppressive measures and putting in place policies aimed at the complete elimination of the identity of the people of the Southern Cameroons. It terminated Southern Cameroons' autonomy, self-governance, and state culture that predated the plebiscite. It Balkanized the Southern

Cameroons, diluted its British educational heritage, eliminated its received British legal and administrative systems and traditions, eliminated its human rights culture, and detrimentally changed the character of the territory and the outlook and way of life of its people. It embarked on de-identification of the people of the Southern Cameroons from their separate and distinct heritage and persona through a planned process of “Frenchification” and assimilation.

A stream of *La République du Cameroun* functionaries, civil as well as police and military, have since October 1, 1961, taken total control of every aspect in the Southern Cameroons (economic, educational, social, cultural, judicial, administrative, and political), pursuing a calamitous agenda of changing the nature and character of the Southern Cameroons’ environment, and of assimilating and sinking its people into the autocratic, clientelist, patrimonial, dismal, and hopeless French world of *La République du Cameroun*. The Southern Cameroons, as a self-governing territory and a qualified subject of international law, has been decreed out of existence by *La République du Cameroun*, the successor colonizer. The government, parliament, civil service, judiciary, police force, and system of administration of the Southern Cameroons, in existence since 1954, were abolished in 1972 by *La République du Cameroun*. The judicial and legal systems of the Southern Cameroons have been mutilated beyond recognition, and its educational system is under constant siege. French has since been imposed as the primary language of public administration, business and social intercourse. *La République du Cameroun*’s domination of the people of the Southern Cameroons is total: political, administrative, power relations, economic, social, and cultural. The occupying State has for decades been in the business of exploiting, essentially for its benefit, the huge natural resources of the Southern Cameroons, especially oil, gas, timber, diamonds, cash crops, and food crops. The exploitation is reckless and continues at an alarming pace. It is truly a case of spoliation of the natural resources of the Southern Cameroons. In a ballot on April 21, 1961, at the 15th session of the UNGA chaired by Lambertin Dinar of Indonesia, the Assembly took a vote on the date October 1, 1961, as the date of termination of trusteeship (entailing independence for the Southern Cameroons). The date was adopted by fifty States voting “yes” with six States including *La République du Cameroun* voting “no,” and twelve States. Even though the UN thus clearly endorsed the plebiscite decision of the people of the British Southern Cameroons to achieve independence, there is today nothing at all in the territory to suggest that it ever achieved independence. *La République du Cameroun* itself has not been able to lie that the Southern Cameroons enjoys even a modicum of independence or even autonomy. The Southern Cameroons is thus a non-self-governing territory under the colonial tutelage of *La République du Cameroun*.

Analysis of the Self-determination Ruling in *Gumne et al. v. Cameroun*

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights ruled against the claim of the people of the Southern Cameroons to self-determination. It characterized their peaceful struggle for decolonization as "engaging in secession" when there has never been any claim to secession and there is no evidence of secession whether contemplated or attempted. It dogmatically declared, without any legal demonstration, that secession is not a variant of self-determination recognized under the Charter. This flies in the face of authority to effect that, even in respect of groups within sovereign African States, "the African Commission should not summarily dismiss self-determination claims" (Ankumah 1996, 165). The ruling in *Gumne* was thus very strange, to put it mildly. The determination that the inhabitants of the Southern Cameroons constitute a "people" clearly has implications for the rights that attach to that term under international law. One such right is the inalienable and unquestionable right to self-determination. The Commission further ruled, again questionably, that the Southern Cameroons is part of *La République du Cameroun* and therefore that its claim to independence is impermissible because such a claim would violate the territorial integrity of *La République du Cameroun*. This was an egregious miscarriage of justice (Weldehaimanot 2012, 85), all the more so as the Commission could not articulate how the Southern Cameroons could mysteriously be part of the territory of the Respondent State. The decision was anchored neither in law, nor in principle, nor in any cogent argument. It did not rest on any evidence, forensic or even anecdotal. It was not grounded in any legal authority, whether case law, legal instrument, legal principle, or academic writing. The Commission failed to comprehend the facts and the basis of the Southern Cameroons' claim to self-determination. It even failed to direct its mind to a related matter, that of internal self-determination.

The facts of the case and the legal arguments there marshalled show that the entitlement of the people of the Southern Cameroons to the continuing and inalienable right to self-determination is grounded on the following unchallenged facts: (i) the contiguous French-speaking state of *La République du Cameroun* achieved independence from France on January 1, 1960 and is, in relation to the Southern Cameroons, a foreign colonizing state occupying the Southern Cameroons; (ii) the Southern Cameroons is not, and has never at any time been, part of *La République du Cameroun*; (iii) Southern Cameroons' independence, the date for which was set by the United Nations for October 1, 1961 to coincide with the date of termination of United Nations trusteeship, was unlawfully suppressed by *La République du Cameroun*; (iv)

the British Southern Cameroons was imperfectly decolonized because, while the trusteeship was ended, the departing British colonial authorities unlawfully handed power, not to the government of the Southern Cameroons as required by international law, but to *La République du Cameroun*, a foreign state, which then assumed an illegitimate power over the Southern Cameroons; and (v) the Southern Cameroons was annexed by and is under the colonial domination and oppression of *La République du Cameroun*. These hard facts speak to an indubitable situation of colonization that is even worse than saltwater colonization and calls for immediate decolonization based on the right to self-determination. As of 2016 the Southern Cameroons had already clocked 158 years of unbroken colonization: British from 1858 to 1887, German from 1888 to 1914, British again from 1914 to 1961, and *La République du Cameroun* from 1961 to date. This is an unparalleled concatenation in the contemporary world.

The African Union has repeatedly reaffirmed the solemn pledge to “eradicate *all forms of colonialism* from Africa” and has undertaken “to eliminate colonialism, neo-colonialism . . . and all forms of discrimination” from Africa (Preamble to the ACHPR). Colonialism is a practice of domination that involves the subjugation of one people by another, and the political and economic control of a dependent country through various techniques. The people of the colonized country have no control over their own governance. Another sovereign, an illegitimate one, exercises control over their Homeland. Colonialism is inherently brutal and therefore an appalling human tragedy. Faced with colonialism, decolonization is the only remedy to remove that illegitimate power and end that human tragedy (Parker 2000). It is incredible that the Commission should be unaware and so shockingly indifferent and insensitive to the new colonialism, black-on-black colonization, which has sought to raise its ugly head in parts of the continent. Some States, which only yesterday were colonial territories and achieved independence by invoking the right to self-determination, soon turned latter-day colonizers of perceived small contiguous neighbors: *La République du Cameroun*’s colonization of the Southern Cameroons; Imperial Ethiopia’s colonization of Eritrea; Morocco’s colonization of the Western Sahara; Libya’s occupation of the Aouzou Strip in Chad; Nigeria’s occupation of the Bakassi Peninsula in the Southern Cameroons; Somalia’s claim to the Ogaden and Haud regions in Ethiopia and to the north-east region of Kenya. Both the African Union and the United Nations emphasize the need for the complete eradication of colonialism in all its *forms and manifestations*. In paragraph 8 of the Grand Bay (Mauritius) Declaration and Plan of Action, 1999, the First OAU Ministerial Conference on Human Rights identified noncompliance with the principles of “inviolability of colonial borders and the right to self-determination” as one

of the causes of human rights violations in Africa. The African Commission itself has pertinently observed that some aspects of human rights in the continent “have proved particularly resistant to change while others have even regressed” (combined 32 and 33 Activity Report 2013). One such negative development is the dangerous national policy of territorial aggrandizement pursued by some countries in egregious violation of international law.

The Commission in its ruling in the Southern Cameroons case did not consider the question of colonization, the central and salient plank on which the self-determination claim was based. It overlooked the critical issue of continuing colonial occupation and its ongoing effects. The situation that obtains in the Southern Cameroons is one of post-UN Charter annexation and occupation with a people subjugated, dominated, and oppressed under a new colonization. On the termination of UN trusteeship and UK administration in the Southern Cameroons on October 1, 1961, the British government, acting without any legal authority for so doing, simply turned over power to the foreign French-speaking State of *La République du Cameroun* rather than to the people of the Southern Cameroons under their right to self-determination. The Southern Cameroons was left, and has remained, trapped in a new colonization by *La République du Cameroun* as successor colonizer to the British. This has plunged the people of the Southern Cameroons down to the lowest level of humiliation. For, while white colonization was fashionable during its time, colonization in any form or shape has since been proscribed by international law (UN Declaration on the Granting of Independence 1960; UN Declaration on Principles of Friendly Relations 1970). For one African country to be colonized by another African country that itself never accepted colonialism is so repulsive and demeaning because this behavior reminds one of the period when fellow Africans sold their own kind into slavery.

La République du Cameroun maintains a choking and violent repressive control of the Southern Cameroons and continually misleads the world into believing that the Southern Cameroons is a constituent part of its territory. It is this new colonization that the Southern Cameroons has for decades been seeking to undo, mistakenly, it seems, by peaceful means. What the British did in 1961 resulted in an imperfect de-colonization because there was no restoration of sovereign powers to the people of the Southern Cameroons but instead, a handover of control of the country to a successor colonizing state. A process of perfect de-colonization by the colonial power would have entailed the restoration of full sovereignty to the people of the country who would then have their own state and full control of their own affairs, with a seat in the UN and with all other attributes of a state in international law (Raic 2002). The people may thereafter even decide to constitute any form of union with another state. But attempts by some African countries

at unions have been dismal failures (Gonidec 1997, 555). Examples are the Mali Federation constituted by Ghana-Mali-Senegal, the Egypt-Libya Arab Union, the Senegal-Gambia Confederation, the Central African Federation of North and South Rhodesia and Nyasaland, the Ruanda-Urundi union, and the Somaliland-Somalia union (British and Italian Somalia).

Another point regarding the ruling in *Gumne* is that the Commission did not apply its mind to the equally important question of acquisition of territory in international law, which it ought to have, given the fanciful claim by *La République du Cameroun* that the Southern Cameroons is part of its territory, returned to it by Britain and the United Nations. Furthermore, the Commission failed to direct its mind to the concept and nature of inalienable rights. It failed to take cognizance of the fact that separately, colonization, illegal foreign occupation, or imposition of alien rule, *ipso facto* constitutes a very serious violation of Article 20; the effect of any of those situations is to nullify all the rights recognized and guaranteed under that provision. The Commission failed to appreciate the fact that colonization amounts to both oppression and domination. It erroneously interpreted its own ruling in *Katanga* to mean that no claim to self-determination under Article 20 of the African Charter can succeed in the absence of proof of massive individual human rights violations. It uncritically went along with *La République du Cameroun's* all-too-familiar evasive, hackneyed, and false secession rhetoric whenever its colonial occupation of the Southern Cameroons is challenged. It provided no legal or cartographical basis for its view that the territory of the Southern Cameroons constitutes part of the territory of *La République du Cameroun*. It applied the *Katanga* ruling to the Southern Cameroons case when in fact the one case is not on all fours with the other.

UNRAVELLING THE MEANING OF ARTICLE 20 OF THE AFRICAN CHARTER

Article 20 of the African Charter enacts the following principles:

1. All peoples shall have the right to existence. They shall have the unquestionable and inalienable right to self-determination. They shall freely determine their political status and shall pursue their economic and social development according to the policy they have freely chosen.
2. Colonized or oppressed peoples shall have the right to free themselves from the bonds of domination by resorting to any means recognized by the international community.

3. All peoples shall have the right to the assistance of the States parties to the present Charter in their liberation struggle against foreign domination, be it political, economic, or cultural.

Rights Guaranteed Under Article 20

A careful reading of this Article shows that it deals with four distinct rights: the right to existence, the right to self-determination, the right to freedom from discrimination, and the right to assistance from third states. First, sub-Article (1) guarantees the right of all peoples to existence. There is no further elaboration. But this right undoubtedly represents a rejection of genocide, pogrom or other massacres, assimilation, and other acts aimed at extinguishing, destroying, or annihilating a people. Under international law, every “people” has the right to exist and to be free from domination. Secondly, sub-Article (1) further guarantees the right to self-determination. This right is declared to be “unquestionable and inalienable.” It is apprehended as both a procedural and a substantive right. It is a procedural right in that it is invoked in the process of decolonization and enables a people to determine its political status in the international community. It is a substantive and continuing right in that it enables a people to pursue its economic and social development in accordance with the policy it has freely chosen. The link between the right to existence and the right to self-determination is that a people, *whether within a state or not*, faced with an existential threat, is entitled to assert the right to self-determination in order to eliminate that threat and free itself from subjugation.

The third right guaranteed under Article 20 is the right to freedom from domination. This right is guaranteed under sub-Article (2). It inures to and is exercisable by a specific category of people only, that is, those who are either colonized *or* oppressed. The right inheres in them because a colonized or an oppressed people are necessarily a dominated people. It is immaterial whether the colonization is by a state next door or by a state from across the seas. It is equally immaterial whether the oppression is by a country’s own government or by a foreign occupying power. Any colonized or oppressed people are entitled to free themselves from the bonds of domination by resorting to any means recognized by the international community (Article 20 (2)). The provision of Article 20 (2) justifies and legitimizes, *ex post facto* and in anticipation, wars of national liberation in Africa against any form of colonial rule. All people have the right to freedom from domination by another people. The people of the Southern Cameroons thus have the right to exist and to be free from the domination of the people of *La République du Cameroun*. As a concomitant of that right, the people of the Southern Cameroons have the

right to resist colonial occupation and domination by resorting to any means recognized by the international community.

The fourth right enshrined in Article 20 is the right to assistance from third states. The obligation on states party to the Charter to assist entails, for the people concerned, the right to expect and to demand any form of assistance. This right may be claimed only by a people waging a “liberation struggle against *foreign* domination,”⁸ whatever the nature of that domination might be—that is, whether political, economic or cultural (Art. 20). The argument that the expression *foreign domination* could be interpreted to mean domination by a non-African entity because the African Charter is a regional instrument (Ankumah 1996, 164) is hardly persuasive. Africa is not a state in relation to which non-African entities become foreign. The African Charter is a regional, multilateral treaty subscribed to by the several African States, each of which is a foreign sovereign State in relation to the other. Surely, Libyan domination in the Aouzou Strip, Moroccan domination in the Western Sahara, and *La République du Cameroun* domination in the Southern Cameroons could be nothing else other than foreign domination in each case. “Foreign” domination underscores the fact that the right under Article 20 (3) cannot be claimed by a people who belong to a territorial unit within a state’s *rightful* borders (Musgrave 2000). The right to assistance from third states is valid only in the context of foreign domination. Here, “foreign domination” (Morris 1997) is a euphemism for colonial rule, wherever the provenance of that colonialism might be—from outside or from within Africa. Further, this provision justifies and legitimizes, *ex post facto*, the multifarious forms of support that were provided by free African countries to those African peoples who were waging struggles against white colonialism and apartheid. The provision provides the legal basis for any such support that may now be provided to people waging a similar struggle.

Meaning of “People”

Articles 19 to 24 of the African Charter all speak of “peoples,” in plural.⁹ Although there is some calculated ambiguity in the use of that term,¹⁰ the plural form “peoples” is a pointer that the drafters of the Charter had in mind not only people (singular) in the national constitutional law sense of a country’s citizens or population as a whole, often designated as the sovereign people, but also an identifiable community of human beings with a common culture, value system, history, and language who are occupying a specific homeland (Ouguergouz 1992; Ouguergouz 1993; Degni-Segui 1992). The inhabitants that make up the population of a country are the “people” of that country, and that population might well consist of distinctive communities of

people denoted as “peoples.” It follows that the “people” of a country is one element, and the various distinctive communities of people (i.e., “peoples”) in the same country, are another. The Charter in its wisdom simultaneously confers the right to self-determination on “people” (i.e., the people as a whole of a country or the people of an identified territory) and “peoples” (i.e., the various distinct autochthonous inhabitants of specific areas of a country, or the distinct native inhabitants of an identified territory (Blay 1985; Van Praag 1993; ACHPR *Examination of State Reports*, vol. 1 (9th Session) March 1991, 33; opinion of Commissioner Umzurike 1979; Ankumah 1996).

There are, however, those who are of the view that the term “peoples” refers only to the various social entities or groups of humans, taken as a whole, within a state. In terms of this view, self-determination can be claimed only by the people, as a whole, of a country (i.e., the self-determination of peoples organized as a state) and not by any sub-group within a country (*Examination of State Report* 1991, 33, opinion of Commissioner Nguema; Emerson 1971; Cassese 1981; Kiss 1986; McCorquodale 1992; Dugard 1993; Boven 1986; Reyntjens 1991; Mbaya 1991). Whatever merit there may have been in this view at the time, it is all too obvious in the contemporary period that it is not persuasive and must be rejected on the sufficient grounds that self-determination is no longer merely a procedural right invoked in the process of decolonization. Self-determination is also a substantive and continuing human right available under international human rights law—in fact, a norm of *jus cogens* in international law. It is a continuing right and thus exercisable from time to time even within post-colonial independent states (Anyangwe 2015; Nanda 1980; Klabbers and Lefeber 1992; Franck 1992; Reismann 1984; Nowak 1993; Tesfagiogis 1987; Higgins 1992; Higgins 1993; Cassese 1999; Jayawickrama 2002).

The right to self-determination does not inure only to peoples under colonial or alien domination (Gros Espiel 1978). The *travaux préparatoires* of common article 1 to the ICCPR and the ICESCR show quite clearly that even in the 1950s the majority of delegates to the drafting conference of the Covenants rejected the notion that the entitlement to self-determination applied only to colonial peoples. The inclusion of the right to self-determination in those key human rights treaties signifies that that right may also be claimed even by peoples who are not under colonial rule (Franck 1992; Kiss 1986; Umzurike 1979). The self-determination of people organized as a state, as opposed to the self-determination of peoples, is in fact a state’s claim to sovereignty. But unlike the right to self-determination of peoples, which is a value-based claim, a state’s claim to sovereignty is nowadays considered more of a hindrance to the promotion of values (McCorquodale 2004, 477).

The inhabitants native to the Southern Cameroons constitute a people—the people and citizens of the Southern Cameroons. All persons who belong to

a community native to the Southern Cameroons are citizens of the Southern Cameroons. They are as much a people as are the inhabitants of any other African country. They inhabit a separate, distinct, established, and identified territory, the frontiers of which are well defined by international boundary treaties. They enjoy linguistic unity in that English is their official language. They had an established government and a state culture for eighteen years and have a common legal culture based on the common law system, as well as a common system of education based on the English educational system. They have a common history dating back to 1844, when the British first signed treaties with their coastal chiefs, through 1858, when the British took possession of the coastal strip of what subsequently became the British Southern Cameroons. They have a strong and unyielding sense of common belonging and of self-identification. They have a sense of collective destiny, the consciousness of being a people, the will to be identified as such, and a strong and unquenchable common aspiration for sovereign statehood. Common suffering has been their lot from the onset of colonial occupation, domination, and oppression by *La République du Cameroun*.

It inexorably follows that the people of the Southern Cameroons have, in the language of Articles 19 and 20 of the Charter, the right to freedom from domination, the right to existence, and the unquestionable and inalienable right to self-determination, by virtue of which they are entitled freely to determine their political status and to pursue their economic and social development in accordance with the policy they freely choose. They are entitled to sovereign statehood (Raic 2002). Entitlement to statehood is unyielding, whether the right to self-determination is interpreted as applicable only in a colonial context, or it is taken also to apply in a non-colonial context. In *Legal Consequences for States of the Continued Presence of South Africa in Namibia (South West Africa) Notwithstanding Security Council Resolution 276 of 1970*, Advisory Opinion, I.C.J. Rep. 1971, 64, the ICJ was emphatic that the international law of self-determination creates a right to independence of the people of non-self-governing territories and peoples subject to alien subjugation, domination, and exploitation.

The Commission Erred in Its Interpretation of Article 20

This is the Commission's rather arcane interpretation of Article 20:

196. It is the view of the Commission . . . that in order for . . . violations to constitute the basis for the exercise of the right to self-determination under the African Charter, they must meet the test set out in the Katanga case, that is, there must be concrete evidence of violations of human

- rights to the point that the territorial integrity of the State Party should be called to question, coupled with the denial of the people, their right to participate in the government as guaranteed by Article 13 (1).
199. The Commission is not convinced that the Respondent State violated Article 20 of the Charter. The Commission holds the view that when a Complainant seeks to invoke Article 20 of the African Charter, it must satisfy the Commission that the two conditions under Article 20 (2), namely oppression and domination, have been met.
201. Going by the *Katanga* decision, the right to self-determination cannot be exercised, in the absence of proof of massive violation of human rights under the Charter.
202. The African Commission finds that the people of Southern Cameroon cannot engage in secession, except within the terms expressed hereinabove, since secession is not recognized as a variant of the right to self-determination within the context of the African Charter.

The Commission then came to the following conclusion:

192. The Commission notes that the Republic of Cameroon is a party to the Constitutive Act (and was a state party to the OAU Charter). It is a party to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights as well. The Commission is obliged to uphold the territorial integrity of the Respondent State. As a consequence, the Commission cannot envisage, condone or encourage secession, as a form of self-determination for the Southern Cameroons. That will jeopardize the territorial integrity of the Republic of Cameroon.

This is a strange reading of Article 20. Sub-article (2) of Article 20 guarantees to colonized *or* oppressed peoples the right to free themselves from the bonds of domination. The *or* in the sub-Article is disjunctive, not conjunctive, so that only one fact needs to be proved, not both: either *colonization* or *oppression*. Domination is the evil that is common to both situations and from which the affected people have the right to free themselves by any means recognized by the international community. A colonized people are necessarily a dominated people. An oppressed people are necessarily a dominated people. The Commission therefore propounds strange learning when it claims that, to succeed in a self-determination claim under Article 20, both domination and oppression must be proved.

When Article 20 declares self-determination a right that is “inalienable” and “unquestionable,” it protects each and every people against colonization, oppression, or foreign occupation. In essence, it says that oppression,

colonization, foreign occupation, or the imposition of alien rule cannot under any circumstance be justified. Article 20 categorically rejects colonization and posits that the rejection cannot be questioned. Not even the Commission may question, or purport to render alienable, a right that the Charter declares to be unquestionable and inalienable. Once it is shown that the victims are indeed a people within the meaning of international law, and that they are colonized or oppressed, there can be no justification for denying them the rights inscribed in Article 20. Annexation and illegal occupation of territory are necessarily violations under the Charter as they are tantamount to colonization or oppression.

Whatever a people may have done, and even if they bear some responsibility for the foreign rule imposed on them, their right to be free when it chooses to invoke that right is unquestionable. Many African princes offered their homeland for colonization. Many African collaborators supported colonial forces. It would have been perverse to argue that African peoples somehow could only have themselves to blame for their condition and therefore were disqualified from fighting colonization. By declaring self-determination an “inalienable” right, the African Charter makes it a right that attaches to or inheres in the status of a people, *qua* people, and not to the acts of that people. This right thus inures in each community of human beings that passes the test of “people” under international human rights law. The right does not inure in a people by virtue of something it has done or left undone, but by virtue of its recognized status as a people.

Furthermore, inalienable rights are not rights that can be lost by their non-invocation at some point in time. They are not subject to a statute of limitation. The strategic moment to invoke these rights is always left to the people concerned. That is why the independence of various colonial peoples was claimed and fought for at various points in time and not at one appointed moment. Nothing said, or done, or attempted to be negotiated by a colonized people in order to mitigate their wretched condition can possibly take away or diminish their rights under the Charter, or can possibly grant the colonizing state rights that it does not have under the Charter or under general international law. Quebec, for example, has been to the polls in two referenda on whether or not to secede from Canada, and it has lost both. Scotland in the UK and Catalonia in Spain have also been to the polls in a referendum on whether or not to secede from the UK in the case of Scotland and from Spain in the case of Catalonia. These examples are illustrative of the nature of self-determination as an inalienable and continuing human right (Van der Vyver 2000) applicable even in a non-colonial context. The fact that the people of Quebec lost the first self-determination referendum did not bar them from claiming entitlement to exercise the same right a second time, and it does

not foreclose their entitlement nor those of the Scots and the Catalonians to exercise the right subsequently, though in the view of the Canadian Supreme Court in *Reference Re Secession of Quebec* (1998), “international law expects that the right to self-determination will be exercised by peoples within the framework of existing sovereign states and consistently with the maintenance of territorial integrity of those states.”

In the context of the African Charter, only two questions need to be answered to determine entitlement to self-determination under Article 20. First, does the community of people claiming the right to self-determination qualify as a “people” within the meaning of international human rights law? In its consideration of the issue whether the people of the Southern Cameroons are a people within the meaning of the right to self-determination under the Charter, the Commission rightly concluded that indeed they qualify as a people. It would have been scandalous had it ruled otherwise (Weldehaimanot 2012, 85) because the UN plebiscite in the Southern Cameroons was predicated on the fact that the Southern Cameroons constitutes a unit of self-determination and its inhabitants *a people*. Since then, pertinent UN resolutions bearing on the Southern Cameroons advisedly designate the inhabitants collectively as “the *people* of the Southern Cameroons.”

The next question for determination, if the community of people concerned does constitute a people, asks whether the said people are colonized or oppressed, or alternatively, following the Katanga test, whether they are the subject of massive individual human rights violations and are denied participation in the governance of the country. On this point the Commission lost itself in a piece of mysticism. It refused to confront this matter, arguing—unconvincingly—that such an inquiry would require going into certain events which it was excluded from considering on the grounds of lack of competence *rationae temporis*. And yet it is trite learning, borne out by the Commission’s own jurisprudence that the Commission has competence to adjudicate ongoing violations, even if they started at a time when the Respondent State had not yet subscribed to the African Charter. The annexation, occupation, domination, oppression, and exploitation of the Southern Cameroons began before the adoption of the Charter and before *La République du Cameroun* became a party to it. But more importantly, those measures have not been ended; they are continuing to this day.

Sovereignty over territory can be based only on legal title to the territory in question and nothing else. *La République du Cameroun* cannot therefore claim sovereignty over the Southern Cameroons on the basis of a fiction, or what it terms the “process of decolonization that took place within *La République du Cameroun* and under the auspices of the United Nations.” How could the UN’s “decolonization” of British-administered Southern Cameroons have

possibly taken place within the French-speaking independent state of *La République du Cameroun*, which itself was a UN trust territory separate and distinct from the territory of the Southern Cameroons? Furthermore, the claim that the Southern Cameroons “joined *La République du Cameroun* (whatever its understanding of that term might be) does not even stand up to cursory scrutiny. What took place was annexation and not joining. Alleged “joining” of peoples or union of territories, cannot be informal. Any valid joining or union is a formal matter underpinned by legal instrument(s), the provisions of which must not be contrary to the UN Charter and, in the African context, not be contrary to the AU Constitutive Act.

The Commission Erred in Its Interpretation of *Katanga*

The Commission also erred in the interpretation of its own jurisprudence. Contrary to the erroneous assertion of the Commission in the Southern Cameroons case, *Katanga* did not posit a universal proposition that the right to self-determination is unavailable in the absence of proof of massive human rights violations. The implication of the Commission’s untenable interpretation of Article 20 is that colonization would still need to be accompanied by other grave human rights violations to find a claim to self-determination under the Charter. This, in turn, leads to the absurdity that colonization could possibly be justified by the argument that it is not accompanied by massive individual human rights violations, or that violations committed have not reached the “massive” threshold to warrant challenge. Quite clearly, this is a doubtful and a dangerous doctrine. As a matter of policy, law, and politics, colonial rule cannot be justified even if it could be demonstrated that colonization is beneficial. Faced with a choice between poverty and freedom, for instance, or a choice between wealth and subjugation, the former options in both cases would doubtlessly commend themselves to any people. The test of massive human rights violations enunciated in *Katanga* is relevant only where the territory of the people seeking self-determination is legally part of the state from which they seek what is in effect secessionist self-determination. In such a situation, the people concerned cannot credibly plead that they are under colonial rule. It can, however, plead oppression as a ground for seeking secessionist self-determination, as the appropriate remedy of last resort, by showing that its existence *within that state* is threatened by massive violations of individual human rights and that it is denied participation in the governance of that state. In *Reference Re Secession of Quebec*, the Supreme Court of Canada conceded that “in exceptional circumstances . . . a right to secession may arise.”

Such a claim to secession, however, would have to be matched against the principle of territorial integrity. It is not clear which of the two competing

principles, self-determination or territorial integrity, would prevail in any such case (Gudeleviciute 2005; Szasz 2000). Case-law authority on this point is lacking. But the postcolonial history of the African continent teaches that in Africa such matters are ultimately decided by armed struggle rather than by forensic battles or even diplomacy. In the case of Biafra, despite the fact that there was a massive human rights violation in the form of a pogrom committed against the aggrieved people, the principle of territorial integrity prevailed over what seemed a compelling case for secession. In the case of South Sudan, the secessionist self-determination claim, which was asserted through a combination of force and third-party diplomatic intervention, prevailed over the principle of territorial integrity. Eritrea vindicated its right to self-determination by force of arms, and the matter of Ethiopia's territorial integrity hardly came in for consideration by intergovernmental political organizations. The Western Sahara followed the same path, though the territory is still occupied by Morocco. Nevertheless, the admission to Membership of the African Union of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic and the independence of the Western Sahara proclaimed by the territory's leadership in exile signify Africa's rejection of Morocco's occupation as an attempt at territorial aggrandisement.

Katanga itself suggested that massive human rights violations in any region of a state, coupled with denial of the right of the people of the area to participate in the country's government, would justify secession. This point is also implicitly made in *Reference Re Secession of Quebec*. There, the Court noted that a "state whose government represents the whole of the people or peoples resident within its territory, on a basis of equality and without discrimination, and respects the principle of self-determination in its own internal arrangement, is entitled to the protection under international law of its territorial integrity." The issue of participation in government arose in *Katanga* simply because the case was one of secessionist self-determination. Since the province of Katanga is indubitably part of Zaire, the Commission took the view that, in order for the province to succeed in its claim to entitlement to secede from Zaire, it must be shown that massive individual human rights violations were committed and that the province has been denied participation in the country's government. A different consideration obviously applies in a situation of colonization (black or white) or of foreign occupation. The so-called participation of a colonized people, such as the people of the Southern Cameroons, in the government of the colonizing or occupying power—even if that participation is effective and meaningful, which is not even the case—does not amount to the exercise, by the colonized people, of the right freely to determine their political status and place in the international community, and the pursuit of their economic and social development, as

guaranteed under Article 20. Participation in a country's governance goes beyond taking part in elections. It involves effective and meaningful representation and participation in decision-making in the country.

If participation of a colonized people in the government of the colonizing state amounted to the exercise of the right to self-determination, there would have been no decolonization at all in the several African countries. It is a commonplace observation that the people of each African colonial territory participated in the government of the colonial power in the colonized country and/or in the *Métropole*. And whether the participation was effective and meaningful is a different matter altogether. The people of the Southern Cameroons aspire to have and to participate freely in their own government and not in the government of the colonizing state of *La République du Cameroun*. A slave or servant may be permitted by an exceptional act of generosity on the part of his or her master to eat at the master's table. But the slave or servant accorded such a singular privilege does not cease to be a serf or an underling. The Southern Cameroons and *La République du Cameroun* have always been two separate countries with firmly established international boundaries. Each has always had a separate state culture, a separate colonial history, a separate Mandate/Trusteeship Agreement, a separate Independence Day, a separate people with no substantial ethnic connection, a separate people with a separate vision, a separate people with a separate way of life, a separate people with no common cultural heritage, and a separate people with a separate aspiration. There is not one single international law instrument or valid instrument of its own municipal law that *La République du Cameroun* can plead in justification of its colonization and domination of the Southern Cameroons. There is absolutely no basis on which *La République du Cameroun* can show why it has assumed colonial sovereignty over the Southern Cameroons and is forcibly preventing the people of that country from becoming free and exercising sovereignty over their homeland.

The Commission Did not Properly Apply Its Mind to the Matter of Territorial Integrity

The Commission reasoned that it was "obliged to uphold the territorial integrity" of *La République du Cameroun* because that country is party to the Constitutive Act of the African Union and to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Yet it was unable to indicate the spatial configuration of the territory in question, the integrity of which it felt it was obliged to uphold. It is settled law, principle, and jurisprudence in Africa that the territory of each State is intangible and consists of the territorial framework it had at the date of its independence. The spatial configuration of *La République du*

Cameroun as of its date of independence on January 1, 1960 does not include the territory of the Southern Cameroons, which was then still a British-administered trust territory.

Further, the concept of territorial integrity is not univocal. It has both an external aspect (territorial integrity threatened from outside), and an internal aspect (territorial integrity threatened from inside). A compelling line of argument marshalled by some states in the ICJ in the case *Accordance with International Law of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in Respect of Kosovo* (2010) is that the norm of respect for territorial integrity does not apply to peoples and that the prohibition of the use or threat of force against territorial integrity applies to external military attacks, and not necessarily against subversion by self-determination. The question of secession is relevant only in respect of the internal aspect of territorial integrity. It is not clear from the Commission's ruling what aspect of territorial integrity it claims it is obliged to uphold because the assertion by the Southern Cameroons of its statehood does not threaten the territorial integrity from inside or even from outside of *La République du Cameroun*, the lawful boundaries of which remain sacrosanct.

On this issue of territorial integrity, a sound basis for the Commission's decision in *Katanga* would have been that the province of Katanga formed part of the territory of Zaire at independence and that the secession of that province would detrimentally affect the territorial integrity of Zaire; but that the claim to external self-determination would prevail over the claim to territorial integrity in any of the following circumstances: acquiescence of secession by Zaire, successful armed rebellion against Zaire, or the commission of massive human rights violations by Zaire against the people of Katanga. A sound basis for the decision cannot be predicated on an inflexible theory of territorial integrity. It makes no sense to say that self-determination cannot prevail on account of the principle of territorial integrity when there are many contemporary cases in which that has precisely happened. A state is always at liberty to suffer a part of its territory to secede, as happened recently in the case of Sudan and Ukraine, or even at liberty to cede part of its territory to another state gratuitously or for value. Moreover, there are legitimate circumstances under which secession would be wholly justified (Nanda 1981; Buchheit 1978; Buchanan 1991; Buchanan 1992). Dogmatic adherence to the principle of territorial integrity would mean consensual separation, cession of territory, or even a union of countries, all of which events are bound to affect the integrity of a State's territory—and would be impermissible. This again would make no sense because there is no rule, and there cannot be any rule, of international law imposing the size, form, and shape of a state.

Following the Commission's very strained logic, any state party to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Right or to the African Union

Constitutive Act may claim and grab any territory it fancies, and the Commission would be prepared to consider the territory thus grabbed, without any scrutiny at all, as part of the territory of the expansionist state. Surely, upholding territorial integrity must be based on proof of legal title. There must be proof of lawful acquisition, under international law, of the territory being claimed. Only then can the territory in question be recognized as a constituent part of the territory of the claimant state. In *Katanga*, for example, the boundaries of Zaire were not in dispute. The province of Katanga has always been within the boundaries that Zaire inherited from colonization on the date of Zairian independence from Belgium in 1960. The inhabitants of Katanga never disputed the fact that Katanga is legally part of Zaire. Their claim was that they simply did not want to be a part of Zaire *any longer*. In order to procure Katanga's separation from Zaire, the people of Katanga created a liberation movement and invited the Commission to recognize it as such. They also invited the Commission to recognize the "independence" of Katanga and to help ensure Zaire's withdrawal from Katanga.

If one were to accept the Commission's fantastic reasoning, the territory of Morocco, for example, would include the territories of Western Sahara, Mauritania, and southern Algeria, claimed at the time by Morocco as part of its dream of a "greater" Morocco. Similarly, the territory of Somalia would include the Ogaden and Haud regions in Ethiopia and the northeast district of Kenya, all of which have long been claimed by Somalia in its unrealistic quest for a "greater" Somalia. Likewise, the territory of Libya would include the Aouzou Strip in Chad, once claimed and occupied by Libya. And the territory of Nigeria would include the Bakassi Peninsula, which is firmly within the Southern Cameroons but was occupied and claimed by Nigeria before the claim was rejected by the ICJ in *Case Concerning Land and Maritime Boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria (Cameroon v. Nigeria: Equatorial Guinea Intervening)*, Judgment of October 10, 2002, I.C.J. Rep. 2002, 1.

Every African state that is party to the Constitutive Act is bound to respect the principles of that multilateral treaty and to perform its treaty obligations in good faith. Among the principles enshrined in that treaty is that of the intangibility of frontiers inherited from colonization. The Constitutive Act states in article 4b that the African Union "shall function in accordance with . . . [the principle of] respect of borders existing on achievement of independence." This principle, sometimes also denoted as *uti possidetis juris*, is reiterated in the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. It has a long pedigree dating back to the OAU's 1963 Charter and the OAU 1964 Cairo Declaration in which African leaders solemnly pledged "to respect the frontiers existing on their achievement of independence." The provision signifies that the lawful territorial framework

of each State Party to the continental multilateral treaty freezes on the date of the state's independence. This was meant to prevent expansionist claims, territorial aggrandizement, and border disputes. The territorial framework of *La République du Cameroun* froze on January 1, 1960, the date of its independence from France. Any claim to territory outside that territorial framework is unlawful and constitutes nothing but an attempt at expansionism or territorial aggrandizement, impermissible under international law. The territory of a state is separate and distinct from territories under its occupation or held contrary to international law (UN Declaration on the Principles of Friendly Relations). To uphold territorial integrity in the African context means to uphold boundaries that were inherited from colonization on the date of independence. The territorial boundaries, to be respected, may also derive from international frontiers that previously divided a colony of one State from a colony of another, or indeed a colonial territory from the territory of an independent State, or one which was under protectorate, but had retained its international personality. There is no doubt that the obligation to respect pre-existing international frontiers in the event of State succession derives from a general rule of international law, whether or not the rule is expressed in the formula of *uti possidetis* (*Case Concerning the Frontier Dispute (Burkina Faso v. Republic of Mali)* 1986 ICJ Reports 554).

The Constitutive Act prohibits *La République du Cameroun* from pursuing its colonial policy and politics of territorial aggrandizement. It outlaws imperialistic ideology, such as is actively being pursued and celebrated by *La République du Cameroun*. It prohibits African States from grabbing perceived small neighboring territories. What *La République du Cameroun* has illegally been trying to achieve over these past decades is to enlarge its territory by claiming the oil-and-mineral-rich Southern Cameroons as an appurtenant appended to its own territory, a claim steadfastly rejected from the very outset—and one that continues to be firmly rejected by the people of the Southern Cameroons. The only territory, the integrity of which *La République du Cameroun* can legitimately claim to be entitled to protect, is that which devolved upon it as State successor to French Cameroun on the basis of the pre-existing boundaries as established by treaties, and which it inherited on achievement of independence from France on January 1, 1960. The spatial configuration of *La République du Cameroun* has never, does not, and will never include the territory of the Southern Cameroons. In the contemporary period it is impermissible for a state to embark on imperialism in the grand old fashion or in another manifestation of it, such as taking over territory by force, subterfuge, or other illegal means. For, it is a well-established rule of international law that “the use or threat of force by states . . . or otherwise to effect a territorial gain is illegal” (Charter of the United Nations art. 2 (4); Brownlie 2003). In

international law, upon diminution or enlargement of state territory, the state remains the state existing before the occurrence of any of those events. In the case of enlargement, however, it must be shown that the additional territory was acquired in accordance with international law (Shaw 1997: 338 et seq.); if not, the acquisition is unlawful, invalid, and ineffectual.¹¹

Both the principle of *uti possidetis juris* and the principle of respect for borders existing on the date of independence bar *La République du Cameroun* from claiming legal entitlement to the territory of the Southern Cameroons. Legal title to territory vests in the people of the territory concerned. *La République du Cameroun* cannot raise the principle of territorial integrity against the legitimate entitlement of the people of the Southern Cameroons to self-determination. In *Kosovo Advisory Opinion* (2010)¹² the International Court of Justice made the important clarification that the principle of territorial integrity is confined to the sphere of relations between states (para. 80). That principle cannot have relevance especially in a case of the exercise of the right to self-determination against colonial rule, oppression, domination, and exploitation. In the final analysis, what is really at stake in the Southern Cameroons sovereignty case is the territorial integrity of the Southern Cameroons, not that of *La République du Cameroun*. It is *La République du Cameroun* that has violated and continues to violate the territorial integrity of the Southern Cameroons by its annexation and occupation of the Southern Cameroons. It is the territory of the Southern Cameroons that is threatened with extinction as a result of colonial occupation, domination, and exploitation by *La République du Cameroun*. The fact that the Southern Cameroons is currently not a member of the AU—as it was under colonial occupation—does not mean that its territorial integrity is not deserving of protection. It is the people of the Southern Cameroons who are facing a grave existential threat. Self-determination for the people of the Southern Cameroons does not cost *La République du Cameroun* an inch of its territory. The territory of the Southern Cameroons and that of *La République du Cameroun* are very well-defined and delimited by international boundary treaties. The self-determination of the Southern Cameroons does not in any way imperil the integrity of the territory of *La République du Cameroun*. There is no invasion or occupation of any part of the territory of *La République du Cameroun* by the Southern Cameroons. There is no secession of any part of the territory of *La République du Cameroun*.

CONCLUSION

As successor colonial authority to Britain, *La République du Cameroun* administers the Southern Cameroons as its dependent territory, exercising over it what is a derivative and precarious variant of colonial sovereignty. On the sound

authority of judicial opinion expressed by Ammoun and J. J. McNair in *International Status of South West Africa Case* (1950), I.C.J. Rep. 1950: 68 & 150, a trust territory has legal personality and constitutes a subject of law, possessing national sovereignty though not able to exercise it. Sovereignty does not cease to belong to the people of a trust territory but is, for a time, simply suppressed. The sovereignty of a trust territory is thus in abeyance and remains in abeyance until such a time when the inhabitants of the territory achieve recognition as an independent state. It inexorably follows that, upon the annexation and occupation of the Southern Cameroons by *La République du Cameroun*, the national sovereignty of the Southern Cameroons, belonging as it does to its people, simply went into and has remained in abeyance until the moment of independence, which must inexorably come sooner than later. The purported British transfer of sovereignty to *La République du Cameroun* was thus ineffectual.

It is submitted that the Commission's ruling in *Gumne et al. v. Cameroun* on the issue of self-determination for the people of the Southern Cameroons is a tragic miscarriage of justice. It ranks alongside the equally scandalous decision by the ICJ in the earlier *South West Africa* cases or the American decision in *Dred Scott v. Stanford* (60 US 393 (1857)), in which the court failed to protect human rights and made itself complicit in their violation. The annexation, occupation, domination, oppression, and exploitation of the Southern Cameroons by *La République du Cameroun* is colonization pure and simple. *La République du Cameroun's* conduct amounts to expansionism and an attempt to bring about territorial change in breach of international law. The annexation and colonization violate international law and the right of the people of the Southern Cameroons to self-determination, to existence, to dignity, and to humanity. It also violates the territorial integrity of the Southern Cameroons, the principle of *uti possidetis*, and the Constitutive Act of the African Union, which in Article 4b imposes on AU Member States, as did the binding 1964 OAU resolution on Border Disputes among African States (Doc. AHG/Res./16/1 of 1964), the legal obligation to respect the borders existing on the date each state achieved independence. It makes no sense in law, logic, or experience to suggest that theft of territory by a European power is unacceptable but that such theft is acceptable when the same act is committed by an African state. Nor does it make sense to reject white-on-black colonization but then suggest that somehow black-on-black colonization is acceptable.

NOTES

1. Like the Southern Cameroons case, the Cabinda case is not known by many people, and the conflict situation obtaining in each these two countries is hardly ever cited as one of even dormant conflict in Africa. In 2010, Cabinda forced world

attention to its dispute with the Angolan Government when it attacked the Togolese national football team transiting through Cabinda on its way to participate in the African Nations Cup in the Angolan capital city of Luanda. Three Togolese officials lost their lives in that attack.

2. Regarding situations within Member States of the African Union, the Organization appears to have moved away from the old policy of non-interference to a new policy of non-indifference in line with its Constitutive Act.

3. There is a respected body of juristic opinion to the effect that there are exceptional situations in which reasons for secession from an existing state are particularly compelling, and that these reasons include the following: a legal claim to territory wrongly annexed by another state; systematic oppression and domination; extreme and unremitting persecution; gross and consistent violations of human rights; the dissolution or breakup of a constitutive federation; internal self-determination is absolutely beyond reach; a people having come under the domination of a controlling state by way of an unjustifiable historical event such as annexation or occupation; the legally suspect assumption of jurisdiction by the controlling state. See, for example, Stromseth and Buchanan.

4. *La République du Cameroun* was found to have committed the following violations: failure to adopt legislative and other measures to give effect to the rights complained of (art. 1); unequal treatment regarding the enjoyment of human rights and freedom (art. 2); arbitrary deprivation of the right to life and of the physical integrity of the person (art. 4); torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment and treatment (art. 5); deprivation of the right to liberty and to the security of the person, in particular arbitrary arrests and detentions (art. 6); deprivation of the right to justice (art. 7 (1)); violation of the right to freedom of association (art. 10); violation of the right to freedom of assembly (art. 11); violation of the right to equality of all peoples and the right to freedom from domination (art. 19); and breach of the obligation to guarantee the independence of the courts (art. 26).

5. Examples of some well-known groundbreaking decisions in which courts resisted the influence of their time and environment are: *R v. Knowles, ex parte Somerset* (1772) 20 State Trials 1; *Brown v. Board of Education* 347 US 483 (1954); *Tyrer v. UK* (1978) European Court of Human Rights.

6. Southern Cameroons is not, as some mistakenly imagine, the south of *La République du Cameroun*. The name *Southern Cameroons* derives from the fact that the British Order in Council of June 26, 1923, divided the Mandated Territory of the British Cameroons into two parts, Southern Cameroons and Northern Cameroons. By this act of the colonial authority, the British Southern Cameroons became a distinct territory from the British Northern Cameroons within the international system, and also became a distinct unit of self-determination.

7. The UN endorsement of the vote by the British Southern Cameroons for independence was consistent with art 76b of the UN Charter, and also with UNGA resolution 1514 of December 14, 1960, which affirms independence as the inherent and inalienable right of all colonial peoples. Moreover, as the ICJ observed in the *South West Africa (Namibia) Case* (1971), “During the second half of the twentieth century, the international law of self-determination developed in such a way as to create a right

to independence for the peoples of non-self-governing territories and peoples subject to alien subjugation, domination, and exploitation.”

8. The concept of foreign domination goes beyond traditional forms of domination. It is militaristic when troops of one country are stationed in another country, economic when one country or group of countries economically dominate another, and cultural (what social scientists denote as cultural imperialism) when one country's culture is imposed on another.

9. Article 19 affirms the principle of equality of “all peoples,” the corollary of which is that all peoples enjoy the same respect and possess the same rights. It declares that nothing can possibly justify the “domination of a people” by another. The concept of “people in that article evidently does not correspond to an ethnic group. It refers to (i) the constitutional law concept of a people, that is, the people of a country as a whole, and (ii) to people as a distinct human population with a territory, a common history, language and culture and will to live as a people and be identified as such. Surprisingly, with all the tribal conflicts, antagonism, and accusations of ethnic domination in various African countries, no communication based on art. 19 has as yet been brought before the Commission.

10. Apparently, the drafters of the Charter shied away from defining the term *people* so as not to end up in difficult discussions. However, a UNESCO meeting of international law experts in February 1990 in Paris concluded that a community of humans constitute a “people” if it enjoys all or some of the following common features: common historical tradition, ethnic group identity, cultural homogeneity, linguistic unity, religious or ideological affinity, territorial connection, common economic life, and the will to be identified as a people or the consciousness of being a people. In 1980, two UN studies on the right to self-determination set out the following factors of a people that give rise to possession of right to self-determination: a history of independence or self-rule in an identifiable territory, a distinct culture, and a will and capability to regain self-governance. Critescu defines *people* as denoting a social entity possessing a clear identity and its own characteristics and implying a relationship to territory.

11. This is what is at the heart of the quarrel between the West and Russia when Russia enlarged its territory by the addition of the Crimea, which was part of the territory of Ukraine. Russia argues that the people of Crimea are ethnic Russians and that in exercise of their right to self-determination in international law they voted in a referendum to secede from Ukraine and join Russia. The West argues that the referendum was invalid because it was not sanctioned by Ukraine and that Russia forcibly aided and abetted the violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity. The reality is that the Crimea has seceded from Ukraine and has been absorbed by Russia as part of its territory in a display of power politics.

12. In 2008, Kosovo seceded from the Republic of Serbia by unilaterally declaring its independence. In its advisory opinion given in 2010, the ICJ adjudged the declaration not to be inconsistent with international law. The court referred copiously to the *South West Africa* decision in arriving at its opinion that “general international law contains no applicable prohibition on declarations of independence” and that Kosovo's declaration of independence in February 2008 did not violate general international law.

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Chapter Four

Resistance and the Nationalist Pathos

Southern Cameroon's Exiles Write Back

Fonkem Achankeng I

INTRODUCTION

For many people, including some scholars of peace and conflict studies like Saibou Issa (2004) and Anthony Okonkwo (2009), the Republic of Cameroon is an example of a peaceful post-colonial African State. This is one of the reasons why Cameroon is neither included in the conflict map of Africa nor featured as a source country for emigrants and asylum seekers prior to the early 1990s (Arthur 2000). A close study of the country, however, shows that by 2007 Cameroon ranked as a major source of asylum seekers in the United States of America (Marquart 2007) and other destinations, including South Africa (Pineteh 2005). This development is a result partly of a struggle to “restore statehood and independence” by ex-British Southern Cameroons (Ebong 1999). That struggle has persistently simmered in the country for over half a century. Characterized as “the most burning issue in Cameroon politics today” (Gros 2003), the Southern Cameroons’ “restoration of statehood”¹ conflict involves the struggle by ex-British Southern Cameroons’ nationalist movements for the withdrawal by the Cameroon Republic “from the territory of former British Cameroons to its boundaries at independence on January 1, 1960, in accordance with Article 4 of the African Union Constitutive Act” (Communication 377/2007; Litumbe 2010).

Southern Cameroons’ nationalists claim that ex-British Southern Cameroons, a former UN Trust Territory under United Kingdom administration, was overrun, annexed, and occupied by Cameroon Republic (*La Republique du Cameroun*) on October 1, 1961. This was accomplished with the connivance of the United Kingdom and the United Nations, in spite of the provisions of Article 76b of the United Nations Charter, the 1948 Universal Declaration

of Human Rights, and the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1514 of December 14, 1960, on the independence of colonial countries and peoples. Ex-British Southern Cameroons' nationalist groups, such as the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), argue that their territory was never part of *La Republique du Cameroun* at the latter's independence on January 1, 1960, and that the territory was simply annexed and colonially occupied by *La Republique du Cameroun*. The nationalists refute any accusations of "secession" or "separation," arguing that they are involved in a process aimed at "restoring a self-governing territory overrun and subjugated by *La Republique du Cameroun*" (Ebong 1999; Feko 2009).

Although there continued to be a no-war-and-no-peace situation between ex-British Southern Cameroons and *La Republique du Cameroun*, the presence of conflict is remained evident as highlighted by a letter addressed to His Excellency the Honorable Peter Mafany Musonge, Prime Minister of *La Republique du Cameroun* during a state visit to North America in April 2000. I came across this letter in America while doing field research in the state of Maryland. The letter, dated Saturday, April 1, 2000, was written to the Honorable Prime Minister, himself a native son of ex-British Southern Cameroons, by the Southern Cameroons People's Conference-North America (SCPC-NA).

This chapter addresses the contents of the letter from the perspective of Sandra Harding's (2004) call for a "strong objectivity" in ethnographic research. Harding's call requires scholars to "be integrated into democracy-advancing projects for scientific and epistemological reasons as well as moral and political ones" (Harding 2004, 136). This analysis of the letter is done on the basis of human needs theory in conflict causes. It focuses on the implications of the Southern Cameroons' nationalism in the Cameroon Republic and the resistance to a situation the SCPC-NA nationalists perceived as a "new colonial experience by the Cameroon Republic over ex-British Southern Cameroons." The chapter also examines the nonviolent option in anti-colonial resistance and its consequences in nationalist struggles. It concludes, from Galtung's (1971) structural conflict framework in peace studies, that conflict resolution depends on the satisfaction of human needs and that, in some contexts, this requires structural change. There is also the recognition that satisfying such needs requiring structural changes may not necessarily conform to the desires of nation-state advocates who argue that self-determination serves no purpose at a time when state boundaries have diminished in significance in the lives of most people (see, for example, Ohmae 1995; Cooper 2003).

This chapter refers to the Southern Cameroons by name, which is also known as British Cameroons, British Southern Cameroons, ex-British Cameroons, Anglophone Cameroon, and West Cameroon. All these names refer to the territory that ex-British Southern Cameroons' exiles refer to as their

homeland. Although the different appellations might be confusing to many readers, Aka (2002) reminds us that they are a reflection of its different colonial experiences, which included British rule (1858–1885), German rule (1885–1916), British rule again (1916–1961), Nigerian rule (1922–1961), and the rule under *La République du Cameroun* (1961–present). This territory is located between the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the West, *La République du Cameroun* to the East, and the Gulf of Guinea to the South.

Because this analysis follows the personal narrative approach, some scholars may view it as partisan. Far from the personal and biased or subjective approach, which is deplored by positivist researchers as detracting from academic quality, the personal approach used in the analysis is intentional. The approach is based on the “researcher advocate” role of standpoint epistemologists, including Sandra Harding (1991; 2004), who consider the social researcher as never free from the values and interests of particular social locations because the kinds of question they ask of subjects are shaped by where their subjects are.

Context and Data Collection

The observations and arguments in this chapter are based largely on my research experience with Southern Cameroons’ exiles in the United States. Unlike my experience in Cameroon, in which interview participants often felt intimidated and fearful of being arrested by the authorities, there was no need here in the United States to contact participants through back channels and to set up interviews in secret places or under the cover of darkness out of fear for my safety or that of my subjects. In fact, unlike in Cameroon, where freedom of expression might lead to arrest by *gendarmes* (French-style armed police with authority over civilians in Cameroon Republic and who are feared by people in ex-British Southern Cameroons) or other security agents, those who agreed to be interviewed spoke freely, without fear of being under surveillance or being arrested.² Despite the freedom that many of these exiles enjoy here in America, for a variety of reasons, we initially had difficulties identifying and contacting those who were willing to talk to us. Once we were able to identify a few individuals, we also encountered the problem of scheduling interviews because many of them worked at different times and also went to school. Consequently, interviews took place in their homes at various times of the day when they were not at work or in school.

Samba (a pseudonym), who worked in the morning as a schoolteacher and then stayed home all evening and at night, was one of those I interviewed. He was living alone in a small apartment because his wife and children were still in the homeland. He informed me that he had filed the necessary documents to

the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for his family to join him in the United States. Therefore, I had to protect his identity so as not to jeopardize the chances of his family's joining him in the United States. The government back home is ruthless, and no one knows with any certainty what could happen to his family if his identity was revealed. Seeing Samba's state of fear even in faraway North America, I reassured him, as well as other participants, of my commitment not to use their real names in the study or in any publication that uses the data I was collecting and to protect any personal information from the discussion. He was curious about the kind of research I was doing. When I told him the reason for my research, he seemed very delighted and willing to be part of the research because, for him, he "would do anything he could if only it would contribute to the cause of freeing his people and his homeland from the French and their neo-colony, *La Republique du Cameroun*." As with the other participants, I asked of Samba three simple questions: What was his story? How did he leave the Cameroon? Why did he decide to come to the United States?

We spent the entire afternoon and evening together. He took time off only to warm our dinner of *eru* and *fufu* (a traditional Cameroonian dish), which did not take long. And even while he was doing the cooking, he kept on talking. Following Southern Cameroons' traditional customs, he also welcomed me to stay with him, sharing his small apartment home and food. Late into the night, just as we concluded our conversation, Samba disappeared into his bedroom, reappearing a few minutes later with a letter that he had had in his possession for a few years and had forgotten about until toward the end of my interview. Based on the interview, he thought the letter would be relevant to the work I was doing. I thanked him, but promised to make a copy of it for my work and then return the letter the following day because I thought he treasured it highly. I read over the letter quickly, and its subject matter kept us awake for the rest of the night.

Here was Samba—a refugee living far away from his homeland and from his family and a person realizing that he was still consumed with the struggle to free his homeland from colonial subjugation—who made me realize that my research was in a way an act of advocacy for the political struggles of a people who are politically weak and largely excluded and unknown. The long night of talk also inspired me to interview other people in Samba's situation, people of former British Southern Cameroons now living in the United States.

An asylum seeker for only about two years, Samba still had the instincts of being very careful about his safety, as he had been in the home country of *La Republique du Cameroun*. He still thought that the *gendarmes* would arrive anytime to search his apartment home, maybe find the kind of documents he was keeping, and arrest him in their "*calé calé*"²³ fashion as "*un*

élément à surveiller de très près” [as someone to be closely watched].⁴ This was the tradition he had lived through in *La République du Cameroun*, which many ex-British Southern Cameroonians’ refugees did consider and still considered “a neighboring country occupying British Cameroons colonially and militarily.” In *La République du Cameroun* every person of ex-British Southern Cameroonians’ extraction was under suspicion and so lived under fear of the police in strict French colonial tradition (Blanton et al. 2001). People of Southern Cameroonians’ origin, no matter their status in the country or in the government, were put together in one group and labeled “*ces gens là*” [those people].⁵ Although Samba was thousands of miles away from his home country, the fear in which he had lived seemed to be with him even in exile. All through the interview with Samba, I kept an open mind to learn as much as I could. I also borrowed from the tradition in ethnography that the researcher still learns something from working with participants whom he keeps anonymous or even if they lie. We sat there all night as Samba narrated his story and answered my probing questions. In all, fifteen open-ended narrative interviews were conducted over a period of nine months to generate facts, opinions, and insights on the situation of former British Cameroonians and to explore the meaning of events and actions held by the different interview participants. The interviews were conducted in Maryland, New York, Minnesota, and Texas, some of the States with a large concentration of people from former British Southern Cameroonians living in the United States. The fifteen interviewees were mainly middle-aged individuals who were seeking or had sought asylum in the United States as a result of their involvement or activism in what is referred to as “the Anglophone struggle” in the Cameroon Republic. Many among them had been professionals back in Cameroon. To collaborate aspects of what the interviewees—including Samba—had narrated, I also used secondary sources on Cameroon history and politics, as well as literature on resistance and identity conflicts. Indeed, Marshall and Rossman have argued that an obvious advantage of using multiple qualitative methods of data collection is the potential to evoke unexpected data (Marshall and Rossman 1999, 138).

The Letter Samba Shared with Me

According to Munroe, freedom is the one value “for which many people, by their words and actions, often seem prepared to die” (Munroe 1984, 12). In conditions of domination and subjugation, resistance is the expression of such “imagined needs” when a people look to the possibilities for a future free of the inequalities in the present. In this context, therefore, resistance is perceived as “an activity of refusal and an attitude that refuses to give in to

resignation” (Hoy 2004, 9). Similarly, Freire describes resistance as arising from the discovery “that without freedom the oppressed cannot exist authentically” (Freire 1970, 30). Indeed, being without freedom constitutes for oppressed people “the death of a way of being-in-the-world, the death of that which constitutes a people’s identity, honor, and dignity” (Daniel 1996, 68).

The letter I received from Samba was three pages long and titled “An Open Letter to H. E. the Prime Minister of *La Republique du Cameroun*.” I have not reproduced the letter mainly because of inadequate space. The letter was written in the first person plural, the “we” referring to Southern Cameroon’s exiles living in the United States, the country the Prime Minister was visiting. The authors were Southern Cameroon’s people and members of the Southern Cameroon’s Peoples Conference (SCPC) in North America. The Southern Cameroon Peoples’ Conference was instituted alongside the Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC) by the second All Anglophone Conference in Bamenda in May 1994 to lead the Southern Cameroon’s struggle to restore independence and sovereignty for ex-British Southern Cameroon. The SCNC and its affiliate, SCPC, are considered by the Government of *La Republique du Cameroun* as “illegal organizations” with “secessionist” intentions (FameNdongo 2000; Marquart 2007). It is therefore no wonder that the authors, members of the Southern Cameroon’s Peoples Conference (SCPC-NA), described themselves as “exiles” in North America.

The addressee of this letter, His Excellency, Peter Mafany Musonge, Prime Minister of the Republic of Cameroon, is portrayed in the letter as an individual to be pitied in the tradition of an anti-hero, one who stands with an oppressor against his own people. Thus, although he is considered by the exiles as “a brother” and a fellow Southern Cameroonian, he is also perceived as “an expatriate” and an agent in the service of a “foreign government” (*La Republique du Cameroun*) on a mission to change the course of their national liberation struggle. In other words, he is viewed as an errand boy working on behalf of a master—the government of Cameroon.

THE “ANGLOPHONIZATION” STRATEGY IN APPOINTING SOUTHERN CAMEROONIANS AS PRIME MINISTERS

Peter Mafany Musonge was appointed Prime Minister of *La Republique du Cameroun* in 1997 by President Paul Biya within the context of the president’s “Anglophonization strategy” (Monono 2000). Monono, a leading scholar on Anglophone Cameroon, describes the Anglophonization strategy as part of a broader policy by the government of *La Republique du Cameroun* to appoint citizens of Southern Cameroon’s origin to government posts.

Therefore, the appointment of Anglophone Cameroonians as Prime Ministers, beginning in 1992, was seen as an important move by the administration to resolve the Anglophone problem. As Monono (2000) argues, the decision to appoint an Anglophone Prime Minister was a fulfillment of the President's desire to effectively involve Anglophones in power-sharing in the country and not remain as political spectator.

The appointment of Peter Mafany Musonge as Prime Minister in 1997 followed an earlier appointment of another Anglophone, Simon Achidi Achu, to the same position by the President of Cameroon Republic. Achidi Achu served as prime minister from 1992 to 1997.⁶ Monono (2000) posits that the appointment of Simon Achidi Achu as Prime Minister in the heat of an emerging Anglophone sub-nationalism during the pro-democracy movement of the early 1990s, was an effort to mollify several Anglophone groups including, the All Anglophone Conference (AAC), the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), the Southern Cameroons Peoples Conference (SCPC) Free West Cameroon Movement, Cameroon Anglophone Parents and Teachers Association (CAPTAC), and the Cameroon Anglophone Teachers Association (TAC) that were advocating for better treatment or possible separation from the union by the former British trusteeship.

The authors of the letter did not consider Peter Mafany Musonge in any way different from their perception of his predecessors, Simon Achidi Achu and Ephraim Inoni, or Philemon Yang, the current Prime Minister. The service to *La Republique du Cameroun* of these sons of ex-British Southern Cameroons was not considered different from the service of the Israeli foremen or taskmasters in Pharaoh's Egypt. Like Pharaoh's taskmasters in Biblical Egypt, Anglophone Prime Ministers and other senior Anglophone officials in *La Republique du Cameroun* were chosen by the President of *La Republique du Cameroun* to represent his interest of sustaining "the annexation and colonization" of ex-British Southern Cameroons. In other words, these men, who were purported to be representing ex-British Southern Cameroons' people in the Cameroon Government, were never elected by the people of that territory to represent them in *La Republique du Cameroun*. With the emergence and increasing polarization of Southern Cameroons' nationalism in *La Republique du Cameroun* beginning in the early 1990s, the leadership of the country saw the need to groom its own leadership of Southern Cameroons and to use these leaders in an effort to impress upon the world community that Southern Cameroonians were an integral part of the country's governing hierarchy. Ironically, whenever these Prime Ministers and other senior Anglophone officials co-opted by *La Republique du Cameroun* were eventually relieved of their positions in government, they returned to Southern Cameroons, their home of birth, where they lived in anonymity. An interview participant in the research who had recently arrived in

the United States from the homeland indicated that these leaders, “like Governor Peter Oben Ashu and Prime Ministers Achidi Achu, Mafany Musonge, and Ephraim Inoni, go into hiding or were imprisoned once the Yaounde regime threw them out. No one sees them in public anymore.”

CONTEXT OF RESISTANCE AND THE PRIME MINISTER’S VISIT TO NORTH AMERICA

What Monono (2000) referred to as the “emerging Anglophone sub-nationalism” in Cameroon is the movement by ex-British Southern Cameroons’ nationalists to “restore the independence and sovereignty of ex-British Southern Cameroons” from *La Republique du Cameroun* (Ebong 1999). This conflict is known variously as the “Anglophone Problem” in Cameroon (Nzefeh 1994; Asonganyi 2015; Monono 2000; Kubuo 2000) or the “Southern Cameroons’ independence Question” (Anyangwe 2008). While Kubuo (2000) and others viewed the Anglophone problem as the outright structural marginalization, the deliberate inferiorization of the inherited culture of Anglophones, and the infernal assimilation imposed on Anglophone Cameroon by the Cameroon Republic with the active complicity of the French, Monono (2000) considered the problem as constituting “the most conspicuous form of internal socio-political contradiction” in Cameroon Republic. He characterized the problem as “a perception problem.” In his perspective,

The Anglophone problem in Cameroon simply put is a perception of marginalization by the indigenous English-speaking people of the former Southern Cameroons, which is translated in their exclusion from participating in managing the country’s sovereignty, or the inclusion of their Anglo-Saxon values in the process of nation-building. It is further a perception of neglect in the socio-economic and infrastructural development of Anglophone Cameroon (Roads, railway, airports, seaports, etc.) as well as a systematic destruction of the region’s pattern of development and its own development institutions like the West Cameroon Development Agency, the West Cameroon owned Cameroon Bank, the West Cameroon Marketing Board, the POWERCAM, and even the CDC. It is finally the perception by most Anglophones that they do not have equal opportunities in Cameroon for personal and professional development like their Francophone compatriots with similar profiles (underlining mine).

Although Monono insisted that it is merely “a perception problem,” he nevertheless recognized it as a national problem that requires a national solution. Furthermore, he argued that the perceived marginalization of Anglophones can also be seen in their glaring absence in critical leadership and policy-making positions, such as National Defense and Security, Intelligence, Di-

plomacy, Territorial Administration, Finance, and Economic Departments. Despite this glaring absence, Monono argued that the appointment of Musonge and other Anglophones to the premiership may be the solution to the perceived problem of marginalization.

Meanwhile, other scholars, including Anyangwe (2008), did and do not define the problem in terms of the marginalization of ex-British Southern Cameroons and its people in the governance of Cameroon Republic. Although that marginalization is obvious, Anyangwe (2008, 2009) and others considered such marginalization as a result mainly of the “annexation, occupation, and re-colonization” of ex-British Southern Cameroons by *La République du Cameroun* (ex-French Cameroon). The perspectives of the authors of the letter to the Prime Minister were similar to those of Anyangwe and others, including Litumbe (2010). Members of SCPC-NA envisioned the solution in terms of separate independence in accordance with the UN Trusteeship Agreement and the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 1514 of December 1960.

Whether the ensuing conflict is viewed in terms of marginalization or one of a foreign occupation and re-colonization, the problem escalated drastically over the years to one in which the people of Southern Cameroons sought a separate existence (Anyangwe 2005, 2008; Ebong 1999; Elad 1995; Foncha 1996; Gumne 2006; Mukong 1990; Nfor 2000). It was in the context of the evolving conflict that Peter Mafany Musonge, like other Anglophone appointees to the position, was appointed Prime Minister—much, as indicated earlier, in the tradition of Pharaoh in Egypt “appointing one of them to fight them.” Some observers of the politics of *La République du Cameroun* think Peter M. Musonge and other Southern Cameroons’ Prime Ministers in *La République du Cameroun* are used not only in the Anglophonization strategy, but also as a calculation to preempt the escalation of the Anglophone problem. In implementing this strategy, the different regimes in *La République du Cameroun* have further put a divide between the Northwest and the Southwest, the two regions of Southern Cameroons annexed as part of post-colonial *Republique du Cameroun*. It was in the position of agent of the government of *Republique du Cameroun* that Prime Minister Peter Mafany Musonge was sent on a public diplomacy mission to North America.

***La République du Cameroun* as a Foreign Occupying Government**

The letter to Prime Minister Peter Mafany Musonge highlighted the difference between ex-British Southern Cameroons on the one hand and *Republique du Cameroun* on the other hand. *La République du Cameroun* was

perceived by the authors of the letter as “a sister African country, a foreign government occupying ex-British Southern Cameroons.” *La République du Cameroun* is the name of ex-French Cameroon. This former Class B UN trust territory under French administration gained its independence from France on January 1, 1960, as *Republique du Cameroun* and gained membership into the United Nations on January 20, 1960. Ex-British Southern Cameroons, a separate Class B UN trust territory under United Kingdom administration was not part of *Republique du Cameroun* at the independence of the latter. Although the letter was written in English, its authors made certain to keep to the French name of the country, *La République du Cameroun*, as enshrined in international law. In doing so they drew the historical contrast between their territory, ex-British Southern Cameroons, and the country “this Prime Minister and fellow brother served.” In a way, they reminded him that he was serving a foreign country, *La République du Cameroun*, one that “remains a corrupt, human-rights abusing and a colonizing entity.” As a “colony of that foreign country,” the authors thought their duty was “to leave” that country rather than “to fix it.” Aware that the cure of colonization is de-colonization, the authors recognized that it was the moral and legal responsibility of the United Nations to accomplish its mission in the former UN trust territory of British Cameroons in conformity with Article 76(b) of the UN Charter and UNGA Resolution 1514 of December 1960. The authors of the letter also viewed the implementation of these international instruments as “the permanent solution and road map of freedom and peace based on justice.”

Other Concerns in the Letter

The authors opened the letter not only with the traditional African courtesy of extending greetings to a guest, but also with a note of disappointment in the Prime Minister as an individual and in the role he was playing for *La République du Cameroun*. They stated rhetorically, “Ordinarily we would have been proud. . . . Ordinarily we would have been overjoyed that the Prime Minister visiting our place of exile is a fellow Southern Cameroons expatriate . . .” if the trip was not designed to be a public relations stunt. They wanted to inform the Prime Minister that his visit was a non-event as far as their struggle was concerned because they knew “Nobody in Southern Cameroons or *La République du Cameroun* would think for a moment that the course of the struggle would change because of the trip.” From the interviews conducted for this research, it appeared the exiles were determined to struggle on in spite of the strong campaign the government of Cameroon was mounting in order to give the impression (the false impression) in North America that there was only one peaceful Cameroon Republic.

The authors of the letter seized the opportunity of the visit of the Prime Minister to “pass some messages through [him] to [his] government and all peoples under its control, whether legitimately or illegitimately.” Some of these messages in the letter included the human rights abuses of the government of Cameroon Republic, the Moroccan Gambit, Southern Cameroons’ prisoners, the Bakweri Lands Issue, the idea of a fake decentralization in *La Republique du Cameroun*, as well as deforestation and other environmental issues. Let us briefly consider some of these concerns.

With regard to the human rights record of Cameroon Republic, the SCPC-NA also informed the Prime Minister in the letter that they had retained the services of “a New York Law Firm to collect evidence of human rights abuse against Southern Cameroons property perpetrated by agents of *La Republique du Cameroun*.” The second issue dear to the hearts of the authors was the concept referred to as the “Moroccan Gambit.” This concept refers to the colonial practice of populating a colony with the native peoples of the colonizing country. The concept is borrowed from the practice by Morocco in Western Sahara. It is a practice currently being used by *La Republique du Cameroun* in Southern Cameroons. This colonial ploy, also known as “demographic dilution” (Aditjondro 2000), dates back to the seventeenth century English monarchy (Brain 1972) and has been practiced by numerous regimes in colonial history, including the example of Indonesia in East Timor as depicted by Aditjondro (2000). Although it is difficult to ascertain the number of ex-French Cameroonians currently living in the Southern Cameroons, many scholars argue that the trend began in the 1930s (Aka 2002, 89) and increased tremendously in post-colonial Cameroon, especially after 1972 when the authorities of Cameroon Republic implemented a unitary state. This demographic dilution is intended to quell Southern Cameroons’ nationalism by tampering with the population balance in the colony.

Subjugation and Political Prisoners

The subjugation of a post-colony was also a concern in the letter. As a “colony” of *La Republique du Cameroun*, the “colonizer” continues to do what colonizers do best: arrest, kill, imprison, or torture anyone who dares to express a different view of things. Southern Cameroons’ citizens and nationalists were regularly arrested and detained arbitrarily by authorities of Cameroon Republic.⁷ And officials of the Southern Cameroons National Council are constantly arrested and detained without charge. The message transmitted to the Prime Minister—and through him to his government—focused on the fact that the killings, the torture, and imprisonment of Southern Cameroons’ people and their leaders “will not stop the contagion of freedom

already underway. It will only intensify its spread.” The authors of the letter indicated their concern for Southern Cameroonians held by *La République du Cameroun* as political prisoners. They forewarned the Prime Minister of Cameroon Republic to stay away “from participating in or formulating policy that will result in the abuse, murder or illegal imprisonment of Southern Cameroonians people.” Although the letter did not state it, further research revealed that there was not a single political prisoner in ex-British Southern Cameroon between 1954, when the territory became self-governing, and October 1961, when it became part of *La République du Cameroun* as West Cameroon, and then 1972, when West Cameroon was abolished in what was portrayed by President Ahidjo of Cameroon Republic as the 1972 peaceful revolution (Aka 2002).

A Dysfunctional Decentralization

Referring to documents in the French language, which the SCPC-NA described as “authentic,” the authors of the letter did not esteem the decentralization plan of the government of Cameroon Republic. For them, the plan was just “another tired mockery of the out-of-touch policy mills in Paris designed to serve the interest of France and her neocolonial peons in *La République du Cameroun*.” They saw the decentralization plan as aimed at “gradually sealing the doom of Southern Cameroonians by annexing the territory to the colonizer.” They asked the Prime Minister of *La République du Cameroun* to please tell his employers that “we will do all in our power to derail it” because they had “no interest in maintaining future ties with *La République du Cameroun* except as good neighbors.” SCPC-NA sought to end not only the occupation of the Southern Cameroonians, but also the mental state that half a century of intoxication and indoctrination had implanted in an entire people since 1961.

Although the analysis in this chapter is mainly one of the letter, further research revealed that the Southern Cameroonians’ people suffered from an endemic collective action problem. It would take more than leadership to change the fate of Southern Cameroonians in *Republique du Cameroun*. It would take visionaries who reason beyond the platitude of daily hypes and sound bites and who work together for collective efficacy. To achieve collective efficacy, Southern Cameroonians’ nationalist leaders and their people needed to learn to get together because unified effort (collective action) remained a viable option for achieving group-based goals (Van Zomeren et al. 2008). The data collected conveyed that it was doubtful whether Southern Cameroonians’ nationalist leaders had engaged the people in collective action in order to attain their nationalism goal. Former British Cameroonians does not fall in the category of Ferguson’s critique of anti-colonial nationalist struggles for sov-

ereignty and the economic poverty and powerlessness of some nation-states such as Lesotho in Southern Africa (Ferguson 2006, 50). Former British Cameroons, with a population of about six million people at the time of the visit, is economically very viable in terms of its location, agricultural, and mineral wealth (Anyangwe 2005). However, at the time of the analysis conducted for this chapter, the British Southern Cameroons' nationalist struggle continued to suffer from an endemic collective action problem and, consequently, from visibility and public support both internally and externally.

The letter also pointed out a number of other issues, including deforestation, perceptions of Cameroon Republic as a foreign occupying government, and the Bakweri lands case as indicated earlier. For example, the writers decried the "clear cutting . . . unleashed on the forests of Southern Cameroons," which had negatively impacted food production, water quality, soil quality, and the health of Southern Cameroons people. Ex-British Southern Cameroons' nationalists also perceived *La Republique du Cameroun* as "a foreign occupying government."

In addition, the authors of the letter argued that Southern Cameroons was not part of the territory of French Cameroon that attained independence on January 1, 1960, as *La Republique du Cameroun* and membership of the United Nations on September 20, 1960. Southern Cameroons' nationalists also argued that the joining of Southern Cameroons to *La Republique du Cameroun* in 1961 after *La Republique Cameroun* had become a member state of the United Nations in September 1960 was not implemented in accordance with the prescriptions of Article 102 (1) of the United Nations Charter. Similarly, the letter contended that the African Union Resolution 16 (1) of July 1964 declared that "all Member States pledge themselves to respect the frontiers existing on their achievement of national independence" and that "Southern Cameroons does not seek a square foot of the land nor a drop of water from the territories of others." For the letter writers, there was and is no valid union between the former British Cameroons and former French Cameroon because there was never any Union treaty executed by the parties and duly filed at the Secretariat of the UN (Litumbe 2010). And the nationalists claimed that "given that there is no Union treaty between the parties, any claims of Cameroon Republic being 'one and indivisible' for over half a century cannot be honored by ex-British Southern Cameroons." The authors of the letter considered the terms of joining as being contrary to the UN General Assembly Res. 1541 (XV) of 15 Dec. 1960.

The Bakweri Lands Issue was also raised in the letter. The 400 square miles of fertile lands confiscated from the Bakweri people of Southern Cameroons by German colonial interests and later expropriated by the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) was described as "irritant." The authors of

the letter saw no difference between German colonialists who expropriated land from the natives and the government of *La République du Cameroun*. On this issue of the native lands illegally confiscated without rents or royalties to the indigenous owners of the land, the authors found no difference between the colonial tradition of the two different “colonizers” vis-à-vis the treatment of the native peoples. They provided the Prime Minister a lesson in colonial studies, noting that his “government is as unwilling to listen to the people as the German colonialist government.” From the letter, one can characterize the relationship between ex-British Southern Cameroonians and *La République du Cameroun* as patterned after the relationship that existed between former European powers and their colonies. The question I would like to address in a later study is what it will take for nonviolent resistance—as evident through the letter to Prime Minister Mafany Musonge—to secure success in an anti-colonial struggle such as the one in which ex-British Southern Cameroonians found herself in post-colonial *La République du Cameroun*.

Nationalism and Power

In his view of nationalism as “the dominant socio-political condition of our age,” Banks (1996) outlined a number of considerations relating to the natural congruence among a country’s name (however often changed); a fixed territory (however much disputed); a group of people who are considered citizens (however varied they are); and a political system that administers that country in the name of its people (however much despised) (Banks 1996, 125). The works of three other authors, Gellner (1983), Anderson (1983), and Smith (1986), are mentioned frequently in nationalism studies are relevant to the discussion of the letter under study. For instance, Gellner considered nationalism as “entry to, participation in, identification with, a literate high culture which is co-extensive with an entire political unit and its total population” (Gellner 1983, 95). Meanwhile, Anderson, another foremost scholar on nationalism theory, considers nations as “imagined communities” in that “members of even the small nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson 1983, 15).

Smith (1986) went beyond Gellner’s view of economic-historical origins and Anderson’s perspective of techno-historical basis of nationalism in his claim for ethnicity as the origin of nationalism. Smith (1986, 22–30) argued that the *ethnie* defined by a set of features or dimensions—including a collective name, a common myth of descent, a shared history and a sense of an association with specific territory, and a sense of solidarity—serves to unite a population in a cultural uniqueness with historical continuity. For Smith,

economic and political formations and alliances come and go and, while they may sustain a collectivity in the short term, only a “myth-symbol” complex is durable enough to sustain an *ethnie* through millennia until it emerges into a modern world as a nation (Smith 1986, 15). In this conceptualization, the nation is a “core” of “myths, memories, values and symbols.” This core is transmitted through and between members of the collectivity and down through the generations. In addition to his focus on ethnic identity in nationalism studies Smith (1986, 220) also recognized the relationship between language and nation-state in the modern world. Smith’s argument was that every nation-state having a language gives greater force to the claims of language-based nationalist movements, such as French-speaking Quebecois in Canada or the Flemish-speaking Walloons in Belgium. This view of ethno-nationalisms put forth by Smith may be incomplete for explaining some nationalist struggles not based on ethnic lines. A typical example would be the case of ex-British Southern Cameroons’ nationalism. As a former UN trust territory with some 60 ethnic groups (Field 1958), the struggle for the restoration of independence and statehood of British Cameroons dates back to World War I (Fanso 2009, 141–150). Although Anyangwe characterizes the territory as having “internationally established frontiers with two decades of self-government behind it,” (Anyangwe 2008, 2), it is difficult to understand how such a nationalist struggle has remained in the shadows. The nature of the struggle and the dynamics of power involved in containing it will be the subject of a different study.

However, in analyzing the letter Samba shared with me as anti-colonial resistance, the perspective of Frantz Fanon (1967) in his classic study, *The Wretched of the Earth*, is important. As a theorist of national liberation, Fanon advanced the argument that all forms of anti-colonial nationalism had, by necessity, to contain violence because the violence inherent in the colonization process always calls forth an answering violence from the colonized. In a fifty-year-long struggle, the letter and its contents appeared to belong in the realm of Gandhi’s nonviolent nationalism (Sharp 2005). From a comparative standpoint, such Gandhian conception requiring the construction of an inclusive type of nationalism, which would remain free of all forms of conceptual violence, did not seem effective. In a world plagued by destructive nationalist conflicts, Steger provides a critique of the Southern Cameroons’ type of nonviolent nationalism notion as mainly “an influential experiment with politics as morality in action” (Steger 2000, 182).

Researcher Advocate

In sticking to the facts narrowly construed, I have tried to do justice to the dreams of freedom among ex-British Southern Cameroons’ nationalists. Even

in the face of enormous neglect by the powerful of the world community following numerous petitions over the years from former Southern Cameroons' nationalists and the repression of the nationalist movements in the territory, Southern Cameroons' exiles working in North America took stock of the state of their subjugation through a letter. They held their heads high in the hope and belief that the day would come when the people of ex-British Southern Cameroons will be independent and free to determine their own future as other former European colonies. The visions the exiles shared through their letter to Prime Minister Peter Mafany Musonge could as well generate political possibilities.

This chapter began when I was conducting research for a different purpose, but it was then that I understood the predicament of the people of ex-British Southern Cameroons. Increasingly, it became evident that the government of Cameroon Republic (*La Republique du Cameroun*) simply overran the territory of ex-British Southern Cameroons (a former UN trust territory) on October 1, 1961, occupied the territory colonially and militarily, and subjugated its citizens for decades without a treaty or any other instrument of international law. Studies on the nature of the marriage experience of the two bi-cultural Cameroons and historical evidence during and after the Fouban conference reveal that no major work may have been done in 1961 to lay a solid foundation for a reunified federal Cameroon (Jua and Konings 2004; Awasom 2007; Anyangwe 2008; Tatah 2014; Fonkem 2014). Scholars, including Charles Hale, have become advocates for the groups they study. In the call for a rethinking of approaches to activist anthropology, Hale has urged social scientists not only to “deploy positivist social science methods and [to] subject them to rigorous critique while acknowledging with acceptance the cognitive dissonance that results” (Hale 2006, 113), but also to use data collection forms and methods of causal analysis to enhance the political struggles of less powerful groups. This approach is contrary to the position of positivists, who view politics as something to be avoided in any research they consider disinterested.

I subscribe to the view that positivists do not monopolize the stage in matters of approaches in social science research. Standpoint epistemologists consider all knowledge projects as political from their argument that researchers are never free from the values and interests of particular social locations. They maintain that the kinds of questions they ask of subjects are shaped by where their subjects are. In this connection, Sandra Harding has advocated for a “strong objectivity” requiring that researchers “be integrated into democracy-advancing projects for scientific and epistemological reasons as well as moral and political ones” (Harding 2004, 136). Harding argues further that politically-guided research projects produce stronger claims to knowledge than those guided by the illusion of value-neutrality. This is what

I have attempted to accomplish in this chapter by trying to listen to the voices of Southern Cameroon's nationalists living in exile through their letter addressed to Prime Minister Mafany Musonge. I have also tried to document the narratives of the structurally subjugated, marginalized, and uninvestigated people of ex-British Southern Cameroon, a people who want "independence to be free as a right to do what we need for us and our children."

From undertaking the study leading to this chapter, it is evident that there are two Cameroons foisted into one post-colonial state against the wishes of one of the two Cameroons. These are the former French Cameroons that gained independence from France on January 1, 1960, as *La République du Cameroun*, and the former British Southern Cameroons that was compelled by the UN and Britain to achieve its "independence by joining" in 1961 (UN Resolution 1608). Simply stated, the two separate colonies of two different colonial masters and separate colonial traditions have experienced a conflictual existence since 1961, in which the political and power majority, former French Cameroon, is perceived by the indigenous English-speaking people of ex-British Southern Cameroon as having "occupied and re-colonized" former British Cameroon (Anyangwe 2014).

The main objective of this chapter was to understand, through the letter of ex-British Southern Cameroon's exiles in North America, the nationalism of ex-British Southern Cameroon within the post-colonial state of Cameroon. From the study leading to the chapter, it may be safe to state that, following the structural injustice on ex-British Southern Cameroon's territory and people in 1961 by Britain and the United Nations, the past structures of colonialism still present in the territory today affect how the people look to the possibilities for a better future as they imagine life in an independent and sovereign Southern Cameroon state. My skepticism, however, remains about where and how far Southern Cameroon's nonviolent anti-subjugation resistance goes in a global environment where attention seems to be where violence is. Given the reality of state politics in today's world, does Frantz Fanon's (1967) argument not resonate with scholars who agree that all forms of anti-colonial nationalism must, by necessity, contain an answering violence from the colonized, because violence is inherently part of the colonizing process.

NOTES

1. Ex-British Cameroon exiles refer to their struggle as "restoring sovereignty and independence." This concept used by Justice Frederick Alobwede Ebong in his "Proclamation of the Restoration of Sovereignty and Independence of Southern Cameroon," is unique in the scholarship on ethno-nationalism in post-colonial Africa.

2. For more information on freedom of expression in Cameroon, see various United States Department of State Country Report on Cameroon and Amnesty International Annual Reports, especially in the 1990s.

3. *Calé calé* is a form of repression in which the military cracks down on a city or town in the early hours of the morning, ransacks homes, and subjects the inhabitants to inhuman treatment as a way of subduing the people.

4. *Un élément à surveiller de très près* translated as someone to be closely watched.

5. *Ces gens là*, translated as those people, conveys the way ex-British Southern Cameroons are perceived and labeled by the people of *La République du Cameroun*.

6. Other Anglophones appointed to the position include Ephraim Inoni (2004–2009) and Philemon Yang (2009–present).

7. For more information on this issue, see various Country Reports on Cameroon by the United States Department of State, especially those in the early 1990s.

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Section 2

ECONOMY

Chapter Five

The Demise of the Coffee Industry in the Northwest Region of Cameroon

Emmanuel E. Kengo

INTRODUCTION

At the dawn of independence in 1961, more than 75 percent of the rural populations in the Northwest region of Cameroon were involved in the production and sale of arabica coffee, making it the main source of foreign exchange earnings for many families. In fact, many farmers believed that independence and reunification with the former French trusteeship, which had gained its independence in January 1960, would lead to increased crop production, more efficient commercialization, and greater profits once the exploitative colonial structure was dismantled.¹ Such optimism led many farmers to accelerate the planting of coffee following independence. As a result, the production of arabica coffee in the region increased from just over 1,400 tons in 1961, to 10,900 tons in 1979 (Kengo 2007). Recognizing the socioeconomic importance of coffee not only to the Northwest province but the economy of Cameroon as a whole, the post-colonial government undertook several reforms in the industry, especially after 1972, which were aimed at stabilizing the industry and guaranteeing a minimum price to farmers by improving the quality and quantity of the crop. The administration hoped to achieve these goals by creating parastatal organizations, which it hoped would win the loyalty and support of the farmers (Jua 1991), while also meeting their needs by supporting existing farmer co-operatives. The optimism that independence would lead to significant improvement in coffee production and in the lives of farmers in the region was short-lived. Many coffee farmers started expressing their disappointment and frustration over observed disparities in the price of arabica coffee in Bamenda with the price in East Cameroon just a decade after independence (Kengo 2015).

Following the initial disappointment and frustrations of the first two decades of independence over price differences in the two territories, the 1980s started off well for arabica coffee farmers in the province. For instance, the price of arabica coffee rose from FCFA 360 per kilogram in 1982 to FCFA 520 in 1986 (NPMB and NWCA Ltd. 2001). The rise was largely the result of a corresponding rise in the price of coffee on the world market, which rose from FCFA 737 per kilogram in 1982 to FCFA 1412 in 1986.² (NPMB and NWCA Ltd. 2001). Such price incentives made the coffee industry attractive and encouraged production in the region until 1986. However, beginning in 1987, Cameroon, like many other African countries, began experiencing a decline in its foreign earnings due to the decline in the price of its exports (Jua 1991; Takougang 1993). For instance, the price of arabica coffee, which had soared on the world market to FCFA 1412 per kilogram in 1986 plummeted to FCFA 765 in 1987 (Kengo 2007). Despite the drop in the price of arabica coffee on the world market, the National Produce Marketing Board (NPMB), which had been created in 1978 as the sole agency for the sale of coffee from the region on the world market (Ollong 2016), was still able to pay farmers FCFA 520 per kilogram for their arabica coffee. As a policy, the NPMB paid farmers a much lower price for their coffee than what it received on the world market. The goal of this price strategy by the NPMB was to establish a special fund that could be used to subsidize farmers' prices when prices were low on the world market. However, while the strategy was well intended, the NPMB generally used its position simply to siphon resources away from coffee and cocoa farmers. In other words, by setting the price that farmers received below what it got from the world market, the NPMB indirectly exploited the farmers, which in turn discouraged farm production and depressed income to farmers (Bates 2005).

Because the price of coffee in the Northwest region had plummeted to Francs CFA 250 per kilogram during the 1989–1990 coffee season, due to the persistent fall in prices on the world market, the NPMB could no longer subsidize the price that it paid to farmers. Instead, the administration decided to introduce liberal policies that were aimed at sustaining coffee production in the region. Among the new policies was the decision that the NPMB would no longer serve as the sole agent responsible for selling coffee produced by farmers of the Northwest Province on the world market. Following this decision, the Northwest Co-operative Association (NWCA), an umbrella organization for coffee farmers in the region ceased to function as the official licensed buyer of coffee in the Northwest province for the NPMB. Prior to the reforms, the NWCA was the sole official licensed buyer authorized to buy coffee from the farmers of the Northwest province for the NPMB, while the NPMB was responsible for selling the coffee on the world market. Following the reforms, NWCA was autho-

rized to sell the product of its members directly on the world market. NPMB, which had a selling monopoly of such coffee on the world market, was closed down in 1991 (Ollong 2015). The new policy also allowed for private Licensed Buying Agents (LBAs) to operate in the province alongside the NWCA. Private LBAs were to operate in the industry for the first time since the creation of NPMB in 1978. Private LBAs, which included local traders like Ndam Charles, Dan Mukala, John Ayaba, and Afah Macolo, bought coffee in rural areas and supplied them to such major exporters as Olam Cameroon (Olamcam), exporters who were based in the cities. By serving in this role to major exporters in the cities, LBAs were able to profit as middlemen. In other words, LBAs were allowed to compete for the produce of the farmers in a free market, thereby allowing farmers to sell their coffee to the highest bidder.

Although these policies were part of the recommendations made by the World Bank/IMF Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) to address a collapsing economy that Cameroon and many African states were facing in the 1980s, they ultimately proved to be devastating to the coffee industry in the Northwest province. However, while these policies did contribute to the collapse of the coffee industry in the region, this chapter argues that a more holistic approach is required in understanding the demise of the coffee industry in the Northwest province of Cameroon. For instance, the introduction and cultivation of coffee in Bamenda—against colonial advice—had serious implications on the industry throughout the colonial period. Not only did the colonial government fail to promote the industry; the farmers also lacked adequate staff and effective means of transporting the crop. While an analysis of the factors that led to the eventual collapse of the coffee industry and its impact on the lives of farmers in the region was the result of the liberalization policies of the 1990s, this chapter begins with its difficult and somewhat controversial birth during the colonial period.

ORIGINS OF COFFEE IN THE NORTHWEST REGION

Coffee was introduced in the Northwest region of Cameroon in 1923, from the former French-mandated territory, despite opposition from British colonial administrators, who were against its cultivation in the region by the indigenous population (NAB, Qc/g 1922/1). One reason for their opposition was that they felt Bamenda lacked the infrastructure needed to transport the crop to its port of exit for European markets. The colonial authorities also reasoned that cultivating the crop would lead to greater economic development and discourage the migration of labor from the region to European-owned plantations on the coast (DeLancey 1988). A third

reason for opposing its introduction centered on the culture and economics of the crop. As H. Roebuck, a senior agricultural officer noted:

While it seems possible that the people in Bamenda might be able to grow Arabica coffee successfully, it is unlikely that they would be able to prepare it properly for the market, without the guidance and advice of a European agricultural officer. When it comes to marketing the coffee, the same European guidance and supervision will be required as is required for cocoa. Before, however, any extension work is undertaken on coffee we want to know more about the economics of coffee, not only the valuation of home coffee brokers but what price local firms are willing to pay. We should not be justified in advocating coffee growing to farmers in Bamenda or even in encouraging them to grow coffee merely on the assumption that it is sound to do so. That, in fact, would be an unsound thing to do. If the farmers wish to plant coffee we cannot stop them, but this is a very different matter to our encouraging them to do so. (NAB, Qc/g 1922/1)

And yet it should be noted that British indifference and lack of support for the industry at the inception stage cannot wholly be considered as altruistic. In other words, it was not in the economic interest of the indigenes that the colonial administrators discouraged coffee cultivation in Bamenda Division. Indeed, O. N. Njoku (1978) opines that colonial administrators were also public relations officers whose language demonstrated the hypocrisy and fundamental *raison d'être* of colonialism couched in the garb of altruism. Similarly, Hymer (1970) notes that colonial administrators were not interested in nurturing native capitalists and preferred to maintain the economic myths that rationalized their negative policies. Such an attitude may explain why in spite of the introduction in the region in 1923, its cultivation was not reported in Britain's colonial assessment reports for the region for almost two decades.

THE POST-COLONIAL PERIOD

Like many segments of the population in Cameroon, the coffee farmers in the Northwest province received independence with optimism. Many farmers in the region expected that independence would lead to an end to many of the problems that they had experienced during the colonial period. This optimism was buttressed by the fact that S. T. Muna, a leading politician from the region, had promised better times for coffee farmers during his campaign for independence (Fon 2003). Another leading politician from the province, J. N. Foncha, who became the prime minister of West Cameroon and vice president of the Federal Republic of Cameroon following reuni-

fication with the former French trusteeship (known as *La République du Cameroun* after gaining its independence from France on January 1, 1960), was also a founding member of the coffee farmers' co-operative movement which had been created in 1947. Once again, this optimism was short-lived (Kengo 2015). Barely a decade after independence and reunification, coffee farmers in the Northwest region faced new problems and challenges. They were not only unhappy with the low price of FCFA 175 per kilogram that they were still receiving for their coffee in 1972—an increase of only FCFA 75 compared to what they had received in 1962 (NPMB; NWCA)—but was disappointed with delays in payment by the government and the Licensed Buying Agents (LBAs). Moreover, they did not understand why, in spite of reunification, farmers in East Cameroon received a higher price for their arabica coffee than farmers in West Cameroon. Their grievance was articulated in a letter to the Prime Minister of West Cameroon by A. A. Geh, manager of the Bamenda Co-operative Marketing Association (BCMA), an association created in 1959 as the umbrella organ of a three-tier farmers' co-operative marketing organization in the province made up of primary societies at village levels and of unions at district or sub-divisional levels.³ The letter noted the following:

Unification has brought along with it harmonization in several fields of activity at different stages, and those affected are now enjoying the fruits of it. But the arabica coffee farmers seem to have been forgotten as this does not seem to have affected them directly. The arabica coffee farmer of East Cameroon continues to receive a higher price for the same quality of coffee year after year than ourselves, and this is striking to note, when it is considered that all our coffee is being sold in the same world market. Formerly we were not grading our coffee in the same way as they were doing and this was responsible for the difference in the price, but two years ago we acquired the necessary grading machines, processing techniques and have since been producing same qualities as they of the East; but still we do not receive the same price for our coffee. (BCMA Ltd to the Hon. Prime Minister of West Cameroon 1967)

However, the challenges confronting the coffee industry in the province were not only price discrepancies in the two territories, but also poor agricultural practices. Indeed, because of the importance of the coffee industry in Bamenda and the negative effect that its collapse might have on the economy of the region, the West Cameroon government employed the services of a German economist, Ekkehart Gablemann, to study the problems and suggest solutions to the challenges faced by the coffee industry and the production of other export crops in West Cameroon. In his final report, Gablemann remarked that the low level of mechanization, and in some cases the complete

absence of mechanization, was one of the main factors for the low level of agricultural productivity in West Cameroon in general. He also noted that land used for the cultivation of such export crops as coffee was hardly completely cleared of grass. All kinds of plants were allowed to grow on cultivated land with the capacity to multiply and impair the growth of the new crops. Additionally, different varieties of cash and food crops were planted together, making it difficult to treat each plant variety separately when necessary. The report opined that bad maintenance of the farms reduced yields considerably because weeds were consuming much of the soil nutrients. Concerning diseases and pests, the report noted the prevalence of dieback and coffee berry disease, which negatively affected crop yields. Finally, Gablemann noted that because many farmers lacked the financial resources to address these problems, their output was quite low, especially when compared to plantation agriculture (NAB: Qc/g 1963/1, Co-operative Societies in West Cameroon).

Based on his observations, Gablemann concluded that farmers in West Cameroon needed assistance in every aspect of agriculture. He noted that the network of co-operative organizations in the territory could serve as channels for funneling such assistance to farmers. In addition to the marketing of farmers' produce, he recommended that co-operatives should undertake research in order to provide important information to farmers on market trends. According to his report, it was also important to transform the existing primary and secondary marketing societies into multipurpose organizations that could provide different services to farmers, including marketing of crops, agricultural extension, granting agricultural loans to farmers and serving as savings institutions/banks for farmers. Even though the price of coffee on the world market had experienced a steady decline over the years, farmers in the region were still producing more coffee. Gablemann noted that the apparent disconnect between coffee production in the region and the price of the crop on the world market was because coffee was perceived as the only exportable crop that could be cultivated on the Bamenda highlands. As a result, many farmers actually increased their production as a way of compensating for the falling price and decrease in revenue. The report strongly recommended diversification of agricultural production in Bamenda as a hedge against continued collapse in the price of coffee. Despite the salience of his recommendations to the survival of the coffee industry in Bamenda, it took more than a decade for some of those policies to be implemented.

Meanwhile, farmers in Bamenda remained unhappy at the price disparity for the same quality of arabica coffee in East and West Cameroon. In fact, on a visit to the Western Province⁴ during the 1964/65 coffee season, farmers from Bamenda could not hide their frustration and disappointment. They were indignant when they learned that the *Union des Coopératives de Café Arabica de*

l'Ouest (UCCAO), the co-operative for arabica coffee farmers in the Western province that was created in 1958, had complete monopoly of the sale of its arabica coffee crop to the world market. Unlike in Bamenda, UCCAO did not need to sell its produce on the world market through any marketing board as the NWCA did in the Northwest province. Indeed, selling directly on the world market rather than through middlemen enabled UCCAO to make more profits for its members. Following their visit, the farmers wrote a letter to the Prime Minister of West Cameroon, dated July 5th, 1966 (Ref. No. PMO.339/108), in which they expressed their concern regarding the price discrepancy and other matters related to coffee production in the region. In response to the letter, the prime minister called on the West Cameroon Co-operative Department to address complaints raised by the farmers, including exploitation by the co-operatives, irregular payment for their coffee, lower prices for arabica coffee in Bamenda compared to East Cameroon, and non-payment of bonuses to farmers. Although the West Cameroon Registrar of co-operative societies, S. S. Shang, dismissed the petition as based on lies, he conceded that the price per kilogram of arabica coffee paid to farmers in West Cameroon was less than what UCCAO paid farmers in East Cameroon. According to figures for the 1964–1965 coffee season, for example, farmers in East Cameroon were paid FCFA 190 for a kilogram of arabica coffee, while those in West Cameroon, where the Marketing Board was the main buyer, received only FCFA 170. However, Shang explained that the difference in price was due to matters of policy, and that while in West Cameroon the crop was controlled by the Marketing Board, which fixed the price and was responsible for the sale of the crop overseas, in East Cameroon the crop was controlled by the UCCAO, which enjoyed complete monopoly in the purchase and sale of the crop (NAB, Qc/g1961/2). At the same time, Shang could not understand how A. A. Geh could be accusing the co-operatives of exploiting the farmers when he himself was the president of the said co-operatives. Clearly, the registrar's argument vindicated the fact that the farmers in the region were being exploited.

The A. N. Lantum Memorandum on the Coffee Industry

Another important actor who had sounded an alarm on the dangers facing the coffee industry in Bamenda was A. N. Lantum, the Assistant Registrar of co-operative societies for the Bamenda area. He argued that the coffee industry in the region was facing a steady decline and low prices for its product on the international market because of the low-quality coffee from the region, which compared unfavorably with products from other coffee-producing countries that were using modern farming techniques and processing equipment. Not only did he observe that old coffee farms were being invaded by pests and

diseases, but that farmers were careless in the harvesting and processing of coffee, resulting in the production and sale of coffee that was damaged, insect-infested, and of poor quality. He recommended that quick action be taken to ameliorate the situation and save the coffee industry from total collapse since most farmers and the economy of the region depended solely on the production and sale of arabica coffee (NAB, Qc/g1961/2).

Lantum's report was a foreshadowing of the danger that the coffee industry in the region was likely to encounter without government intervention. For example, he noted that because small-scale farmers and even entire villages were often unable to raise the FCFA 28,000 needed to procure coffee pulpers (to pulp or peel coffee) and thus had to depend on the generosity of richer farmers who often lived outside of the village, many farmers were unable to pulp their coffee within the recommended twelve hours after harvesting. He also pointed out that even when a pulper was available, some farmers considered that it was a waste of time and energy to pulp only small quantities at a time. In other words, they decided to keep the coffee until they had enough quantity to pulp. Lantum was also critical of the length of time that some farmers devoted in making sure that their coffee was properly dried. Because of so many social engagements (births, deaths, weddings) in the villages, which often took them away for periods of time, some farmers were unable to dry their coffee on the consistent basis needed to produce high-quality beans. He was also critical of the fact that farmers harvested and mixed together ripe and unripe coffee beans. Farmers were also ignorant of when and how to prune coffee, the types of fertilizers to use, and how to use them. All these factors contributed to the poor quality of arabica coffee from the region that was sold on the international market. Arguably, Gablemann and Lantum were the first experts to critically examine the challenges facing the coffee industry in the postcolonial economy of Bamenda, the potential impact if corrective measures were not taken to mitigate the problems of coffee production in the region. Indeed, like Gablemann, Lantum also made recommendations that, if pursued by the administration, could save the industry from collapse, including the creation of a special funding mechanism by the Marketing Board called the "save the industry campaign" to provide financial support to farmers. He also called for the recruitment of an agricultural officer specializing in coffee production for a two-year period. Such an officer would be affiliated to the Ministry of Agriculture and charged with the following tasks:

- (i) Establishing coffee demonstration plots at strategic areas
- (ii) Taking responsibility for control of plant pest and diseases
- (iii) Recruiting and training workers, including those from local authorities, in order to achieve the above.

Lantum also argued that much could be achieved in terms of improving the industry if seminars were organized to educate the farmers on some of his recommendations. Furthermore, he recommended the elimination of LBAs in favor of the Bamenda Co-operative Marketing Association (BCMA), as was the case with UCCAO in East Cameroon. Finally, Lantum also recommended persuasion and coercive measures as well as the institution of various laws and regulations on the cultivation and processing of coffee.

Undoubtedly, Lantum's report addressed issues faced by the coffee industry in the region and made recommendations on improving the quality of the crop. Indeed, an earlier report between 1956 and 1958 by the Southern Cameroon's Co-operative Department had also argued that the greatest problem in selling arabica coffee from Bamenda was largely due to its inferior quality. The critical question was, if the issues affecting the quality of arabica coffee in the Northwest province were known as far back as the mid-1950s, why were farmers still ignorant on how to produce quality coffee for the international market even as late as the 1990s, seventy years after the crop was introduced in the region? Perhaps the answer might be evident in an interesting analogy made on a flier put out by the Northwest Co-operative Association. The analogy is between coffee and Bamenda's other local products, corn beer and palm wine: "Coffee is just like corn beer or palm wine. If you do not follow the correct processing procedures, the drink will taste bad. The future of NWCA coffee depends on producing coffee with a good taste" (NWCA-Coffee Quality Education Notes No. 3, n.d.).

While it is true that coffee is like corn beer or palm wine in some ways, the main difference lies in the fact that, while corn beer and palm wine are produced and consumed mainly within the region, coffee from the region is mainly consumed abroad. In other words, while people of Bamenda may know exactly how their corn beer or palm wine will taste when they don't follow the rightful processing procedures, they hardly know how the coffee will taste if the correct processing procedures are not followed because the farmers don't consume it. Consequently, these farmers often are more interested in quantity than in the quality of coffee that they produce. In his CNN program, dubbed *Cocoonomics*, for instance, the veteran CNN journalist Richard Quest demonstrated the problem by showing how cocoa farmers of the West African nation of Cote d'Ivoire did not exactly know what their cocoa was used for. Even more startling was the fact that many of the farmers had never tasted chocolate, a by-product of their cocoa. Similarly, I found during the research that many coffee farmers of the Northwest region of Cameroon did not know what their coffee was used for. Indeed, a few indicated coffee was used to produce tea (the general name given to all beverages by the farmers), while others confessed that they had never drunk tea. Because the farmers did

not consume the by-product of their coffee, they were less concerned about the quality of the product. With minimal domestic market for the product, it was necessary that every effort had to be made to retain the quality of coffee from the region if it had to sustain price fluctuation and competition on the world market. In other words, a crop whose production largely depends on the international market with very limited domestic consumption base to mitigate against demand and price fluctuations is a crop vulnerable to the caprices of external forces. Indeed, Mosher (1966) has argued that few countries can sustain their agricultural base without the growth of a strong market demand for agricultural products within the country itself.

Although the Lantum report addressed several issues plaguing the coffee industry in the Northwest region, it did not resolve the price difference between what the farmers in East Cameroon and those in Bamenda received for the same quality of coffee. Additionally, farmers in Bamenda continued to protest the fact that West Cameroon coffee farmers also paid produce tax to the federal government for all their coffee regardless of where it was sold, while their East Cameroon counterparts paid taxes only for coffee sold in the traditional market (Western Europe and North America), where it sold for a high price. At the same time, no taxes were paid if the coffee was sold in the new markets in the Middle East, Asia, and the former Soviet republics, where the price was about 60 to 70 percent compared to the price in Europe and North America (NAB, Qc/g1961/62). The fact that the coffee co-operative in the Northwest province paid produce taxes to the federal government that were often as high as FCFA 12,713 per ton of arabica coffee, while UCCAO paid no taxes, meant that the former had less rainy-day funds to pay farmers than was the latter. While East Cameroon's arabica coffee farmers did not pay federal sales taxes for the produce, their marketing organization, UCCAO, paid FCFA 15 per kilogram (i.e., FCFA 15,000 per ton to the stabilization fund) for arabica coffee sold. However, UCCAO was not required to pay this FCFA 15 per kilo to the Caisse for coffee that was sold in the new market. Rather, it received a subsidy of FCFA 25 a kilogram for coffee sold in the new market. (NAB, Qc/g 1961/62). Such discrepancies could only help but infuriate the farmers.

GOVERNMENT COFFEE POLICY IN THE NWP, 1972–1993

The period from 1972 through 1993 experienced great reforms and government intervention in the production and sale of coffee in the region. For instance, with the creation of the unitary state on May 20, 1972, replacing the federal structure established in 1961, Law No. 73/15 of 7/12/73 led to the harmonization of co-operatives in both the former West and East Cameroon

(Ngabir 1996). Harmonization also marked the beginning of state intervention not only in marketing, but also in the production of coffee in the region. In other words, producer co-operatives became the main vehicles through which the government could provide subsidies and other assistance to farmers. Meanwhile, the government-controlled West Cameroon Marketing Board was responsible for marketing coffee from the region to foreign markets. Under the new arrangements, the existing umbrella co-operative organ, the Bamenda Co-operative Association (BCA), which had replaced the BCMA in 1970, remained a licensed buying agent for the West Cameroon Marketing Board. However, the relationship between the farmers' co-operatives and the Marketing Board was characterized by conflicts and mutual suspicion. For one thing, the Bamenda Co-operative Association felt that the Marketing Board was usurping its role as the exporter and marketer of coffee from the province and making much profit from it without necessarily rendering services to the farmers in the region that warranted such benefit. Meetings were held by the executive of the BCA on July 9th and 10th, 1974, in which the association moved a motion requesting the government to allow it to bypass the Marketing Board and sell its coffee directly on the international market. Unfortunately, the BCA failed to receive a favorable reply from the government.

Nevertheless, in 1978 the government announced the creation of a new development program for the farmers of the Northwest province that was intended to serve more as a rural development program. This program was also supposed to function under the auspices of the Bamenda Co-operative Association (BCA). As such, it was deemed necessary to revise the structures of the co-operative in order to accommodate the new functions. It was also expected that the BCA would, like its counterpart in the Western Province, UCCAO, acquire an export status that would allow it to negotiate maximum price for its members by marketing its coffee directly on the international market. The government also intended in the new program to expand the activities of BCA Ltd. so that it could undertake rural development projects planned for the province (NWCA 1985). In anticipation of this new development and responsibilities, at an extraordinary meeting on March 29th, 1978, the BCA decided to change its name to the Northwest Co-operative Association Limited (NWCA). The new organization included all eleven unions that already existed under the BCA. Unfortunately, from its inception in 1978 until 1981, the NWCA was plagued by mismanagement and financial irregularities at all levels of the organization. For instance, in anticipation of the new functions and the financial support that it was supposed to receive from the administration under the new arrangements, the NWCA and its affiliated unions engaged in a hiring spree even before they had actually received the necessary funds from the government. Consequently, it was forced to acquire

bank loans in order to meet its financial obligations. Indeed, an external audit by J. C. Awundaga who covered the organization's activities between 1978 and 1980, revealed corruption and gross mismanagement at all levels of the organization (NWCA 1985; Ngabir 1996). Faced with the situation, the government of Cameroon and the external bodies (the African Development Bank and the World Bank) that were supposed to provide financial support for rural development in the province withdrew their support.

A separate parastatal was set up on August 13th, 1981, and charged with the execution of the development project for the NWP. This parastatal was known as the Northwest Development Authority (NWDA), also known by its French appellation, *Mission de Développement de la Province du Nord Ouest (MIDENO)*. Meanwhile, following the audit report on the NWCA, the government also undertook other reforms that were aimed at protecting the interests of the farmers in the region. For instance, on July 20, 1981, the Minister of Agriculture dissolved the Board of Directors of the NWCA Ltd. and appointed a Provisional Administrative Committee to replace the NWCA Board. While NWDA was involved with agricultural and rural development in the province, it also provided credit opportunities to the farmers through the *Fonds National de Développement Rural (FONADER)*. However, these credit opportunities were more often in kind than in cash and included providing farmers with coffee pulpers, sprayers, and fertilizers. The Northwest Development Authority (NWDA) was also charged with the training of agricultural extension workers responsible for educating farmers on best practices for improving their crop yield and output. However, NWDA had one major inherent weakness. For instance, the fact that donor countries and organizations were not very much involved in the supervision and implementation of its projects meant that NWDA still functioned under existing government agencies that had proven to be corrupt and ineffective in the first place. In fact, with the exception of R. D. B. Hughs, an expatriate who served as the project manager, NWDA was essentially a government-run institution controlled by civil servants and politicians.

Fond National de Développement Rural (FONADER)

The *Fond National de Développement Rural (FONADER)* was another agency through which the government of Cameroon intervened in coffee production in the NWP. Since farmers often had difficulties securing loans from banks and credit unions, FONADER was created in 1973 to address the issue and also promote the cultivation of coffee, cocoa, palm oil, and other export crops by farmers in Cameroon. Fondly known as the farmers' bank, FONADER was also supposed to supervise and ensure that such loans were

used appropriately. The creation of NWDA made FONADER more relevant to the coffee farmers of the Northwest province. Farmers who benefited from NWDA loans received such loans from FONADER. FONADER on its part did not give out the loans to the farmers directly. Rather, it passed them through the farmers' co-operative societies. Equally, farmers applying for NWDA loans did so through the co-operative societies, in which there was a credit committee composed of NWDA Field Technical Staff and staff representatives of FONADER to advise on such matters. From the credit committee, the application made the tortuous journey through the co-operative society's board of directors to the FONADER branch office in Bamenda. As related to the coffee industry in the Northwest province, FONADER loans were supposed to be used exclusively toward the purchase of such farm items as knapsack sprayers and hand coffee pulpers, fertilizers, chemicals, and other related items (NWCA 1985). Meanwhile, the onus of recovering the loan from the farmer was placed on the co-operatives and often involved deducting the equivalent amount of supplies that had been given to the farmer from the proceeds in accordance with the terms of the loan agreement between the farmer and the credit committee.

Despite the optimism that followed the creation of FONADER, only a limited number of farmers who applied actually got the loans. According to Ban (1981), by 1979 FONADER had still not solved the financial problems faced by coffee farmers. In fact, there was still no significant change in the percentages of loans requested for and loans granted to farmers in Mezam Division between 1979 and 1981. Ban argues that, while 779 farmers requested FONADER loans totaling FCFA 240,367,000 during that period, only 178 farmers were actually granted the loans, which amounted to FCFA 67,850,000, 23 percent of the amount that had been requested. The situation in Mezam Division mirrored that of the entire province by 1981. Because of the difficulties in getting these loans, unscrupulous employees at all levels—co-operatives, NWDA, and even FONADER itself—often took advantage of the situation to exploit farmers who applied for it. Commenting on NWDA/ FONADER loans, a farmer made this observation:

... I see them as cheats. There is an instance where I applied for a NWDA loan of Francs CFA 100,000 and what was actually given to me was Francs CFA 70,000 but I was to pay interest on Francs CFA 100,000 and to pay back the sum of Francs CFA 100,000 through the co-operative. Co-operative and NWDA workers curtailed the remaining Francs CFA 30,000 as bribe for giving me the opportunity of benefitting from FONADER loan. So I had to pay back Francs CFA 100,000 at the end when I actually received just Francs CFA 70,000. This is just an example of the many ways by which they cheat farmers. So, my impression about them is a negative one. (Fombo 2003)

Records show that from 1979–1983, FONADER loans to farmers in the entire province totaled FCFA 552,744,571. This was in addition to the sum of FCFA 187,426,325 granted to the co-operatives (NWCA 1985). What this record does not tell us is how much money was actually solicited for by the farmers and how many of them benefited from the total amount of loan. Based on the experience of the aforementioned farmer, one is tempted to question how much of this amount actually got to the farmers since such practice seemed to have become the norm in obtaining loans. As Nantang Jua has rightly observed, in creating FONADER and other parastatals such as NWDA and NPMB, the goals of the state were laudable and the promise of the strategy overwhelming. But in the context of the patrimonial state, these parastatals were converted into prebends Director-General or to serve other exclusive interests of the hegemonic class or developmental coalition (Jua 1991). From this discussion we can surmise that, prior to the liberalization of the coffee sector, the coffee industry of the Northwest province was already plagued by a plethora of problems, some of which were as a result of improprieties and internal crises. The industry was therefore in dire need of some reforms on the eve of liberalization. However, whether such liberal policies were the right solution to the many problems confronting the industry at the time remains to be seen. An examination of these liberal reforms in the coffee industry of the Northwest province of Cameroon is very important for our appreciation of the demise of the industry.

LIBERALIZATION OF THE COMMERCIALIZATION OF COFFEE

Until the late 1980s, a state-controlled marketing entity known as the National Produce Marketing Board (NPMB) served as the sole agency for the marketing of coffee from Anglophone Cameroon (Northwest and Southwest provinces) overseas. Its Francophone counterpart was known as the *Caisse de Stabilisation* (UNCTAD 2010). In the Northwest province, coffee was bought from farmers by the co-operatives (NWCA), which then supplied it to the NPMB to be marketed on the world market. However, NPMB became indebted to the co-operatives as a result of a fall in the price and demand of coffee on the world market to the extent that it delayed payments to farmers for several years. In response to this situation and under the terms of Structural Adjustment Program (SAP)⁵, the Cameroon government decided to liberalize the coffee market in the NWP in particular and Cameroon in general. Liberalization of the marketing of arabica coffee in the Northwest province began during the 1989–1990 coffee season. These reforms included

the liberalization of coffee and cocoa prices. In other words, the prices of these commodities were to be determined by the forces of demand and supply and were not to be subsidized by any state parastatal. The purchasing of coffee from farmers at the local levels and the exportation to the world market, both of which had previously been regulated by the marketing board, were also liberalized. In 1994–1995, these first series of reforms were followed by another set of changes, including the abolition of the price scale and the stabilization fund (FAO 2009).

The reforms led to the creation of new purchasing agencies as well as of new privately-owned coffee hullers (FAO 2009). This meant that the marketing of arabica coffee from the province was no longer the monopoly of the Marketing Board and the NWCA was no longer the sole buyer of coffee from farmers in the province. The decision by the administration to liberalize the marketing of coffee in the Northwest province of Cameroon was seen as a betrayal by the farmers, especially at a time when world market prices for arabica coffee had dropped below the break-even point and the government was no longer profiting from its sale (Kengo 2006). With the liberalization of the marketing of arabica coffee in the Northwest province, NWCA was given the right to sell the product of its members directly overseas, without passing through the Marketing Board. In other words, the administration gave the NWCA the opportunity to sell coffee overseas at a time when it was unprofitable. In fact, unlike UCCAO, which had had the opportunity for decades to establish a stabilizing fund for its farmers at a time when coffee was profitable, the NWCA was never in a position to establish such a fund. Hofmeister has asserted that, in 1984–1985 alone, the National Produce Marketing Board realized a huge profit from the sales of arabica coffee from the NWP (Hartmut Hofmeister, n.d). But when the marketing of coffee was liberalized, the money that was supposed to have been accumulated by the stabilization fund of the Marketing Board was not used for the interest of the farmers. Although it was imposed by Western donor countries and the Bretton Woods institutions, the fact that the Cameroon government agreed to open its economy and the stringent conditionalities of SAPs could be seen as an acceptance of failure of the policy of state intervention in agricultural production and marketing by the post-colonial state.

Impact of Liberalization on the Coffee Industry in the Northwest Province

The liberalization of the marketing of coffee in the Northwest province as a policy had very serious consequences on the coffee industry as a whole. With the prices of arabica coffee falling in the world market—and consequently

in the province to a ridiculously low level, from FCFA 1412 per kilogram in 1986 to FCFA 378 in 1990—the state failed to take any serious measures to hedge the effects of the falling prices on the farmers. Rather, it chose to liberalize the marketing of coffee in the province, which before then, was the exclusive right of the NPMB, with NWCA as the only Licensed Buying Agent (LBA) for the NPMB. Indeed, liberalization created more problems for the industry than it was intended to solve. With liberalization of the marketing of mainly arabica coffee in the province, private LBAs entered the market like hungry wolves, leading to unhealthy competition for the farmers' produce. This unfettered competition among buyers produced two major negative effects on the coffee industry. First, it led to unhealthy competition among the buying agents who were anxious to buy as much coffee as possible—including poor quality coffee—since their competitors were ready to do so. In fact, some LBAs even bought parchment coffee (coffee processed by the wet method and arguably the best method of processing arabica coffee), which they mixed with hauled coffee processed by the dry method. Other LBAs even went to the extent of mixing arabica coffee with Robusta coffee (Angwantu 2003). Second, because of the proliferation of LBAs willing to buy whatever they could get from the farmers, the farmers became less concerned with the quality of coffee that they produced since the private LBAs did not purchase coffee based on quality as the co-operatives had been doing. Ultimately, because prices no longer reflected the quality of coffee sold, many farmers were reluctant to purchase or utilize fertilizers and other chemicals that were needed to ensure the production of quality coffee. The net result was a chaotic market situation, with the sale and export of poor quality coffee from the Northwest province and a bad reputation for coffee from the region on the world market (Atanga 2003).

Many farmers were critical of the decision by the government to liberalize the commercialization of arabica coffee in the NWP, especially as this happened when the prices had dropped significantly in the world market: from FCFA 1,412 per kilogram in 1986 to FCFA 378 in 1990 and FCFA 135 in 1992. They also argued that liberalization had led to unscrupulous practices, including the use of rigged scales by LBAs to weigh coffee. Many LBAs also failed to pay farmers any bonuses, even in situations when the LBAs made huge profits from the sale of the coffee. Finally, LBAs were also accused of failing to provide farmers with farm implements, fertilizers, and other financial support the way the co-operatives used to do it.

The co-operatives found it difficult to survive under the new economic arrangement. Already damaged by payment delays of the 1980s, the co-operatives lost most of their market share as a result of the intense competition from a host of informal intermediaries, who often went from door to door

in search of coffee to buy. The position of the co-operative was further exacerbated by losses arising from adverse price movements; farmers would no longer accept partial payment on delivery of the crop and a second payment after it had been marketed. Co-operatives had to pay the full price and this exposed them to large speculative risks with the ensuing losses and further increase in their debt burden (UNCTAD Report 2010).

Farmers' Response to Falling Coffee Prices

The collapse in the price of coffee on the world market and the failure of the state to take adequate measures to mitigate its effects on farmers and the coffee industry in the Northwest province forced many farmers in the region to engage in alternative economic activities. For instance, rather than growing coffee, farmers in the Santa subdivision decided to grow vegetables and other food crops, including Irish potatoes, beans, and corn. The result was the emergence of a new market economic structure that included men and women actively working for the same purpose (Mbonying 2003). In the Mbengwi subdivision, farmers focused on the planting of oil palms, a traditional crop which could easily be bought and sold in the area for domestic consumption. While palm oil was being sold in the local markets, some was used for domestic purposes. Meanwhile, other farmers embarked on such traditional industries as bag weaving—and with more devotion (Sabum 2003). Similarly, in the Njikwa subdivision and the Batibo subdivision, the farmers responded to the fall in coffee prices by emphasizing the planting and tapping of raffia palms for wine, to the total neglect of coffee. According to many farmers, as a result of the liberalization policy and SAPs, growing food crops per acre of land was more profitable than growing coffee. Moreover, growing food had an immediate impact by providing food for the family while also generating income from the sale of any excess. While many replaced their coffee plants with food crops, other farmers simply abandoned their farms and engaged in non-farming activities. Meanwhile, in the Njinikom, Fundong, and Oku subdivisions, farmers reluctantly continued with coffee cultivation, hoping for better days ahead for the coffee industry in the region (Bechia 2006). Unfortunately, liberalization of the industry marked the beginning of the end of the coffee industry in the Northwest province.

Co-operatives and Some Improprieties

Although much of the blame for the demise of the coffee industry in the Northwest province may be attributed to the collapse in the price of coffee on

the world market and the decision by the government to liberalize the commercialization of coffee in the region, the role of the co-operatives and the pervasive corruption that plagued the co-operatives also need to be examined. For instance, some of the agents of the co-operatives issued receipts to farmers for coffee that was never delivered to the society. Meanwhile, the money paid to the farmer against such a receipt was then shared between the farmer and the co-operative worker or agent in question (Angwantu 2003). At the same time, other agents defrauded farmers by using rigged scales to weigh coffee. For instance, because of the rigged scale, a farmer might be told that the coffee he was selling weighed, say 100 kilograms, when in actuality it weighed 150 kilograms. In that situation, the proceeds from the 50 kilograms that the farmer did not receive actually went to the co-operative agent or worker. In other words, using rigged scales meant that agents often paid farmers less for their coffee than they actually deserved.

The case of Fai Tawong Aloys Kiyung of Melim-Nso, arguably the highest coffee producer in the province, may also illustrate the corruption and fraud in the coffee industry in the Northwest province. Fai Tawong is said to have delivered coffee to the co-operative during the 1994–1995 coffee season amounting to more than FCFA 4 million. However, because he never received the money, he decided to sue the co-operative in the Kumbo magistrate court, where he was ultimately victorious when the case was decided. However, instead of making amends, the co-operative appealed to the Appeal Court in Bamenda, where it lost for a second time. Despite his legal victories, Fai Tawong had still not been paid as of January 2006 (Kiyung 2006). The co-operative, on its part, argued that the produce exported that year was never bought in the world market. Such experiences only helped to alienate farmers from the co-operatives and discouraged many of them from cultivating coffee. At the same time, some farmers were dishonest in their dealings with the co-operatives. For instance, many farmers often failed to give their crops to the co-operatives even after they had received payment for their coffee. Another problem with coffee production, like that in the production of many other agricultural products, is its vulnerability to climatic conditions, which of course may have a negative impact on output. In other words, many farmers failed to honor their engagements to the co-operatives during periods when their output was adversely impacted by poor weather. Meanwhile, other farmers deliberately decided not to give the coffee to the co-operatives even when the harvest was good. Such dubious behaviors by some farmers also contributed to financial difficulties that the co-operatives faced since they neither had the money nor the produce to give to the unions at the end of the season.

CONCLUSION

Despite its controversial introduction in the Northwest region of Cameroon, arabica coffee emerged as the region's greatest colonial economic legacy. However, coffee's paramouncy in the economy of the region was short-lived as farmers became increasingly disenchanted by the failure of the post-colonial state to address many of the problems faced by coffee farmers in the region. For instance, despite studies and recommendations by experts on how to improve coffee production in the region, government policy and intervention in the industry was more often than not inefficient and characterized by corruption. Agencies and parastatals such as the Ministry of Agriculture, NPMB/ONCPB, FONADER, and NWDA only epitomized such inefficiency and corruption. The farmers' co-operative movement, which was at the heart of coffee production in the province, was also plagued by corruption. Furthermore, the production and commercialization of the crop was characterized by improprieties. As such, by the time liberal policies were introduced in the early 1990s, coffee production was already facing serious challenges. In fact, the IMF/World Bank recommended liberalization as a remedy to the situation, but it helped only to compound an already bad situation. For instance, the policy recommendations including SAPs led to the production and exportation of poor quality coffee from the Northwest province of Cameroon. This helped to tarnish the reputation of NWCA coffee, thereby affecting its demand and price in the world market. Unfortunately, the fall in demand for NWCA coffee in the world market could not be mitigated by a domestic market.

NOTES

1. For a comprehensive account of the History of Cameroon leading to independence and reunification, see Victor LeVine, 1964, *The Cameroons from Mandate to Independence* (Berkeley: University of California Press); Willard Johnson, 1970, *The Cameroon Federation: Political Integration in a Fragmentary Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press); Victor Julius Ngoh, 1996, *History of Cameroon since 1800* (Limbe: Press book).

2. It has, however, been argued by Benjamin and Devarajan (1986) that with the sale of oil becoming an important source of revenue, President Paul Biya was able to subsidize the prices farmers received for their export crops including arabica coffee.

3. It was composed of more than sixty primary societies and eight unions. The eight unions were Nso Area Co-operative Union Ltd., Central Area Co-operative Union Ltd., Santa Area Co-operative Union Ltd., Kom Area Co-operative Union Ltd.,

Bali Area Co-operative Union Ltd., Ndop Area Co-operative Union Ltd., Pinyin Area Co-operative Union Ltd., and Moghamo Area Co-operative Union Ltd.

4. Western Province (region) borders the Northwest region to the East and was part of the East Cameroon that was formerly under French colonial administration. The two regions share much in common culturally. Coffee was introduced to the Northwest province from the adjoining region.

5. The Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) was a package of economic reforms that were introduced in the 1970s and 1980s by the IMF/World Bank to provide the framework for economic stabilization and recovery in sub-Saharan Africa following the world economic recession that began in the early 1970s. By the end of the 1980s, all West African States, including Cameroon, had introduced various adjustment programs.

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Chapter Six

What Has Changed? A Historical Appraisal of Legal and Institutional Frameworks for Environmental Management in Cameroon

Lotsmart Fonjong

INTRODUCTION

Environmental threats abound today and striving toward a sustainable environment has remained one of the central discussions in most global and national debates. Stewart and Hams (1992) argued that human activities are the main cause of environmental problems, noting that humanity is reaping from nature more than the planet can replenish and also producing wastes at a rate higher than the planet can absorb. This creates natural imbalances and sets in motion an environmental crisis in which both humans and other inhabitants of the planet become ultimate victims. “Man” is therefore at the center of the current environmental crisis, either as agent or victim. The drive for economic prosperity and the quest for comfort has brought about changes in human lifestyles, changes that have provoked unprecedented population growth, urbanization, economic growth, wealth accumulation, poverty, conflicts and conflict management—all key determinants of the state of the environment. Global response has in some cases (e.g., search for cleaner energy or biofuel) bred new environmental crises begging for an urgent response. Environmental problems have, thus, become very complex, requiring robust and global responses.

Cameroon has a unique geographical location in tropical Africa that cuts across different ecological zones, each with different environmental realities. For example, while the Sahel ecological zone of the three northern regions suffers from desertification, the southern region’s dominant forest ecological

zone faces deforestation and water pollution. These environmental problems have ignited both legal and institutional responses from public authorities that have been accompanied by international cooperation and commitment.

Cameroon's international commitment to the fight against environmental degradation is encouraging. At the global level, Cameroon has embraced the 1972 Stockholm Declaration that ensued from the United Nations Conference on the Environment; it also signed the Rio de Janeiro Declaration of 1992, born from the Conference on Sustainable Development; it has committed to the 2002 Plan of implementation from the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development; it has subscribed to the Millennium Development Goals, which place a premium on environmental sustainability. Cameroon's efforts at the continental level are also commendable. For example, it hosted the Heads of State Summit (1999) on the Conservation and Sustainable Management of the Tropical Forests. Additionally, Cameroon signed both the Yaounde Declaration (March 1999), the 2005 Treaty relating to the conservation and sustainable management of forest ecosystems in Central Africa, as well as the partnership declaration on the preservation of the Congo Basin Forest prepared by the Conference of Ministers in Charge of Forests in Central Africa (COMIFAC). Similarly, at the national level, the Government has enacted laws, decrees, ordinances, and institutions regulating the exploitation and management of nature resources and the environment. Some of the recent regulatory frameworks include the 1995 law regulating land use in the forests of the South; the 1994 law relating to forest, wildlife, and fisheries; the 1996 law instituting the environmental management framework; and the 2005 Environmental Impact Assessment Law aimed at enhancing positive impact and bringing mitigation on negative impact. These legal frameworks have been accompanied by institutional changes that have led to the creation of various ministries to take charge of the environment and nature resources over time, including (1) Ministry of Forest and Wildlife, (2) Ministry of Environment, (3) Ministry of Nature Protection and Sustainable Development, and (4) Ministry of Mines and Power.

Legal and structural changes have also been complemented by national action to protect the forest and ensure sustainable exploitation and management, and land use allocations within the national forests. These national drives have been objectified in the creation of forest reserves, protected areas, national parks, wildlife reserves, sanctuaries, hunting zones and communal forests. The government has also created an enabling platform for collaboration between the various ministries, local and international environmental organizations such as the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the World Resources Institute (WRI). This platform will, among other things, see to the conservation of flora and fauna in the Cameroon forests, and provide modern

techniques of information management needed for national capacity building toward the monitoring and management of forests.

These regulations and efforts from Government notwithstanding, Cameroon continues to face such environmental threats as deforestation, soil erosion, water contamination, drying up of water sources, pollution, desertification—each hazard a challenge to environmental sustainability. This situation raises serious policy questions that speak to the conflicting interests often associated with the promotion of sustainable exploitation of natural resources and environmental management. This chapter thus begins with a reflection on colonial environmental laws and policies. It examines how present regulatory and institutional frameworks are a continuation of colonial thought and then how these frameworks have failed to combat environmental and nature degradation in Cameroon. This analysis raises the question of why laws and institutions have not been able to bring about more positive change in environmental and nature protection in Cameroon.

Methodology

The data for this chapter was based on analysis of secondary and historical sources, on a review of regulations from the websites of relevant ministries and agencies concerned, and on documents of the National Assembly and other government reports.

ENVIRONMENTAL LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS IN PRE-COLONIAL CAMEROON

Natural resource management has evolved with the evolution of the State of Cameroon. Although the political State of Cameroon might not have existed before colonization, the geographical space was in place. There was a clear political organization within the geographical space where local communities regrouped themselves into villages, with political and legal institutions. The major institutions were the chiefdoms, village councils, and family heads. In addition to these visible institutions, there was as well a greater allegiance to the invisible ancestor, considered supreme, with powers to punish and reward. These institutions ensure the rational distribution and exploitation of natural resources in the interest of everyone, oversaw interactions between community members, settled disputes, and even declared war against intruders and enemies. All these institutions operated under customary norms that had clear directives on access, control, and management of natural resources, and that also established the likely punishment for defaulters.

Before the colonial experience of 1884 to 1960/1961, pre-colonial practices pointed to the fact that various communities consciously paid attention to the sustainability of their land, forest, wildlife, water, and other resources. Many studies, including those of Menang (1997) and Amungua (2011), have observed that the collection of food and the hunting of game were done in strict respect of customary norms and practices. Although land, for example, was considered abundant, it was held in trust by chiefs and shared among community members through the various institutions (quarter heads or heads of families). In the case of wildlife, for example, local chiefs defined hunting zones and the types of animal hunted. Hunters were required to get permission into particular forests; and even with such permission from the chiefs, the hunting of certain animals was still not permitted. Forest exploitation was also rationalized. Fetching wood or building materials from some tree species or forests was strictly regulated, or they were reserved for only certain titled individuals. This kind of stipulation was particularly the case in the grass fields. Punishment was evoked from the ancestors, or chiefs, or village elders to guarantee enforcement of these measures. In general, there was harmony between the population and their environment. Some of the traditional modes of conservation that included the establishment of sacred forests and rivers were later enhanced during the colonial and post-colonial periods through the creation of parks and nature reserves.

Colonial Frameworks and Institutions for Environmental Protection

The dawn of colonization relegated or suspended most native institutions and norms in the management of natural resources and the environment. Cameroon, unlike many other African countries, experienced three different colonial occupations: German, British, and French. The Germans annexed Cameroon by the German-Duala Treaty of 1884. However, after the defeat of Germany in the First World War, the June 1919 Treaty of Versailles that ended the war then divided Cameroon between Britain and France. The two Cameroons were ruled by the British and the French as League of Nations–mandated territories, and then later as United Nations Trust territories after World War II. Colonization came with the formalization of rules and institutions, most of which were done without consultation with or input from the indigenous population. For example, on July 12, 1884, the Germans signed the German-Duala Protectorate Treaty that recognized that “the land in the towns and villages of Cameroon remains the private property of the indigenous peoples.” However, this treaty existed only in principle because the introduction of plantation agriculture increased German demand for land. Consequently, German plan-

tation owners immediately took control of most of the land, acquired easily by a simple exchange of gifts with local chiefs—quite often gifts of wine for plantation land. On July 15, 1896, the colonial administration passed the German Kronland Act under which “all lands in Cameroon belongs to the empire, except land for which there was ownership or other real rights, or land on which third parties have acquired occupancy rights through previous contracts with the imperial governments.” Ownership and management of land and its resources thus moved from the natives to the German plantation owners, particularly with the introduction of the land register, an instrument which gave legality and security of tenure. Whereas any German plantation owner could register land, only very few natives could. Thus, the majority of the natives lost their ownership and management rights to land.

German colonial activities set into motion elements of both environmental protection and destruction. The introduction of plantation agriculture meant that deforestation preceded the opening of plantations. In fact, the increase in the number of plantation owners from only seven in 1896 to 182 by 1913 (Rudin 1938; Mbatu 1998) also suggested a corresponding exponential increase in the rate of deforestation within just a seventeen-year span. In addition to this deforestation resulting from plantation farming, the trade in wood and the construction of rail lines and roads by the German administration also contributed to forest and wildlife degradation. Rudin (1938) and Mbatu (1998) noted that by 1913, just a year before the Germans were defeated in Cameroon, the Germans had constructed 224 miles of rail lines and 311 miles of road. Additionally, German-owned plantations covered over 100,000 hectares of land. These developments not only led to deforestation, but also necessarily impacted the wildlife and the wildlife’s habitat and affected the environment in general.

A review of Hedin (1930), Adeyoju (1976), and Mbatu (1998) highlighted some of the conservation efforts of the German administration. German efforts included the creation of the Forest Service in 1912, which controlled the size of trees cut and the log and extraction techniques applied during lumbering. Other environmental decisions by the German colonial administration included the 1892 creation of the Botanical Garden in Bimbia (known as the Limbe Botanical Garden today) and the establishment of a special agricultural school in Bimbia that trained the natives in forest and agricultural management. But the institution of comprehensive environmental regulations under the Germans provided an important framework for land exploitation. According to Mbatu (1998, 24), these regulations included the following:

1. The reservation of forest areas
2. Classification of forest offenses and procedure for the arrest and prosecution of offenders

3. Issuance and control of timber licenses
4. Issuance of special licenses for the local use of wood and secondary forest produce
5. Highlighting forest offenses by duly appointed forest officers
6. Establishment of the procedures and functions of the forest service
7. Prescription of circumstances in which bona fide landowners and certain forest operators could take specified forest produce free of charge
8. Rules governing the payment of fees and royalties for forest produce harvested
9. Responsibilities for licenses for the establishment and maintenance of succeeding forest crops

The British ruled the southwestern part of the former German colony it had inherited under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles as part of the colony of Nigeria to the West. Consequently, most of its policies in Nigeria were applied to this part of Cameroon. Like the Germans, the British enacted native-friendly laws on paper but their practical implementation were highly inimical to native interests. For example, according to Section 3 and 14 of the Land and Native Rights Ordinance of Northern Nigeria as adopted by Southern Cameroons, all land was declared native land that was to be used for the common benefit of the people. The Native Ordinance, however, took away the rights of collective ownership from the natives and made them mere occupiers. In essence, it subjected all lands to the disposition and consent of the British Governor, who alone had the powers to grant certificates of occupancy for definite or indefinite terms. Concerning forest management, the British put in place seven ordinances which promoted reforestation, forest reserves, and forest management. In a nutshell, the British continued the policy of the Germans. They maintained the botanical gardens and even converted German plantations into parastatal organizations.

The French who occupied most of the former German colony were also not very different from the Germans and the English. The Land Tenure decree of July 21, 1932, required all natives to register their real property rights in the *livre foncier* or Land Register that was later converted to *titre foncier* or Land Title. The process was both tedious and cumbersome and left out many natives. The colonial authorities, directly and indirectly, encouraged deforestation by promoting logging and the construction of rail lines and roads across dense forests in what is today the Centre, South, and Littoral Regions. Additionally, the French administrations passed the 1946 Forest Decree which reorganized the Forestry Service, reinforced State ownership of all forest land, and promoted the preservation of botanical knowledge. This forest legislation remained in force until 1973 when it was replaced (Mbatu 1998).

THE POST-COLONIAL ERA LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

The achievement of political independence in 1960, and changes in the global approach and pace of environmental issues have had far-reaching implications for the development of laws and institutions regulating the environment and natural resources in Cameroon. Independence also came along with new institutions like the National Assembly that could make laws, and with a sovereign constitution that would determine both the socioeconomic and political development of the country. For instance, since independence, the National Assembly has passed a series of environmental laws, including the 1974 and 1976 Land Ordinances; the 1994 law on forests, wildlife and fisheries; and the law of 1996 creating the national environmental management framework. All these instruments serve as hallmarks for regulating the environment. Additionally, the administration has passed complimentary environmental laws by executive decrees. Indeed, the fact that the Department of the Environment, previously in the Ministry of Agriculture, was converted into a full-fledged ministry—the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MINEF)—to take care of environmental issues shows the commitments of the administration to nature and environmental protection in Cameroon. MINEF has evolved into the present-day Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development.

Legal Impetus toward Environment and Nature Protection after Independence

A plethora of laws and decrees have also been passed to support government policy and drive environment and nature protection in Cameroon. They include Law No.78/23 on the protection of national parks, Law No. 89/027 concerning toxic and dangerous wastes, Law No. 2001/014 on seed activities, Law No. 2003/003 on the protection of plants, Law No. 2003/006 on the regulation of biodiversity, and Law No. 2003/007 on activities of the subsector of fertilizers. Some of the laws and other national efforts were inspired by the Constitutions of 1972 and 1996. For example, the preamble to the 1972 Constitution noted that the State of Cameroon was committed to exploiting its natural wealth to raise the living standards and well-being of its people (Mbatu, 2009). Similarly, the preamble to the 1996 Constitution subscribes that “every person shall have a right to a healthy environment. The protection of the environment shall be the duty of every citizen. The State shall ensure the protection and improvement of the environment” (Law No. 96–06 of January 18, 1996, to amend the Constitution of June 2, 1972). Similarly, Law No. 96/12/of August 5, 1996, creating the environmental management framework

is a broad framework that covers the protection of the atmosphere, continental water, floodplains, coastal and maritime water, soil settlement, pollution, dangerous waste, harmful substance, risk, biodiversity, and natural disasters. It also defines the role of institutions for environmental management.

Legal Frameworks Regulating Water and Marine Environments

Two years after independence, Cameroon passed the Merchant Marine Code by Ordinance No. 62/OF/30 of March 31st, 1962, to regulate the transportation of inflammable products and explosives and to regulate fishing with chemical substances. It was later modified by Law No. 63/17 of June 19th, 1963, and Law No. 67-LF-25 of November 30th, 1967 (Makak 2001), and Law No. 64/DF/162 of May 26th, 1964, which, among other things, regulated modalities for the transportation of gas and liquid hydrocarbons through pipelines. These laws on the protection of the environment from gas, chemical, and other liquid substances were followed by new ones in the 1980s. For example, Law No. 83/16 of July 21st, 1983 on port inspection also included measures on the prevention of fire disasters and fines for water pollution. Law No. 89/27 of December 29th, 1989, on toxic and dangerous wastes defined wastes containing inflammable, explosive, and radioactive substances as dangerous waste. It required industries and other manufacturing enterprises to declare the volume and nature of toxic waste that they produced and ensured correct methods for their elimination. It also banned the entry of dangerous wastes into the national territory. Law No. 98/005 was passed on April 14, 1998, and defined the national water regulatory framework, the protection of public health, and the general legal framework of the water regime.

THE PROTECTION OF FORESTRY, WILDLIFE, AND FISHERIES

The early instruments (Law No. 61-OF-14 of November 1961 on forest crime, Law No. 68-1-COR of July, and Decree No. 70-92-COR of May 1970 on forestry regime in Cameroon) in this domain highlighted the fact that the new administration did not depart from the repressive measures used by colonial powers immediately after independence. The first law to regulate the exploitation of three important natural resources, Law No. 81/13, was enacted on November 21, 1981. This law laid down the regulation on forestry, wildlife, and fisheries. It advocated for the creation of national parks, reserves, protected areas, classification of species for protection, and it pro-

hibited logging in ecologically sensitive areas. The law was replaced with a new one, Law 94/01 of January 1994 following international consultations and contributions, especially from the World Bank.

Law No. 94/01 of January 20, 1994, on forestry, wildlife, and fisheries and its Decree of implementation No. 95/531/PM of August 23, 1995, present a more comprehensive effort at managing these three important natural resources in Cameroon. The law is divided into five parts, each handling such key areas as nature and biodiversity, forest, wildlife, fisheries. The 1994 law divided the Cameroon forest into two major types: permanent and non-permanent forests. For example, permanent forests include designated state-owned parcels ostensibly allocated to forests and wildlife, while non-permanent forests, on the other hand, are lands that can be allocated to other uses. In fact, under the 1994 law, the percentage of land designated as permanent forest increased from 9 to 30 percent of the national territory. This law also highlights renewed public endeavors aimed at involving local communities in the natural resource (particularly forest) management as evidenced by the introduction of communities and local councils in forests management, administrative directives on forest revenue, and the marketing of non-timber forest products (NTFPs). Ministerial Order No. 98/122/MINEFI/MINAT of 29/04/98 instituting the payment of forest royalties to councils and village communities is an order based on the spirit of the 1994 legislation.

The concept of community forest has the merits of not only conserving forest and wildlife, but also of involving local people in resource management and improving their standard of living. Article 30 of the 1994 Forest Law on communal forests gives local councils the opportunity to apply for a land certificate on a forest whose objectives and limits are defined. Egute et al. (2014) believe that the 1994 law has been instrumental in the operationalization of the 1993 Cameroon National Forestry Action Program (NFAP), whose objectives focus on the sustainable protection of the national forest heritage and preservation of biodiversity.

The 1974 and 1976 Land Ordinances and the Management of Land Resources

The 1974 and 1976 Land Ordinances were among the earliest comprehensive legal frameworks for land regulation in Cameroon. They converted all lands except State and titled lands into national land according to Section 14 and 15 of Ordinance No. 74-1 July 6th, 1974. Land was thus reclassified into three types: national, state, and private land. Article 1 (1) of Decree No. 76/165/76 introduced land registration and titling as the only proof of land ownership. The 1974 laws gave those people living on untitled land in urban areas ten

years to register their land, and it gave those on untitled land in rural areas fifteen years to register their land. After these respective periods the land became national land, and those people without land titles became tenants at the mercy of the whims and caprices of the State, with no *locus standi* to assert their land rights since they were without formal documents. The introduction of a land title under Sec. 12 of Decree No. 76/166 of April 27th, 1976, meant that local communities could be dispossessed of their ancestral land that has become part of the national land. National land is managed by the Land Consultative Boards (LCB), a quasi-judicial body found in every subdivision defined by Sec. 16 (1) of Ordinance No 74–1/74. In the pre-colonial era chiefs held the land in trust and managed it for the entire community, but this role is now performed by the LCB, which is presided over by the local Divisional Officer. Local communities are represented on the Board only by their chiefs and two notables, who are designated ordinary board members. The procedure for land registration is difficult, especially for poor people living in rural areas. Consequently, rural landowners are neither adequately compensated when their land is needed for public use nor protected when their land rights are threatened. As such, the majority of rural dwellers cannot afford legal status for their land. This implies not only that they cannot be adequately compensated if and when this land is required for public use, but also that they cannot be better protected if their land rights are threatened.

As Amungwa (2011) and Mbatu (1998) have observed, the current frameworks for environmental and natural resource management in Cameroon are largely a continuation of colonial policies. This is partly true when one considers the overwhelming control of the State in both periods over land, minerals, and forest resources. As Table I demonstrates, most of the National Parks in Cameroon have been created by simply upgrading the existing colonial reserves on the same geographical space where these resources existed in the days of the colonial authorities (see Table 6.1).

Table 6.1. Evolution of Some National Parks in Cameroon

<i>Parks</i>	<i>Colonial status</i>	<i>Post-colonial status</i>
Bénoué National Park	The French established it as a faunal reserve in 1932	It was upgraded to a National Park in 1968, and in 1981, it became a biosphere reserve
Faro National Park	It was established as a reserve in 1947	Government upgraded it to level of park in 1968
Waza National Park	Established as the Waza Reserve on March 24, 1934	Established as a park in 1968

Source: Compiled by Author

Just as was the practice during the colonial period, the newly independent state of Cameroon took away customary rights and emphasized State ownership and control of natural resources such as land, forest, and minerals. Nonetheless, the introduction of community and council forests in the 1994 forest legislation and the increasing role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and other common initiative groups in environmental and nature protection after independence depart slightly from State hegemony, and they demonstrate efforts in involving local communities and populations in the management of their natural resources and environment.

POST-COLONIAL INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS

According to Nasong'o and Gabsa (1998), although colonization had led to the introduction of rules and institutions on natural resource management in Cameroon, the post-colonial administration failed to prioritize environmental protection in its first four Five-Year Development Plans (1961–1981). For instance, by 1972, forest and water resources were departments in the Ministry of Agriculture, and national parks were managed by the Department of Tourism. Changes introduced in 1982 gave the Department of Tourism control over wildlife, while the Ministry of Livestock and Animal Husbandry was in charge of forest. Indeed, it was not until 1992 that the Ministry of Environment and Forestry was created and charged with developing national environmental management plans, including the development of forestry laws and policies. Some of the institutions put in place by the State of Cameroon to elaborate and implement policies that complement the legal frameworks described earlier are profiled below.

In 1981, for example, the administration created the National Center for Forest Development (CENAFOR), with technical assistance from Canada. This was followed by the creation of the National Reforestation Service (ONAREF) in 1982 to oversee forest management in the country. By 1990, ONAREF and CENAFOR were forced by the economic crisis and the austerity measures of structural adjustment reforms to merge into a single entity, the *Office National de Développement des Forêts* (ONADEF), translated as Office of National Forest Development.

The Rio Conference and its outcome (Agenda 21) inspired the creation of the National Advisory Commission on Environment and Sustainable Development under Decree No. 94/259/PM/ of May 31, 1994. This is an intergovernmental agency whose mission is to support the government in the elaboration of national environmental and sustainable policies and to help in their coordination and implementation. Two years later, in 1996, another agency, the

Permanent Secretariat of the Environment, was created by Decree No. 96/224 of October 1st, 1996. The Secretariat was charged with the implementation of the National Environment Management Plan, created earlier by Law No. 96/12 of August 5th, 1996. Three other institutions have since been created to foster the implementation of the Rio Declaration. These are the National Consultative Council for the Environment and Sustainable Development, by Decree No. 94/259/PM of May 31st, 1994; the Institute of Agricultural Research for Development, by Decree No. 96/050 of March 12th, 1996; and the Inter-ministerial Committee for Environment, by Decree No.2001/718/PM of September 3rd, 2001.

Cameroon later demonstrated its concern for the environment by creating government agencies and institutions and establishing specialized departments in ministries. For example, Decree No. 88/1350 of September 30th, 1988, organized the Ministry of Water Resources and Energy, giving it special responsibilities on pollution, hygiene, and sanitation. The Ministry of Tourism has the duty to manage National Parks and Conservation, as stipulated by (Decree No. 92/61 of December 29th, 1992. The Ministry of Agriculture, by Decree No. 94/001 of January 6th, 1994, is also responsible for the forest, water, pollution, and toxic management. Also in 1994 the Directorate of Territorial Management and Environment was created in the Ministry of Regional Planning. Its responsibilities included initiating environmental policies and monitoring the work of departments and institutions doing business in the field of environment. It was also responsible for collaborating with international institutions, coordinating national environmental policy, and ensuring the rational use of natural resources.

Efforts by the Cameroon government at environmental management reached its apex in 1992 with the creation of a full ministry in charge of the environment, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MINEF), under Decree No. 92/069 of April 9th, 1992. According to Tchigio (2007), the creation of MINEF brought together under one umbrella the three main components (forestry, wildlife, and environment), which were previously dispersed in the Ministries of Agriculture, Tourism, and Plan and Territorial Development, respectively. The new Ministry was responsible for developing and implementing a national environmental policy. In 2004, MINEF was divided into two ministries by Decree No. 2004/320 of December 8, 2004. These two ministries were the Ministry of Forest and Wildlife (MINFOF) and the Ministry of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED). The responsibilities of MINFOF and MINEPDED were central to Cameroon's protection of environment and nature protection. MINEPDED's role is to develop, coordinate, and monitor national, regional, and international environmental policies, as well as negotiate international

environmental agreements and ensure their implementation. As for MINFOF, its role includes developing, implementing, and reviewing Cameroon's forest and wildlife policy. It is further responsible for the sustainable management of national forests, for the monitoring and implementation of regeneration programs, for afforestation, reforestation, and inventory, and for the issuing of permits for wildlife exploitation. As can be expected, the functions and activities of both ministries overlap. For example, both ministries are responsible for coordinating the reduction of emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) activities throughout the country.

Cameroon has also been very supportive of the international efforts at environmental and nature protection by signing, ratifying, or committing to many international agreements, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the International Tropical Timber Agreement, the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, the Basel Convention on the Control of Trans-boundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the Vienna Convention for the Protection of Ozone Layer, the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, and the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade.

Beyond these agreements came the 1990 liberty laws. Among other things, these laws sanctioned freedom of movement and expression in Cameroon, and they provided opportunities for more local and international partnership in the protection and effective management of the environment and natural resources (Markham and Fonjong 2015). For example, since the passage of Law No. 99/014 of December 22, 1999, on NGOs, Cameroon has witnessed the emergence of over 150 national NGOs and about sixty associations involved in education, training, and other activities related to environment and nature protection (The National Coordination of the ANCR-NCSA process, 2007). Local and international environmental NGOs (WWF, Living Earth, and Centre for Environment and Development) in Cameroon have also taken the opportunity to execute a number of important projects aimed at protecting and sustaining the environment.

For example, the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) began operation in Cameroon in 1990, and since then it has been involved in various activities

related to environmental protection and nature conservation: support for local communities and indigenous peoples around protected areas, improvement of law enforcement for more effective legal prosecution, bio-monitoring to regularly update population data of flagship species for conservation impact assessment, conservation of High Conservation Values (HCVs) and more effective anti-poaching strategies, sustainable forest management and forest certification. It has also bolstered the promotion of green economy in cooperation with mining and palm oil industries, developed models of best practice, and addressed the growing corporate influence on the environment by adapted communication and sensitization methods (WWF 2015). The Mount Cameroon, Korup, Bayang Mbo, and the Bakossi National Parks are examples of protected areas where WWF Cameroon works in the coastal forest (WWF 2015).

The Centre for the Environment and Development (CED) is a national NGO focusing on several environmental problems in the country, especially the threat by extractive industries (oil and other minerals) on the rights of surrounding populations and survival of the environment. Since 2000, for example, it has focused on providing support to local NGOs and other associations in the forest zones in Cameroon and neighboring countries by helping them track the illegal exploitation of forests; increase the knowledge of the law on forestry, mining, indigenous peoples, and the environment; and carry out participatory mapping (Nguiffo 2014). The actions of CED have helped maintain indigenous and local knowledge, and they helped reduce pressures from habitat loss, land-use change and degradation, and unsustainable water use. Other achievements of CED include ensuring the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the exploitation of local natural resources.

AND SO WHAT?

One would have expected that these remarkable changes that have taken place in natural resource institutions, legislation, and policies in Cameroon, would lead to efficient management capable of halting human encroachment and protecting nature reserves. But this has not been the case because most of these changes have been cosmetic and have not been driven by any clear objectives or desires for profound change. The irony, however, is that the plethora of environmental laws and institutions do not seem to have made much difference to the state of environmental degradation and natural resource depletion in the country.

Take the case of deforestation. Markham and Fonjong (2015), Fonjong (2006), and others posit that 200,000 hectares of national forest are lost annually and that over forty species of wildlife are threatened with extinction. The

laws have not been able to stop the expansion of plantation land, the over-exploitation of non-timber forest products, deforestation resulting from bush burning for farming and grazing, and the legal and illegal industrial logging. There is little compliance with legal provisions by foreign logging companies, and corruption from public officials in the sector is endemic (Markham and Fonjong 2015; Neba 2007). The situation is compounded by rapid population growth and urbanization, requiring more forest land for economic and infrastructural development. Ecological degradation is also threatening the country's rich biodiversity because of the loss of habitat due to hunting and poaching, deforestation, and pollution of coastal waters.

Markham and Fonjong (2015) argue that deforestation has triggered a chain of environmental problems, including the decline in soil fertility and in increase in such non-friendly agricultural practices as overgrazing, farming on steep slopes, and avoiding crop rotation. These practices are fertile ground for desertification, as is the case in the Far North Region and around Lake Chad where there is overexploitation of water resources (National Capacity Self-Assessment Global Support Program, 2006). *Opération Sahel Vert* (Operation Green Sahara), which was instituted to fight this phenomenon in the North by planting 10 million trees in the 1980s, was abandoned during the economic crisis that gripped the country beginning in the mid-1980s. The problems of the scarcity of potable water and of water pollution are second to none in a country that is paradoxically well watered with streams, rivers, lakes, sea, and an average annual rainfall of 1684 mm. Fifty years after independence, many localities, both urban and rural in Cameroon—including the two most important cities, Douala and Yaounde—still depend on rain, springs, wells, streams, and rivers for domestic water. Even with the country's many laws and institutions, the former water company, *Société Nationale des Eaux du Cameroun* (SNEC), and the current one, Cameroon Water Utilities Corporation (CAMWATER), have not been able to transform the abundant water sources to the benefit of the population. They have not changed, for instance, the outdated water infrastructure. Cities like Yaounde are still served by treatment plants constructed in the 1980s (AEUD 2010), and Buea by water installations left behind by the colonial powers (Fonjong and Ngekwi 2014). The problem is not only water supply; it is also water pollution, environmental degradation, poor sanitation, human and industrial damage, and inadequate sewage disposal. In fact, Ndjama et al. (2008) noted a direct relationship between localities such as Yaounde and Douala to high rates of water pollution from industries and homes and to the prevalence of water-related diseases (typhoid, malaria, and skin diseases). The endemic hold of cholera on Douala has been linked to rapid urbanization, poverty, and lack of access to clean water (Guevart et al. 2006).

Cameroonian cities are generally dirty, thus breeding grounds for mosquitos and vectors of other diseases. Many streets are littered with abandoned garbage, abandoned because of the absence of a functional garbage collection system. And then, where some form of city waste management exists, the garbage bins are too few, too small, inadequate, poorly located, and not emptied as frequently as required. The ban on the use of non-biodegradable plastic bags without the provision of an affordable alternative has only aggravated the problem of plastic waste. Poor environmental management has contributed not only to diseases but also to direct death through human-induced natural disasters. Poor planning has allowed construction in dry valleys, in low-lying areas, on steep slopes, on wetlands and swamps, and equally poor planning has led to habitation and occupation of disaster-prone zones. All this has resulted in many deaths from frequent floods, landslides, and other disasters, further exacerbated by inadequate sewage systems (Asangwe 2010).

Recent examples of disasters with high casualties and victims include the 1999 eruption that degraded farmland, displaced people, and destroyed plantations and villages in Limbe, Fako Division. The Lake Nyos gas disaster in 1986 in the Northwest region claimed over 1,700 lives, while 850 people were hospitalized, and thousands of cattle killed. It is argued that the magnitude of this disaster would have been minimized if there had been better road and communication infrastructure linking the area and facilitating rescue and relief intervention. Lake Monoun also killed thirty-seven people in 1984. It is obvious that lakes, like volcanic eruptions, represent some of the serious environmental threats in Cameroon. However, the United Nations Environment Program, UNEP-Africa (2008), believes that the root of the problem is more related to the environmental threat and the low level of awareness by the population of the existence of these threats than to the seismic activities of lakes or Mount Cameroon.

Landslides and floods have left victims without food and secure sources of livelihood for extended periods. In Limbe, recent landslides occurred in 2001, 2004, 2005, 2008, and 2009. These landslides killed twenty-five persons, displaced many others, and brought enormous destruction to buildings, farmlands, and other property (Diko 2012). Other landslides in 2003 in Wabane, still in the Southwest region, impacted the lives of nearly 4,200 inhabitants (Ndifor 2003). Over 2,000 people were displaced in Donga Mantung (Northwest region) by landslides. In 2012, heavy rainfall and the poor management of the Lagdo Dam led to serious flooding that killed over thirty people in the Far North Region, displaced over 4,000 persons, and adversely affected about 26,000 residents (Taku 2012). Fire disasters are also frequent and often take an important human and material toll. In Zhoa in the Northwest region, 500 homes were destroyed by fire, and material damage resulting from fire

outbreaks were also recorded in Douala, Tiko, Kumba, and several other markets in Cameroon. The material losses could have been less if there had been functional fire intervention units in the localities concerned and if urban planning had been rigorous.

As demonstrated so far, the many institutions and laws governing the environment and nature protection have very little to show. Kamto (1996) described them as dormant. This is true when one considers, for example, Law No. 98/005 of April 14, 1998, on the water regime in Cameroon. Although it is supposed to protect the land around the perimeters of the collection, treatment, and storage of water, the law is rarely enforced. Today, land around water points and other wetlands that ought to be protected by this law are not only illegally exploited, but also victim to the complicity of corrupt municipal authorities who offer duly signed permits to law breakers. Nasong'o and Gabsa (1998) were of the opinion that Cameroon legal and institutional frameworks are only good to the extent that they exist. They attribute the inability to accomplish anything to the following facts: (1) these frameworks ignore local realities, as we have seen in the example of the forest laws; (2) the institutions are too many and end up being confused over who is supposed to do what; and (3) they generally lack objectivity in their management because of over-centralization. As a result of the poor performances of Cameroon's environmental, legal, and institutional frameworks in addressing the environmental problems, Markham and Fonjong (2015) argue that these instruments are limited by gaps in the laws, frequent changes in the allocation of responsibilities to various ministries, and the fragmentation of responsibilities among numerous participating agencies.

CONCLUSION

This chapter highlights the historical development of the legal and institutional framework regulating protection of the environment and nature in Cameroon. Despite the many laws that have been enacted in the post-colonial period in comparison to the number of laws passed during the colonial era, the spirit and focus of the laws have not changed very much. Early post-colonial laws were grounded by the same colonial philosophy that the resources belong to the State and that punishment was necessary to prevent the people from encroaching on the environment. However, recent trends have shown a slight shift from policing natural resources to gradually involving local communities in management, as seen in the institution of community forestry in the 1994 Forest Law. NGOs and community organizations have also joined the struggle for a better environment and nature protection with the enactment of

the 1990 liberty laws that allowed these people-centered operations to operate legally. Furthermore, the 1999 Cameroon National Biodiversity Strategy Action Plan (NBSAP) underscored the importance of public participation and the role of communities and indigenous knowledge in the management and conservation of biodiversity. Structural changes have also seen the creation of national parks and services managing these resources, evolving from simple departments to full ministries.

Unfortunately, the multiplication of laws and institutions regulating the environment and natural resources has had little or no concrete impact on the state of the environment. The rate of environmental degradation has more than doubled and the future of many rare birds and of other animal and wild-life species is in jeopardy. Environmental crises (landslides, floods, solid and sewage pollution, drought, deforestation, climate change) remain on the rise. The reasons for this mismatch between the proliferation of policies and correspondingly fewer or no results are not difficult to identify. They range from lack of coordination, duplication of tasks, and the absence of a proper policy of institutional accountability, to the culture of corruption, self-interest, and propaganda nationalism. Thus, the goal of most of these laws and institutions, particularly after independence, is not necessarily to solve clearly identified problems but more just to window dress and only appear to meet international obligations. The number of laws and environmental institutions does not matter; what matters is the will and the willingness to learn from past failures in order to transform the current state of anarchy within the domain to a veritable coordinated system that protects and sustains the constitutional rights of Cameroonians to enjoy a clean and healthy environment. Until this happens, nothing will change the crisis facing environment and nature protection in the country.

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Section 3

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Chapter Seven

Changes in Female Roles in Cameroon

Toward the End of “Social Juniors?”

Honore Mimche, Achille Pinghane Yonta,
and Nobert Lengha Tohnain

INTRODUCTION

Gendered division of labor accounts for much of the universal and specific nature of human societies because relations between sexes determine how societies operate on almost all levels. Relations between sexes also determine power and antagonistic relations in the society. And individuals behave according to expectations related to their sex. Even the most far-reaching socio-economic changes observed since the eighteenth century did not completely reverse the practices of social organization that were more or less sexist. Such differences are very obvious linguistically, and they exist virtually in all languages since masculine and feminine genders are characterized differently. In most cases, gendered division of labor occurs in all spheres of social and political life, resulting in the creation and reproduction of a social order and the sharing of social life that Mead (1966) viewed as a public/private dichotomy that expresses the specific fields of action for one sex or the other. Such a social order also influences the construction of male and female identities into opposing social categories. In other words, while women have to take care of the inside (domestic spheres, private spheres, the family, reproduction) and make it their incontestable field, men are responsible for the outside (public sphere in charge of production, decision making, and public life).

It is this social construction of men and women that is evident in pictures transmitted through different social media (artworks, manuals, radio, TV, church, etc.) and that led many social scientists, including Balandier (1974), Bayart (1979), and Meillassoux (1982), to define “social juniors” as all subjugated social categories (youths and women), as opposed to their “social seniors,” who have authority that is linked to their age, their position in the

lineage, and their ownership of symbolic and material resources. However, in the face of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) imposed by the Bretton Woods Institutions beginning in the 1980s, as well as by various urbanization processes, the influential role of the media, and the transformation of power relations in families, a few women began playing new roles in society; roles such as family heads, business leaders, opinion and political leaders, and charismatic religious figures. This change is particularly visible in Cameroonian public life, with the presence of women in new social roles alongside their male counterparts. This change in the status of women is at the heart of the social changes that affect their traditional family life. Indeed, the Cameroonian society has changed in many significant ways since the last century. Male and female roles and gender relationships in particular have changed significantly. That is why, today, legal equality and social equality among the sexes are undoubtedly explicit societal objectives.

Understanding such changes allows us to examine women's issues and societal interrelations from a larger perspective, one of social change. Thus, this chapter seeks to understand the profound changes observed in women's roles. For example, it analyzes the relations among women and aims at understanding the manner in which women negotiate their responsibilities, circumvent a few social norms, and also transmit them to their daughters. Furthermore, it analyzes the power dynamics among various generations of women, dynamics that are shaped especially through the processes of empowerment, through struggling, and through survival strategies. It also analyzes how women strive to assert themselves in order to account for the profound social changes occurring in Cameroon by asking the following questions: What changes have been observed in women's roles in society? What accounts for these changes? How do these changes influence gender relations? This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section deals with contemporary figures who model women's mobility. This social deconstruction stems from several factors, including education, industrialization, urbanization, and the evolution of gender ideology. The second part presents the role played by different factors in these change dynamics in women's roles in Cameroon. Finally, the chapter examines the impact of these changes in terms of male-female relations in society and family institutions.

CONTEMPORARY FIGURES OF WOMEN'S MOBILITY

In the traditional social structure, the family is organized on the basis of a patriarchal power system that is greatly centralized and hierarchical. This patriarchal system establishes a relation of men's authority over women and

generally that of “seniors” over “juniors” in all spheres of family and community life. Age and sex constitute the principles of family organization (Abeles and Collard 1985, 10) and the vectors of social stratification. Thus, different age groups among women and men are assigned specific functions in society (Paulme 1971, 9). The social situation of women has remained distinct from that of men. As in many African societies, the social position of women is marked by subordination, and the various tasks assigned to men and women justify the argument that the traditional society was built on a rigid division of social roles. Both sexes are different from each other in that their respective potentials do not apply equally to the same tasks but rather to tasks that, though sometimes different from each other, are geared toward the same goal. Thus, gendered division of roles and status is translated by division of responsibilities in the family and in the community. Division of labor is anchored on the specific norms of the social group, and the social and family roles of women and men are codified by the rights and duties in the various spheres of life (domestic, productive, reproductive, conjugal, community). Such division leads to functional specialization in families between the private domestic life—the privileged field for women—and the public sphere reserved for men (Newland 1981, 39). In other words, traditional social organization is translated by the existence of “women’s occupations” alongside “men’s occupations.” By restricting the participation of women to the social and home economies, traditional society strengthens both gender inequalities within the community and family spheres, and the preponderance of male domination establishes the invisibility of women within the public sphere.

It is for this reason that social research on women has for a long time been dominated by arguments that aim at demonstrating that women are “social juniors”—that is, they belong to all dominated social categories compared to their “social seniors,” whose authority is linked to their age, their position in the lineage, and to ownership of symbolic and material resources (see, for example, Balandier 1974 and Bayart 1985). According to ethnographic accounts, these juniors depend considerably on their male seniors for access to resources, religious practices, and their marriage choices (Paulme 1960). However, it is evident that for some years now there has been a significant improvement in the status of women, an improvement associated with their presence in salaried positions in the service industry, as well as in changes in the workplace and women’s activities (Maruani 2000). Faced with the economic crisis of the 1980s, and especially with the influence of urbanization and education inherited from colonization, Cameroonians have experienced a “silent revolution” in the status of women. As Ela (1994; 1997) points out, given their level of education and the desire to become career women, a new generation of women have emerged who are no longer satisfied with being

just housewives and mothers. Such a dynamic current falls within the broader spectrum of changes linked to the improvement in living conditions in the post-modern context, and this dynamic current can be felt at several levels as an indication of women's visibility and "coming out."

From an Increase in the Labor Market to Women's Presence in the Professions

For a long time, experts on gender and employment focused on disparities between men and women, to the disadvantage of the latter, in the sense that, contrary to men, women have an uncertain professional status. For instance, they have been less represented in status-enhancing professions and more in the subsistence sector (Aka Kouamé 1999; Kobou 2000). Most research has shown that these inequalities were increasing and varied with the nature of work, income disparity (Aka Kouamé 1999), working conditions (Kobou 2000), professional constraints in terms of differential exposure to gender-based violence (Jaspard 2005), conditions of integration into the labor market and access to a first job (Maruani 2000). However, what is significant today is not so much the aforementioned differences (Aka Kouamé 1999), but rather the huge progress in women's activities and the ongoing gendered reversal process in the labor market. In fact, since 1960, there has been an unprecedented transformation in the place of women in salaried positions as more women make inroads into professions that were previously restricted to them. Surveys on employment in the informal sector conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics (INS) in 2005 and 2010, demonstrated both a quantitative and qualitative representation of women in salaried employment and other professions that were hitherto considered to be reserved for men. In fact, the 2010 INS survey indicated that the rate of employment among Cameroonians ten years of age and older was 64.2 percent for women and 74.1 percent for men. Meanwhile, in the public sector, the survey also indicated that women made up only 35.2 percent, compared to 64.8 percent for men, while in the private sector statistics showed 24.5 percent for women compared to 75.5 percent for men. Despite the improvement in the percentage of women in employment and other salaried professions, from 5.4 percent in 2005 to 11.2 percent in 2010 (EESI), it is still much lower when compared to their male counterparts. As Maruani (2000) pointed out, women have not only supported developments in the service sector and salaried labor in the workforce for some years now, but also greatly contributed to their creation. Women's participation in the liberal professions and other forms of economic activities is taking precedence over marriage, hitherto considered the prerequisite for integration and social progress for women. In fact, besides giving her more

independence, having a job enables a woman to make up for a failed marriage and gives her the opportunity for self-improvement. It also allows her to become a more useful member in society by allowing her to play a more publicly recognized role. Thus, since colonization, there has been an invasion of the “outside” by women (Baffoun 1981). This transformation in the role of women in society has led to a shift in gender and female activities and social norms. For example, despite the seemingly permanent nature of socio-cultural practices, most women who have joined the military have chosen this career either because of personal conviction or because they have been encouraged to do so by relatives (parents, spouses, other family members).

The feminization of work is also manifested in the improvement in the place of women in professional life as evidenced by their access to positions of responsibility and senior leadership, and an increase since 2000, in the number of women in various professions—magistracy, journalism, medicine, political life, engineering, pharmacy, higher education. For instance, according to the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Cameroon (ONECCA), the number of female attorneys increased from 144 in 2000 to 274 in 2008, while over the same period the number of Bailiffs and Notaries, respectively, increased from 34 to 81 and 18 to 46. However, despite the increase in the number of women in senior leadership positions in both the public and private sectors, their numbers in those positions remain significantly low. And their presence within other institutions remain elusive.

The Feminization of Traditionally Male Professions

Since colonization, several changes have taken place in the area of gender inequalities. Available data on the labor market in Cameroon reveals a significant entry of women into extra-domestic economic life, especially in jobs and professions that had been dominated by men. This gender mix in the workforce, which has resulted in the feminization of masculine jobs on the one hand and masculinization of feminine jobs on the other hand, a mix that reflects both a modification of patriarchal values and practices that delegitimize the phallocratic civilization (Sindjoun 2000), and a modification of patriarchal practices prevalent in traditional Cameroonian society.

The feminization of traditionally male jobs—for example, in the Cameroon army—is indicative of evolving sexist customs and social representations in families and among women themselves. At the family level, this has translated into a shift from traditional social integration trends for women, whose future had long been associated with marriage. Like elsewhere in Africa, women are often prisoners of this stereotype that forces them to work from the inside. However, since the 1980s, there has been a significant change

in careers with women entering so-called masculine careers, such as in the army. This democratization of access in the military does not imply, however, a systematic social progression by women in the sense that they have access (in the military) only to sectors that are reputed as “female,” and thus hold positions with secretariat duties, or duties in transmission, military health, and food catering. Their absence in the “forefront” also reflects a culture of segregation and inequality in the military.

Women in Public and Political Life

In societies and in sociopolitical organizations (associations, political parties, and families), women and men are very often assigned different social positions and specific roles, just as they are in political life. These social statuses and roles, as well as the statistical representation of both sexes, define the fundamental mechanisms and conditions for membership to a political party and participation in political life, with male and female identities constructed and based on societal expectations of the sexes. In other words, sex is an important marker in the political life of any society, with women playing very limited and traditional roles in public life. Their roles are tailored to initiatives aimed at collective management and decision-making processes related to family and social life. Thus, masculinity and femininity are still viewed as principles of social organization that determine an individual’s participation and role in politics and political parties.

In traditional societies, male domination in the political sphere was the order of the day, though this did not exclude some level of participation by women (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1994). Women were embedded in institutional infrastructure where socially accepted rules were practiced. As elsewhere, obstacles to women’s progress in politics are mainly structural. Following the dominant traditional ideology, women’s subordination is evident in their exclusion from the public and political spheres reserved mostly for men. Political roles played by some women in pre-colonial societies were thus exceptions to the rule. However, for some years now, women’s participation in political life has changed considerably, particularly in its conventional (citizenship, electoral behavior, party militancy, political career) or non-conventional role (militancy in associations, social movements, feminism, etc.). Even though women are still underrepresented in politics regardless of how their commitment is expressed (militancy, participation in voting, abstention, participation in campaigns, etc.), they are becoming increasingly involved in both public and political life. As it relates to public life, their access to positions of responsibility and their participation in national political life have been remarkable in the last few decades. According to Table

Table 7.1. Changes in the Number of Women in the Legislative Assembly since 1973

<i>Legislature</i>	<i>Total Number of Parliamentarians</i>	<i>Number of Men</i>	<i>Number of Women</i>	<i>Percentage of Female Parliamentarians</i>
1973–1978	120	113	7	5.8
1978–1983	120	108	12	10.0
1983–1988	120	103	17	14.2
1988–1992	180	154	26	14.4
1992–1997	180	157	23	12.8
1997–2002	180	170	10	5.6
2002–2007	180	161	19	10.6
2007–2012	180	155	25	13.9
2013–2018	180	124	56	31.1

Source: MINATD

7.1, the percentage of women in the legislature increased from 5.8 percent in 1973–78 to over 31 percent in 2013.

Despite the fact that politics remains almost exclusively masculine, with its several discriminatory practices either institutionalized or evident through action, the quest by women for social legitimacy through political participation is currently an important struggle throughout the world. As in many African countries, even though Cameroonian women are more involved both in party activities and in regional and national politics today than in the past, they often do not hold positions of authority. For instance, Table 7.2 indicates that there have been few women in such important positions as Governors, Prefects, sub-Prefects and District Heads since 2006.

Even in cases where women hold cabinet positions in the administration, they are not assigned positions that deal with sovereignty issues but rather to ministries that are related to those traditionally assigned to women: social affairs, women's empowerment, and education. For instance, for many years, Delphine Tsanga served as Deputy Minister of Health and Public Welfare

Table 7.2. Women in Positions of Political Authority (Governors, Prefects, sub-Prefects, and District Heads)

<i>Year</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2011</i>
<i>Position</i>	<i>Number of Women</i>	<i>Number of Women</i>	<i>Number of Women</i>
<i>Governors</i>	0/10	0/10	0/10
<i>Prefects</i>	0/58	0/58	0/58
<i>Sub-Prefects</i>	2/267	2/267	5/360
<i>District Heads</i>	0/54	0/54	0/54

Source: MINATD.

(1970–1975), while her counterpart, Dorothy Njeuma, was Vice Minister of National Education (1975–1985).

Development of Women Entrepreneurship: An Asset for Social and Family Economy

The 1990 economic crisis in Cameroon and the passage of the Liberty Laws in December 1990 led to the development of small income-generating economic activities, which resulted in the relative empowerment of women and in their ability to freely promote women's economic organizations. In other words, the economic empowerment of women and freedom of association have allowed women to rethink their status as "social juniors" who generally lag behind men in all aspects of development. This informal participation in family life highlights areas in which women are able to resist the burden of traditional forms of sexual domination. Additionally, education and migration have served as important catalysts in the reversal of gender dynamics in the urban marketplace.

Female entrepreneurship ushered in particular awareness of associative movements in villages and towns regardless of one's social class. It is through these associations that women have been able to develop strategies for jump-starting their lives. By coming together in women's associations, women are able to implement informal savings-and-loan programs that provide them with the wherewithal to carry out such micro economic projects as soap production, sale of doughnuts (*puff puff*), purchase of commercial transport vehicles and motorbikes for urban transportation (urban taxis), retail businesses, and restaurants. In fact, many women in Cameroon are currently involved in small income-generating businesses not only for their financial empowerment but also for the survival of their families. With their involvement in these associations and with the support of NGOs, women have access to loans to carry out some of these activities. Membership in these organizations have also given women the opportunity to leave their homes, share ideas, and realize that they are not alone and that their problems are not unique. This opportunity for women to provide and receive mutual support at various events and as the need arises has important ramifications. This is an area where their husbands have no authority, much to the women's satisfaction. It gives them a place to freely express themselves. They appreciate this source of power and try to create similar groups wherever possible. Unfortunately, however, power struggles within some of these groups often causes friction, leading to their demise or reconstitution under new names. It should be noted that the creation of women's network and organizations enables them to acquire new cultural resources that their

husbands often do not possess, since these organizations also offer them an opportunity for political socialization, functional literacy, and introduction to new income-generating activities.

The Increase in the Number of Women as Heads of Households

Since the end of the 1980s, as in many other African countries, and particularly in towns and cities, Cameroon has seen an increase in the number of women among household heads. According to experts in demography and sociology of the family (Locoh 1996; Maruani 2000), the rise in such a phenomenon is another manifestation in the changing family dynamics. From 1991 to 2011, for example, almost 25 percent of households around the world were headed by women (Pilon, Mama, and Tichit 1996). Figure 7.1 provides the number of households headed by women in Cameroon during the same period, and shows an increase of more than 6 percent during the same period.

The increase in the number of households headed by women correlates with women's residential autonomy on the one hand and single parenthood on the other. Both are indications of the evolving status of women in society. Irrespective of whether they are migrants or wives of migrants, spouses, divorcees, widows, or refugees, the number of women with key family responsibilities is on the rise in contemporary Cameroonian society. Often ignored by researchers, this growing phenomenon shows that women who are the mainstay of the family are often victims of government shortcomings and lack of support from their spouses. They often organize themselves, help one another, and learn to fight for their rights. According to Pilon, Mama, and Tichit (1996) and Vignikin and Vimard (2005), women household heads

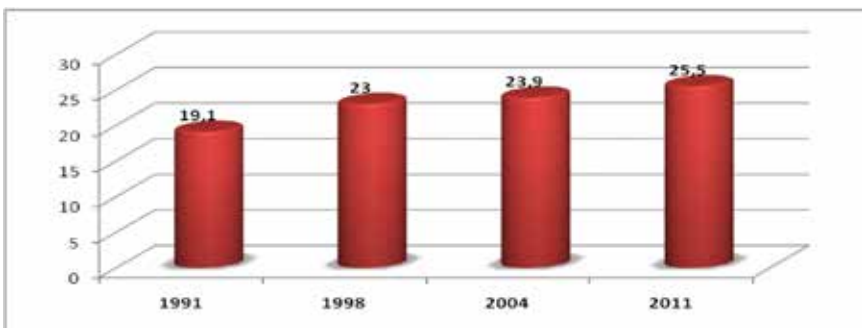


Figure 7.1. Trends in the Proportion of Women Household Heads, 1991–2011 (Percentage).

Source: Cameroon Demographic and Health Survey (I, II, III, IV).

constitute a new form of households whose emergence in society has led to a shift into a new type of family organization. This phenomenon also reveals new aspirations for women in a changing society.

Migrations as Indicators of the Social Mobility of Women

Since 1960, female migration in Cameroon has changed considerably, with more women migrating as a result of their social mobility (Evina and Mimche 2008; Mimche and Kamdem 2016). From forced migration during colonization to voluntary migration linked to modernization and poverty in African societies, it can be argued that women's migration has changed significantly with changes in the status of women. It goes without saying today that the rate of women's migration is gaining momentum. And the number is likely to increase significantly since women account for half of the population of global migrants searching for new opportunities. This has led to an increase in the number of labor migrants without permanent residency in the host countries. Although it may not be new, this phenomenon has continued to gain momentum in the multifaceted relationships that are inevitable in the globalization process. Women's migratory movements are characterized by the development of voluntary flows that in turn translate into the determination by migrants to free themselves from male domination and rural gerontocracy. More than ever, women are now important players in transnational migration. They find in migration a solution for improving their living conditions. Domestically or internationally, this movement of women shows how they are changing and acquiring more independence and freedom. Their situations vary, however, with some migration involving great risks that can lead to hardship and frustration. Yet, regardless of their situation, one central issue is important to female migrants: the gradual but irreversible modification of relations between men and women in traditional families.

For over a decade now, there has been an increase in the rate of female voluntary migration, diversification of female migratory strategies and sectors, and the creation of networks that facilitate such movements toward international business opportunities. In this vast migratory current, women are seeking to escape from conditions imposed on them notably in rural areas. There has been a shift from a model of "passive female migration" based on family reunification (matrimonial migration, for example), to that of individual migration: work migration, rural exodus, return migration, political asylum, and business migration. Even though women have long been included in the analyses of migration dynamics solely as wives and daughters of migrants, they are today becoming actors of voluntary migration thanks

to the social, economic, familial, and cultural changes that are taking place in Cameroon and around the world. Even in countries reputed as the most culturally integrated and in which collective networks do not easily lead to women's emancipation, there is a revolution in social values relating to gender reversal of migration flows and a remarkable increase in women's mobility conditioned by new migration trends and the reasons for migration. Such changes in the migration status translate into evolving family and social structures characterized by their social mobility (women household heads, education, etc.). In fact, besides the revolution in the traditional social gender status, it is the revolution of cultural norms and economic challenges that accounts for this social and geographical mobility of women. The effects of this economic situation can be characterized through social changes in "gender social roles" and through the development of new family responsibilities for women. Increasingly, women are assuming the role of household heads, as well as the rising risk of migration. It is therefore necessary to analyze these changes in the migration discourse since it is largely through migration that women are making significant progress in society.

FEMALE MOBILITY: DRIVING FORCES FOR CHANGE

Many factors account for the changing dynamics in the status of women in Cameroon.

Social Representations on the Status of Women: An Acknowledged Trend

Like in most communities, women were generally viewed in their families as temporary residents, called upon to leave their birth families and create new families elsewhere. The rise in the number of women in the labor force represents a shift from the traditional concept that has long viewed marriage as the main mode of social integration for women. By granting a woman more independence, work makes it possible for her to make recompense for the failure of a marriage, to get an opportunity for advancement, to play a publicly recognized role, and to be useful to society and her birth family (Deniel 1985). Thus, since colonization, women have practically invaded the outside world through access to formal and professional education, their entry into the public service, and access to factories and businesses. These trends in social representations have resulted in a change in family education strategies, particularly with respect to the education of girls.

Women's Education

Education is the basis of sociopolitical changes in societies. It often leads to changes in sociopolitical institutions and makes it possible to analyze more cogently the issues and problems encountered in daily life. Knowledge acquired through education helps us all to analyze, understand, and make decisions when faced with various social issues. Education facilitates women's access to employment in public life, where it remains the key criteria for their social and professional integration. Thus, professional women come from families that value education. The increase in women's educational level is responsible for their significant presence in the labor market and their sudden move from domestic life. In the same vein, education has also been at the heart of changes observed in customs with regards to gender, as both girls and boys now have the opportunity to be educated. In those families with girls who excel in school, parents are led to adopt attitudes that are slightly different toward education. The new education introduced by colonization ignited the emergence of values that often challenged traditional ideologies. At the community level, education is one of the factors that account for female social mobility. Those who are educated are often major players for social change in their communities. This reality is responsible for women's social commitment, their emancipation, and their determination to eliminate "patriarchal rules," rules that had been responsible for their social marginalization. Thus the increase in the level of women's education in a world where gender relations are being restructured is likely to favor a more equal model for gender relations. Zoungrana et al. (2007) demonstrate the importance of education in producing the domination/subjugation dichotomy and especially the various opportunities opened to educated women for constructing relations based on equity and partnership. Women's education not only makes them question their subordinate roles, but also encourages them to transcend those roles.

The Emergence of New Religious Denominations

The rise in new religious movements is one of the most remarkable developments in contemporary Africa. Since the liberalization of the sociopolitical space resulting from the democratic wind of change that swept the continent beginning in the early 1990s, religious freedom has grown to the point of escaping state regulation. In this context of globalization and of religious modernity, the Cameroonian religious market has, since the 1990s, experienced unprecedented changes, characterized by an emergence of "new religious men and women" as the new religions became popular. The mobilization of

women in the new so-called revivalist movements can be explained by their determination to free themselves from the domination prevalent in other religions. With women becoming pastors and bishops in these new religions that do not marginalize them, gender inequalities experienced in most Judeo-Christian religions are irrelevant and nonexistent. These new religions give women the opportunity to freely express themselves and feel fulfilled in their daily lives; these religions function as associations in which members can get advice from each other based on their experiences. Mutual help is the underlying rule in women's relations, a rule that motivates them. In fact, given the proliferation of these religions, the daily exponential growth in the number of followers, and the influence that women have on the spiritual life of their children, it is no surprise that gender relations are undergoing significant changes in Cameroon.

A Changing Legal and Political Environment

The legal framework and political discourse have also led to new discussions on gender dynamics with an emphasis on human rights, including the right to work, the right to education, and the right to professional training. Thanks to the law on freedom of association, many institutions have been created for women's empowerment. The advent of multiparty politics in Africa—together with individual freedoms and liberties, especially as they relate to women—is important in analyzing new female roles. The inclusion of women in senior political leadership positions either through elections or by appointment is the result of this ongoing change in African societies in general and Cameroon in particular. Furthermore, multiparty politics has not only inspired women by the presence of women in important political positions, especially in regional and local politics, but also eliminated gender bias on issues of power and authority. This reality is at the core of women's activism now evident in all social arenas.

CHANGES IN FEMALE ROLES AND GENDER RELATIONS

Do these changes in the status of women affect gender dynamics in the so-called post-modern society? Social scientists, including Locoh (1996), Maruani (2000), and Vignikin and Vimad (2005), argue that it is important to analyze from both a sociological and anthropological perspective the consequences of change in the status of women at the professional, family, and community levels. Such an analysis calls for some major questions. Do women's

wage-earning positions constitute a factor in family dynamics? Do changes in traditional family and social status—changes characterized by women's emancipation—translate into social relations through a change in gender relations? Has the increase in the number of women heads of households, an expression of female mobility, contributed in deconstructing gender biases and stereotypes? Overall, are changes in women's traditional roles likely to lead to a rejection of gendered division of labor, or are they simply a re-composition of gender differences?

Dynamics of Gender Change in Community Life

In community life, women's emancipation does not always result in a reversal of gender roles. The presence of more women in public life is still not enough to reverse stereotypes and gender habits acquired long ago. That is how stereotypes and gender biases that contribute to constructing gendered public and professional lives have come to stay. However, through education and by their earning potential, women are acquiring greater social visibility because they can now own property, homes, and means of production (cattle, land), and they can also hire men to work for them.

Male/Female Relations: Toward a New Distribution of Roles and a New Role for Fathers in Households and Families?

Theoretically, the increased presence of women in the labor market is one of the reasons for the incompatibility between their traditional roles (marital and maternal) and the new ones. According to this line of thought, as the number of women with new skills increase in the labor market, it becomes difficult for women to combine their new roles and their traditional roles as wives and mothers. In towns and cities, they resort to day cares, maids, and parents to ensure the good functioning of their households and to the education of their children.

While in some Western societies these trends are often accompanied by a significant change in gender relations within the family and the community (Kaufmann 1992), in the Cameroonian society, adjustments in gender relations are much slower. In fact, despite these changes, women still spend most of their time in traditional reproductive and maternal roles. Their return to the domestic space is often viewed as an expression of conjugal love, a strategy to keep the spouse, in a context where women are increasingly confronted more with the challenges of keeping their husbands in monogamous marriages in the face of rising "bureaugamy."¹

Women can break social stereotypes in cases where men can no longer fulfill their matrimonial and family duties, especially those relating to responsi-

bilities imposed on them by tradition. The ability to circumvent this situation has been made possible by the emergence of new institutions (credit institutions, NGOs, village associations, *njangis*, etc.) that supplant the family and community structures. Women's access to credit gives them greater visibility in society and in their families because it gives them respect and satisfaction. Socially, it translates into reduced subordination toward "seniors" and the intergenerational transfer of authority originally reserved to "seniors." Their presence in the labor market has made some women more financially responsible to both their birth families and their families-in-law. While exposing them to single parenthood, education, and employment, such change also has presented a challenging aspect in regard to matrimonial relationships because it enables women to choose their spouses away from their endogamous clans, as had been the case for hundreds of years. However, even when they actively participate financially in family activities, women still find it difficult to be considered equal to their male counterparts (spouse, brother, parent). That is why even the most educated men—who are inclined to accept women's emancipation and who want women to integrate new models that are more compatible with the new structural changes—would still prefer that these values complement rather than replace traditional values.

However, it is important to recognize and remark on the notable breakthroughs that have accompanied the increased status and mobility of women, not in the sense of gender equality, but in relation to the social pictures of women in the household and community. Women are financially dependent on their spouses when providing for the family is the sole financial responsibility of the spouses; the resulting relationship is therefore one of domination. When women generate income through work and take care of some of the family responsibilities, it does not immediately modify the division of family duties and obligations. However, it does modify the consumption model through the quest for new goods in the market. If, for cultural and religious reasons, some spouses do not allow for the financial contribution of women to the family economy, women's income is redirected to children and household equipment, without a real modification in the role of the father. It is in socialization that trends in women's family status can be read, which is in reality a continuation of her traditional role.

With increased integration of women in the labor market and the accompanying changes in family structure evident during the second half of the twentieth century, families with two salaries or those in which women have stable and good-paying jobs have become a trend. Therefore, the question is whether new social roles are likely to emerge in society, with men taking more responsibilities in the family as more women assume positions in the labor market. Far from reducing the gender inequalities, this situation creates

a redistribution of time that generates family inequality, an inequality seen in both the length and quality of time spent by men and women in work and non-work activities. In urban centers, for example, the “new fathers” participate more in providing toward children’s needs and their care when women are constrained by their professional engagements. On the other hand, even if family roles are appropriately divided, family obligations within the household are largely still the woman’s responsibility.

CONCLUSION

The context marked by sociocultural modernization and sociopolitical changes has led many African countries into gradual transition dynamics, with perceptible effects on gender relations and men and women’s identities both in the private spheres (household, couple, and family) and public spheres (politics, workplace). This has led some scholars to conclude that African societies today are undergoing social change as part of the process of “redefining” social identities (Balandier 1971; Ela 1994a, 1994b), a redefining of how we are and how we live in society as men and women. This dynamic trend is translated by the sudden emergence of social juniors in the sense that the situation of women is at center stage of social transformations affecting their traditional social and family lives. Pursuant to Locoh (1996), a silent revolution is observed in female roles in the sense that since colonization, significant changes are occurring in societies previously considered by theoretical indolence as having no history (Ela 1994b).

This chapter examined different forms of female social mobility in Cameroon and the factors contributing to their presence in the outside world. These dynamics fall within the broader framework of changes linked to transformations of living conditions. Today, the trends are remarkable, even though they remain sometimes marginal, with the enhancement of women’s self-worth through access to salaries. This has contributed to improved visibility for women in various forms, with concomitant effects on the family roles of both women and men. Thanks to several social change factors, there is evidence of gender reversal, especially as it relates to women in wage-earning positions and their presence in professions that had been reserved for men. Beyond the significant growth of women’s contributions to family life, there has been a “silent revolution” in public life with the increase in female activities in the labor markets of Cameroon’s towns and cities. The development of a modern economy has facilitated the emergence of a female labor force out of the home and has clearly impacted the status of Cameroonian women in their families and communities.

NOTE

1. In many African countries like the Ivory Coast, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Congo, and Cameroon, this is a particular form of urban polygamy characterized by a plurality of women called “second office” and initially contracted mostly by the monogamous men. Generally, they do not live together.

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Chapter Eight

Representations of the Figure of Femininity among the Bamileke, Bassa, and Duala Cultures of Cameroon

Jeannette Wogaing, Rose Mireille Nnanga,
and Rose Angeline Abissi

INTRODUCTION

Only recently have women become the subject of interest among scholars. Until the end of the twentieth century, it was taboo to discuss the woman, especially in the social sciences. Scholars took little or no interest in her. Subsequently, however, women of letters and a few social scientists began to take interest in her, particularly in her condition, her social value, and her multiple narratives. Female French historians including Yvonne Knibiehler and Catherine Fouquet (1977), Françoise Thébaud (1987), and Michelle Perrot (2004) wondered whether it was possible to write a history of women since they were confined to the private space. For their part, African writers like Camara Laye (1953), Philomène Basseck (1990), and Calixthe Beyala (1987) have handled the concept of motherhood and femininity from different perspectives. They subscribed to the two concepts of womanhood and femininity based on their literary experience and understanding. However, both terms came to mean the same thing at some point in the life of a woman and fuse semantically around the feminine gender at a certain age, together informing the basic relationship between feminine gender and procreation. From this perspective, motherhood—that is to say, the fact of procreating—is at once a natural¹ and a cultural² act. In other words, the mature woman is there mainly to procreate. Some men think that her existence is predicated on maternity and that it is only through it that she can achieve self-fulfillment. What then is femininity? How is it lived? And how does one acquire it as a girl or a woman?

Femininity is women and their feelings. At the more personal level, femininity can, among other things, be the fact of being a mother, and at a collective or social level, femininity is the fact of being a wife or mother. Seen from this perspective, femininity cannot be the sole preserve of married women. It concerns mainly all those women in search of motherhood in the biological or social sense of the word and who for one reason or another cannot procreate. This is what Parini calls “playing femininity” “to behave in such a manner as to establish an agreement between your sexual belonging and what society expects of your gender in terms of dress, body language and language, etc.” (Parini 2006, 26). Femininity is the essence of being a woman, but it is also the affirmation of difference, the foregrounding of attitudes, beliefs, and ways of being and doing that are specific or attributed to the woman. According to Bamileke, Douala, and Bassa women, a woman is considered a woman not when she delivers only one child, but when she delivers at least four or five children. This chapter analyzes the different ways in which femininity is lived, explains the reason motherhood is its corollary, and explains that “the woman” remains its object.

CONTENT AND METHOD

To fully understand and analyze the statements on the representations of femininity and its corollary, we held discussions with girls and women who were either pregnant or had given birth, along with their partners, during prenatal visits, delivery, and post-delivery periods in three obstetrics services in the city of Douala, including Laquintinie Hospital, Protestant Hospital in Ndogbati, and the St. Therese Health Centre. Our survey took place in August and September 2014. Ethnographic data collection was done through interviews, life stories, and case studies of about 60 pregnant women and new mothers and about ten spouses. The women had the particularity of being nulliparous,³ primiparous, paucipare, or multipara. The interviews were conducted with the help of an interview guide. The interview guide for the women was comprised of four sections: a section on their identity; a section on the definition of the terms *woman*, *maternity* and *femininity*; a section on the perception of the woman and of the mother figure; and finally, a section on their views of femininity and the place of maternity in the lives of women. Although the interview guide for the spouses was shorter and focused more on their social life, some of the questions posed to the women were also posed to the spouses.

The data analysis was combinatory. We opted for a comprehensive and interpretive method based on the qualitative approach, an approach that enabled

an analysis of the discourse of women and men on the concept of femininity and the place of motherhood in the lives of women.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

From Girl to Woman

Sex is the principal distinguishing biological element between a girl and a boy. The age criterion makes it possible to classify girls into three main categories:

- Little girls between one and four years of age.
- Girls between five and twelve.
- Adolescents between the age of thirteen and nineteen whose bodies have undergone a series of physiological transformations, together with psychological modifications or secondary sexual features that traditionally make of the girl child a woman, *a priori* fit to procreate.⁴

In different Cameroonian cultures, a girl socialized naturally as a “woman,” either in her family⁵ or during the initiation ceremony, in which she not only learned to become, but actually became a young woman. When it comes to girls, the passage from adolescence to social maturity among the Bamileke, Bassa, and Duala is indicated by the appearance of secondary sexual features, especially the occurrence of the first menstrual cycle—in other words, “the first time in the ovulatory cycle that a female experiences her menstrual cycle” (Anne Donnadiu and Céline Firtion 2006). However, each culture has its own understanding of maturity. In certain groups, maturity is determined by initiation (circumcision and excision) or through the practice of rituals of an individual and social order. At the individual level, Victor Turner (1972) notes that

The initiation rite can be understood to mean a complex collection of techniques meant to harmonize, culturalize and socialize the human being through the liberating knowledge and beneficial trials that guide him towards his adult responsibilities, and specify his status and roles: role of husband and wife; in other words, the role of a mature man and woman, mentor, etc.

The main concern of all parents is to marry off their daughter as soon as she becomes a woman. Among the Bamileke, the Bassa, and the Duala, a girl’s first menstrual cycle solicits advice on various prohibitions and on sex-related warnings from the rest of society. And quite often, a young relative who has already experienced her menstrual cycle takes care of her. However, among the Bamileke, discussion among younger generations does not include discussion

on sexuality. A similar situation was observed among the Pèrè of the Adamaoua of Cameroon where, according to Charles-Henri Pradelles de Latour (2005), "All the information pertaining to sexuality must be delivered by a third party." Along the same lines, Mary Nyangweso Wangila reminds us that

Each culture distinguishes between the two genders during socialization. Socialization models are different depending on whether you are male or female. Transitions or initiation rites which are part of this socialization process often dramatize the gender attributed to young members of the community who are called upon to assume new social roles now that they are adults. (Wangila 2007, 22)⁶

The cultural context represents maturity in many ways. For some, the appearance of the first menstrual cycle marks the passage from childhood to maturity, while for others the first menstrual cycle is followed by an initiation rite. The latter involves the partial or total removal of the external parts of the female genital organ (clitoris, big and/or small labia).⁷ In these cultures where adulthood is understood in terms of being excised, the feminine gender adheres to this practice.

In the urban setting, however, the situation seems different; practically all the girls go to school. Even though marriage remains a common occurrence, it is on a steady decline; so are uncontrolled births. In Douala and Yaounde, for example, the fertility index is estimated to be 3.2 children, while in the other towns and cities it is estimated to be 4.6 children (Health Population Census 2004, 64). Similarly, in the city of Douala, 3.3 percent of adolescents between 15 and 19 years old are mothers, compared to 4.2 percent in other urban centers and an average of 7.8 percent in rural areas (*Enquete Demographique de Sante* 2004, 79). Currently, girls marry at a slightly older age than in the past. Indeed, whether among the Bamileke, the Bassa, the Douala, or among other ethnic groups in Cameroon, the appearance of the first menstrual cycle no longer signifies marriage.

Fokouo (2006) argued that for the social group, traditional initiation corresponds to the gift of what Engelberg Mveng calls "the basic school of life" (Mveng 1976, 16); that is to say, a system of education and instruction that provides the man with all-round education and socialization. It goes without saying that a little girl who lives in a setting where "to be excised is to be a woman" feels socially as a woman only if she is excised. In such a setting, the psycho-social factor takes precedence over the universal ideal that views the other (someone else) not in terms of the values he represents but from the perspective of extraneous traits which do not necessarily apply in an environment governed by a different cultural charter (Nyano 2005).⁸

Thought patterns and attitudes toward women continue to be influenced by education and practices administered to the younger generation even when,

from a health point of view, such practices pose obvious risks for the individual. Indeed, because power relations in society are demonstrably complex, it is sometimes difficult to analyze from the outside the art of living. In this respect, Pascale Barthélémy (2004), treating the social connections of sex, argued that it is almost impossible to bring change from the outside if the elements of transformation do not take account of internal factors. Even when the analysis is grounded in the culture it is studying, it is still important to understand that values vary according to gender. If in one society the beginning of the menstrual cycle leads to genital excision, which is a mark of maturity,⁹ in another society it signifies female maturity. For example, Monteillet (2006) argued that, among the Yezum of the Southern region of Cameroon:

If the young girl was barred from sex until she had menstruated several times, the intention was to protect her reproductive potential by pre-empting early deliveries. Transgression of this prohibition on sexual intercourse by the young girl before the ninth menstrual cycle not only led to pathological complications for the child but was a stain on the two guilty parties.

This meant that at puberty the little girl did not marry immediately following her first menstruation. A participant in the study indicated that “a woman is first and foremost a human being born of the feminine sex” (Esther, first-time mother, District Hospital). The growth phase between birth and the end of adolescence is completely ignored. The first menstrual cycles are proof of this. When the ovule is fertilized, the woman can carry the fertilized egg until delivery. Her social maturity compels her to view sexuality within a pre-defined setting, such as marriage, as opposed to the little girl who is not yet menstruating. The little girl of yesterday who is now a woman must marry and think of having children.

From this standpoint, the female attains adulthood with her first menstrual cycle. That is why, in Greek medical thought, for example, what distinguishes the woman from the man is that organ, the uterus, an inverted cup which, alternately, opens to release menstrual waste, sperms, the child, and closes to retain the masculine seed and protect and nourish the fetus (Kniebiehler 2000). Among the Bamileke (of Baham and Bazou), the Bassa, and Duala, children are born of a mixture of male and female waters or male and female blood (Tantchou 1999; Wogaing 2002).

Many of those interviewed in our study defined the woman in biological and sociocultural terms. To some, she is a human being of the feminine sex. Here, only the biological features are highlighted. For others, in addition to being a human being of feminine sex, she also experiences menstrual activity. In fact, one of the spouses in the study noted that “The woman is a person of feminine sex characterized by puberty and menstrual activity.

If she has sexual intercourse during her fertile period, she runs the risk of being pregnant” (Partner 1, Protestant Hospital). In a way, the menstrual cycle represents a rite of passage, the beginning confirmation of femininity. Menstrual activity is important only to the extent that it announces maturity (Falade 1960).¹⁰ Another respondent noted that “the woman is first and foremost a human being of the female gender old enough and able to procreate” (Judith Iyo, Primipare, Laquintinie Hospital). According to Judith, there is a clear link between the sex variable and the ability to procreate. The concept of woman is linked to that of mother as if the two were inseparable. Seen from this perspective, the woman has to claim her status and do her social and biological duty: procreate. Since procreation is still perceived as the first goal of marriage, some cultures ensure that a girl is capable of being a mother by going through various rites and also consulting with her family members to make sure that the girl of today will in effect be a mother tomorrow.¹¹ If, in spite of all the precautions taken, a problem still arises, there will always be ways of solving it (Laburthe-Tolra 1985). For example, Monteillet (2006) noted that, among the Yezum,

They sought to know if one’s parents lived to ripe old ages and had been sufficiently fertile. One looked for girls in homes with many aged people. The dowry paid was an important investment and one therefore had to be certain that the girl one was marrying was healthy and could *bear* children, in light of the limited recourse options available.

Our respondents established a clear link between physiological maturity (appearance of secondary sexual features and menses), age, and the reproductive functions of the woman (the ability to procreate). Clearly, the woman is a human being of feminine sex whose primary responsibility is to deliver children. Consequently, the woman’s reproductive cycle influences how she is perceived by society. Indeed, Alice (primiparous, Protestant Hospital) defines a woman as “A person of the female gender who has reached the age of procreation.” On account of this particularity, there is a tendency, when analyzing what it means to be a woman, to reduce her to her reproductive role. That is why the woman is often associated with the menstrual cycle and ultimately with excision and procreation. Against such background, one is born a woman and does not become a woman, contrary to Simone de Beauvoir’s theory (1949) which stated, “One is not born a woman: one becomes a woman. No biological, psychic or economic destiny defines the image that a female represents in society; it is civilization that creates the intermediary product between the male and the castrated being called feminine.”

The representations of natural femininity vary from person to person. From another viewpoint, the simple fact of having secondary feminine sexual

features and a menstrual cycle makes of the woman a reproductive machine or an instrument of procreation. That is why, from puberty, and given a woman's active sex life, the absence of the menstrual cycle symbolizes the likelihood of pregnancy. In the same way, scholars who have explored the subject of the woman have presented her in her productive function: producer of food crops (Meillassoux 1975), producer and educator of children (Mona 1979; Titi Nwel 1985; Tchegho 2002). Under such circumstances, we are able to understand the Cameroonian woman, especially given that her daily life, her rights, her aspirations, and so forth, vary from culture to culture.

From Woman to Mother

The study of the woman in her sociocultural milieu is not the prerogative of sociologists and anthropologists alone. Some literary scholars, including female writers like Evelyne Mpoudi Ngolle (1990) and Calixthe Beyala (1987), also present the woman's situation through different feminine characters. These authors seek inspiration from social reality and use these characters to decipher the woman's world. They show that in society the feminine gender is a plural being in the sense that the woman in her daily life is an embodiment of many characters. Already as a little girl already, she is introduced to her future role of wife and mother. The little girl symbolizes social maternity—that is, the mother or the role of mother (Etonde-Ekoto 1985).

One of the most ancient feminine figures is found in the Bassa origin myth in which Ngo Maa and her partner educate society (men and women) on their different social obligations, including marriage, morals, and parental responsibility (Titi Nwel 1985). The Judeo-Christian worldview follows a similar path. In it, the woman (Eve) is the first feminine character in the Jewish Tora and in the Christian Old Testament. She was created by God from a rib removed from Adam, the first masculine gender He created. From this perspective, Eve would be the *mother* of humanity, a status loaded with meaning (affection, protection, breast feeder, giver of life, etc.). Then come the submissive wife of Lot,¹² the savior Esther, the consoler Mary, and the sublime Queen of Sheba, to name just a few.

Among the ancient Africans, the woman was first of all a human goddess. She held the mystery of human reproduction and the organization of sowing. It was she who, early in the morning, took care of the family with the aid of her partner, man. The two were complementary. They needed each other. This was not the case in ancient Greece. Women were not citizens there. The man had the power of life and death over the woman and the children. Male domination silenced the voice of the woman like nowhere else. The woman's personal identity was not acknowledged. She was the "daughter of" or the

“wife of.” And because they could not pass down their name or properties, women could not adopt or be adopted (Knibiehler 2000). Within the traditional context, Cameroonian women had a few options in cases of sterility. The man and the woman could agree to find a man who could impregnate the woman, and if the woman was barren, adoption was often the solution. It constituted a kind of social regulator of group cohesion (Francis Bebey 1967; Grâce Emmanuelle Peh 2000).

Westernization and the advent of the “civilizing” missions changed everything; from life partners (Titi Nwel 1985), women were relegated to rural life, to subsistence agriculture, to unheard-of economic dependence, to precarious motherhood, to a suffocating patrilineality, to a blinding maternity.¹³ There, marriage was an absolute necessity. Women were ignored in the public space not only by their absence, but also by their invisibility (Perrot 2006). The public space was not theirs either, unless they were queens or queen-mothers, as in Bamileke chiefdoms (Delarozière 1950; Lecoq 1998). Their place was in the kitchen, in the field, and at certain ceremonies: birth, marriage, feminine rituals, and funerals. Perrot (2006) was certainly right when she noted that women leave few direct traces, written or material, of their lives. This can be explained by the fact that women and mothers take care of family chores and housework, including cooking and taking care of children and the elderly. Even where studies on women exist, opinions are generally expressed from an androcentric standpoint, that is to say, from a masculine analytical perspective—even if the work is initiated by women. The approach was different, however, in the West, particularly in Canada, the United States, and France, where historians took an early interest in the history of women. Female historians in these countries were interested in the woman as an active subject in their history, even if such history limited itself to the so-called natural functions of the feminine gender: procreating, breastfeeding, raising children, and performing other family duties (Yan 2002).

In Cameroon, the situation is quite different. Long considered an exotic phenomenon, the woman has been described by scholars not in the way that she was in the past, but on how she has been shaped and presented by external forces. She was depicted by these scholars according to whatever they wanted to present to all those who have never had the good fortune of knowing Africa in its multiple and very colorful realities. Thiam (1978) noted that

Blacks who have had the opportunity to write on Black Africa and Negro-African civilization have either abandoned the Black Woman or have taken very little interest in her. And even when they took interest in her, it was to praise her, to sing about her beauty, as a ‘sex object,’ as muse and pain-enduring mother, or to analyse her relationships with Whites and Blacks, or to put her on trial and to relegate her to the rank of savage. (Thiam 1978)

As we ponder over the status of the woman in the Douala or the Cameroonian social universe, where the slave trade and colonization connived to exile her (Hugon 2004, 145),¹⁴ we realize that she has been reduced in the strictest sense to her maternal functions, which seem to be the unavoidable passage for femininity (Tichit 2004, 11). In this sense, the main objective of all marriage is to have a child and explains why there is compensation each time a woman is given away in marriage (Lomo-Myazhiom 2001). At the same time, however, a woman who advances in age and is no longer able to procreate becomes, in the imagination of those looking at her, an exceptional case, and therefore able to enjoy some of the societal prerogatives reserved for men (Boni 2008). It is necessary here to cite the works of three French-speaking female university dons, Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch (1994), Anne Hugon (2004), and Tanella Boni (2008), who present African women in different settings void of the kind of caricature one usually comes across in the works by scholars with affection for Africa.

Coquery-Vidrovitch presented African women in an evolutionary manner, beginning with the arrival of colonialists and through to the dawn of the third millennium. Anne Hugon (2004), on the other hand, redefined maternity in a colonial context, emphasizing the notion of *good mother* as it was understood in the West in the recent past (Knibiehler 2000), and with the express desire of the colonial power in the Gold Coast to transform the art of being a mother in that country. A similar experience was observed in Cameroon with the *Sixa*, structures instituted by the Pallottine society. In the *Sixa*, and for an indeterminate length of time, girls received lessons on Christian marriage, the family, and the duties of a wife and mother (Messina & Van Slageren 2005; Mongo Beti 1976). Protestant boarding schools, for their part, were there to “raise indigenous young girls to civilization” (Lomo-Myazhiom 2001). For her part, Boni (2008) presented African women and other women who, without being Black, have an African soul through marriage with Africans and who are discovering the Africa they know nothing about. Without any ethnocentric judgment, Boni provided descriptions of the image Africa throws back at “the other,” who observes her and who handles men/women relationships within a universe where the pains of women and the violence done to them are not expressed with the same acuteness and are not experienced in the same manner. We will borrow from Boni’s ideas and ask the same contentious question that Françoise Héritier (2002) posed:

Why has humanity developed thought systems that value the male gender and devalue the female gender, and translated these thought systems into actions and de facto situations? Why the situation of women is considered minor, devalued, or constrained, and done so universally, so to speak, even though the female

gender is one of the only two existing genders, there is no biological basis for her so called “social inferiority.”

In the Cameroonian cultural universe, outside the fact that the woman is first of all a person born of the feminine sex, the Cameroonian woman is multiple and diverse. Depending on whether she is Bantu, semi-bantu, Sudanese, or peuhl, her image, her expectations, her desires, and her obligations toward her family and society vary from one cultural sphere to another, and at times from one ethnic group to another. The common denominator remains the woman characterized by maternity: be born of the feminine sex, be a woman, and become a wife and mother.¹⁵ In her family, the little girl is naturally socialized as woman. To her, being a woman means menstruating and abiding by the principle which states that maternity is natural and cannot be denied or ridiculed. To “be a woman” in such an environment is to

- procreate (Simon David Yana 1997);¹⁶
- accept unconditionally to welcome a mate; consequently accept polygamy (Chantal Guilmain–Gauthier 1985), and adhere to a shared sexuality (Pierre Titi Nwel 1985);
- accept surrogacy¹⁷ (Philippe Laburthe-Tolra 1981)
- accept levirate¹⁸ (Rose Maïtchie & Dina Kolyang Taiwé 2008)
- procreate for the sister who cannot, or become a *mother* to the “gift child” and keep the secret (Leonora Miano 2011).¹⁹

In Cameroon, it is often difficult to say with certainty who the woman is.

The female world . . . is heterogeneous because of the contrasts not only between regions and from one country to another, but also from one social status to another. In addition, one realizes that within the same social category world views and the awareness of being a woman are not the same. (Boni 2008)

That being the case, we pose the following questions: Who is the woman? The biological mother or the social mother? A sister? A wife? A concubine? A lover? A post-menopausal woman? Does being a woman mean “playing the woman?” Or simply being a person of the feminine gender whose first duty is to transmit cultural values to future generations while at the same time perpetuating them through maternity?

The Woman: Between Feminity and Maternity

It is the general belief that the woman’s first function is maternity. It is therefore necessary to determine when the feminine gender becomes a woman.

Does being a woman equate to being able to procreate? Being a woman is inseparable from biological maternity, the function of mother being the way a system of social control sets boundaries both for the woman and for the man. The birth of a child, therefore, becomes a form of achievement for both parents: the woman attains the status of mother, while the man becomes a “fulfilled man” (Monteillet 2006; Pradelles de Latour 2005). All these expectations happen to be the very goal of marriage. Is it essential for the woman to claim the function of mother over and above that of spouse? Is bringing a child into the world a matter of social stakes even if the act in itself can cost life? Because one is born a boy or a girl, the apprenticeship of social roles completes the masculine and feminine attributes during socialization. Girls and boys undergo an evaluative process. For the girls, this process is marked by the beginning of the menstrual cycle or by excision at different ages, depending on the cultures, events consolidating social or cultural maturity in some of them.

The menstrual cycle marks the passage from adolescence to physiological or social maturity. The young girl of yesterday becomes mature because of the appearance of her menstrual cycle or because of excision, acquiring a form of physiological maturity; she is therefore ready to procreate, to play femininity. As such, she is essentially an object of maternity. By this fact, one is a woman from puberty and from the appearance of the menstrual cycle. According to all our interviewees, one becomes a woman “beginning with puberty, when one can reproduce.” In other words, the status of a woman is acquired as soon as the beginning of the first menstrual cycle, which seems to be the principle determinant of being able to procreate. It would be wrong, however, to think that this is a kind of savage life, one in which the masculine gender goes after the feminine gender. The maternal function is a form of consecration of the woman, something she has to engender. Although precocious in certain cases, procreation does not occur as if it was a machine set in motion. In this particular cultural context, with the appearance of the menstrual cycles, matrimonial alliances are consolidated so that children can be born following the required social norms (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1994; Badji 1993).

In an apparent duality, then, a *woman* is first a mother before she is a spouse. Even before the birth of the child, which clearly gives value to the marriage and enriches the matrimonial contract, she is already playing the role of mother to her husband. The birth of a child only objectifies a reality that, without a biological child, remains a social one. Here, the feminine gender is considered an *entity* from whom one expects a number of varied acts; she is expected to defend her gender culturally, to show that she is a real woman by taking care of the home and making it fertile, and to accomplish the other tasks that society expects of her.

The definition of the woman is directly linked to her physiology and her anatomy. Because there has been an exchange of goods and services in order to legitimize the marriage, the woman must procreate. Her offspring win her a new status—not that of mother, but that of spouse-mother. In other words, for her, the child and maternity are the richest rewards (Fokouo 2006; Kourouma 1970). The child signifies for her the appropriation of her true femininity, while for the man the child represents virility and prestige, the right to certain types of meat, and the privilege to join the ranks of fathers (Monteillet 2006).

Whereas the Bamileke, Bassa, or Duala woman was valorized through matrimonial compensation (Mayi-Matip 1983; Moutomè-Ekambi 1985), she has today partially become prisoner to it. She must be fertile or become a pariah; even worse, witnessing her social death in case of sterility (Tichit 2004).²⁰ Once the traditional marriage is celebrated, it is really no longer possible to cancel it. Among the Bamileke, for example, a married woman who divorces remains symbolically the wife of the first husband since, at death, she will be buried on his grounds even if she has delivered children in her second or *n*th marriage (Tchegho 2002).²¹ But if traditional society authorized her to remarry, no compensation is paid; it is not permissible to demand matrimonial compensation twice for the same person. When parents take matrimonial compensation, it is only to return it to the family of the former husband (Nkwi 1985). Medically speaking, however, the appearance of the menstrual cycle does not constitute a determining factor for the status of the woman as is the case in the traditional sphere. Physiological maturity and age are indispensable in contemplating sexuality. In this environment, the status of mother is attributed to women who have had one or more children. A mother is therefore “a woman who has delivered children.” The verb *have* here denotes the action of having been pregnant and having delivered. One is a mother through lived maternity and not narrated maternity: maternity marks the passage from the state of woman to that of mother. This status deserves respect from the entire community (Nkwi 1985).

In Bamileke, Bassa, and Duala cultures, a mother is not only a woman who has delivered one or more children. She is also a mother through the roles she plays on a daily basis. A mother can be a grandmother, a sister, or an aunt who has raised a child—or even a neighbor with whom the child entertains affectionate relations. Moreover, this relationship is not only biological; it is eminently social (Rivière 2002). Those who can procreate can do so for those who cannot. For this reason, it is rare for a woman not to have children even though she is sterile. In the case of a sterile sister, arrangements are made to make her “a gift” of a child from the fertile sister. One of them then becomes an adoptive mother (Peh 2000).²² In such a cultural universe, the word *mother* becomes polysomic, just like the word *maternity*. The woman can be a bio-

logical mother without being a social mother and vice versa. She can also be a woman biologically and yet not be one socially because she is neither excised nor married.

Among the Douala these days, the beginning of the menstrual cycle marks the progressive passage from the state of a little girl to an adolescent. This is the period during which parents are increasingly worried because of the early sexual maturity of young girls and the consequences it can have on their future. In that case, any person born of the feminine sex and who is already menstruating can be a *mother*. For cultures that are so diverse, it is sometimes very difficult to know who a mother is. Is maternity among the Bamileke, Bassa, and Duala cultures experienced biologically or socially? What can be the role or status of the woman-mother?

Accomplished Woman

In practically all the societies, the status of mother is acquired progressively. The feminine gender passes from girl to mother or from spouse to mother. The spouse-mother corresponds to the most valorizing phase. Families expect the menstrual cycle to stop as an indication of a forthcoming pregnancy and therefore of a child. Even if in most societies the woman has been relegated to the universe of the family,²³ she still plays a key role (Hugon 2004). Yana (1997) argued that she retains real powers “in spite of the formal hierarchy of gendered roles which assign her an inferior position.” In the days immediately following marriage, the family awaits news of the end of the menstrual cycle, which signifies the future birth of a child that will consolidate the foundations of the home. Monteillet (2006), citing Claude Lévi-Strauss, notes that “between the man and the woman on the one hand, and between the couple and society on the other, the child plays a mediatory role.”

On that note, the birth of a child is just as much an important event for the man as it is for the spouse-mother. It wins the man a place among “accomplished men” (Monteillet 2006); by this action the man appropriates the responsibility to procreate numerous offspring—a source of prestige and respect. This representation of fertility also exists among the Bamileke of Baham, where the future heir to the royal throne, in the course of his initiation into *la'akam*,²⁴ is really not enthroned king until he impregnates one of the spouses who accompany him on his initiation journey. The pregnancy of a woman is therefore a *sine qua non* for becoming king. During his enthronement, the new king shows gratitude to the woman who authenticated his fertility by raising a statue at the initiation site in her honor and that of the child. The child conceived in this place bears a specific name: *Pouokam* for the boy, *Toukam* for the girl.

The role and status of the woman are quite often tributaries of societal situations. And so the woman can be confined to family chores or to the control of fertility, just as she can be removed from certain political decisions (with the exception of women of the royal family) or exiled for not having children. On this score, fertility brings into play a process of maturation of the feminine status. Yana (1997) posited that

the most enviable status can only be attained by the old woman who has accumulated a lot of experience and knowledge of the society, who has accomplished her duties as a wife, and who, because of menopause, is free from the burden of maternity, which from this point of view places her at the same level with men.

It is evident that the sterile woman has no place either in this social system or in the social recognition that having children brings. The childless spouse

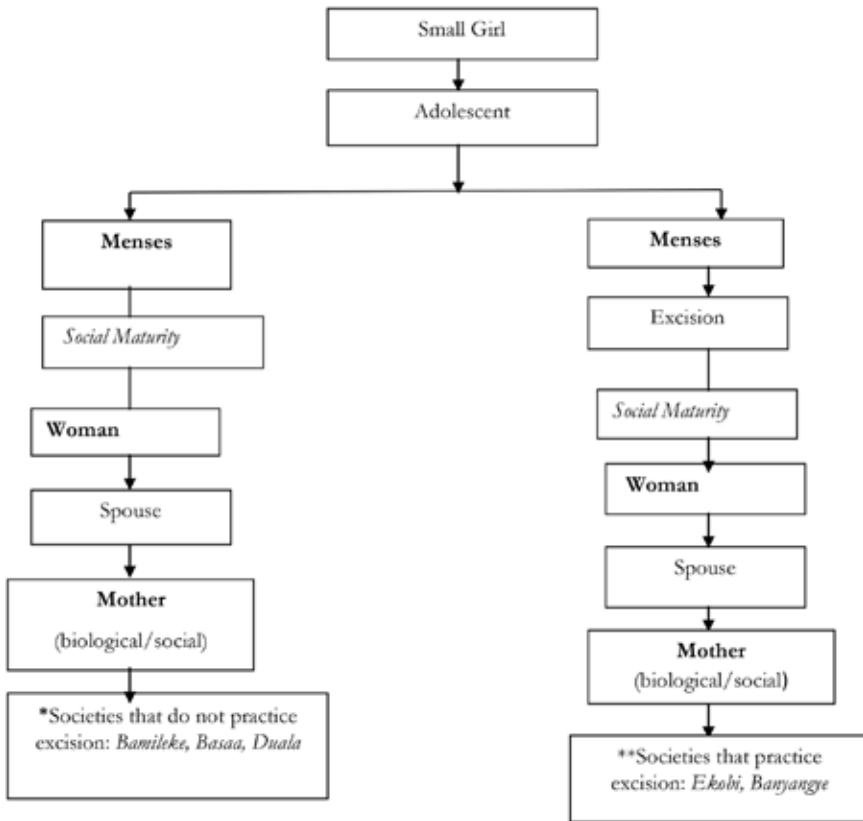


Figure 8.1. Figures of Femininity.

who has not played the role expected of her will get no compassion from family and relatives. In Bamileke country, for example, a sterile woman is buried with a stone in both hands to make sure she does not come back (Kamdem-Kamgno 2000), with the exception, however, as we saw earlier, of societies in which sorority is at work, like among the Duala or the Maasai, societies in which the fertile sister makes a gift of one of her children to the sister who was not able to procreate. That was the case with Naini and her sister Nareyo. After having given birth, Nareyo made a gift to her of the newborn baby without even breastfeeding it" (Sicard 2003, 127).

Traditionally, the Cameroonian woman has the right to adopt; but she is also the object of matrimonial scorn (Moutomè-Ekambi 1985). The life of the Cameroonian woman is punctuated by the rites of childbirth, which as we mentioned earlier, passes through excision in certain cultures. Marriage and motherhood usher into the wife-mother phase, a phase characterized by marital and nurturing roles. In other words, "the construction of the feminine identity hinges on the experience of motherhood; and so does the social recognition inspired by the so-called fulfilled women" (Tichit 2004).

CONCLUSION

Our objective in this chapter was to analyze the different forms of expression of femininity in the Bamileke, Bassa, and Duala cultures of Cameroon, beginning with the principle that maternity is a corollary of femininity. From our analysis, we observed that, in the cultures studied, the woman continues to be the object of maternity. Her femininity is called into question if she cannot demonstrate her biological or social motherhood. As Kourouma (1970) reminded us in *Les Soleils des indépendances*, "The woman without maternity lacks more than half of femininity." Everything happens as if her existence can and must only gravitate around maternity. It will be a laudable idea to examine a theme that centers on the counter-narrative to maternity in order to investigate if there are women in such environments who have deliberately chosen not to bear children.

NOTES

1. Pregnancy and delivery are biological and physiological phenomena.
2. Everywhere, motherhood is thought, socialized and protected.
3. Nulliparous females are girls and women who have never delivered children, Primiparous females are first-time pregnant girls and women. Primigravida are girls

and women delivering for the first time. Pauciparous females are women delivering for the second or third time. Multiparous women are women delivering for the third or fourth time.

4. This period is marked by the appearance of secondary sexual features and the beginning of the menstrual cycle.

5. In ancient Rome, if marriage was the last step of domestication, it was from the age of seven that little girls began the process which would make of them accomplished wives. See, for example, Louise Bruit Zaidman, 2002, "Les filles de Pandore Femmes et rituels dans les cités grecques," in Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot, *Histoire des femmes en Occident*, t. 1, *L'Antiquité*, (Paris: Plon), 445, 441–493.

6. "Every culture makes a distinction between the genders through socialization. Every culture makes distinctions between the two genders through socialization. Socialization patterns are different for males and females, [. . .] transition or initiation rites, which form part of this socializing pattern, often dramatize gender attributes of young members of the community who are expected to assume a new social status as adult." Mary Nyangweso Wangila, 2007, *Female circumcision* (New York: Women from the Margins), 22.

7. This practice qualified as scientific by Cheikh Anta Diop comes from the cosmogony of the androgynous character of the god Amon. <http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/FR163/13chapitre13.pdf>. (Accessed on June 18, 2015). See also <http://gtz.de/de/dokumente/fr.fgm-pays-Cameroun.pdf>. (Accessed on June 18, 2015).

8. For example, *excision even functions as a factor of unification and identification. . . . It sees itself as the equivalence of circumcision and is considered as such by men* (Emboussi Nyano, 2005, *Revisiter l'excision. Une apologie de Hawa Greou* [Paris: Dianoïa], 39). Some researchers posit that the purpose of these rites would be to remove from the girl everything that resembles the masculine sex, and vice versa.

9. Maturity means the same thing as childbearing since to talk about maturity is to talk about the ability to procreate.

10. In certain societies where menses-related rituals (ceremonial baths) do not exist, as among the Wolof, the would-be wife must be a virgin. She must maintain her virginity until her wedding day. See Solange Faladé, 1960, "Femmes de Dakar et de son agglomération," in Denise Paulme (ed.), *Femmes d'Afrique noire* (Paris: La-Haye Mouton), 209, 207–218.

11. Among the Bamiléké of Baham, for example, before beginning the ceremony of matrimonial compensation proper, members of the family-in-law inquire from neighbors about the genetic standing of women of the fiancé's family on the one hand, and on the other hand the "stomach quality" of women of the fiancé's uterine family to know whether they do not harbor the *lim*, or vampirism. Among the Bassa it is the *hu* and among the Douala the *ewusu*. These phenomena seem akin to the *evu* described by Meinrad Pierre Hebga, 1979, *Sorcellerie chimère dangereuse . . . ?* (Abidjan: INADES), 87–115; see also Jeanne-Françoise Vincent, 1999, "Femmes et agression sorcière chez les Mofu et les Beti du Cameroun," in Danielle Jonckers, Renée Carré, and Marie-Claude Dupré, *Femmes plurielles Les représentations des femmes discours*,

normes et conduites (Paris: Maison des Sciences de l'homme), 196–197, 189–202; and Nicolas Monteillet, 2006, *Médecines et sociétés secrètes au Cameroun* (Paris: L'Harmattan), 35.

12. This and the following references are drawn from the Holy Bible (Louis Segond version), 2005, (Esther, chapters 1–10; Mathieu 1: 18–23; Luc 1: 39–47; Song of Songs 1–10).

13. The wife-mother should be able to give birth to an heir and the girl should be able to prove to herself that she is fertile and therefore a woman.

14. Hugon argues that the ideology of maternity assigns to women a privileged, even unique place, the private space.

15. In societies that practice excision (Dogon, Mossi, Yoruba, Masaai, etc.), to be a woman is first of all to be excised, then to deliver children.

16. Many African authors have portrayed the maternal figure and her procreative role. We can cite Camara Laye, *L'Enfant noir* (Paris: Plon, 1955), 7–8; Ahmadou Kourouma, *Les Soleils des indépendances* (Paris: Seuil, 1970), 51; Mongo Beti, *Perpétue* (Paris: Buchet-Chastel, 1974), 259.

17. Sorority was a practice among the Ewondo and the Bulu (Centre and South of Cameroon).

18. Levirate is a practice among the Bamileke (West of Cameroun); on this subject, read Christiane Dieterlé and Corinne Lanoir, *Une femme étrangère, des frontières ouvertes* (Paris: Olivetan, 2006), 45. Jeannette Momo Doungagni, *La Veuve et ses enfants* (Paris: Harmattan, 2005).

19. Read also Etienne Mona, 1979, “L'Adoption chez les Baoulé de Côte d'Ivoire,” *Revue De L'Homme*, juil.-déc., XIX (3–4): 63–107.

20. A similar concept is indicated among the Wolof of Senegal by Lamine Ndiaye, 2009, *Parenté et mort chez les Wolof. Traditions et modernité au Sénégal* (Paris: Harmattan), 33.

21. However, there are cases in which children of the second marriage are less active than those of the first. They literally seize their mother's remains to bury in the soils of their father. There are also situations where the deceased, at her death, demands that her children promise to bury her in her own father's land. This applies to the wives of Bamileke kings, women with the status of Queen or Mafo. The former are buried in paternal grounds and the latter on their own land.

22. It happens that the biological mother gives up her rights as mother and hands the newborn baby to another relation. In some cases, she does not even breastfeed the baby before handing it to the new mother. There are times too when the baby is breastfed and handed to the sterile relation when it is weaned (Grace Emmanuelle Peh 2000).

23. Seen from the outside, the woman leaves the impression of being everywhere and nowhere. She is often absent from most meetings; and even when she is present, she is an onlooker, a witness of proceedings.

24. *La'akam* or “village of nobles” is the name given to the place where the future king and future traditional chiefs of Bamileke villages are initiated.

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Chapter Nine

Dynamics of Religious Modernity in Cameroonian Cities

Honore Mimche and Christian Bios Nelem

INTRODUCTION

There is consensus among sociologists on the continent that Africa has been experiencing vast social changes since colonial times. These changes, which can be viewed from different perspectives, have gathered momentum with each succeeding crisis. In fact, most of the sociocultural changes taking place since the 1990s, including changes in religious institutions, are driven by migration and globalization. According to Derocher (2008), today, humans are wandering in a religious supermarket. This metaphor clearly articulates the sustained religious activity that has taken place in Africa over the last two decades (Campbell 1999; Seraphin 2004). The rise of New Religious Movements (NRM) ranks among the most striking happenings in modern Africa, and this fact makes them suitable institutions for social research (Falna 2000; Seraphin 2004). In a pioneering work on the subject, De Rosny (2004) provided a panoramic picture of new religions and philosophical movements in the city of Douala in Cameroon. Although the study was not exhaustive, it nevertheless still provides as comprehensive a picture of the situation as possible. In fact, De Rosny identified four types of movements that have emerged in the country in the last few decades: Pentecostal Movements, the New African Independent Churches, Millennialist Movements, and Gnosticism.

The religious phenomena witnessed in Cameroonian towns and cities in the last decades have been driven by two main religious movements: evangelical and (neo) Pentecostal groups that have broken away from different Protestant denominations. For example, among these dissident groups can be found the so-called revival churches, which are very active in Cameroonian cities. Also existing alongside these churches are groups of more or less Christian

inspiration, such as the Rosicrucian Order, whose doctrines are essentially philosophical or syncretic, and whose objective is social success. Even though certain characteristics of these groups allow us to qualify them as sects, including the fact that they have broken away from a given church and, in certain cases, have founded their own doctrine, it is more prudent to view them as essentially different from other sectarian movements whose image and acceptability differ from culture to culture.

These new religious movements emerged in the early 1990s, just when Africa was entering a new era of democratic and socioeconomic changes spurred by the collapse of the Soviet empire and the wind of change that was blowing across the continent. In Cameroon, as elsewhere on the continent, the process culminated with the adoption of a new political system that predicated the fundamental principles of freedom, the recognition of political pluralism, and the respect of human rights (Takougang and Krieger 1998, 109). In African towns in general, and in Cameroonian towns in particular, this surge of religious movements is noticeable by their noisy practices in certain neighborhoods that threaten public order. In fact, since the wind of democracy freed the sociopolitical space, religious freedoms have so asserted themselves as to constitute threats to state peace. The influx of new beliefs has disrupted public peace in different African countries that were traditionally Catholic, Protestant, or Muslim in outlook. This influx is the result not only of the international migration and the rise of new forms of religious belief, but also of the liberalization of the sociopolitical space. These new religious movements are multi-functional spaces, in towns especially: places for worship and spaces for healing and deliverance (De Rosny 1992; Rocchi 1999). According to the results of the general population census published in 2005, three religions dominate the religious landscape in Cameroon: Catholics (38.04 percent), Protestants (26.03 percent), and Muslims (20.09 percent). Animists represent 5 percent of the population (BUCREP). Meanwhile the new emerging religions are estimated to include about 4.0 percent of the Cameroon population (BUCREP 2005). By contrast, previous census data (1976 and 1987) indicated that the latter constituted less than one percent of the population. According to the same source (BUCREP 2005), members of the “new religions” include young people between the ages of ten and thirty-five. These new religious movements have attracted the attention of sociologists not only because of their communication strategies, but also because of their attraction to young men and women. Their novelty is showcased in the innovations brought to the religious market, a market that gets more competitive by the day on account of the increasing number of religious entrepreneurs. That novelty is also noticeable in the way religious movements like the New Charismatic Renewal churches re-shape and re-invent worship,

as well as in the refreshing changes made to the individual image and to the religious community as a whole. All these innovations mirror the contribution of the new religions to the transformations at work in contemporary African society. Through various rituals and doctrine, the new religions afford opportunities for the simultaneous reappraisal of one's relation with both the sacred and society.

Religious modernity has attained global proportions. Within that context, and beginning in the early 1990s, the Cameroonian religious market witnessed the surge of new religious beliefs to the extent that one would be hard-pressed to find monotheistic spaces dominated by a single religious denomination. For example, a field study conducted in Douala in 2009 by De Rosny (1992, 636) identified at least 109 NRMs and 315 places of worship in the city. However, only fifteen of these NRMs had received legal status. Similarly, more than 100 religious associations listed in the city of Yaoundé operate illegally (Mballa 2016). These emerging religions are viewed as urban survival strategies (Tedongmo 2015)—the expression of a moral crisis in the Cameroonian society—and they are also viewed as therapeutic (Rocchi 1999). Moreover, they aim at re-defining family identities by re-configuring family structures. They do this by questioning everything that has kept the traditional family together, and by proposing a new set of values with the sole aim of disrupting the traditional family and replacing it with a new structure of their own. Therefore, in order to analyze these NRMs as post-modern players, we must focus, among other matters, on their methods of social communication, methods that make them veritable religious entrepreneurs. Seen from the towns' perspective, the religious space is a laboratory where social sciences attempt to capture and analyze the profound changes taking place in society. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the process by which such a religious community transforms social beings into individuals. The first part of this chapter traces the rise of these religious movements in Cameroonian towns and cities. Then it delineates the new communication strategies used by these NRMs in attracting new followers.

GAUGING RELIGIOUS DIVERSIFICATION IN CAMEROONIAN CITIES

Religious Activity as an Indicator of Social Dynamics

The emergence of new religious movements in recent years have considerably transformed the sociocultural landscape of African towns. In the same way as the coming of missionaries in the nineteenth century challenged

traditional religions, the new religions that are replacing traditional religions and implanting themselves on the continent are currently facing the same problems that the preceding traditional religions faced. For instance, Islam and Christianity are facing the thorny challenge of maintaining their demographic and material capital at their former levels, and with reason: the new religious movements are making impressive inroads into the strongholds of these classical religions, especially in towns and cities where the NRMs are more persuasive and energetic. That is why the literature has focused mainly on these new religious movements (Kadya-Tall 2003; De Rosny 2009; Mballa 2016). Indeed, Cameroon has also been affected by this worldwide phenomenon characterized by the emergence of new religious pieties onto its social landscape. As previously noted, these new forms of worship pose the fundamental question of coexistence between different social groups and even within families¹ (Lasseur 2005; Mimche and Alawadi 2011; Nantchouang and Mimche 2013). Assigning social space to a cohort of religious denominations is no easy matter, not least because it has often been seen as an encouragement to breakaway or separatist appetites whetted by rising religious fundamentalism. Unfortunately, scholars have either neglected or paid little attention to the role of religion in the development of society within this new social and religious context, a context that has contributed profoundly to a recomposition of individual, family, and community identities.

The ascendancy of these “sectarian movements” is nowhere better showcased than in the rapid growth and development of new religions. In fact, from 1952 to 1989, twenty-three religious denominations were authorized in Cameroon. However, in just nine years, from 1990 to 1998, another twenty-three new churches gained official recognition in the country. Some examples are The Deeper Life Bible Church, Spiritual Warfare, The Evangelical Mission of Christ, The Christian Assembly, The True Church of Christ, and Christ’s Church in Cameroon, The Baha’i Faith, The Jehovah Witnesses, and The Missionaries of the Christ. However, considering that many other churches exist clandestinely, it can be concluded that twice as many churches likely exist in Cameroon today compared to the period from 1952 to 1989. For example, according to Lasseur (2010), about 471 new religious associations requested permission to organize from the Ministry of Territorial Administration between 1992 and 2003, in accordance with Law No. 90/053 of December 19, 1990, on Freedom of Association. At the same time, however, several NRMs organized without seeking permission from the administration. In other words, the new religious movements were able to exploit the socioeconomic crisis and democratization process of the early 1990s to their advantage. Indeed, the socioeconomic hardship that gripped the country beginning in the mid-1980s created a moral crisis that gave the new churches a

great opportunity for moral rearmament. On the other hand, democratization strengthened individual freedoms and the development of various forms of expression of faith. The new religions were quick to detect and cash in on the vulnerability and economic needs of would-be converts. Today they continue to grow, even in areas where only a single religion had existed for decades. Over and above the teeming activity of the NRMs, what is of importance to sociologists is that the converts assert their new identity by embracing new lifestyles and by subverting the foundational values of the old culture. They re-invent the social order, based this time on new models. Therefore, following this overview of religious activity in Cameroon, we will discuss the ways in which group members practice their faith and then the influence this practice has on their lifestyle.

Religion is clearly a marker of social identity in such a religious pluralism as is at work in Cameroon. That is why these religions place a premium on changing the social orientation of their followers. They exercise stringent psychological and physical control over the individual from whom they expect and accept no less than total allegiance to the group. In order to facilitate this social re-conversion, these religions limit contact with the individual's former community to the minimum. And they are not unaware of the fact that the former community can also contrive the same kind of resistance mechanisms (De Rosny 2009; Mimche and Alawadi 2011). This "brainwashing" of the new converts prepares them for new behavior patterns and for specific social codes. Belonging to such a religious movement mandates accepting its values, its models and its habits. This total acceptance is a *sine qua non* for belonging. Being part of a new religious movement means taking on a new identity and accepting confrontation with others, including family members, with alternative routes to salvation. It means establishing a new scale of values in which priority is given a new meaning. In fact, it means being born again and re-inventing one's personality and one's place in society.

This vision does not always receive societal approval; followers of these new religions are often stigmatized and their behavior condemned as too rigid, unappealing and deviating from the norm. In the Cameroonian context, Faith is very often a source of divisions between individuals. Frequently, once a "born again" thinks he knows the Word of God, he or she builds a distance with loved ones and members of her biological family. Also, many of the servants of God in Cameroon self-proclaim as Pastor, Prophet, Apostle, or Doctor—without real training. In certain neighborhoods in the city of Yaounde, no less than three religious organizations clamoring for membership can be found in close proximity. Finally, to belong to a new religious movement is to accept and bear the brunt of societal stigmatization. The consequence of existing like this on the fringes of society is that

one is at variance with mainstream society. That is why the city is the ideal context for such marginal groupings: it is better positioned to accommodate such deviant behavior.

Cameroonian Cities as Ideal Site for New Forms of Worship

Rapid urban population growth is one of the main features of modern-day sub-Saharan Africa. Born generally in response to political imperatives, most of these towns and cities undergo constant change in terms of population, space, and planning. Of all the changes that the African continent has undergone since the 1950s, urbanization is without doubt the most remarkable (Amadou et al. 2009; Lasseur 2010). Towns and cities are therefore the ideal measuring rods for social change, while the new religious movements are the principal movers of this change. African towns and cities are the stages on which all the innovations, all the political and socioeconomic changes, are played out. The dynamics of cultural change, driven mostly by the new religious movements, is to be inscribed in this context. Even if the city does not yield to any ready definitions, it nevertheless admits of itself as the vector and place of social and cultural change. This view has already been echoed by dominant change and modernization theories. According to diffusionist and culturalist theories, the town has always provided the conducive setting in human history for social change and for the evolution of belief systems (Goode 1963; Ela 1983). In the history of sociological thought, the town was first construed as an enemy to social balance since it was home to forces inimical to the social fabric. The city was even viewed as an obstacle to social integration. According to modernization and transition theories of the 1950s and 1960s, the city provided the ideal setting for change in mentality and sociocultural behavior (Rocher 1968; Marie 1997). The changes in religious attitudes that one witnesses in the cities today are not unconnected to the changes brought by new values and norms. All noteworthy social changes take place in the city. And, even though the new religious movements are observable both in rural and urban areas, their presence and influence in the city is more profound than in the countryside, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The city distinguishes itself in three ways.

First, urbanization and the city constitute ideal settings for the individualization of social beings. As Alain Marie (1997) argued, the city is the setting in which the post-modern man can fulfill himself—the setting where, at the end of the day, the individual still enjoys relative autonomy. The multiple layers of socialization that he experiences makes him a cultural hybrid in which two countervailing social trends meet, confront, or fuse with each other. Similarly, Nobert Elias (1991, 144–165) posited that the individual

and modern society are together products of an effort to elicit the best in man. In highly urbanized societies the individual is often alone and left to his own devices. He must learn to live separated from others and from the rest of the world by a barrier, and to face the challenges of life in a complex setting where individuals and the community vie for his attention. In the city, religion is no longer a family and community pursuit; it is a personal quest (Goode 1963; Ela 1983). Man can no longer depend on the community to fulfill his religious passion, especially in the urban environment. Gone are those days when the community—mainly the ethnic group, the lineage, and the clan—exercised social control on the individual. Religion has lost its rallying power. One thing urbanization does is split the family. That is not all. It also creates opportunities for new social aspirations that in their turn drive the socio-religious dynamics and re-position individual identity at the center of the new religious movements. The main aim of the latter is to propose a new kind of Christianity, one tailored to its African reality. Above all, the new religious movements seek a religion that speaks to the social and spiritual needs of the people. They are therefore the interface between the ambient social crisis and Christian causality.

Second, when immigrant populations fail to insert themselves in the urban setting, they turn to these new movements for succor. And the first thing they are told is to respect the ways and doings of the movement, especially its liturgy, which is preached during intercession, bible study and teaching, prayer vigils, fasting, and miracle-healing sessions (Seraphin 2004). Theology teaches that salvation is predicated on conversion and not on receiving the sacraments or belonging to a Church. For this reason, divergent Bible texts are highlighted during sermons to drive home the certainty of salvation. The new religious movements owe their success in cities to a well-mastered strategy that can be summarized in one sentence: Faith in Christ is the answer to all social problems. The NRMs hold the slothful traditional Catholic Church responsible for the myriad ills plaguing the continent: hunger, war, challenges to traditional worldviews. They see themselves as credible alternatives, not least because the form of worship they propose and practice is more popular and more dynamic—and underpinned by a strong therapeutic intention (Mballa 2016). Their own type of religion, especially in the midst of so much disarray, is fired by the trust in sure salvation—a trust strengthened by the triple promise of immediate release from material poverty, healing of the body and soul, and prosperity beyond life on earth. By guaranteeing happiness on earth and beyond, these new religions succeed, at least, in assuaging the main worries of the people. Their remedy is simple: promise fast solutions to the failures and difficulties of daily life. And so they preach a theology based on what one could call the gospel of material well-being, the

kind that makes money and work easily accessible. Such a gospel affirms or causes people to believe that the salvation promised by Christ begins here on earth and that Christ is already providing it by showering material gifts on those who believe in Him and respect the commandments of the church. From all indications, the salvation discourse is based on success, health, and prosperity in this life.

Some of the members that we interviewed for this study indicated that it is as a result of a certain number of difficulties encountered in life that one decides to give one's life to the Lord. The new religious movements therefore have little difficulty winning over the poor and those aspiring to a wealthier life. In the process, pastors even resort to unorthodox practices. For example, even if they often live in opulence, they lead their followers to understand that material goods alone cannot guarantee entry into the Kingdom of God. In Yaounde, Douala, Bamenda, Bafoussam, and Buea, Pentecostal structures focus on deliverance and exorcism and address issues pertaining to witchcraft. Since material and therefore social well-being comes as a blessing, it can only be achieved after delivery sessions during which evil spirits are cast out, and with them any failures or obstacles to God's plans.

The new religious movements are also resilient. They make spectacular healing a centerpiece of their religious practice, and this goes down well in an environment prone to metaphysical occurrences. The healings are all done in the name of Jesus. One of the most chanted slogans is "Jesus Christ heals"—from the pain of illness, suffering, and torment. Good deeds of this kind should not be kept secret. In addition to being spectacular, healing is carried out to the accompaniment of public praise of divine generosity, all intended to seduce wavering minds. Physical illness, but more especially, moral illness, is a corollary of poverty. The new religious movements are aware of this, and so in their effort to heal distress they apply a procedure known as "faith healing." The soul being the place where one gets into communion with God, healing the soul is for the pastor a means of seeking the well-being, emotional balance, and spiritual peace of the faithful by aid of the scriptures. Faith healing is mediated by direct interaction with the faithful on such aspects of his life as history, family, and social relationships, with a view to locating the root cause of the illness consuming him and impeding his quiet enjoyment of his faith. Here assistance and confidence work in tandem and portrays the pastor as both a psychologist and spiritual counsellor. What the group does here is cater to the health needs of the individual and to his relations with the spiritual. Although, overtly, the actions of the religious movements provide physical or moral healing, their real target is the soul of the individual. Pastors embody certain powers that set them apart. They are the temporary custodians, here on earth, of the mystery of the redemption,

which the promise of salvation announces. The forces used in faith healing border on the magical and for that reason are captivating (Seraphin 2004).

The third reason why these NRMs flourish in cities is because cities provide modern communication facilities and a vibrant social media culture that the new religious movements tap into for outreach. In the present context of media pluralism (Seraphin 2004), new social media forms are appearing on the scene and boosting follower mobilization. These mass communication tools include billboards, banners, TV, Internet, radio, and social media (see Figure 9.1 below), as well as interpersonal communication through social networking.

According to Achille, a young born again living in Yaoundé, the use of mass media does not exclude the use of interpersonal communication aimed at attracting new converts. It is for this reason that, in the street, one is easily approached by these evangelists and their followers in an effort to gain new followings. Under this new environment, traditional belief systems have progressively lost ground in today's religious marketplace and made room for new churches or religions.

CONGREGATION BAPTISTE CAMEROUNAISE
Décret N° 74/34 du 19/01/1974

Nous vous souhaitons la Bienvenue à la | *We welcome you @*

FAITH COVENANT MINISTRIES Intl
Cathédrale de La Foi

FACE TEXACO OMNISPORT

Dr. Dicunedort KANDEM
(Pasteur / Pastor)

Mercredi Wed : 18h-20h: Enseignements Teachings
Vendredi Fri : 18h 20h: Delivrance - Guerison - Miracle
Dimanche Sun : 09h-12h: Culte de Célébration

à la Cathédrale de la Foi, We are Born to be the Best!

Swivel Dunamis
Sur New TV tous les mercredis et Vendredis de 18h30 à 19h

Figure 9.1. Billboard Advertisement by one of the NRMs in *Quartier* Omnisport in the city of Yaounde.

Photo by authors.

NRMS AND WINNING NEW FOLLOWERS: DEVISING NEW COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

In Cameroon, adopting new communication techniques is fundamental to winning new followers to the Christian faith. In that case, Law No 90/53 of December 19, 1993, on Freedom of Association can certainly be viewed as the defining moment in the birth and proliferation of NRMs in the country. At the same time, the law also paved the way for diverse media outlets and opportunity for NRMs to expand their reach to the population. Today it is important to be seen in the marketplace of religions, and you can only be seen there if you offer the best images possible in order to attract a large following. The plural character of these revival churches originating from Pentecostal beliefs encourages them to use creative strategies to facilitate their entrepreneurial visibility in the public in order to attract a faithful clientele. To market the illusion of certainty, these religious entrepreneurs exploit the ambient uncertainties of vulnerable citizens. In that context, religion and all its trimmings become nothing but commodities that need to be displayed and sold to the spiritually needy. Such vulnerable persons are fair game for the pastor or prophet, who now steps in to shield them against family or professional difficulties. The religious product symbolizes the definitive break with the conventional churches and their boring ritual practices. The product is also publicized in the media, along with the “miracles” it performs—miracles in which the lame walk, the deaf hear, barren women give birth, and so forth. These performances are often accompanied by persuasive oratory. To lend greater force to all this activity, FM radios are operated by these men of God to keep alive the competition with Catholic and Protestant churches and to woo listeners. The product is finally sold to new converts who, seduced by the prophet’s powers, embark on a religious adventure with the movement and from whom some financial contribution is requested in keeping with their social standing. But before delving more deeply into the communication techniques used by these religious entrepreneurs, we need to understand that media coverage of religious activities is the new mode of worship. This is salient proof of the freedom of association and of the religious pluralism at work in Africa in general and Cameroon in particular.

MEDIA COVERAGE AND RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

Religious pluralism is a reality in African cities, particularly in Cameroonian cities (Mouandjo 2013). Within such a social context, the many religious movements gravitating around the more established traditional religions see media coverage as the best way of marketing themselves, mainly by display-

ing vulnerable followers and believers of other religions embracing the new religion. Viewed from this perspective, to keep one's following, one has to apply the modern propaganda techniques often used by politicians to attract the electorate and more especially to consolidate their grip on power. This political pitch is closely akin to unleashing a barrage of communication and crowd-control psychology techniques.

The Faith Market

The uncertainty of a better future drives most people to search for new paths. That is precisely where the new religious movements lie in wait. In fact, Africa's underdevelopment has long been associated with the many crises that the continent faces (political crises, economic crises, family turmoil, mental crises, food crises, migratory crises, threats to traditional structures, etc.). Indeed, Africa is a continent torn by conflicts of interest fought in increasingly complex politico-military, inter-religious, and inter-generational wrangles, to which must be added such ills as the widening gap between the rich and the poor, unemployment, hunger, and the rise of deviant practices like pedophilia, homosexuality, cyber criminality, trade in human parts, and so forth. In such an "incurably sick" society, spiritual mentoring becomes a vibrant market, a market that religious entrepreneurs will stop at nothing to conquer.

Marketing as a concept originated in the United States (Mouandjo 2013). And although it initially applied to business dealings between different groups, it later attained other meanings. In its broader sense, therefore, marketing means "action on the market," from the root "market" and the suffix "-ing" meaning movement (Albouy 1994). This market space can be taken up by economic, political, or religious activity. Technological progress in mass communication brought with it a corresponding progress in competitive publicity and marketing techniques. Economic progress provides incentives for competing strategies in the race for new followers. This is the logic that led the politician to be viewed as a "marketable product" (Albouy 1994, 6), whose value is more in his image than in what he says. This method of communication grants the entrepreneur tremendous economic, political, or religious advantage.

It is the same strategy that is being used by NRM leaders in Cameroon and elsewhere on the continent to promote their faiths. Indeed, while posters may be the main vehicle in this form of marketing, television—the "leading media"—is the privileged organ on which to sell the religious brand and add more shine to the miracles performed by the man of God. In this new communications framework, particular care is taken with form and content. One area in which this care is exhibited is in the choice of names. The new religious movements choose names with a strong psychological appeal, names that function as

spiritual baits. A few examples can demonstrate this appeal: The Redeemed Christian Church of God, the Holy Temples, Church of the Holies, Holy Church of the True and Living God, Christian Assembly of the 12 Tribes of Israel, True Church of God, New Jerusalem, Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministry of Awakening Nations, The Ministry of the Called, The Cathedral of Faith, “*Vas et Raconte*,” “True Church of God,” “Jesus Saves and Heals.” The proliferation of these new religious movements reminds one of the large numbers of political parties in Cameroon whose memberships are often dictated by sociopolitical factors. In a similar manner, the sale of the political or religious brand depends for the most part on interpersonal relationships and on TV’s power to impact individual consciences through educational programs and advertisements. Studies on this unflinching media have shown how its techniques impact minds directly or indirectly, and even change people’s daily behavior (Balle 1988; Warren K. Agee et al. 1989; Rieffel 2001; Harrami and Melleti 2011). The different programs aired on TV influence viewers’ ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. With those that own a TV set, the likelihood is greater that they will be influenced by news, entertainment and advertisements (Bios Nelem 2012). The impact has even been stronger with satellite transmission carrying images to many more parts of the country. Cable broadcast makes it possible for businesses to sell their brands in an ever more exacting society.

The success of mass media has also engendered thematic TV channels—and, of course, tele-evangelization. The following are a few religious TV channels that broadcast in the city of Yaounde: Muslim TV, Glory Channel, Sion TV, Divine TV, Emmanuel TV, and the Catholic channel KTO. In a sociopolitical context characterized by diverse audiences, theme-based television channels, specifically religious networks, are responding to the needs of people seeking a spiritual alternative lifestyle. The question is whether all these new religions have changed Africa’s attitude to marketing. This question is important to the extent that the NRMs try as best they can to juggle spiritual rebirth on the one hand and the accumulation of material and financial wealth on the other. Some of these movements use marketing-type communication strategies to build economic and religious empires, as is the case with religious moguls like TB Joshua of Nigeria and Dr. Tsala Esomba or Dr. Dieunedort Kamdem in Cameroon. To all of them, these acquisitions are a result of different communication strategies.

NRM COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Different communication strategies are used by these new religious movements in their bid to attract new followers. In such competitive environments,

each new church must do what it takes to stay in the spotlight if it intends to grow. In this business of targeted hunts, a lot will depend on the strategies used to market the church in all its aspects (Mouandjo 2013, 152). The first and the most fundamental of these aspects remain the building and the strengthening of faith through evangelization.

Evangelization

Today, Cameroonian society has become the space for diverse religious currents of different origins. These differences are reflected in a variety of religious practices and strategies: the propagation of a widespread religious fervor; innovations in the ways of praying through the use of radio and TV programs; the mass production and distribution of religious literature, objects, and icons; the massive expansion of the function of social welfare providers; and the proliferation of churches and other places of worship in rural and urban areas. Just like the conventional churches, the new religious movements use the spiritual message to establish a relationship of confidence between man and God. But their methods are different. These new churches present themselves to distressed souls as salutary alternatives to the ills of society and especially to the boredom of the Christian religion and its rigid conventionality. Their approach includes proposing a more appealing, more dynamic kind of Christianity that is anchored in a fervent faith that heals. They preach the good news by aid of communication strategies designed specifically to win new converts, while at the same time maintaining the clientele base. Pentecostals, for example, use proximity evangelization. This often involves the use of loudspeakers and other instruments to preach the gospel on street corners and other places. Indeed, public evangelism campaigns are becoming common in crossroads, markets, and other places that can help mobilize the greatest number of new members.

Converts who want to strengthen their faith are then exhorted to spread the good news. They proclaim their conversion as “born again,” an identity that frees them of family control, even though this may also mean severing of family ties (Nantchouang and Mimche 2013; Mimche and Alawadi 2011). Belonging to this new family imposes on the new convert the duty of spreading the good news and taking responsibility for his or her religious choice. They are now traders in a communications business who must invade public spaces to vie for market shares. They can be found on the prowl for a willing ear in markets, road junctions, theaters, and even family homes. Many religions mean many different preachers and numerous methods of preaching—a pack of wolves as it were, vying for fresh game. On this jammed road to religious prominence, one meets, among others, Evangelists, Baptists, Methodists,

Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian faithful or those who purport to be, and religious entrepreneurs who claim to speak for such sects as millenarian churches, messianic churches, the Rosicrucian Order, Freemasons, and Born Again.

These movements practice "religious schism" and follow the path of renegade Protestants. The religious body is grouped into three echelons. First are the senior followers, including the deans or deacons. These are persons close to the prophet, who carry out specific duties in the Christian community. The next echelon in this religious hierarchy is made up of the "chosen ones," also known as "Ambassadors for Christ," whose main responsibility is evangelization through different channels (gatherings, media, etc.) with the purpose of winning new souls. At the lowest rung of the ladder are the believers made of all the faithful who worship in the church. In fact, this religious hierarchy is observable during televised programs and ceremonies in which the leaders are often surrounded by the deans or deacons, followed by the ambassadors. Unlike the austere and ritualistic practice of the Catholic Church, for example, evangelization in these new churches depends on the ability to excite the faithful within a festive environment where warm fellowship provides a sense of assured salvation. Thus each new church that opens in a neighborhood does everything to start a choir, made up mostly of women, then an orchestra to warm hearts weighed down by the difficulties of life and the many shortcomings of a society in crisis. Animation, praise songs, and worship prepare minds for the good news brought by the prophet. And in many towns and cities in Cameroon where unemployment and other forms of social and economic upheavals prevail, these NRMs are supposed to sooth the mind and the soul of these desperate followers.

Dramatization of Daily Life by the Prophet

The prophet's sermons dramatize daily life and speak to the main worries of the audience in a matter-of-fact way. He uses whatever devices available to address audience expectations, their doubts, and their hopes. What he does quite simply is use the intricate relationship between religion and society to exploit the vulnerability of his audience (Bobineau and Tank-Storper 2007). In other words, these NRMs depart from the dullness of conventional religions like Catholicism by providing answers to man's uncertainties and to unveiling the mysteries of life. In fact, the Catholic Church is often taken to task for being too far removed from the daily worries of its members (Seraphin 2004). For one thing, the Catholic Church views reading of the Bible as more of an obligation than a necessity; and so all the priest does is read a few verses and explain them to his congregation. To make matters worse, the ritual feel of Catholic mass has been such that, until recently,

some masses were celebrated in Latin, a foreign language, with no attention whatsoever to the cultural norms of the worshippers. And under Catholicism, children are baptized at tender ages, to the great pleasure of parents, even if the significance of the act is lost on the baptized child.

That is the kind of history and context in which the new religions take root. They come with answers to the numerous and complex ills yearning for rescue and for immediate spiritual healing. They work miracles against the trials and torments of daily life and against all other physical and social iniquities. Their sermons confront the daily worries of followers and society and help worshippers to unravel the mystery of happiness inscribed in the Bible. The prophet has no difficulty convincing worshippers that the lame can walk, demons can be cast out, barren women can give birth, and jobless youth can find work and travel abroad for those who want to.

The New Religious Movements have been able to adapt to an environment with a strong metaphysical consciousness but which, as time goes on, tends to distance itself from the fortune-teller mentality and to follow the path of spirituality and faith healing. The New Religious Movements have been quick to respond to this shift and to build spectacular healing into a profitable strategy (Seraphin 2004). Healing through Jesus has supplanted the sorcerers, spirits, and ancestral forces on which society depended in the past, boosting evangelization significantly. As Lasseur (2005) argues:

Evangelistic campaigns are also being carried out by international multi-confessional organizations, such as the African Evangelical Association (AEA), based in Nairobi. At the end of the 1990s, this organization inspired the launching of a gigantic campaign of evangelization which, under the name of “Cameroon for Christ,” began in the Far North with the aim of gradually covering the whole of the national territory, in the form of systematic evangelistic campaigns in which Cameroonians, Nigerians, Chadians, Norwegians and Americans participated. In the area of evangelism, exchanges with neighboring Chad and Nigeria have been well developed since the days of the missions.

In various cities today, indicators of these expansion strategies are evident in the increase in the number of church buildings, religious and sometimes open-air programs, the creation of Christian focused media (radio and TV), collaboration with recognized media (as Canal 2), and billboards that dominate spaces. One of the most popular slogans is “Jesus Christ Heals”—illness, suffering, spells, and all forms of pathology. No challenge is above the prophet, not even overpowering the devil, which he can do with the power of the Holy Spirit. Such good deeds are not to be concealed, and so healings are performed amid testimonies in praise of divine goodness. These healing and prophesy sessions enrich the prophet’s aura and grow the followership.



Figure 9.2. Billboard Advertisement by one of the NRMs in Quartier Obili in the city of Yaounde.

Photo by authors.

As followers receive answers to their worries, they become more committed to their faith. The healing, miracle, and prophesy sessions are more readily internalized if they are seen as practical applications of religious teachings. Seen from this angle, religion ceases to be simply a “sensory code” and becomes an important aid to living a full life in a society beset with uncertainty (Bobineau and Tank-Storper 2007, 101).

The Image of the Religious Entrepreneur

In the attempt to re-invent communication modes, particular attention is paid to appearance. Appearance takes on new significance as a communication tool at the service of entertainment and conversion. The image of an actor on life’s stage has the power to seduce and convince the believer that he has made a good choice. Just as in the case of products for consumption, the packaging and presentation of products often influence the consumer’s attitude. The more beautiful, attractive, and seductive the packaging and presentation, the greater the likelihood that more people will be interested in the product. In other words, religious entrepreneurs have understood that, in the production of goods and services, image is an important vehicle for mobilizing and winning crowds. The new concept has replaced the image of the man of God as a pious individual who takes greater care of his soul than of his body.

And so, the pastor's outfit, all done out in bright colors, contrasts markedly with the dreary old garb of the Jehovah's Witness. The popularity and financial power of the religious leader only serves to showcase his spiritual and material comfort and project him as an example for those seeking access to prosperity and salvation. This view soon trickles down to the congregation as evidenced by the marked change in the followers' dressing. One can no longer tell a person's social standing from his dressing. Gone are the worshippers in modest attire: the worn-out shirt and tie for the man, and the gown or a long skirt for the woman, with a head tie to cover the hair—all going around in pairs with bags full of brochures. Today the packaging and presentation are more valuable than the content, and it is difficult to identify the follower of a revival church from his appearance. Conversion is easier than in the past since spiritual healing is no longer predicated on loss of material comfort—unless, that is, such material comfort is castigated by the pastor as harmful to spiritual life. Even so, the evil spirit is conquered not by destruction of property owned, but by handing such property over to the pastor, who best knows what to do with it.

CONCLUSION

The rise of New Religious Movements is thus among the most remarkable happenings in contemporary Africa. Afro-Christian churches and new Muslim faiths have appeared on a continent where social transformations and new worldviews have emerged. African countries previously known to be Catholic, Protestant, or Muslim are every day shaken by the influx of new faiths and new relationships with religion brought about by inter-continental migration. This “religious modernity” (Mayrargue 2001, 2009) has re-drawn Africa's religious map and by so doing uncovered the hidden facet of contemporary African religious reality. These NRMs seem to fare best in the context of economic and social crises. No doubt then that revival churches are winning over millions of followers (Hefner 1993). As Dillon-Mallonie (1983) argued, the birth and rapid growth of independent African churches is an important religious phenomenon that no country on the continent has escaped. Today, people can move easily from one religion to the other. Indeed, these religious phenomena not only impact family and inter-generational relations considerably, but also provide opportunity for social scientists to analyze the deep changes taking place in society today. These religious movements constitute high stakes in the countries where they have taken hold. In Cameroon, for instance, growing the Christian faith and winning over new followers have always worked in tandem with adopting new

communication techniques. Law no. 90/53 of 19 December 1993 on Freedom of Association—considered as the event that triggered the birth and growth of the new religious movements—ushered in the use of various modes of communication, including posters, banners, radio, television, Internet, and other forms of social media. All have been used effectively and are at the core in the rise of NRMs in Cameroon.

NOTE

1. By 2014, the government of Cameroon had closed churches that it viewed as “harmful to society.” At that time, data from the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization indicated that only forty-seven were legalized.

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Chapter Ten

The “Cameroonization” of Education

A Decolonial Analysis of Content and Language Issues, 1960–2015

Roland N. Ndille

INTRODUCTION

Studies on colonial education have often argued that the relationship between the metropole and the African colonies did not permit the growth and sustenance of the indigenous knowledge base of the colonies (Ramoupi and Ndille 2017; Ramoupi 2015; Ndille 2014; Kanu 2008). In German, and later in British and French Cameroons, colonial education ostensibly served the exploitative and subjugated interests of European missionaries and colonizers. Colonial education also reinforced the notion of European superiority and African subjectivity (Ndille 2014; 2012). Therefore, independence was supposed to lead to a complete overhaul of the colonial education system in order to serve local and national interests. Wilson-Tagoe posits that the goal of postindependence educational reform was to “secure and sustain the survival of the uniqueness and strength of every erstwhile colonial people” (Wilson-Tagoe 2007, 238). In fact, most independent African countries agreed on the need to reform the educational system in order to address those goals. Presidents Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Sekou Toure of Guinea, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, and Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia all issued proclamations to this effect (Bangura 2005). In Cameroon, for example, the new focus was highlighted by the country’s first president, Amadou Ahidjo (1961–1982) who declared in a speech in 1962 that “We must shun all servile importing and transplanting of foreign systems. The structure and substance of our educational system must consult the environment, needs, and personality of the Cameroonian people” (quoted in Gwei 1975, 11–12).

Ahidjo understood that local knowledge—science, geography, history and languages—were repositories of the Cameroonian indigenusness as well as

the key vectors of the new nation's philosophy of unity in diversity. Therefore, the postindependence educational philosophy in Cameroon was grounded on the principle that schools should foster and promote cultural specifications that were fundamental to the development of a Cameroon-centered identity within a global system. According to Lockheed and Verspoor (1991), the search for an indigenous philosophy and an appropriate curriculum to actualize that philosophy were the foundational goals of education in most developing countries in the 1960s. In other words, while education planners in these countries were intensifying efforts at expanding education to all children, they were also concerned with "making the education system more relevant to national needs." (Lockheed and Verspoor 1991, 29–30).

As a result, postindependence educational reform in Cameroon was not only expected to address the structural and demographic lapses inherited from a flawed colonial education system, but also expected to address what the purpose of education was supposed to be—that is, who was supposed to benefit from education in a postindependence Cameroon and what approach was it expected to take? The obvious answer would have been to prioritize the Cameroonization and Africanization of the curriculum and the language of instruction. Ramoupi and Ndille (2017) recently described what would have been involved in the process:

. . . situating knowledge, skills and language of instruction in their cultural contexts; in ways that reflect the identity of the Cameroonian society; the transformation of syllabuses and contents of school programmes; changing what is taught in colonial schools with a pertinent consideration for local relevance, bearing in mind the sustained oppressive status quo of colonial education . . . reclaiming what and who have been historically disenfranchised. (Ramoupi and Ndille 2017)

A Cameroonized education would therefore be that which grows out of the Cameroon environment and society. In this case, the content presented to students must be drawn from the knowledge base of the Cameroon society. It would be an education which is politically, socially, and economically Cameroon-based and relevant to the Cameroon society—knowledge about Cameroon, by Cameroonians, and for Cameroonians. It is the re-appropriation of the production and dissemination of knowledge detached from the present geopolitical configuration of the world, a reappropriation that questions the logic of Euro-Western-centric universalism (Mignolo 2009, 159).

Writing on the history of education in Cameroon, Tambo (2003) argued that, with the coming of independence, the educational policy underwent a radical change toward meeting the needs of national independence and development in all aspects of national life (Tambo 2003, 14–15). Gwei (1975,

303) also explained that education was recognized as the greatest instrument for guaranteeing the nation’s socioeconomic advancement. However, an examination of the literature on post-colonial education reforms in Cameroon reveals that most of the studies have focused on how the state has addressed the structural reforms rather than the equally important functional and ideological issues of educational reforms (Atayo 2000; Ndongko and Tambo 2000; Aka 2002; Tambo 2003; Fonkeng 2004; MacOjong 2008). Indeed, while existing literature highlights the importance that the administration placed on curriculum reform as an important vehicle for nation-building and identity formation, not enough attention has been paid on whether these efforts have been successful.

This chapter focuses on the challenges in instituting an indigenous educational system, and particularly on efforts at reforming the history curriculum and the language of instruction as part of the post-colonial ideological transformation of education in Cameroon. The first section of this chapter concentrates on the history curriculum of the Anglophone subsystem of education; the second section presents the issue of adopting a national language of instruction, an issue that goes beyond both the Francophone and Anglophone subsystems of education.

“CAMEROONIZING” THE CURRICULUM: A POSTINDEPENDENCE CHALLENGE

In most African countries, the trend in educational reform at independence was to call educational conferences or set up commissions to examine the state of education and propose reforms. In Cameroon, it took a top-down approach, with laws emanating from the presidency as well as from federal and state assemblies through decrees and *arêtes*. This began in June 1963, with the passage of *Loi Federale* or Federal Law No. 1, 63/13 of June 19, 1963. The law’s goal was to reorganize public secondary and technical education in Cameroon since secondary education was the prerogative of the federal government. But while the law called for the reorganization of secondary schools, it was silent on reforming the curriculum. Meanwhile, the state governments also passed legislations on primary education, which was the prerogative of each of the federated states. For instance, the federated state of East Cameroon passed *Loi No.163/COR-5* of July 1963, while the federated state of West Cameroon had earlier that year adopted the West Cameroon Education Policy No. WCA/63/35 of 13 March 1963, which highlighted the state’s need to respond to the new structure of the country: a reunified, bilingual, and federal country. None of the aforementioned laws discussed the idea of revising school

curriculum to ensure the replacement of existing Euro-centric curricula with educational goals attuned to the independent country. At both primary and secondary levels, harmonization of the two systems—which were structurally different before reunification (Nwana 2000; Ndille 2014)—overshadowed the other exigencies of educational reform, including reform of the curriculum. Efforts were mostly geared toward harmonizing the duration of primary and secondary schools. For instance, at the time of reunification in 1961, primary school education lasted seven years in West Cameroon (former British Southern Cameroons) and six years in East Cameroon (former French Cameroons). Meanwhile, secondary education lasted five years in West Cameroon and four years in East Cameroon. A similar discrepancy existed at the high school level: students spent two and three years in West and East Cameroon, respectively. Altogether, students in West Cameroon stayed a year longer in primary, secondary, and high school than their East Cameroon counterparts. According to the March, June, and July 1963 laws, restructuring of the educational system to ensure that students spent the same number years in primary, secondary, and high schools was supposed to have been completed in 1965. For example, West Cameroon should have had a six-year primary education system corresponding to the six-year primary system in East Cameroon. On the other hand, East Cameroon should have adopted the five-year secondary system and the two-year high school system that existed in West Cameroon.

Despite the structural changes outlined in the March, June, and July 1963 laws, they were practically silent on the issue of harmonizing the curriculum between the Anglophone and Francophone educational systems, even though there were several opportunities to do so. For instance, in 1965/66, the Higher Council for Education requested the creation of a national curricula for secondary education that was more national in its content. A joint committee of experts from the two federated states was set up to examine the secondary school curriculum and the examination systems with a view of harmonizing the two systems. This Committee for the Harmonization of Education in the Republic met in Yaoundé from January 13–15, 1966. At the meeting, William Eteki Mboumoua, the then Minister of National Education, explained that the government’s aim was

. . . to provide the same content of education to all Cameroonians no matter where they were situated in the nation; . . . ensure that education was to be Cameroonian in content and spirit and select from both systems what was valuable, enriching and educationally good. (Ndongko and Tambo 2000)

However, a survey of the history curriculum demonstrates that, although the committee had as its terms of reference the “selection of valuable content,” the idea of “Cameroonizing” the curriculum was hardly the focus of its

work (Ndille 2012). Rather, the committee recommended that the General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level (GCE O/L) in West Cameroon and the *Brevet d'Etude du Première Cycle* (BEPC) in East Cameroon should be replaced by a single certification exam called the Certificate of General Education (CGE) to be taken at the end of secondary school. At the same time, the Anglophone GCE Advanced Level and the Francophone Baccalaureate exams taken at end of high school studies in West and East Cameroon, respectively, would be replaced by the Secondary Education Leaving Certificate (SELC). Candidates for these exams were expected to study the same subjects and content materials, but in their respective languages (Nwana 2000, 16). In other words, French would be the language of instruction in East Cameroon, while English was used by the counterparts in West Cameroon.

Although one might have expected that representatives at the January 1966 meeting would have detailed changes in the curriculum that did not occur. Nevertheless, the work of the committee continued when it met two years later in Douala, the nation's economic capital, to discuss relevant content material that would meet the goals of “Cameroonizing” the curriculum. Unfortunately, in terms of the final curriculum, the draft proposal presented to the Higher Council of Education for approval in 1971 was not different from the Eurocentric curricula still in use in both West and East Cameroon (Ndille 2012), and thus may explain why the proposal was never implemented. For instance, in Form One (year one of secondary schools) the focus of the curriculum was on ancient civilizations of Western Europe (Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Greco-Roman empire) and those of China and India. The present structure gives the false impression that Mesopotamia and the Greco-Roman empire were replaced by China and India. In Form Two, the curriculum focused on pre-colonial European activities in Africa, while Form Three dealt with colonialism and nationalism. Forms Four and Five's history curricula focused on preparing the students for the General Certificate of Education Examination, whose content was based entirely on Western Europe, including Great Britain, the USSR and Eastern Europe, the USA and the Americas, China and Japan, India and Pakistan (File Sb/a/1968/3). This was not different from the colonial curriculum that prepared students for the Cambridge Overseas Certificate Examinations. In the latter situation, the options available were History of the British Empire and Commonwealth (Syllabus A), European History (Syllabus B), Modern World History (Syllabus C) and West Indian History (Syllabus D) (West Cameroon, 1963). The revised syllabus in Cameroon required candidates to select between Syllabus B and Syllabus C—which had nothing on Cameroon history.

Apparently disappointed by the committee's work, the government set up the Institute of National Education (INE) in Yaoundé by presidential order

No. 1. CMR/72/018 in 1972, The Institute's task was to carry out research that would result in the improvement and harmonization of secondary school curriculum. The National Institute of Education was charged not only with developing a national-centered and Cameroon-centered curriculum, but also with developing textbooks in mathematics, civics, history, and geography—all to be initially introduced at the Government Bilingual Grammar School Molyko, in Buea. Although the INE made a concerted effort at harmonizing the curriculum throughout the country, the proposed curriculum failed to promote a Cameroon-focused curriculum. As to the reason for this oversight, I argue elsewhere that

the end of the colonial era set in motion a transition from modern colonialism to global coloniality and that the Euro-North American hierarchical classification of thought and action that continue(d) to produce and reproduce forms of exclusion remained and was rather joined by local actors. Because of the nature and outcome of colonial education, what was expected to be African postcolonial states and nations became mere small huts within the bigger neo-colonial houses that managed the economic and social affairs and influenced the political trajectory of the continent. The elites that were at the fore-front of the independence processes in both East and West Cameroon ended up only importing and reproducing the same alien epistemological locations that marked the new geographic space of a bilingual and federal Cameroon. (Ndille 2014)

This situation continued to frustrate further opportunities at indigenizing the curricula. In 1977, the Cameroon government took over the setting and administering of both the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced and Ordinary levels exams from the University of London, which had been in charge of both exams in West Cameroon since 1961. But instead of developing a Cameroon-centered curriculum, the changes that were initiated were more administrative than content-wise. Although the details of the prospective syllabi were worked out at the meeting, they were never implemented (Tambo 2000, 153–54). In fact, there has been little effort at “Cameroonizing” the curriculum since independence. For example, even though history is an important subject in which efforts at indigenizing the curriculum could have been easily implemented, the first two years of junior secondary schools in the Anglophone educational system still reveal a major focus on other regions of the world. As shown in Figure 10.1 below, over 93 percent and 80 percent of the history curriculum during the first and second year of secondary education still focuses on European and world history. A similar situation existed at other levels of secondary and high schools in the Anglophone regions where, until 1997, the curriculum was less focused on Cameroon history. Figure 10.2 shows that, until 1997, 95 percent of the history curriculum

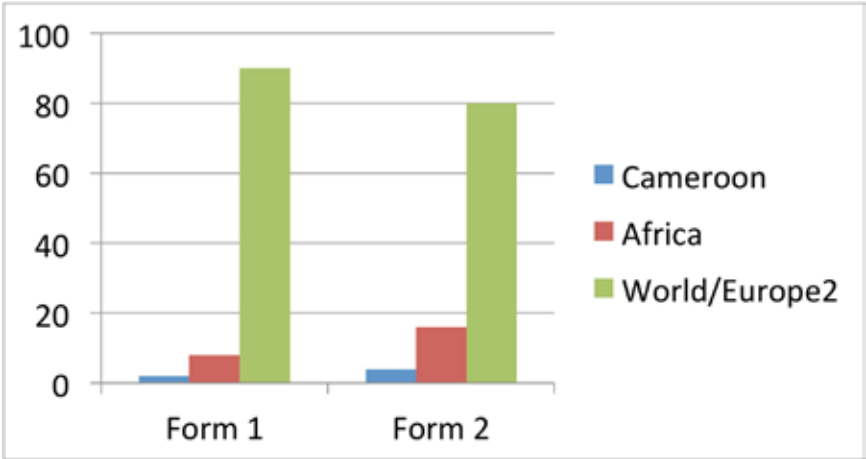


Figure 10.1. Distribution of the History Content on the syllabus for junior Secondary Schools (Forms 1 and 2) from 1963 to Present in the English subsystem of Education in Cameroon (Percentage).

Source: Compiled from, File sb/a/1963/3: Opening of new schools, NAB; Cameroon Baptist Convention, 1985, Education Board Syllabuses and Schemes of Work Secondary Schools, obtained from Saker Baptist College Library and Cameroon, 2009, Draft Syllabuses and Schemes of Work for Secondary Schools, Obtained from the South West Regional Delegation of Secondary Education.

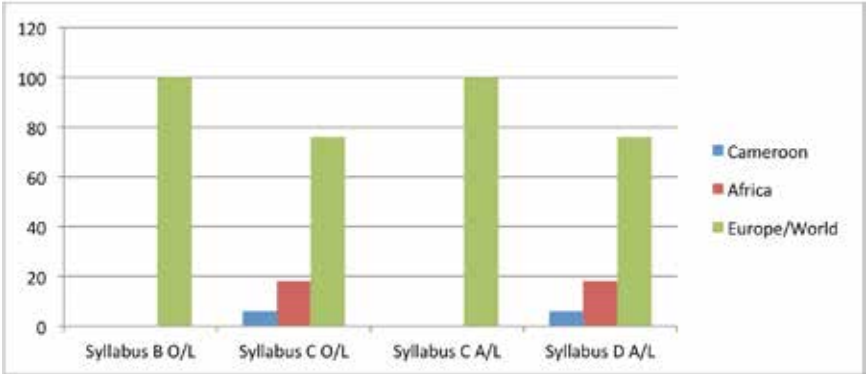


Figure 10.2. GCE History Syllabus, 1967–1997 (O/L+ Forms 3, 4, and 5; A/L+ Lower Sixth and Upper Sixth or Form 6 and 7) (Percentage).

Source: Compiled from University of London, 1964. *General Certificate of Education Examination Syllabuses for June 1964 and January 1965*. London: University of London Printing Press; Republic of Cameroon, 1990. Ministry of National Education General Certificate of Education Examination Question Paper for June 1990 History Exams RC 90/0966.

for students taking the GCE Ordinary Level exam focused on Europe and World history, while less than 5 percent was on Cameroon. Similarly, about 95 percent of the Advanced Level curriculum focused on Europe and World history and less than 5 percent on Cameroon history.

Prior to 1997, the Anglophone subsystem of education operated two history syllabi, as was the case when the examination was organized from London. For instance, the content for Syllabus B at the Ordinary Level and Syllabus C at the Advanced Level focused entirely on European history, while over 90 percent of the material for Syllabus C at the Ordinary Level and Syllabus D at the Advanced Level focused on World Affairs, including Europe, America, China, Japan, India, and Pakistan. By the same token, only about 7 percent and 3 percent of the course material focused on Africa and Cameroon, respectively. In fact, a review of the questions that students were asked at both the ordinary and advanced levels of the examination (between 1977 and 1997) reveal that only two of the thirty-four questions that were asked were on the history of Cameroon (MINEDUC 1990).

It was not until 1997 that another attempt was made at indigenizing the history curriculum currently in use in secondary and high schools in the Anglophone subsystem of education. Indeed, as a result of the 1997 reform, 40 percent of the evaluation in the history curriculum at the GCE Ordinary and Advanced levels dealt with Cameroon history, while 60 percent focused on African and World history (see Figure 10.3 below). The 40 percent for the Cameroon curriculum was significantly higher than the 5 percent in the pre-1997 World Affairs Syllabus. However, despite the increased focus on

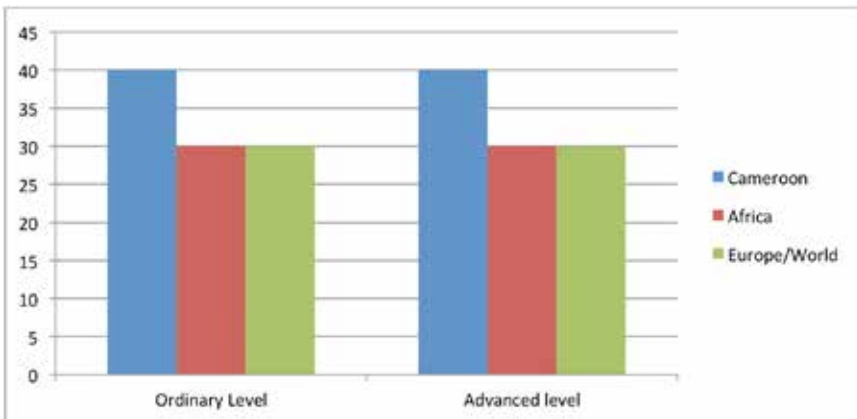


Figure 10.3. GCE History Curriculum after 1997: Ordinary and Advanced Levels (Percentage).

Source: Compiled from Cameroon General Certificate of Education Board, 1997. General Certificate of Education Board Examinations, May/June 1997 and May/June 1998. Buea: CGCEB, 319–413.

Cameroon, some critics argue that the curriculum is still skewed in favor of world history in terms of the contents material in each section.

Although our focus so far has been on the harmonization and indigenization of the history curriculum at the secondary and high schools in the Anglophone subsystem of education, it should be noted that similar efforts were made in primary schools. As mentioned earlier, the West Cameroon state government, which was in charge of primary education, introduced a new syllabus in 1963 and another in 1965 that, unfortunately, favored the study of more European/World history than Cameroon history. A summary of the contents in the 1965 syllabus presents a picture similar to the one in Figure 10.4 below.

Thus, between 1963 and 2000 there was hardly any major revision of the history curriculum for primary schools in the Anglophone subsystem of education. In 1995, an education forum was organized in Yaoundé by the Minister of National Education, Robert Mbella Mbappe. The goal of the forum was to establish a new orientation of the educational system. Although this forum was supposed to discuss the issue of “Cameroonizing” the curriculum, the final twelve-point report from the forum failed to do so (MINEDUC, 1995, 10). However, Law No. 98/004, on the Guidelines for Education in Cameroon, a product of the 1995 forum, was passed on April 14, 1998, and it acknowledged as one of its objectives the responsibility of educating “citizens who are deeply rooted in their culture” (Republic of Cameroon 1998, 1). The 2001 primary school history curriculum that emerged from the law showed an increased focus on Cameroon history than had been the case with the curriculum in effect since 1963. For instance, Figure 10.4 below shows that only 7 percent of the content in primary school dealt with the history of Cameroon, while 12 and 71 percent focused on African and World history, respectively.

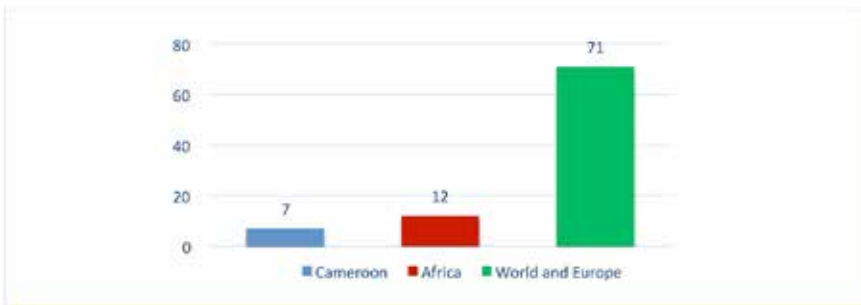


Figure 10.4. Distribution of History Content in the 1965 Primary School Syllabus (Percentage).

Source: Compiled from File sb/a/1963/3: Opening of new schools, NAB; File 8184: PCCAL: Matters regarding syllabuses, notes, schemes of work and textbooks for primary schools from the Supervisor Basel Mission schools Forest Region (1962–1967). File Sb/a/1965/29: Seven Year Primary School Syllabuses-Revised 1965 West Cameroon. NAB, File 6149 PCCAIB, Schemes of Work for Classes 5–7 1980s-1990s.

By contrast, Figure 10.5 below shows that, following the enactment of Law No. 98/004, about 64.1 percent of the history curriculum was on Cameroon history, 11.5 percent on Africa, and 24.4 percent on World history. From these figures, we can assess the extent to which the Cameroonization of education has been undertaken.

While the 2001 curriculum shows an increased focus on Cameroon history, there has actually been very little expansion in terms of introducing new content material on Cameroon history to be covered. In fact, as a result of the 2001 reform, S. N. Tita, the author of *History of Cameroon*, the major text used in primary schools throughout the Anglophone regions since 1966, published three volumes of the text retitled *New History for Cameroon*. An analysis of the new texts revealed a lot of content-duplication. For example, chapter/unit 7, titled “Religious Movements in Cameroon,” in Volume I of the book has the same basic content as chapter/unit 9, titled “Religion in Cameroon” in Volume II. A similar problem pertains to chapter/unit 9 and 10 in Volume I of the text. Unit 9 is titled “German Occupation of Cameroon,” while unit 10 is titled “Resistance to European Occupation.” And again, chapter/unit 10, titled “The Germans in Cameroon” and chapter/unit 12 in Volume III, titled “Cameroon under German Protectorate,” pretty much contain the same information. In other words, while there appears to be an increased focus on Cameroon history in these texts, the fact that the information is duplicated in many instances simply means that the same information is being recycled. Altogether, almost twenty-four of the forty-six chapters in all of the three volumes seem to be duplications. Additionally, that there is so much focus on the Europeans in Cameroon rather than on the history of precolonial society or on such other aspects of Cameroon history as migrations, settlement, and



Figure 10.5. Distribution of History Content in the 2001 Primary School Syllabus (Percentage).

Source: Cameroon, 2001, *New Primary School Syllabuses for Anglophone Primary Schools in Cameroon*, Yaounde: SOPECAM, 2001; Tita, S.N., 2005. *New History for Cameroon Bks 1, 2, 3*. Limbe: Noremac Press.

traditional economic and political organizations is clearly a matter of content that neutralizes the goal of “Cameroonizing” the curriculum.

The situation was not very different at the tertiary level of education. In 1962, the Federal University of Cameroon was established in Yaoundé along the same lines as universities in France. And because the French language was the main language of instruction at the university and other institutions of higher learning in the country, students from the English-speaking Cameroon faced tremendous language barriers. This was a problem that was solved only in 1993 with the creation of the University of Buea, in the Anglophone Southwest region, and only in 2010 in the creation of the University of Bamenda in the Anglophone Northwest region. The new universities have since faced the same challenges in Cameroonizing the curriculum that have plagued the primary, secondary, and high schools in the region. According to Figure 10.6 below, only 11 percent of curriculum in the Department of History at the University of Buea focuses on Cameroon history. The situation is similar at the University of Bamenda, especially since the committee that was charged with drafting its history curriculum was largely made up of faculty drawn from the University of Buea. While a course on the local history of the communities which make up the Northwest region where the University of Bamenda is located, authorities at the University of Buea are still reluctant to do the same.

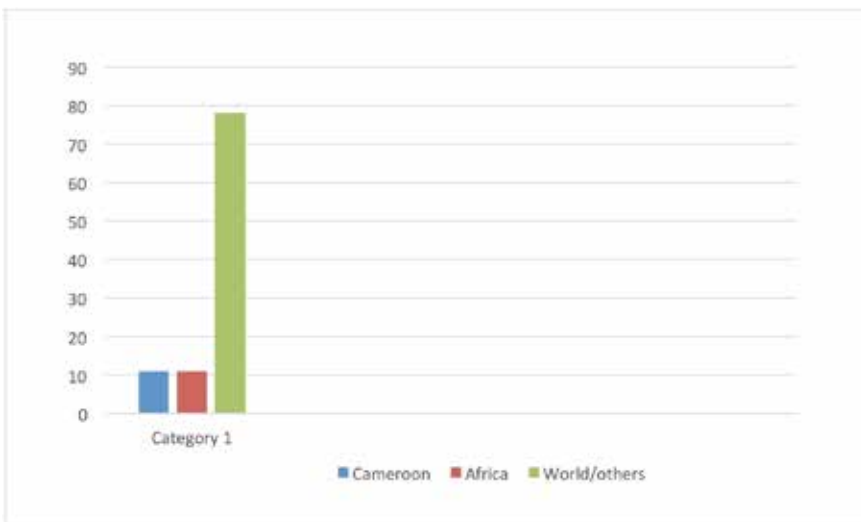


Figure 10.6. Distribution of Courses Taught in the Department of History at the University of Buea (Percentage).

Source: University of Buea, *University Syllabuses*, Limbe: Presbook, 1993; Department of History Students Guide, 2003.

It is clear from this evidence that the Cameroonization of the history curriculum at all levels of education in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon remains neglected, largely dominated by foreign contents that the country inherited at independence. In other words, despite the fact that the post-colonial curriculum was supposed to promote the Cameroonization of the curriculum with the view of promoting a one and indivisible country, that has not been the case. Indeed, the same argument can be made for the development of a postindependence language policy in Cameroon.

POSTINDEPENDENCE LANGUAGE POLICY IN CAMEROON

Following the reunification of British Southern Cameroons and *La République du Cameroun* on October 1, 1961, bilingualism was instituted as the official policy in the Federal Republic of Cameroon. Article 3 (Section 3) of the 1961 Federal Constitution ensured that “the official languages of Cameroon shall be French and English” (Republic of Cameroon, 1961, 1). Therefore, one of the goals of the new administration was to increase the number of Cameroonians who were fluent and proficient in both languages. In an effort to promote bilingualism, a presidential decree in 1962 established the Federal Bilingual Grammar School, which was opened in Man O War Bay in 1963. The institution was eventually moved to Molyko, in Buea, the capital city of the federated state of West Cameroon. The Federal government also signed cooperation agreements with France, Britain, and the United States that were aimed at promoting the teaching of English and French throughout the country. In 1964 the president of Cameroon Ahmadou Ahidjo declared the following:

When we consider English language and culture and French language and culture, we must regard them not as the property of such and such a race, but as an acquirement of the universal civilization to which we belong. This is in fact why we have followed the path of bilingualism since . . . it offers us the means to develop this new culture . . . and which could transform our country into the catalyst of African unity. (Anchimbe 2005)

At a time when the state was expected to adopt a national language policy in an effort to rid itself of the colonial languages, Ahidjo’s speech did more than just demonstrate the extent to which the inculcation of colonial values had been entrenched in the country; it was also seen as an effort to guarantee continued financial support from France and Britain for the continued proliferation of alien languages. In other words, in order to attain that objec-

tive, the federal government—with financial and personnel assistance from UNESCO—funded a nationwide bilingualism program. By the late 1960s the program had 7,500 literacy centers, popularly known as “*L'Ecoles sous l'Arbres*,” translated as “schools under trees” (Anchimbe 2006, 134). Rather than encourage the teaching of such indigenous languages such as Akose, Isubu, Duala, Munghaka, Bassa’a, Bulu, Ffulde, and Ewondo—which had been going on in some of the schools in the country, including *College Liberman*, *Chevreuil*, *Retraite*, *Mimetola*, and *Le Sillon*—the administration was more intent on promoting its bilingual policy (Anchimbe 2006, 136). In fact, in Dschang in 1966, government authorities seized books, typewriters, duplicators, and other materials from an indigenous language school established by chief Djoumesi. This singular act by the administration was seen as an “act of vandalism on its own cultural identity enhancement and a failure to take into account its own cultural treasure” (Momo 1997, 13). Unfortunately, by 1969, efforts at promoting bilingualism throughout the country had collapsed because of the lack of more external funding.

In 1972, when the unitary state was established, the unitary constitution again emphasized that “the official languages of Cameroon shall be French and English” (Cameroon 1972, 1). No mention was made regarding indigenous languages. In fact, the teaching of Duala, *Bassa’a*, *Ewondo*, *Bulu*, *Fulbe* and *Fe’efe’e*, which had been going on in the Department of African Languages and Linguistics at the University of Yaoundé, was abruptly ended in 1977 (Chumbow 1980, 302). The revised constitution of January 18, 1996, also guaranteed bilingualism as the official language policy in Cameroon, but this revision of the constitution added the following statement on the promotion of national languages in Section I, Art I (3):

The official languages of the Republic of Cameroon shall be English and French, both languages have the same status. The state shall guarantee the promotion of bilingualism throughout the country. It shall endeavour to protect and promote national languages. (Cameroon 1996)

Two years later, on April 14, 1998, the administration passed Law No. 98/004 on the General Orientation of Education in Cameroon. Like the 1996 constitution, the law emphasized the teaching and promotion of English and French as the nation’s official language policy:

The education system shall be organized into two subsystems: the English speaking subsystem and the French speaking subsystem, thereby affirming our national option for bi-culturalism . . . the languages of education, therefore shall be English and French . . . the state shall institute bilingualism at all levels of education as a factor of national unity and integration. (Tambo 2003)

Apart from stating that “the general purpose of education is to train children for . . . their smooth integration into society,” the only reference to indigenous languages in the April 14th Law was Section 5, which alluded to the promotion of national languages as one of the objectives of the education system (Tambo 2003, 121). The insertion of a national languages clause in the 1996 constitution and the 1998 law on education only appear to be responses to the pressure from the various organizations working in translating the Bible into indigenous languages—rather than a definite prioritization to use indigenous languages as a medium of instruction (Albaugh 2007; 2009; Anchimbe 2006).

COLONIALITY AND THE FAILURE OF THE CAMEROONIZATION PROCESS IN EDUCATION

In the first section of this chapter, I argued that, despite several reform initiatives to indigenize the history curriculum, efforts are still very minimal. I also argued in the second section that the official policy of bilingualism (English and French) has been promoted rather than a policy promoting a national language as the medium of instruction. In this section I attempt to explain why the post-colonial state has been reluctant in pursuing a genuine “Cameroonization” of its educational policy. The failure by the government to indigenize its curriculum and promote a national language of instruction policy is not unique to post-colonial Cameroon. Indeed, it is based on what Ramon Grosfoguel (2007) has called “coloniality.” Grosfoguel posited that

one of the *most* powerful myths of the twentieth century was the notion that the elimination of colonial administrations amounted to the decolonization of the world. This led to the myth of a “postcolonial” world as we continue to live under the same “colonial power matrix” in which erstwhile colonial masters and their Western allies have guaranteed the continuous pursuance of colonial policies of subjugation and domination which continue to advocate the study of western-centric contents and the use of colonial languages. (2007)

Therefore, by failing to Cameroonize the curriculum and establish an indigenous language policy of instruction, Cameroon is simply exhibiting the qualities of neo-colonial states. According to Nkrumah (1965),

The state which is subject to neo-colonialism is, in theory, independent and has all the trappings of international sovereignty. In reality, its *socio-economic* system and thus its political policy is directed from outside—not now through the presence of troops but through economic and monetary means, as control over government policy may be secured by the payment towards the cost of

running the state and by provision of civil servants in positions where they can dictate policy.

Nkrumah's position is justified by the huge amount of financial and human resources that the promotion of bilingualism (English and French) and other educational projects received in Cameroon from Western countries in the initial years of independence. On November 13, 1960, for instance, *La République du Cameroun* (former French Cameroon) signed a Treaty of Cooperation with France. Under the terms of the treaty, France also extended aid to West Cameroon (former British Southern Cameroons) following reunification between the former British territory and *La République du Cameroun*. In fact, the preamble to the 1960 Franco-Cameroonian Cultural Convention emphasized that "French is the official language of Cameroon . . . so education of a French character has become for the Cameroon people, in its faithfulness to its national traditions, the instrument of its cultural, political, economic and social development" (cited in Atayo 2000, 39).

In other words, the Franco-Cameroon cultural agreement ensured French presence and dominance in the territory through the promotion of French values, a French educational system, and the French language. In order to achieve these objectives, France agreed to put at Cameroon's disposal French men and women to help in educational reform and research. Cameroon also agreed to give the French government preference in the recruitment of such personnel. France also promised to continue granting scholarships to Cameroonians for study in French institutions and to help Cameroon organize and develop its university (Atayo 2000). By November 1961, France had placed at Cameroon's disposal a total of 576 civil servants, including 50 in general administration, 26 in the judiciary, 80 in health, 144 in technical services, 35 in telecommunications, and 241 in education. In fact, by the end of 1963, the number of French officials in the education sector alone had increased to 334 (Atayo 2000, 39). During the same period, there were 504 Cameroon students on French government scholarships who were studying in various French institutions and were likely to return to Cameroon after their studies. Atayo (2000, 39) argued that the fact that a French legacy in government, administration, law, and education remains so important in Cameroon may explain why there has been no serious effort to de-Gallicize the country's educational curriculum, especially since doing so might jeopardize the aid package that it receives from France.

Meanwhile, in the Anglophone subsystem of education, the Institute for Rurally Applied Pedagogy (IPAR) charged with revising the primary school programs in favor of a Cameroon-centered curriculum was created in Buea in 1974. IPAR's objective was supported by a number of bilateral agreements

with various funding agencies, including UNDP, UNESCO, the German Agency for Technical Corporation (GTZ), and the British Council (Kalla and Yembe 1981). With foreign investments that greatly surpassed investments from the Cameroon government, it was evident that IPAR's curriculum was likely to be influenced by these foreign entities. Moreover, the expatriates and local education officials responsible for designing IPAR's curriculum had all been educated under a system that promoted a "superior" Eurocentric education. In other words, the educational background of the architects of IPAR's curriculum led only to the creation of a system that was similar to that under which they had been trained. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) posited that

One of the strategies that have sustained the hegemony of the Euro-American-constructed world order *has been* its ability to make African intellectuals and academics socially located in Africa and on the oppressed side to think and speak epistemically and linguistically like the Euro-American intellectuals and academics on the dominant side. They *have* often failed to question the core logic of Western modernity that globalized Euro-North American views of the world and that constructed a racialized, hierarchical, hegemonic, patriarchal and capitalist global social system. They *have* also failed to deeply engage with the delicate issues of African development and knowledge production which were never fully realized beyond some emancipatory pretensions during the colonial and early neo-colonial eras. (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013)

Ndlovu-Gasheni concluded that, until Africans recognize the negative impact of a continuous adherence to European epistemologies on the African knowledge base and break away from it, any discussion or implementation of an African or a Cameroonian identity in its educational system is unachievable.

CONCLUSION

The central theme in this chapter is the failure by the post-colonial state in Cameroon to Cameroonize its educational system. I have used "Cameroonization" of education to refer to those efforts that introduce more Cameroon-based contents in the school programs than foreign contents; a situation which was common in almost every African country following independence. Using the history curriculum and language of instruction, I have argued that the continued emphasis on a Eurocentric curriculum and the promotion of English and French to the detriment of indigenous languages in various institutions in the country have derailed efforts at developing a true Cameroon identity within the global community. I posit that efforts at establishing a Cameroon-centered curriculum have been unsuccessful because many of those currently in lead-

ership positions in the country were educated under a colonial educational system that emphasized the centrality of European educational and cultural values. Until the state realizes that such a system is not in the interest and benefit of the Cameroonian people, the desire and calls for an educational system that would lead to genuine development and sociocultural assertiveness on the global stage will remain an illusion, or nothing more than what is popularly known in Cameroon as "throwing water on a duck's back."

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Section 4

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Chapter Eleven

Cameroon's Foreign Policy and Inter-African Relations in the Post-Ahidjo Era

Peter A. Ngwafu

INTRODUCTION

Following independence and unification, Cameroon's foreign policy was largely conceived and executed by its founding president, Ahmadou Ahidjo, and continued by his successor, President Paul Biya. For instance, the 1972 Unitary Constitution accorded the president immense authority in the formulation and implementation of the nation's policy (Article 5 section 2), hence domestic and foreign affairs became policy areas that revolved around the president. Under the authority accorded to the president, Ahidjo pursued a foreign policy approach or strategy that was guided by pragmatism, although some scholars, including (Kofele Kale 1981) and (Ngolle Ngolle 1996), have referred to it as essentially conservative or cautious, non-confrontational, and low profile. His pragmatic approach to foreign policy making was guided by his commitment to the use of tact and realism to forge relations with nations that would help him stabilize a politically unstable and economically fragile emerging state. Ahidjo utilized this approach to shape relations between Cameroon and African nations and organizations, Western Europe, Israel, the Middle East, the Soviet Union, former Eastern European nations, and China. It was subsequently employed by Paul Biya, with a few cosmetic changes in style, to promote and strengthen Cameroon's foreign policy.

Drawing on primary and secondary sources, this chapter examines the nature of Cameroon's foreign policy and inter-African relations in the post-Ahidjo era with hopes of determining how core elements or principles of those policies have informed relations between Cameroon and selected African nations and organizations. To that end, the chapter explores the role of

key actors and institutions involved in Cameroon's foreign policy making process and the domestic determinants of such policy, briefly reviews the elements of continuity and change in Cameroon's foreign policy under Ahidjo and Biya, and assesses how key principles, including Cameroon's unique colonial heritage, regional cooperation, non-interference in the affairs of other states, African unity and non-alignment have informed its inter-African relations. Considerable attention is given to relations between Cameroon and both French and non-French-speaking African nations, political and economic organizations, the African Union, and relations with the other African members of the Commonwealth of Nations and the Lake Chad Basin Commission. The chapter concludes with a brief assessment of the challenges and prospects in Cameroon and inter-Africa relations in the post-Ahidjo era.

KEY ACTORS, INSTITUTIONS, AND INSTRUMENTS IN CAMEROON'S FOREIGN POLICY-MAKING PROCESS

Any sustainable discussion of Cameroon's foreign relations with African nations and regional organizations, must give considerable attention to the role that key actors, institutions and other factors have played in shaping such relations. An effective assessment of the roles of these variables that are central to the foreign policy-making process in Cameroon would provide scholars and observers with insights into the extent that each has contributed to the actual crafting of such policies. As discussed earlier, Cameroon's constitution confers on the president expansive powers that allow him to shape domestic and foreign policies including negotiating and ratifying treaties and international agreements. While the above-mentioned article also stipulates that certain types of treaties which fall within the competence of legislative power (as defined in Article 26 of the 1972 Constitution) shall be submitted to parliament for its ratification, that provision is neutralized by Article 28 section 1, which authorizes the president to legislate by way of ordinance. The absence of a credible check and balance mechanism in the constitution, allowed both Ahidjo and Biya to set Cameroon's foreign policy agenda. It also empowered both leaders to execute policies with little or no opposition from the other foreign policy-making institutions such as the national assembly and the cabinet. However, Ngolle Ngolle (1996) argues that with the advent of Paul Biya to the presidency, Ahidjo's centralized and personalized foreign policy-making style which was not open to public scrutiny, gave way to a more open and less personalized policy-making approach. Such transparency, he maintains, was evidenced by Biya's willingness to allow government ministers, including the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Finance,

Trade and Industry as well as the Head of the Economic and Social Council and other officials to participate in the foreign policy process. Furthermore, he notes that the change in style is also evident in the consistency with which President Biya issues press releases to the public on important foreign policy matters (Ngolle Ngolle 1996, 10).

With the exception of the Bakassi Peninsula in the 1990s, and the current Boko Haram terrorist incursion in parts of Northern Cameroon which threatens the nation's national security,¹ Cameroon has largely pursued peaceful diplomacy as a means of establishing and sustaining relations between nations. In the case of the Bakassi Peninsula, Achu (2011, 5), posits that Cameroon intervened militarily in Bakassi only after the entente or understanding which had been established between Nigeria and Cameroon following several meetings between the two nations over the boundary issue failed. When in 1981 and again on Christmas Day 1993, Nigerian troops invaded the peninsula, Biya had no other recourse but to send the Cameroonian army to Bakassi. And despite the fact that the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled, on October 10, 2002, that the disputed peninsula belonged to Cameroon and also called on Nigeria to immediately withdraw its troops from the area, the two armies remained entrenched on the peninsula until August 14, 2008, when Nigerian troops were formally withdrawn from the peninsula in keeping with the June 12, 2006, Green Tree Accord² between the two nations.

In terms of foreign aid or other forms of assistance to African nations, Cameroon has extended humanitarian assistance to refugees fleeing conflict in Chad, Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea and the Boko Haram incursion in Northern Nigeria over the past several years. Nonetheless, trade has been an important component in Cameroon's inter-African relations. It has maintained trade and economic ties with its neighbor Nigeria, and with members of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) which includes Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, The Democratic Republic of Congo, The People's Republic of Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Rwanda, Angola and Sao Tome. Cameroon has also been a member of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC), which replaced UDEAC or the Customs and Economic Union of Central Africa in 1983. Although there is a lack of consensus among Cameroon scholars regarding the existence of a guiding ideology undergirding Cameroon's foreign policy-making process, similar to Nyerere's *Ujamaa Socialism* or Senghor's *Negritude*, both Kofele Kale (1981) and Ngolle Ngolle (1996) argue that domestic determinants of Cameroon's foreign policy, including the national economy, resource base, governmental structure, political leadership, network of alliances, Cameroon's colonial heritage, together with its size and strategic location are essential in shaping the general orientation of

its policies toward other nations especially its relations with other African states. Relying on the classical linkage theory in international relations, Ngolle Ngolle reminds us that foreign policy is essentially seen as “the external expression of a state’s domestic concerns for what a state does in the external environment is as much, if not very much, a function of what it does at home” (Ngolle Ngolle 1996, 3–4). Takougang (1993) has also observed, in terms of continuity in the foreign policies of Ahidjo and Biya that the same national interests that shaped Cameroon’s foreign policy under Ahidjo have largely influenced those relations under Biya. To that end, Biya has thus used his constitutionally granted role as the principal actor in domestic and foreign policy-making processes to forge economic, political and cultural relations with other African nations.

Other interesting determinants of Cameroon’s foreign relations with Francophone African nations in the Ahidjo and Biya eras have been the notions of *La Francophonie* and France-Afrique. These two concepts have sustained the foundations of Cameroon’s relations with other French-speaking African nations since independence. Initiated after World War II, De Gaulle’s concept of France-Afrique (later translated into a *Communaute Franco-Afrique*), was designed to grant independence and internal self-government to its African colonies while France was allowed to retain control over such essential matters as defense, foreign affairs as well as economic, monetary and strategic minerals policy (Guy Martin 1995, 3).

France would later orchestrate the formation of the International Organization of *La Francophonie* in 1970 (discussed below), thus making France-Afrique and *La Francophonie* two core elements in France’ relations with its former African colonies as well as relations among its former colonies. Cameroon’s relations with Francophone African nations are therefore, shaped to a large extent, by those two institutions. Cameroon’s economic, political and cultural interests are also important determinants of its relations with other African nations. Driven by a desire to improve its economic performance through trade and monetary cooperation, maintain political stability at home and forge cultural ties with other African nations, Cameroon has enjoyed the opportunity to play the role of peacemaker in settling regional and continental disputes. It has also played an important economic role among Francophone Central African nations, as a member of regional economic and monetary organizations such as the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC). In terms of regional security, President Biya and the leaders of Benin, Nigeria, Chad, and Niger were compelled to reactivate the Multinational Joint Task Force (MJTF), originally created in 1994 to check cross-border security issues in the Lake Chad region, in an effort to combat

the Boko Haram Islamic insurgency that has caused grave security problems in parts of Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria and Niger.

Ahidjo's foreign policy goals that were characterized by the principles of national independence, non-alignment, regional and international cooperation, were maintained and expanded under Biya. For example, in his book, *Communal Liberalism*, President Biya affirmed the need to "safeguard Cameroon's independence and sovereignty, to participate in regional and economic organizations, promote social justice at home and globally and seek unrestricted and equitable economic and cultural cooperation" (Biya 1987, 134). Admittedly, he has not been able to accomplish the lofty goals that he envisioned in 1987. Also, current literature on Cameroon's foreign policy in the Biya era depicts a nation whose foreign policy approach has been characterized by phrases such as non-contentious, low profile, continuity and change, pragmatism, bilateralism and multilateralism. Some of these themes have also been used, in one form or another, by scholars and observers of Cameroon history and politics to describe how they shaped Cameroon's foreign policy during the Ahidjo era. Ndiva Kofele Kale (1993), Joseph Takougang (1998), Julius Amin (1998; 2015), and Achu (2011), among others, have articulated various aspects of these themes and have undoubtedly added to the emerging body of scholarship that is central to any critical examination of Cameroon's foreign policy during the presidencies of Ahidjo and Paul Biya. Except for a change in style, it is not implausible to argue that Cameroon's foreign policy in the post-Ahidjo era has remained largely intact and has been rooted in the principles of pragmatism and continuity.

CAMEROON'S RELATIONS WITH FRANCOPHONE AND NON-FRANCOPHONE AFRICAN STATES IN THE BIYA ERA

Perhaps a good starting point in assessing Cameroon's foreign policy and inter-African relations in the post-Ahidjo era is to examine its relations with the other Francophone African nations, particularly the other thirteen former French West Africa (*Afrique Occidentale Francaise* [AOF]) and Equatorial African countries (*Afrique Equatoriale Francaise* [AEF]) which, together with Cameroon share memberships in various regional organizations.³ An assessment of such relations is critical in the sense that unlike its relations with other African states, Cameroon-Francophone Africa relations, are shaped by a unique set of factors or elements including a common colonial heritage characterized by economic, political, security and cultural linkages and the institutions of *La Francophonie* and France-Afrique, that are conspicuously absent in its other inter-African relations. In fact, except for Guinea which

fell out of French favor in its quest for independence from France in the 1960s, Cameroon and the other thirteen states that constituted a significant part of France's African empire, share a common colonial heritage, as well as social, political, economic, cultural and military linkages with France. While each country may have pursued different political and economic paths since independence, the strength and resilience of their relations with France and among themselves is indisputable. Moreover, Victor Le Vine (2004, 3) notes that the ties between these fourteen states and France does not only include educational and cultural exchanges, technical and financial assistance, trade and investment, but also the idea of periodic "Francophone" leaders' conferences which is based on membership in the international Francophone cultural organization *La Francophonie*.⁴ These conferences are often chaired by the French president and include representatives of French citizens who live or do business in these countries. Le Vine (2004, 3) also notes that occasionally French military assistance is available to these states, on demand, and units of the French *Force, d'Action Rapide* (FAR) had been involved in eight Francophone African military ventures before it was dissolved in 1998. These organizations represent only a fraction of broader formal and informal post-independence linkages that have characterized relations between these states.

As articulated earlier, since gaining independence, Francophone African leaders, including Presidents Ahidjo and Biya of Cameroon, have maintained close relationship which each other that have often led to economic and political assistance. However, it is worth noting here that not only has Biya maintained relations with the other former French West and Equatorial African nations⁵ that were established under President Ahidjo, he has also strengthened relations with Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Comoros Federal Islamic Republic, Iles Glorieuses, Reunion, the Iles Tromelin, Juan de Nova, Bassa da India, Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo through the France-Afrique network, also known as "Franafrique." Furthermore, Cameroon's relations with these French West and Equatorial African states as well as the other Francophone nations constituting the former French empire in Africa have been maintained through the annual Franco-African summits of heads of states. To this day, these annual summits or conferences are held annually between France and African nations to discuss issues that are mutually beneficial to both parties.

Sylvain Touati (2007) argues that France's ability to establish a strong support among African politicians, state officials, military personnel and other professionals in these countries has allowed it to sustain its economic, political, cultural and military interests in Francophone Africa. By virtue of his thirty-two years in power, President Biya serves as the de facto dean of Francophone African heads of state. This position has allowed him to serve

as the sage and mediator in various crisis situations, including the succession conflict between Ali Bongo and the Gabonese opposition following Omar Bongo's death in 2009. In fact, at the November 29, 2014, Summit of *La Francophonie* in Dakar, Senegal, President Biya was recognized for his exceptional leadership in Cameroon, the Central African sub-region and international relations in Francophone Africa in general (Kimeng Hilton Ndukong 2014).

In addition to the continued historic, cultural, economic and political ties that have characterized the country's relations with Francophone African nations under Biya, Cameroon has also been at the forefront in establishing new regional economic organizations among member states. For instance, Cameroon is a founding member of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), also known as the *Commonaute Economique des Etats de L'Afrique Centrale*, founded in 1983, following an agreement by members of the Central African Customs and Economic Union (UDEAC), to form a wider economic community of Central African states. This community of ten central African states, headquartered in Libreville, Gabon, seeks to promote regional economic cooperation in Central Africa by achieving collective autonomy, raising the standard of living of its populations and maintaining economic stability through harmonious cooperation. Its current membership includes Gabon, Cameroon, the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, the Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Angola, and Sao Tome and Principe. Although ECCAS began functioning in 1985, it has been inactive since 1992 because of financial difficulties stemming from the non-payment of membership dues. Cameroon also played an important role in influencing the formation of yet another regional organization in Central Africa, the *Commonaute Economique et Monetaire de L'Afrique Centrale* (CEMAC). Created in 1994 to replace the *Union Douanière des Etats d'Afrique Centrale* (UDEAC), the goal of CEMAC was aimed at improving regional economic integration and policy effectiveness among countries that use the Franc CFA as their common currency. It was also designed to promote trade, institute a common market and build greater solidarity among peoples, in poor countries and regions. CEMAC countries now share a common financial, regulatory and legal structure and maintain a common external tariff on imports from non-CEMAC countries. It also allows free movement of goods and capital among member states. Specifically, the 1994 reforms that created CEMAC introduced: (1) a common external tariff; (2) the gradual removal of tariffs on intraregional trade (completed in 1998); (3) the harmonization of indirect taxation (with the introduction of a Value Added Tax in 1999); and (4) the replacement of import barriers with temporary import surcharges (Tsangarides and Martijn, 2007). The executive

body of CEMAC is the Conference of the Heads of State, which meets at least once a year to define the overall guidelines of the community's policies. CEMAC's Executive Secretary is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the organization's policies and decisions. In 1999, Jean Kuete, a former member of President Biya's cabinet was selected as Secretary General of the organization. Biya supported his reappointment for a second term in 2005. However, Kuete relinquished the position on September 22, 2006, when he was appointed as Minister of State for Agriculture and Rural Development in Biya's cabinet.

The key policy goals for the community include the creation of a fully functioning and effective customs union, and ensuring that a system of macroeconomic surveillance and promotion of sectoral policies that help create a common market for goods, services and capital exists. Trade constitutes an important component of the relations among CEMAC nations and is characterized by the production and exports of natural resources and other primary commodities. In fact, minerals and petroleum products constitute over 50 percent of the exports from CEMAC countries. For instance, oil represents over 90 percent of exports from Chad, Republic of Congo, and Equatorial Guinea while exports from the Central African Republic and São Tomé and Príncipe are heavily dependent on diamonds and timber, respectively (Ngeleza and Muhammad 2009). Meanwhile, in Cameroon where oil represented about 46.9 percent of the export in 2005, other products, including timber, cocoa, aluminum, coffee, cotton, rubber, and timber remain important to the economy. As for Gabon, oil remains its largest export product followed by timber (Ngeleza and Muhammad 2009).

Cameroon is also signatory to the Central African Parliamentary Network. According to the International Democracy Watch (2012), the organization was established following the adoption of a protocol at the June 2002 summit of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) to create an ECCAS Parliamentary Network also known as *Réseau des Parlementaires* (REPAC). The preamble to the organization's protocol notes that it was created because member states agreed that it was important to guarantee the human rights of citizens in ECCAS states in order to allow them to participate in decision-making processes. In that regard, the Parliamentary Network is viewed as a space for dialogue and consensus building for representatives of people in the respective states. Once functional, the city of Beta in Equatorial Guinea would serve as the organization's headquarters. Its fifty members would include five deputies from each of the ten Member States, elected for a period of five years by parliamentarians from the respective states. However, the role of REPAC was restricted only to giving advice on matters related to the ECCAS treaty, including human rights and fundamental freedoms, social

integration, citizenship, environment, science and technology, minority rights and gender issues, as well as policies aimed at promoting networking and integration in educational systems, public health, communication and energy. Additionally, it was responsible for providing information on issues regarding free mobility and the revision of ECCAS' founding treaty.

REPAC is supposed to meet twice a year for a session of up to 15 days, headed by an internally nominated President and assisted by a Secretariat. As long as the Network is not holding its scheduled meetings, ECCAS regularly organizes seminars to prepare the national parliamentary deputies for the official start of activities (International Democracy Watch, 2012). Unfortunately, since its creation, the organization has been plagued by several problems including a difficult and protracted ratification process, lack of funding for the preparation and launching of the network and the difficulties finding host cities for its meetings. According to the International Democracy Watch (2012), these problems reveal an unwillingness or reluctance by the leaders of these countries to commit themselves to an institution that might expose them to international scrutiny. However, despite these problems that have impeded the organization from functioning effectively, it is widely expected that once those issues are resolved, the Network would evolve into a regional parliament with members elected by direct and universal suffrage.

RELATIONS WITH NON-FRANCOPHONE AFRICAN NATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

In terms of its relations with non-Francophone African states in the Biya era, Cameroon has largely maintained the African centered policy that was begun by his predecessor. That policy is predicated on the idea of non-interference in the internal affairs of other member states of the African Union, support for the African Union and other regional organizations and improved bilateral relations with other African nations. Takougang (1993), provided a full assessment of Ahidjo's role in forging peace between various African protagonists in the 1970s and in successfully establishing himself as a "respected statesman on the continent." It is clear, that as a founding member and strong supporter of the Organization of African Unity—OAU (now African Union), Ahidjo was instrumental in the selection of two Cameroonians, Nzo Ekhah Nghaky (1972–1974) and William Eteki Mboumoua (1974–1980) as Secretary Generals of the OAU. It was also during his leadership that Cameroon served on the crucial liberalization committee of the OAU. The liberation committee was established to mobilize resources for the liberation struggle and garner international solidarity for liberation movements, assist

the liberation movements financially and materially to execute the liberation struggle, assess the performance of the liberation movements and give them the necessary advice and assistance needed to achieve their goals. The liberalization committee provided assistance to the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa, Namibia's South West African Peoples Organization (SWAPO), and Mozambique's Front for the Liberalization of Mozambique (FRELIMO), in their struggles for independence. Biya has retained Cameroon's membership and support of this flagship African organization, and served as the chairman of the OAU summit in Yaounde, Cameroon in July 1996, just as Ahidjo, served as Chairman of the organization from 1969 to 1970 (Pondi 1996).

Perhaps one of Biya's successful foreign policy accomplishments was Cameroon's admission into the Commonwealth of Nations, an organization that was hitherto opened exclusively to former British colonies. Its admission to the august body significantly improved Cameroon's relations with other African countries in the organization. For example, in a keynote address at the Yaounde Hilton on July 27, 2010, during the opening session of the 7th Commonwealth Heads of African Public Service Forum, Prime Minister Philemon Yang referred to the partnership between Cameroon and the Gentlemen's Club as vibrant. He maintained that Cameroon had benefited from the Commonwealth, in terms of the role it had played in setting up Elections Cameroon, (ELECAM), in instituting reforms within the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms, establishment of the National Anti-Corruption Commission, (CONAC), and creation of the audit bench of the Supreme Court (Nformi Sonde Kinsai 2010). Pondi (1997) argues that when Cameroon joined the Commonwealth in November 1995, it became the first Commonwealth nation that also belonged to the Francophonie. He also notes that while the country's first president, Ahmadou Ahidjo, was cautious about joining either the Commonwealth or the Francophonie because of the country's bilingual culture, Paul Biya saw the decision as an important step at pacifying an Anglophone minority that had been agitating for Commonwealth membership, especially during the prodemocracy movement of the early 1990s. Like the nineteen other African nations, membership in the Commonwealth has allowed Cameroon to benefit from increased trade between member countries and an opportunity to address some of the country's social and economic problems. In fact, Jayanta Roy Chowdhury (2012) estimates that trade among Commonwealth nations reached US\$4 trillion in 2008, an increase of 16 percent from 1990.

Another regional body with which Cameroon is affiliated and that brings together Francophone and Anglophone African nations is the Lake Chad

Basin Commission. Created initially in 1964 by the four countries bordering Lake Chad (Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria), its membership currently consists of eight states following the addition of Algeria and the Central African Republic (1996), Libya (2008), and Sudan (2000), which were admitted because of their proximity to Lake Chad (Giuseppe Schiavone 2005). The organization, which is also a member of the International Network of Basin Organizations,⁶ is headquartered in N'Djamena, capital of the Chad Republic. The aims of the Lake Chad Basin Commission are to regulate and control the use of water and other natural resources in the basin and to initiate, promote and coordinate natural resource development projects and research. The Commission's Basin Committee for Strategic Planning coordinates local activities between member states. The member states fund the commission's one million dollar annual budget based on an agreed upon formula. According to the Lake Chad Basin Commission's 2014 First Coordination Meeting of the Sahel Project's Institutional Framework and Ongoing Activities and Cooperation, Nigeria contributes 40 percent, Cameroon 20 percent, Libya 18 percent, Chad 11 percent, Niger 7 percent, and the Central African Republic 4 percent to the one million budget. However, it is not clear why Algeria and Sudan do not contribute to the commission's budget. In July 2000, Lake Chad was declared a Trans-boundary Site of International Importance⁷ with the aim of creating a network of national and regional conservation areas in the Chad basin as well as establishing institutions dedicated to their sustainable management. In November 2000, Cameroon, along with other Commission members, participated in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Bureau of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands⁸ and the Chad Wetlands Initiative. The Chad Wetlands Initiative was subsequently launched in June 2003, and was managed by the Ramsar Bureau and its Mediterranean Coordination Unit. Cameroon has been an active participant in the proceedings of the commission, including its participation at the Ramsar Conference in November 2005.

TRADE, BORDER DISPUTES, SECURITY, AND CAMEROON'S RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBORING NIGERIA, CHAD, NIGER, AND THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Cameroon's relations with the neighboring countries of Nigeria, Chad, Niger and the Central African Republic deserve to be examined more closely in light of the border disputes, cross-border trade and Boko Haram terrorist activities that have influenced relations between these nations in recent years. In the context of the fight against terrorism, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Benin,

and Nigeria are members of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MJTF) that is currently combatting Boko Haram insurgency in parts of the Chad Basin region. Although Boko Haram is based in Nigeria and has largely operated in the Northeastern part of the country, it has also launched attacks against civilian populations in Northern Cameroon and parts of neighboring Chad and Niger. Another recent event that has influenced Cameroon's relations with its neighbors is the civil war between government forces and opposition Seleka insurgents (Christians against Muslims) that has ravaged the Central African Republic since 2012. Not only has the crisis forced Cameroon into absorbing thousands of refugees fleeing the conflict, but it has also forced the Biya regime to mobilize its military in an effort to contain incursions into Cameroonian territory by Seleka opposition rebels and Central African Government forces pursuing them.

Relations between Cameroon and Nigeria are especially important given the historical, political and economic forces that have shaped those relations for over a hundred years or so when cross-border trade began between people in both countries. Once administered as part of Eastern Nigeria following World War I, Southern Cameroons or English-speaking Cameroon opted to join French Cameroon in 1961, to form the United Republic of Cameroon. However, boundary disputes between Cameroon and Nigeria in the border of Lake Chad in the North as well as ownership of the oil rich Bakassi Peninsula in the south in the late 1980s and 1990s resulted in military incursions between the two nations. As discussed earlier, Cameroon eventually referred the matter to the International Court of Justice which ultimately ruled in its favor in 2002. It was not until 2006 that a United Nations brokered agreement known as the Green Tree Accord (under the leadership of Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations from January 1997 to December 2006), between Paul Biya of Cameroon and Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria persuaded Nigeria to formally hand over ownership of the Peninsula to Cameroon on August 14, 2008.

To underscore the significance of the relations between the two nations, President Paul Biya began a two day official visit to Nigeria on May 3, 2016. During the visit, the first in his thirty-five years as president, the heads of states of Cameroon and Nigeria, discussed issues of common interest to both nations including bilateral and regional cooperation against terrorism, violent extremism and cross-border crimes. New agreements to strengthen ties between Cameroon and Nigeria in their fight against Boko Haram in the northern regions of both countries, as well as trade and economic relations, were concluded and signed. A joint communique about the visit and the agreements that were reached was issued before Biya's departure from Abuja on May 4, 2016 (*African Examiner* May 5, 2016).

CHALLENGES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

Although Cameroon's foreign policy and inter-African relations in the post-Ahidjo era has recorded impressive successes and buttressed the nation's economy and position as a leader on the continent and the central Africa sub-region, it has nevertheless encountered some challenges, including issues of human rights and the need to re-examine the context within which the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other States must be respected. In other words, how will Cameroon address a situation where the government of an African government commits such horrendous atrocities that continental and international public opinion may warrant some intervention? Or worse still, what if a neighboring country engages in subversive activities that threaten the security of Cameroonians? Perhaps the recent successful threat by forces of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to intervene in Gambia to force former dictator Yahya Jammeh, to relinquish power to current President Adama Barrow who won the December 1, 2016, elections, is an indication of how such interventions can foster democracy and curb human rights abuses in African nations. As a relatively stable and influential player in the region, Cameroon needs to use its diplomatic leverage as a central African powerhouse to persuade members to support and enhance the activities and performance of the fledgling Central African Parliamentary Network, and the Economic Community of Central African States by securing reliable funding for both organizations and a permanent secretariat for the Central African Parliamentary Network. It is likely that Cameroon will continue to be admired by its regional neighbors and international actors, as a beacon of stability and peace on the continent as long as it continues to pursue a foreign policy approach that is cautious, incremental in nature, guided by expert leadership and based on some of the core principles that have been discussed in this chapter.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has attempted to examine the nature of Cameroon's foreign policy and inter-African relations in the post-Ahidjo era. To that end, it has explored the role of key actors and institutions involved in Cameroon's foreign policy-making process and the domestic determinants of such policy, briefly reviewed the elements of continuity and change in Cameroon's foreign policy under Ahidjo and Biya, examined how key principles of Cameroon's foreign policy, including Cameroon's unique colonial heritage, regional cooperation, non-interference in the affairs of other states, African unity and the policy of

non-alignment have informed its inter-African relations. Considerable attention has also been given to relations between Cameroon and Francophone African nations, political and economic organizations, non-Francophone African states, the African Union, relations with other African member states of the Commonwealth of Nations, the Lake Chad Basin Commission and border relations with the neighboring states of Nigeria, Chad, Niger and the Central African Republic. The chapter concludes with a brief assessment of challenges and prospects in Cameroon's relations with other African nations in the post-Ahidjo era. Taken together, it is important to note that while political leadership in Cameroon was transferred from Ahidjo to Biya in 1982, the key actors, institutions, instruments and processes that were critical in making foreign policy under Ahidjo, largely remained intact under Biya. Consequently, the phrase "continuity and change" has been used to describe and assess Cameroon's foreign policy in general and its relations with other African nations, in particular. In other words, the same determinants and core principles that have shaped Cameroon's foreign policy since independence and earned her the reputation of a stable and peaceful nation must be sustained, under proper leadership, if Cameroon intends to maintain its status as a stable and respected regional polity.

NOTES

1. The Bakassi Peninsula is a swampy area of land strategically located in the Gulf of Guinea between Nigeria and Cameroon. It is believed to be rich in fish and submarine oil deposits. Disputed by Nigeria and Cameroon since the 1960s, the peninsula became the subject of sporadic military clashes between the two countries in 1981 and the early 1990s until it was referred to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for resolution by Cameroon in 1994. The Peninsula was awarded to Cameroon in 2002 by the International Court of Justice, based largely on the Anglo-German Agreement of 1913 that defined the maritime borders of Cameroon and Nigeria. A 2006 United Nations brokered Green Tree Accord between Nigeria and Cameroon set the timetable for the return of the Peninsula to Cameroon and the process was completed in August 2008. Meanwhile, Boko Haram is an Islamic extremist group based in northeastern Nigeria, but also active in Chad, Niger and northern Cameroon. Its name means Western education is forbidden and it advocates adherence to a strict form of sharia law. The group was led by Abubakar Shekau until August 2016, when he was succeeded by Abu Musab al-Barnawi. The group had alleged links to al-Qaeda, but in March 2015, it announced its allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Since the current insurgency started in 2009, it has killed 20,000 and displaced 2.3 million from their homes and was ranked as the world's deadliest terror group by the Global Terrorism Index in 2015.

2. The Green Tree Agreement was the formal treaty which resolved the Cameroon-Nigeria border dispute over the gas and oil rich Bakassi peninsula. Although the dispute has its roots during the colonial period, it was not until the 1980s and 1990s that armed clashes between the two countries over the disputed territory prompted Cameroon to refer the matter for resolution by the International Court of Justice in 1994. On October 10, 2002, the ICJ ruled in favor of Cameroon.

3. French West Africa included Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea, Cote D'Ivoire, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and the UN Trust Territory of Togo. Although under French administration it operated partly under the jurisdiction of AOF, it was considered a separate political and judicial entity because of its special international status. The AEF group consisted of Chad, Central African Republic, Gabon, and The Republic of Congo. The UN Trust Territory of Cameroon enjoyed the same status as Togo.

4. The International Organization of Francophone States (OIF) generally known as Francophonie or the International Organization of *La Francophonie*, is an international organization representing countries and regions where French is the official language or where a significant portion of the population are Francophones (French speakers) or where there is a notable affiliation with French culture. The organization currently comprises fifty-seven member states and governments, three associate members and twenty observer nations. The term Francophonie has also been used to refer to the global community of French-speaking peoples comprising a network of private and public organizations promoting equal ties among countries where French people or France played a significant historical, cultural, military, or political role.

5. The organizations linking the fourteen former French West and Equatorial African countries include the unsuccessful Mali Federation (1959–1961), the 1959 Council of the Entente which loosely connected Cote d'Ivoire, Benin, Togo, Burkina Faso, and Niger, the Central African Customs Union also known as *Union Douaniere et Economique de L'Afrique Centrale* (UDEAC), was founded in 1964 and included Chad, Cameroon, The Central African Republic, Congo Brazzaville, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea while the West African Economic Community (*Communaute Economique de L'Afrique de LOuest* [CEAO]) founded in 1974, included Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal).

6. The International Network of Basin Organizations was established in 1994 and its headquarters is in Paris. Its objective is to promote the exchange of experiences between organizations in charge of river basin management in such areas as institutional and financial management, knowledge of water resources, training different stakeholders involved in water management as well as the staff of basin organizations, and increasing the awareness of the general public on water resources management. It also promotes the twinning of basin organizations from different countries, including the exchange of staff. INBO and its member organizations support the application of integrated water resources management. The Lake Chad Basin Commission is a member of the INBO because it shares similar characteristics and problems with other global basin organizations. It benefits from the experiences and resources of the organization to better manage the lake Chad Basin Commission.

7. A transboundary site of international importance refers to an area located between or among several countries, which houses an important resource or resources, such as wetlands or lakes.

8. The Ramsar Convention was signed on February 3, 1971, in the Iranian town of Ramsar by eighteen nations with the goal of conserving natural resources on a global scale. It is the only global treaty which prohibits countries joining it from exploiting their natural resources irresponsibly. It is concerned with protecting the most threatened of habitats such as wetlands or open shallow waters which include lakes, ponds, rivers, coastal fringes. As a part of this convention the Lake Chad Basin Commission will benefit from the convention's resources and experiences to accomplish its goals.

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Chapter Twelve

Cameroon and China

The Paradox of Beijing's "Win-Win Gain" Pronouncements¹

Julius A. Amin

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF SINO-CAMEROON RELATIONS

At the turn of the twenty-first century, DVD players and other electronics were highly prized items in Cameroon. But by the end of the first decade of the new century, prices of those appliances dropped significantly. DVD players, in some cases, cost as low as \$30, cell phones \$24, and televisions as low as \$50. Many of those appliances became permanent fixtures in homes, thereby redefining a typical Cameroonian home at the beginning of this century. Clothes, shoes, and other consumer goods became easily accessible. In Douala, Cameroon's economic capital, doughnuts made by the Chinese cost less than those made by Cameroonians. Tens of thousands of motorbikes imported from China served as taxis (*okada*) and contributed to congestion in many of the nation's urban centers (Konings 2006; Simone 2007; International Crisis Group 2010). All over Cameroon, goods traditionally owned and reserved for the upper class were more accessible to the poor. A retiree made the following observation:

I have worked as a warder with the government of Cameroon for over forty-three years, but my meager salary could not allow me to buy a television set. Today, with my pension allowance, I have bought a cheap Chinese made television which if I handle well will serve me for some time. (Rupp 2008, 69)

And there was more. In Douala, Cameroonian prostitutes went on strike to protest the low rates charged by their Asian colleagues, or the so-called Shanghai beauties (Ndjio 2009, 606–607; Michel and Beuret 2009, 115). The easing of travel restrictions from China in the early 1990s encouraged Chinese citizens to travel to other parts of the world in search of fortunes. For some,

Africa became a “dreamland destination.” In a 2007 speech, Cameroon’s president Paul Biya encouraged Chinese companies to “come in their numbers and invest in Cameroon in all the sectors, especially hydrocarbons, mineral exploitations and wood extraction” (Khan and Baye 2008, 6). Agreements signed between Cameroon and China, starting in 1972, opened the floodgates for such cheap manufactured imports as clothes, leading to a so-called Textile Tsunami. In return, Cameroon’s exports to China consisted of cotton, timber, and oil (Konings 2011, 187; Khan and Baye 2008, 6).

Proclamations describing Sino-Cameroon relations and collaboration used such positive words and phrases as “fraternity,” “win-win gain,” “strategic partnership,” “equal partners,” “non-aligned,” and “South-South,” but this language remained just empty rhetoric (Alden, Large, and Oliveria 2008, 16; Khan and Baye 2008, 4). It was the same language China used to describe relations with other Sub-Saharan African nations. Repeatedly, China assured African leaders that the relation was forward-looking and characterized by non-intervention and anti-imperialism. In every instance, however, China was the chief beneficiary of those economic arrangements. Given a domestic record of human rights violations, chronic corruption, brutal suppression of dissidents, and the absence of good governance, many Sub-Saharan African leaders welcomed a policy of non-intervention.

This chapter examines Cameroon’s foreign relations toward China, arguing that China has been the chief beneficiary of its “win-win gain” pronouncements used to define its relationship with Cameroon and other African nations. In short, China’s policy has undermined Cameroon’s economic development. In the early 1960s, Cameroon’s per capita income of \$518 was six times more than that of China’s. After forty years of Sino-Cameroon relations, it was \$662, which was about half that of China’s per capita income, and the gap has continued to widen (Charlier and N’Cho-Oguie 2009, 9). This chapter’s observations are important for several reasons. China is a major economic player in global affairs. With a population of over 1.35 billion, China is the most populated nation in the world. It has the second largest economy, has a permanent seat at the UN Security Council, and has significant leverage in the global community. What follows in this chapter thus adds to our understanding of challenges that smaller nations in particular have faced and likely will continue to face in their attempt to navigate successfully in a global system dominated by a neoliberal economic system whose rules are set by the major powers.

AHMADOU AHIDJO: THE FORMATIVE YEARS

Prior to independence, Cameroon entered a series of military and economic agreements that gave France overarching authority over the country’s do-

mestic and foreign policy. Those agreements, as events later showed, bothered Ahmadou Ahidjo, Cameroon's first president. Born in 1924 in Garoua in the Northern Region, Ahidjo attended *L'Ecole Primaire Supérieure* in Yaoundé, and then from 1942 to 1946 he worked as a radio operator for the territorial and communication service. His critics dismissed him as an intellectual lightweight who basically listened to the French and others around him. They charged that, because of his limited formal education, Ahidjo was ill-equipped, ill-prepared, and ill-trained to be president of Cameroon. He was, they continued, unable to engage in any serious analysis of the nation's problems and needs. On the other hand, his defenders argued that, while he was initially too dependent on the French, with time he emerged as a thoughtful leader committed to promoting the interest of his country (Le Vine 2003, 35).

In 1952 Ahidjo was elected to the Representative Assembly, in 1955 he became Vice President of the Territorial Assembly, and two years later he became president. As Vice Minister and Minister of Interior in the first Cameroon government of André Marie Mbida, he negotiated successfully for the independent state of Cameroon. He became prime minister in 1958 and was elected president in 1960. In 1962, during an official visit to Washington, he asked President John F. Kennedy for more US involvement in Cameroon, with hopes of neutralizing France's influence. Though Kennedy made no promises, the United States sent Peace Corps volunteers, and also approved technical and financial assistance to Cameroon through the United States Agency for International Development.² Unlike the United States, Cameroon's relations with China started on a rocky path.

Ahidjo resented China's support of the *Union des Populations du Cameroun* (UPC), an opposition party in the country. The UPC dismissed Ahidjo's regime as a "neo-colonial creation with Ahidjo in the role of *fianioche* (puppet) of France and French interests." UPC conducted subversive activities in Cameroon. From China, the UPC received arms and training in guerrilla warfare (Weigart 1996, 44). And Ahidjo vowed to crush them. Working with French advisers, he decimated villages in Cameroon on the grounds that they were either part of or harbored *Maquisards* (dissidents). The campaign against the UPC was brutal. A French helicopter pilot, Max Bardet, who participated in the anti-UPC campaign, stated that French-Cameroonian forces "massacred between 300,000 and 400,000 persons. A true genocide. They practically annihilated the race. (It was) spears against automatic weapons. The Bamileke didn't have a chance. Their villages were razed, a bit like Attila" (Le Vine 2003, 44). The campaign also decapitated UPC's leadership. In 1958, the founder and president of the UPC, Reuben Um Nyobé was killed by French commandos. In 1960, his successor, Felix-Roland Moumié, was assassinated in Geneva. After that his successor, Ernest Ouandje, was on the run. With

nowhere to go or hide, on August 19, 1970, Ouandie surrendered. He was detained, hurriedly tried, sentenced, and executed. Ahidjo also went after other political parties and leaders. In 1966, he decreed that the only legal party in the nation was the Cameroon National Union (CNU). The message was clear to other political leaders. Those who did not join Ahidjo's CNU were hunted down, jailed, forced out, or eliminated. Those were the days when polling stations had the name of only one candidate, Ahmadou Ahidjo, during elections. These were also the days when, at police checkpoints, people were asked for their CNU party cards; those without cards either bribed their way through or were detained. The story of Ahidjo's excesses has been documented elsewhere by others (Bayart 1978, 44–45; Kofele-Kale 1986, 53–82).

Simultaneously, Ahidjo was troubled by China's continuous support of the UPC political party. On November 11, 1961, Ahidjo accused China of trying to destabilize Cameroon: "*qu'il avait des preves que la chine populaire ou la chine communiste aide ouvertement des terroristes qui cherchent à abattre le régime du Cameroun* [There is convincing evidence showing that Communist China is supporting terrorist groups to overthrow Cameroon's government]." He added that terrorists trained in China and captured in Cameroon had provided incriminating evidence against China (Sinou 1985, 11). Stephen Weigart has written that "interrogation of captured UPC personnel revealed that the PRC had trained an unspecified number of Cameroonians in the strategy and tactics of guerrilla warfare as well as providing the insurgents financial assistance" (Weigart 1996, 44). On February 8, 1964, Ahidjo restated his opposition to China's admission to the UN: "*si nous ne reconnaissons pas la Chine Populaire, ce n'est pas parce qu'elle est communiste, mais parce qu'elle s'ingère dans nos affaires. . . . Si nous avons la prevue que la Chine cesse de s'ingérer dans nos affaires interieures, nous pourrions la reconnaitre et voter pour son admission aux Nations Unies* [We oppose China not because she is Communist but for her intervention in our domestic affairs. If there is evidence that China has stopped that practice then we'll reconsider our decision to oppose its admission into the UN]." China has continuously intervened in the domestic affairs of Cameroon, he said (Sinou 1986). Throughout much of the 1960s, Ahidjo recognized Taiwan, but when China's position shifted in the late 1960s, Ahidjo's administration began conversations to improve relations. From the mid-1960s, China aggressively looked for ways to amend relations with existing African governments. Its policy evolved from an "unsustainable and ideologically-motivated approach to political pragmatism and on to a relationship based on economic pragmatism" (Bing and Ciccoli 2013, 119).

Communist China's formal involvement in Africa began at the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, popularly referred

to as the Bandung Conference, of April 18–25, 1955. At that conference China's premier, Zhou Enlai, presented his Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence: "mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity," "mutual non-aggression," "mutual non-intervention in each other's internal affairs," "equality and mutual benefit," and "peaceful coexistence." Attending the conference were Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Presidents Gama Abdel Nasser of Egypt, and Achmed Sukarno of Indonesia. As staunch nationalists, they championed the course of anti-imperialism. It was at the Bandung Conference that Zhou Enlai argued that his Principles become a bedrock foundation of the non-aligned nations (Brautigam 2009, 30).

The Bandung Conference occurred at a particularly important moment for China. In 1949 mainland China went Communist. It was a tense period in the Cold War and major western nations responded accordingly. The United States invoked the typical approach towards third-world revolutions inherited from Woodrow Wilson's presidency. It waited to see whether or not the regime would survive, and after that gave assistance to anti-regime groups. The United States rejected the one-China policy, continued its pro-Taiwan policy, placed an economic embargo on China, and extended non-recognition to the Communist regime. Communist China was snubbed and undermined, its image distorted. In addition, US containment policy created a "devilish" image of China in developing nations. Africans were suspicious of Communist China. The Bandung Conference thus gave China an opportunity to rehabilitate its image, and it seized the moment. In 1956, China established diplomatic relations with Egypt, the first in the African continent. Egypt's leader, Abdul Nasser, a highly respected nationalist, had an ability to move others. From that moment China continued to make overtures to other African nations.

But the path remained rugged. Many African leaders found it difficult to forgive China's support of subversive activities in their nations. Those nations came into existence in the early 1960s and had fragile democracies. They loathed outside forces that provided assistance to radical groups. While some severed diplomatic relations with China, others adapted a policy of non-recognition of Communist China. Faced with increasing isolation and coupled with the Sino-Soviet split, China moved to make amends. It reversed course from an ideologically motivated policy of supporting radical groups in developing nations to one of pragmatism and "mutual" economic development. And African nations reciprocated. On October 25, 1971, twenty-six African nations were among the seventy-six that voted in support of China's admission into the UN. Mao Zedong, Communist China's founder and leader, paid tribute to those nations when he noted, "The African brothers sent China into the door of the UN" (Hickey and Guo 2010, 127–128; Harnet-Sievers, Marks, and Naidu

2010, 92). China pursued a non-confrontational policy as it increasingly emphasized “noninterference . . . equality and mutual benefit, pursuing practical results, adopting various ways and seeking common development” (Hickey and Guo 2010, 129). Consistent with the new direction, China withdrew support from Cameroon’s UPC, affirming what the conservative British conservative politician Benjamin Disraeli had stated in the nineteenth century—that foreign policy is about “permanent interests” and not “permanent friends” or “permanent enemies.” (Hickey and Guo 2010, 129)

Prior to supporting China’s membership into the UN, Ahidjo had moved for a change in policy, declaring in 1970 that the UN was too important an organization for China to be kept out indefinitely. The following year, Cameroon withdrew its support from Taiwan and recognized Communist China, and on March 26, 1971, both nations established diplomatic relations following “lengthy” negotiations between Feng Yu, Chinese ambassador to Mauritania, and Vincent Efont, Cameroon’s minister of foreign affairs. On December 21, 1971, Lague Tsobny was named Cameroon’s ambassador to China, and on March 23rd, 1973, Ahidjo made an official visit to China, and then another one in 1977 (Sinou 1985).

TAP DANCING WITH THE “DRAGON”

During the Ahidjo era, Cameroon’s relation with China was characterized by non-intervention, respect for each other’s sovereignty, and economic and technical cooperation. At a dinner in honor of Ahidjo’s 1977 visit to China, Vice-Premier Li Hsien-Nien and Ahidjo praised each other, restating their commitment to work as equal partners. They repeatedly characterized the relationship as one of “Afro-Asian Solidarity,” “self-centered development,” “respect for sovereignty and non-interference,” and “peace, equality, justice, and freedom.”³ Cameroon’s leadership was easily flattered by those pronouncements, and as a result analysts failed to engage them in a more critical manner.

Sino-Cameroon relations thus began with much optimism, and the Ahidjo team believed Chinese rhetoric of “mutual-gain” and “mutual-benefit.” On September 27, 1972, Ahidjo signed Decree No. 72/500 approving an economic and technical agreement between China and Cameroon. The decree reduced tariffs on imports and exports. In addition, it spelled out the list of manufactured goods to be imported from China, as well as a list of raw materials to be exported to that country. Imports included clothes, shoes, rice, appliances, drinking glasses, and other consumer items. Meanwhile, exports to China were timber, rubber, cocoa, coffee, cotton, and plants for pharmaceutical use. Oil was later added to the list. The agreement of 1972 marked a

beginning of a framework of Sino-Cameroon relations that remains in place to the present. Cameroon's role would be to export raw materials, while China would send to Cameroon manufactured goods.

On May 7, 1975, both countries signed an agreement in which China provided assistance for the purchase of medical equipment. In another economic agreement signed in Peking on October 7, 1977, China extended to Cameroon an interest-free loan of roughly \$9.8 million (60 million Yuan) to be used for the construction of public projects, including the Conference Hall, Lagdo Hydro-electric Dam, and Mbalmayo and Guider hospitals.⁴ To coordinate the economic, social, and cultural relations with China, Ahidjo signed a presidential decree on July 24, 1974, creating the *Bureau Charge des Relations Commerciales avec la Republique Populaire de Chine* (BURECOM) [Office in-charge of Sino-Cameroon Relations]. This agency was charged with coordinating imports and exports, data collection, and assessment of the gains and losses of the trade.

In addition to other forms of aid, China began in 1982 to give concessional loans. Established in 1994, Eximbank doled out concessional loans (also known as preferential or low-interest loans) to African nations on behalf of the Chinese government. Concession loans are designed to improve economic growth. However, nations that accepted the loans agreed to also agree to grant preferential treatment to the project: tax-free repatriation of payments on the loan, relief on import tariffs and lower income tax (Brautigam 2009). Brautigam also argues that the loans were structured to benefit China and also catering to the need of China's economic diplomacy. Like other Chinese aid, concessional loans had additional stringent conditions. The terms of the loans were vague because, as Brautigam noted, China "demonstrates little respect for transparency and other aspects of good governance." Those loans could not be cancelled and repayment was easily rescheduled. Whatever the nature of aid or loans, China was the chief beneficiary (Brautigam 2009, 114; Hubbard 2008, 218). More broadly, Chinese loans were predicated on notions that China would receive Africa's raw materials, and would also use Chinese labor for projects in African nations. Even Chinese unskilled workers were brought in. It has been noted that the Chinese repatriated most of the profit, and in some cases Chinese firms actually brought in their food and cooks, with the result being "a Chinese can work for a year in Cameroon without buying anything locally" (Khan and Baye 2008, 28; Konings 2011, 199). In many cases Chinese companies "import casual laborers, leaving the majority of locals in the cold although Africa has abundance of unskilled labor which could immensely benefit from these projects," wrote Moreblessings Chidaushe (2007, 109). On February 27, 1985, a memo from Cameroon's Ministry of External Relations titled "*Note sur L'état des Relations entre la*

République populaire de Chine et la République du Cameroun [The state of Sino-Cameroon Relations]” confirmed that it was an uneven trade partnership, as shown in Table 12.1.

During Ahidjo’s era, economic arrangements between both countries remained unchanged. Agreements with China did not include initiatives to promote manufacturing in Cameroon. China did not transfer any form of technology to Cameroon and made little effort to genuinely partner with Cameroonian-owned companies. Major projects were completed with mostly Chinese labor. A more celebrated achievement was the construction of the Yaoundé Conference Center (*Palis de Congrès*) formally inaugurated in 1985. Following its completion Chinese technicians were brought in to operate the machines, as confirmed in a 1985 memo: “*A la fin des construction du Palais de Congrès, notre Government avait conclu un contrat de services technique pour l’entretien et la maintenance de cet edifice, des equipment don’t il est dote et de ses abords, avec le Governrment et la Republique Populaire de Chine* [Following the completion of the Conference Hall, we agreed that Chinese technicians remain in Cameroon for a period of time to service and maintain the equipment in the building].”⁵ Additionally, the construction of the Lagdo Hydroelectric Dam in the northern region was inaugurated in 1987, and the Guider and Mbalmayo hospitals were completed and inaugurated within the same period (Ndjio 2009, 608).

Despite those projects, questions were continuously raised about the economic value of Chinese aid. “I have not seen a single Chinese investment project that is productive in any way; they are content with building infrastructure, especially stadiums and congress halls,” one analyst stated. A significant percentage of aid from China went to fund construction projects—bridges, sports stadiums, hospitals, and phone systems. Increasingly, locals argued that Chinese aid was Western aid in a more dangerous dress. Contracts resulting from Chinese aid were executed by Chinese companies who utilized

Table 12.1. Trade Figures between China and Cameroon (In millions of FCFA)

<i>Année</i>	<i>Importations</i>	<i>Exportations</i>	<i>Balance</i>
1976	3373	473	–2980
1977	2971	1330	–1641
1978	6757	450	–6307
1979	5539	400	–5139
1980			–689

Source: Memo, “*Note Sur L’état Des Relations Entre la République Populaire de Chine et la République du Cameroun*,” p. 4, 27 Février, 1985, *Ministère des Etrangères, Direction Afrique Asie, MINFA*.

mostly Chinese workers. Those companies violated many of the local labor laws. Africans were hired and treated as “casual” workers. Chinese companies either paid the worst wages or less than the required minimum wage. Study after study has shown that Chinese-owned construction companies pay below the legal minimum wage in Angola, Namibia, and South Africa. In Botswana, those companies engaged in job discrimination. Unlike African employees, Chinese employees “received subsidized housing, paid annual leave and paid sick leave.”²⁶ In short, Chinese contracts are of minimal benefit to companies in Cameroon and other African nations.

Chinese citizens in Cameroon have been involved in small business activities. Everywhere stores have popped up that are owned by Chinese who continue to hire Chinese employees to sell Chinese imports. In this domain, the process of Chinese operation has been simple. Typically Chinese move in, establish stores in poor areas, and because they price goods below market value, they easily force out local competitors. In Douala, they have stores at the *Douche Municipale* and in other poor neighborhoods. “Indeed, most of Chinese immigrants living in these neighborhoods,” Basile Ndjio wrote, “earn their living as radio or shoe repairers, grocers, peddlers, cart pushers, petty retailers or sex workers.” It was where street vendors and other unskilled Chinese who come to the country hang out (Michel and Beuret 2009, 155; Ndjio 2009, 612). In urban centers in African countries, Chinese owners of small stores moved in and literally took control of several businesses. They are Africa’s new “conquistador” (Alden, Large and Oliveria 2008, 134).

Ahidjo and Biya: The Collision Course

The passing of the baton to Paul Biya, the man who succeeded Ahidjo, was watched all over of the world. On November 4, 1982, Ahidjo in a joyous and celebratory event handed over power to Biya. It was a triumph for African politics, so it seemed. Despite the optics, however, the behind-the-scene drama was filled with conspiracy, manipulation, and double-crossing. Just as Ahidjo had connived to take power during the early part of his career, the French had done the same and pushed him out. It was a case of the chickens coming home to roost.

Biya rose quickly in Cameroonian politics, and in 1982, in the midst of apparent health problems, Ahidjo resigned and Biya became the new President of the Republic of Cameroon. However, Ahidjo maintained his position as Chairman of the CNU. Few Cameroonians had ever heard or knew of Biya before November 4, 1982. But that was about to change. Joan Baxter (2008) has written that Ahidjo was “maneuvered” into resigning because he had become too nationalistic for the French. Among other things, he was reluctant

to support the Chadian Oil Pipeline because of its potential negative impact on local communities and the destruction of the rain forest. It was a move that, put him on a collision course with the French who saw the Pipeline as a financial windfall for Western oil companies. The French had had enough with Ahidjo. They conspired with his French physicians, who fabricated a diagnosis of a chronic illness in Ahidjo and suggested he retire and live the rest of his life in France. Another medical checkup by different physicians that was conducted after Ahidjo had already resigned from power showed him to be in good health. But it was too late to reclaim the presidency (Baxter 2008, 110–113). As Ahidjo had manipulated Andre Marie Mbida and others during his rise to power, similar tactics were used against him.

Shortly after taking power, Biya initiated actions against rivals and used the authority of the state to silence critics. As president, Biya “took several pages from his mentor’s book and perpetuated Ahidjo’s pattern by being the sole candidate . . . and replacing Ahidjo’s ‘northern barons’ with his own (co-ethnic) group of ‘Beti Barons’ and a new North-South, East-West network of clientelistic relationships” (Bayart 1989, 31).

Once in power, Biya proceeded to consolidate his position. Initially, he promised much: democratic reform, efficiency, integrity, morality, and freedom of the press and speech. He pledged the Cameroonian people to a “New Deal” Program, stating that it would restore “rigor,” “moralization,” prosperity, and efficiency (Takougang 1993, 96). He visited Cameroon’s ten regions and appealed to the people for their support, help, and prayers. In Anglophone Cameroon, he spoke in English. The trips gave him much needed visibility (Mbile 2000, 275). Desperate to move beyond the repressive years of the Ahidjo era, few people paid attention to the motivations and actions of their new president. Everyone was fooled, some knowingly and some not.

Despite public pronouncements, Biya quietly implemented policies to keep him and his Bulu/Beti clansmen in control of the political apparatus of the country. Ahidjo loyalists were systematically purged in regular cabinet reshuffles. He also undermined Ahidjo’s position as Chairman of the CNU, and that put both men on a collision course (Bayart 1989, 31). By the time Ahidjo reacted in the spring of 1983, it was too late—Biya had truly grasped the reins of power. Ahidjo left the country and, from France on August 27, resigned his position as Chairman of the CNU. Less than a month later, Biya was elected as Chairman of the party. It was a triumph for him. He now served as Chairman and President of the nation. Each success gave him additional momentum to make his next move. Though he still had more than a year to serve out the rest of Ahidjo’s term, on January 14, 1984, Biya called for a new presidential election and won 99.8% of the votes.

His next move was to remake the party in his image. At the Bamenda Party Congress, referred to as the “New Deal Congress,” the name of the party was changed from the Cameroon National Union to the Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement (CPDM) (Fanso 1989, 180–181; Mbile 2000, 276–279). Two years after becoming president, Cameroonians began referring to Biya as “Papa Biya,” meaning “Father of the nation,” a title he endorsed.⁷ Biya developed a personality cult typical of African leaders of his generation.⁸ In the post-colonial era, those leaders soon mimicked their former colonial masters. Writing in the fourteenth century, the philosopher Ibn Kaldun stated: “Those who are conquered . . . always want to imitate the conqueror in his main characteristics—in his clothing, his crafts and in all his distinctive traits and customs” (Hochschild 1998, 304). And this remains as true today as it was then.

As Biya consolidated his power, he moved to finish off his now exiled former mentor. Less than a month after the elections, Ahidjo, though absent, was among those tried for treason. He was found guilty and sentenced to death. But more trouble was just ahead. In a coup in April of 1984, anti-Biya forces attempted to dethrone his regime. Loyal forces squashed the revolt. Ahidjo was held responsible for instigating the coup and was banished from Cameroon. Cameroonians never heard from him again. It had all happened too quickly. The man who signed Cameroon’s birth certificate was not able to return to the country. He died in exile on November 30, 1989, and is interned at the Muslim cemetery in Dakar, Senegal. The news of his death brought welcome relief to Biya, who, as some have suggested, wished Ahidjo’s “soul a speedy journey to hell” (Le Vine 2003, 33–34). A onetime technocrat and political apprentice, Biya had outmaneuvered his mentor. He proceeded with his policies uninterrupted. Time and time again, Biya employed his considerable political skills to maintain his position. And repeatedly, Cameroonians accommodated him. As Frederick Douglass once aptly wrote, “The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress” (as cited in Foner 1950, 437). Yet absolute power, while certainly offering short-term advantages, has its drawbacks, for it tends to give leaders like Biya a false sense of stability and security.

But something more must be said of the lessons of Ahidjo’s demise. It was surprising that he so easily believed French physicians—especially on such a life-changing diagnosis and without a second opinion. He was doomed by the same techniques he had mastered and repeatedly had used successfully against rivals and opponents. It was, in truth, a case of the chickens coming back to roost. After Ahidjo died, his name was rarely mentioned in public. With Ahidjo out of the way, Biya proceeded to govern as he saw fit.

BIYA'S BEIJING POLICY

During Biya's thirty-four-year presidency, the policy of "non-intervention" and "non-interference" with China has served him well. At major points, when the Biya regime was in trouble, China's non-intervention policy was effective. In the early 1990s, when Cameroon was rocked by protests, demonstrations, and calls for a constitutional conference, Biya's regime almost collapsed. And all through the political maneuvering and upheaval, China maintained a policy of non-interference in the sovereignty of Cameroon.

A more recent example of China's non-intervention policy was the February 2008 protest in Cameroon. In his New Year's wishes to Cameroonians on December 31, 2007, Biya stunned the nation by announcing that presidential term limits violated the principles of democracy. Given that he had only three more years to serve as president, he figured out a way to prolong his tenure in office. Cameroonians, he said, asked him to continue as president. Article 6 of the nation's constitution stipulated a maximum of two consecutive terms, after which the person must vacate the position. Biya asked parliament to change the constitution, and parliamentarians obliged. But Cameroonian youths took to the streets, demonstrated, and protested the underhanded tactic to amend the constitution, thereby shattering global perceptions of Cameroon as a peaceful nation. Western leaders, including then US ambassador to Cameroon, Janet Garvey, publicly spoke up against the constitutional change. Nichola Sarkozy of France asked Biya not to run for re-election.⁹ Biya ignored Western opinion, counting on non-intervention from his Asian partner. He responded to the crisis violently, bringing into urban centers the nation's elite paramilitary force and *Batallion d'intervention rapide* (BIR), who terrorized the population. Young people were machine-gunned, tortured, raped, and brutalized. During the entire process, China made no public statement. Even when young people were attacked a few kilometers away from the Chinese embassy in Yaoundé, there was still no statement. The policy of non-intervention has served both countries well.

Over the years Cameroon and China have exchanged high- and low-level visits, and they have signed numerous economic, technical, and cultural agreements. Since 1972, rarely has a year passed without both nations signing an agreement. Biya has made five official visits to China: 1987, 1993, 2003, 2006, and 2011.¹⁰ Simultaneously, there were countless exchanges at the ministerial and other levels. On the Chinese side there have been high-level visits to Cameroon. In May 1997 Li Peng, China's prime minister, visited Cameroon, and in August 2002, then Prime Minister Zhu Rongji made an official visit to Cameroon. In January 2007, Hu Jintao, China's president, visited Cameroon. In January 2011, Chinese Vice-Premier Hui Lianyu spent

two days in Cameroon. During all the visits economic agreements were either signed or revised. In his *Emergence du Cameroun à L'Horizon 2035 L'Apport de la Chine: La Coopération de Développement, ses Succès et ses Craintes*, Charles Ateba Eyene documented the major Sino-Cameroon agreements signed between 1971 and 2011, and most were economic agreements (Eyene 2012, 80–95).

Sino-Cameroon agreements included contracts to construct the Kribi deep seaport, soccer stadiums, Ayato Water Project in Douala, and several infrastructural projects. In an accord signed by Bello Bouba Maigari, then Cameroon's Minister of State in-charge of Industrial and Commercial Development, and Lu Fuyam, then China's Vice-Minister of External Commerce and Economic Cooperation, both nations agreed to reduce duties on imports and exports. In another agreement in 2006, the Chinese company Shaanxi State Farms bought 10,000 hectares of land in the Center and Western regions of Cameroon to cultivate rice, process cassava, and rear ostrich. Critics charged that government sale of "ancestral lands" to China betrayed traditional norms. As of 2009, rice cultivation done by Chinese workers was already taking place in the Nanga-Eboko region.¹¹ In addition, programs were developed to teach Chinese language and culture.

In 1996, for example, the Chinese Zhejiang Normal University established a Chinese language teaching program in Yaoundé. In collaboration with the International Relations Institute of Cameroon (IRIC), Zhejiang Normal University created a Mandarin language learning center in Yaoundé. In 2007, this center was converted to the Confucius Institute, where students learn Chinese language and culture. That same year, China pledged \$100 million in new grants and cancelled \$32 million of Cameroon's debts. Seven years earlier, in 2000, China cancelled \$34 million of the nation's debts (Shinn and Eisenman 2012, 214 and 306; Nzeugang 2010, 27–28; Khan and Baye 2008, 4; Konings 2011, 4). Another agreement in the same year gave Hangzhov China-Africa BIOTECH Co. Ltd (HCABC), a Chinese company that deals in pharmaceutical products, the right to conduct research in Cameroon. In 2009, Biya formally opened the Gynecology and Obstetrics Hospital and a multi-sports complex, both located in Yaoundé. The Chinese also constructed a hospital in Mbalmayo. Another agreement signed in Beijing on August 3, 2009, by Henry Eyebe Ayissi, then Cameroon's Minister of Foreign Relations and Fu Ziyang, the then Chinese Vice-Minister of Commerce, gave a loan of 50 million Yuan (\$8 million) for the construction of the Gynecological-Obstetric and Pediatric Hospital in Douala.¹² On March 24, 2010, an agreement was signed by Louis Paul Motaze, the then Minister of Economy and Plan, and Fu Ziyang of China, in which China extended another \$8 million (50 million Yuan) loan to Cameroon for various projects. In still another agreement signed in Yaoundé

on January 24, 2012, China agreed to provide to Cameroon medical personnel, including radiologists and anesthetists, and other equipment. They were also charged to train Cameroonians in radiology and other medical skills. In return Cameroon would provide housing and utilities. To pay for the program, China extended an aid package of \$870,000 (5.3 million Yuan). Those technicians were assigned to the Gynecological-Obstetric and Pediatric Hospital in Yaoundé, Buea District Hospital, and to the hospital in Mbalmayo.¹³ In addition, China has awarded scholarships to Cameroonians to study at Chinese institutions. In 2008, forty scholarships were awarded, while the following year, thirty-two scholarships were awarded. Also, agreements were reached with Camtel, Orange, MTN, and CAMPOST. On March 24, 2010, Cameroon's Ministry of Post and Telecommunication reached an agreement with Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd, a Chinese based multi-national company, to improve the nation's telecommunication system.¹⁴

A particularly significant but troubling agreement was entered in 1989. On June 19, Cameroon and China reached an agreement allowing Chinese traditional doctors to practice in Cameroon. The agreement stated the following:

“Les deux parties intensifieront leur coopération dans le domaine de la Médecine Traditionnelle en favorisant les échanges sur:

—L'organisation de la pratique du le médecine traditionnelle

—La reserche sur les plantes medecinales

—Les technique d'appointment en médecine traditionnelle

[The two nations have agreed to cooperate to improve the use and study the effectiveness of traditional medicine as alternative medicine].¹⁵

As a result of the agreement, Cameroon became home to numerous practitioners. There are billboards everywhere advertising Chinese traditional medicine. They promise a cure for every imaginable illness, and the local people believe them. Western-trained physicians protested and called on the Cameroon government to stop “these quacks.” Their presence threatens Cameroonian traditional doctors as their clientele has declined. Cameroonians drifted toward Chinese traditional medicine because it was much cheaper than going to a regular hospital. Additionally, Cameroonians accepted stereotypical notions of Chinese resourcefulness.

During the first decade of the twenty-first century, young Cameroonians migrated to China where they taught English. China was considered to have better opportunities than Cameroon, but those feelings were short-lived—many returned after about a year because of hardship and other frustrations. Particularly bothersome were racial attacks against Africans in China. Africans were humiliated, brutalized, ridiculed, and labeled. For all the talk of equality, Beijing did little to stem the tide of racial attacks against blacks. In

an article titled “A Cameroonian Journalist, Abused and Disabused in China,” Matthew Robertson described the humiliation and hardship Patrick Pieplie Sianne experienced in that country. At different points Sianne was referred to as a “monkey,” and faced recurring harassment (Robertson 2011). Sianne’s case was not unique. Chinese females dating African males were labeled a “disgrace” to their country. Africans were harassed and intimidated. In 1989, Cameroon’s Ministry of Higher Education launched a protest against continuous racism and threatened to pull out its citizens from China. The city of Nanjing was particularly singled out. In a memo dated January 20, 1989, and titled, “*Situation étudiants Camerounaise en Chine*, [The Living Conditions of Cameroonians in China],” ministry officials cabled the Cameroon ambassador to investigate the problems and act accordingly. Racism was more severe, the memo stated, when it involved “*des rapports entre Etudiants Africaines et jeunes filles chinois* [the relationship between Africans and young Chinese females].”¹⁶

This kind of treatment of Cameroonians in China differed remarkably from the humane reception accorded Chinese citizens in Cameroon. Not surprisingly, Chinese regularly immigrated to Cameroon. And Cameroon has proven to be an attractive destination for Chinese immigrants. The country is diverse, has rich soil, raw materials, oil, gas, gold, and because the nation is sparsely populated, there is much land available.¹⁷ Unskilled Chinese and working-class people are accorded a privileged position in Cameroon. As of 2009, Chinese were the only foreigners allowed into the country on an eighteen-month residence visa without a labor contract. When the visa status was extended in February 2007, the Cameroon Embassy in Beijing received 700,000 applications.¹⁸

Chinese immigration to Cameroon dramatically increased at the beginning of the twenty-first century. There are Chinese practicing traditional medicines in virtually every city in Cameroon. The agreement of 1989 inviting them into the country was a license for granting anyone claiming to be a traditional doctor to open a medicine shop. Also immigrating to Cameroon were Chinese women assigned specific obligations in African nations. Chinese females initially arrived in Cameroon and other African nations in the 1980s as “cultural diplomats.” To borrow and paraphrase in a completely different context the words of President John Kennedy’s famous challenge to young Americans, these women were told to go to Cameroon to “do something for their country.” China’s overriding mission in Africa was to secure markets and guarantee a supply of raw materials. To accomplish that objective, China signed agreements with African nations requiring Chinese companies to engage in a variety of development projects in Cameroon, and most of their employees were Chinese males. Young Chinese females were encouraged to go to

those countries to supply company to Chinese male workers. It was a “civic duty,” they were told. In addition, Chinese companies’ policies discouraged relationships between Chinese men and African females. But those policies were short-lived because things began to change from the early 1990s. Given Cameroon’s liberal immigration policy toward China, far too many Chinese females arrived in the country. Because many of them lived in Douala, a town listed as “one of the world’s most expensive cities,” those females sought other avenues for financial survival.¹⁹ Their problem was compounded because the Chinese male population shunned earlier restrictions and established relationships with locals. Indeed, young Chinese males and females were manipulated on the chessboard of diplomacy, and as citizens in a country in which dissent is brutally suppressed, they had few options. “These young prostitutes put their sex, and sensuality at their states’ disposal in the same way as Chinese migrant males did with their strength and energy,” Basile Ndjio wrote (Ndjio 2009, 610–611).

The exploitation of females for diplomatic gain and espionage is not a new practice, but China has taken the practice to extremes. Cameroon’s economic capital, Douala, is the epic center of Chinese prostitutes in the country; they are concentrated in neighborhoods such as the Quartier Village, *Carrefour Elf Aeroport* in residential areas of *Bonamoussadi*, *Makepe* and *Bonapriso*, and the major trading districts of Akwa. Critics have likened their presence to a “Sexual Tsunami.” During the day, they hang out at nail salons, Chinese restaurants, and Chinese-owned petit shops, and at night they walk the streets. They are well-organized with pimps and the like. And they have offered stiff competition to locals. Critics have noted, sarcastically, that like Chinese goods, Chinese prostitutes are equally low-priced. They “will turn tricks for as little as FCFA 2000 (\$4.25), whereas the locals, the famous *Wolowoss*, won’t get into bed for less than FCFA5000 [\$10.75].” (Michel and Beuret 2009, 115) Basil Ndjio, whose work was based on extensive interviews of prostitutes and their “Johns” in Douala, agreed with the assertion: “We overheard that these street prostitutes charged between 1500 [\$3.00] and 2000 [\$4.00] FCFA for a quick sex session, and were available for the whole night for customers who could pay 5000 [10.00] FCFA” (Ndjio 2009, 612). He added,

so synonymous have Chinese restaurants become with brothels and close houses in Douala, that nowadays, when people say that they are going for a meal in a Chinese restaurant, they frequently also mean that they are going to solicit Shanghai beauty in a Chinese restaurant. (Ndjio 2009, 61)

As of 2009 they were over three hundred Chinese prostitutes in Douala. Some have completed their term of “cultural diplomacy” and are now settled in the country. Others married their former clients (Michel and Beuret 2009, 118).

FOCAC AND A HIGH POINT OF BIYA'S DIPLOMACY TOWARDS CHINA

A particularly significant highlight in China-Africa's relations has been the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). FOCAC was created by Beijing in 2000 to help develop better Sino-African relations. The meetings alternate between Beijing and African nations. The first FOCAC Ministerial Conference October 1–3, 2000, was designed to promote friendship and cooperation among members. The event was attended by over eighty ministers from China and representatives from forty-four African countries. Following that first conference, China cancelled debts of thirty-one African nations.²⁰ The second Ministerial Conference of FOCAC took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in December 2003 and focused on ways to resolve common problems. At the end of the meeting China signed 382 assistance agreements with African countries.²¹

Whatever the positives, however, the framework of FOCAC remains problematic. China sets the agenda and controls meeting deliberations. Simply put, the organization was created by China to promote Chinese interest. Commenting on notions of “equal partnership,” Chidaushe wrote that “it is impossible to engage on an equal footing as long as the parties are not on the same level. China is coming in as a donor and Africa as a recipient” (Chidaushe 2007, 110).

Of all the previous FOCAC meetings, the Summit of 2006 was the most important. It was a memorable event attended by 1,700 representatives from forty-eight African nations, including forty-one presidents. The event marked the fiftieth anniversary of China's official involvement in Africa. It showcased China's leadership role among non-aligned and developing nations. Prior to the 2006 event, Chinese President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiaboo had visited ten African nations to dramatize the importance of Sino-African relations (Manji and Marks 2007, vii). China did much to please its guests. Streets in Beijing were decorated with African flags and artifacts, African cuisines were available, and welcome signs proclaiming “Amazing Africa,” “Economic Partnership,” and “Strategic Partnership” were everywhere. The Chinese made the right moves and did the right things to welcome a group whose members are more often seen as junior partners by Western leaders. Such a reception for African leaders had never occurred either in Washington, London, or Paris. It was the “Year of Africa,” many observers have written. According to Manji and Marks, the 2006 Summit was “strong on motherhood and apple pie rhetoric, promising a new type of ‘strategic partnership’ founded on political equality and mutual trust, economic win-win cooperation and cultural exchanges” (Manji and Marks 2007, 1–2). The decorations

for the Summit and the Summit itself were a “pageantry,” wrote Brautigam (2009), adding that the promises made at the three-day event basically “married aid to China’s global ambition” (Brautigam 2009, 241). The official booklet of FOCAC stated the theme of the Summit as “Friendship, peace, cooperation and development.” China’s president Hu Jintao emphasized this theme when he declaimed that “China and Africa are good friends, good partners, and good brothers.” At the end of the Summit participants produced two documents: *Declaration of the Beijing Summit* and *Beijing Action Plan (2007–2009)*. Those documents reinforced ties between China and Africa and promised additional collaboration. The China-Development Fund was established, which invested \$500 million in over two dozen projects, and China promised additional infrastructure construction in Africa. In 2006, China’s aid to Cameroon totaled \$1.7 billion (Brautigam 2009, 285).

Then, barely five years after the Beijing Summit, Sino-Cameroon relations reached another milestone, the celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two nations (Alden and Oliveria 2008, 2–8). To commemorate the anniversary, the Cameroon embassy in Beijing produced a pamphlet documenting key moments in Sino-Cameroon relations. On the top of the document’s second page is a featured quotation from a speech by Hu Jintao, the Chinese president: “*La Chine comprend et soutient les efforts déployés par le Cameroun pour devenir un nouveau pays émergent et elle entend continuer ‘a l’aider ‘a renforcer sa capacité d’auto-développement durable* [China understands that Cameroon is a developing nation and promises to assist its progress].” On the bottom of the page is another quotation, this one from Biya defining the nature of Sino-Cameroon relations: “*J’irais jusqu’ ‘a dire que la coopération entre nous deux pays est exemplaire et qu’elle me parait pouvoir servir de modèle ‘a L’échelle de notre continent* [Our cooperation is exemplary and should serve as a model for our continent].” Educated at the University of Paris, Paul Biya’s language is laced with Enlightenment ideas. China’s relations with Cameroon, he stated, are “*exemplaire . . . efficace . . . et généreuse.*”²²

As part of the anniversary, Biya took another official trip to China. It was an election year in Cameroon, and his trip, barely two months before the election, confirmed his confidence. Much happened during the trip. The pro-government newspaper, *Cameroon Tribune*, in an editorial on July 20 told Cameroonians they had “much to smile” from the Sino-Cameroonian relations. China, the editorial continued, has made major contributions to Cameroon. Authored by Shey Peter Mabu, the editorial was a positive portrayal of China’s role in Cameroon. In another editorial, Nkendem Forbinake lauded China’s efforts in Cameroon. “Their involvement in health is very much appreciated,” he wrote.²³ Following a working session between Biya and Hu

Jintao, seven economic and technical agreements were signed. In a speech Biya praised China for its unprecedented economic growth, noting that China is today the “world’s second largest economy . . . [and] . . . counts among our most reliable and most faithful external partners.” He continued:

Cooperation between Cameroon and China is marked by outstanding achievements in various domains including agriculture, health, education, infrastructure, telecommunications, culture, and sports. . . . Our two Governments attach great importance to principles and values such as peaceful conflict resolution, non-interference in the domestic affairs of states and respect for their territorial integrity.²⁴

And later, in an address to African diplomats in Beijing, Biya challenged Africans to emulate China’s example because “hard work and determination” can eliminate poverty. The China trip was timely. It showed Biya on the world stage acting presidential and doing the nation’s business. Cameroonians in Beijing endorsed him as their sole candidate in the upcoming election.²⁵ And Biya won the elections by a landslide.

MIXED RESULTS

There were problems, though, despite all the praises, successes, and celebrations of Sino-Cameroonian relations. Increasingly, questions have been raised about Chinese practices. Even its widely professed policy of noninterference has not been total. The policy was applicable only in times when China’s political and economic interests have not been threatened. Furthermore, China’s aid came with an unconditional acceptance of the one-China policy. Thus partners who establish diplomatic relations with Taiwan put in jeopardy any aid prospects and face potential suspension of diplomatic relations with China. China repeatedly intervened in domestic affairs of partners. In 2006, for example, when the opposition candidate in the Zambian election, Michael “King” Cobra Sata, threatened to make China’s exploitation of Zambia a campaign issue, Chinese officials threatened to suspend aid to Zambia if Sata won the elections. In his study of Chinese operations in the Sudan, Askouri (2007) argued that China’s pronouncements of noninterference and nonintervention are “misleading,” because China “intervenes in the internal affairs of the countries . . . China interferes deeply in the domestic affairs of its partners, but always to the benefit of the ruling group” (Askouri 2007, 73).

Equally, it must be understood that Chinese aid—no matter its form—were loans. Whether in the form of technicians, equipment, military hardware, construction material, or unskilled workers, all were loans that Cameroon was under contractual obligations to repay. Given the nation’s rising trade deficit

and huge loans already incurred from China, it was almost certain Cameroon would not attain its goal of poverty reduction by 2035. Repayment of some of Cameroon's loans are scheduled to begin in 2020, an indication the nation will remain indebted to China for generations to come.²⁶ In devising Cameroon's foreign policy toward China, the Biya regime displayed limited foresight.

What's more, particularly given the current direction of global events, it may become more difficult for China to continue with a non-interference policy. More and more the world is focusing on issues of human rights and good governance, and repeated violations of both—evident on both sides of the Pacific—will continue to deny China an opportunity to emerge as a truly great power. Great power status is not determined solely by economic imperatives. China must do more to become a leading voice against injustice, corruption, human rights abuse, environmental destruction, and it must be an advocate for good governance. As for Biya and other lifetime presidents in Africa, time is not on their side. Biya's successful manipulation of the constitution, his corrupt administration, and a culture he has continued to create in order to silence critics are clear reminders that the voices of protest must continue. Biya's current anti-corruption campaign is a step in the right direction, but it cannot be politically motivated, and suspects cannot be detained indefinitely at the Kondengui Central Prison and other facilities.²⁷

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations, Cameroon's position as a supplier of raw materials and minerals has remained unchanged. Cameroon remains a recipient of cheap imports from China. And Cameroon's economy is worse off today than it was forty years ago. Because of a dramatic jump in imports, Cameroon's trade deficit with China has been on the rise. According to Khan and Francis (2008), Cameroon's trade deficit with China "accounted for 82 percent of the total trade deficit in 2005." A list of Cameroon's fading and disappearing industries is a sobering one. Though Cameroon produces rubber, for example, there is no shoe industry in the country. And the clothing industry, Cameroon Industrial Cotton Processor (CICAM) is almost non-functional. Konings has argued that "the so-called 'textiles tsunami' illustrates the adverse impact of massive Chinese export machine on local industries" (Konings 2011, 187). Those exports have had a devastating impact on the clothing industry in the country. The profession of tailoring, too, has almost disappeared in the country. Almost forty years ago, tailoring was an attractive profession to many young people, but today it is almost extinct. Similarly, cheap motorbike imports from China have almost crippled taxi business in many cities. And the fish industry is collapsing. Though Cameroon is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean and also has many major rivers, much of the fish consumed in the country is now imported from China. Another case in point: doughnuts. Many young Cameroonians grew

up making and selling doughnuts to augment family income, but doughnuts are now produced in massive quantities by Chinese, and are sold at a reduced price. In Bamenda, Chinese make and sell what they call “*beinge Chinois*,” a doughnut made from locally made flour; in Douala, Chinese go from door to door selling *puff-puff*, a type of doughnut. (Mbori 2005). And Chinese traditional medicine has equally become a health hazard.

There is no reliable data on the number of Chinese in Cameroon. Given that they are involved in small trade and family-style businesses, it is nearly impossible to know those who are legal or illegal in the country. Interviews of Chinese citizens in Yaoundé reveal that family and friends initially arrived, and they later invited others to join them.²⁸ Many can neither speak English, nor French, nor Pidgin English, nor any of the local languages. While Chinese arrival and settlement patterns in Cameroon are typical of movements of other groups to other parts of the world, a fundamental difference has been that, in most other countries, visitors provided convincing reasons before being granted visas; Cameroon’s immigration policy, however, was and is less stringent on Chinese immigrants. In contrast, China is among the most difficult places to obtain an entry visa to visit. Thus Biya’s “open door policy” toward Chinese immigration may have created more problems than previously imagined. Chinese operate clothing, appliance, and grocery stores, do construction work, and peddle, and Cameroonians watch from the sidelines. Because the Chinese price their goods below market value, they have successfully forced Cameroonians out of business in strategic locations in urban centers. In short, they have displaced, undermined, and destroyed Cameroonian entrepreneurship.

Urban centers in African nations are now home to thousands of young Chinese. From the turn of the twenty-first century, young Chinese arrived and settled in African cities in massive numbers. And as noted, they have engaged in different forms of economic activity, including shoe repair, petit trading, peddling, and prostitution. Africans found it hard “to understand how a young chap could fly from Shanghai to sell combs and deodorant. It is a daily fare in many of Africa’s urban centers (Askouri 2007, 74). Whether in Dakar, Abidjan, Libreville, or Lagos, it is a familiar story.

CONCLUSIONS

While the “Beijing consensus” seems preferable to the “Washington consensus,” Cameroonians have become more apprehensive, and each day they raise new questions about Chinese business practices. The politics of non-interference, while pragmatic, has created an anti-Chinese presence in the

country. It is unclear how much longer business can continue as usual. These concerns are of course not unique to Cameroon. But Africa's "benefit from Chinese aid is minimal," wrote Chidaushe (2007, 110). Other scholars have come to a similar conclusion. What Moelesti Mbeki, then deputy Chairman of South African Institute of International Affairs, said in Beijing in 2005 remains very valid today: "Africa sells raw materials to China and China sells manufactured goods to Africa. This is a dangerous equation that reproduces Africa's old relationship with colonial powers" (as quoted in Manji and Marks 2007, 5). He might have added that China also exports untrained people to Africa. African nations are in need of engineers, scientists, physicians, and water resource technicians. Cameroon already has enough unskilled and unemployed people of its own. Because of technology, the Internet, and the rapid movement of ideas, goods, and people across national and continental boundaries, anti-Chinese protest activities in Cameroon and in other African nations will continue. Biya and other leaders in the region may have to more seriously embrace calls for an "African Consensus," one that takes into consideration the economic needs and realities of the local people. Both the "Washington Consensus," and "Beijing Consensus," have stalled Africa's development efforts, and therefore need an alternative paradigm. The old adage of silencing, manipulating, and coopting may no longer be sufficient. Africa's silent majority may finally be pushed to the brink. China's booming economy will continue to need raw materials, and therefore will need Africa for generations to come. Africa's voices of protest must continue to grow louder against unfair business practices in the region. But China can pre-empt a rising tide by working for a more equitable trade arrangement, which would result in a genuine "win-win gain" as articulated in many of the slogans in FOCAC. China can begin to transfer relevant technology and assign to Cameroonian-owned firms a percentage of Chinese-funded contracts. China's actions in Cameroon and other African nations must match its "win-win gain" pronouncement.

NOTES

1. This paper was originally presented at the African Studies Association Conference in Baltimore in 2012, and portions were published in the *African Studies Review* 58 (3, December 2015): 171–189. I thank Cambridge University Press for granting permission for me to use portions of the publication in this chapter.

2. Memorandum to the President, March 13, 1962, unsigned, Cameroon-Ahidjo Visit, March 1962, Box 112a, President's Office Files, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, Massachusetts; "Head of Cameroon Says Reds Aid Foes," *New York Times*, March 15, 1962; Julius A. Amin, *The Peace Corps in Cameroon* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press), 64–65.

3. “President Ahidjo Visits China;” “At the Banquet in Honour of President –Vice-President Li-Hsien-nien’s Speech (Excerpt);” “President Ahidjo’s Speech (Excerpt).” *Peking Review* 20 (42, October 14, 1977): 3, 14–16.

4. Sinou, pp. 15–16, V-XVII; Le Présidence de la République, Decret NO: 75/387 Du 9 Juin 1975, Portant publication du Protocole d’Accord entre le Gouvernement de la République Unie du Cameroun et le Gouvernement de la *République Populaire de Chine, relatif à l’envoi par la Chine, d’une équipe médicale au Cameroun, Yaoundé, 7 Juin 1975, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Yaoundé (Hereafter referred to as MINFA)*; Le Président de la République, Decret No: 78/394/Du 12 Septembre 1978, Portant ratification de l’Accord de Coopération Economique et Technique entre le Gouvernement de la République Unie du Cameroun et le Gouvernement de la République Populaire de Chine, signe le 7 Octobre 1977 a’ Peking, MINFA; Charles Ateba Eyene, *Émergence Du Cameroun a L’Horizon 2005 L’Apport de la Chine: La Coopération du Développement, ses succès et ses craintes* (Yaoundé, Cameroun: Editions Saint-Paul): 86.

5. Memo, Director General to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Congress Palace, 23 Mai 1985; Memo, 27 Fevrier 1985, MINFA; Piet Konings, *The Politics of Neoliberal Reforms in Africa: State and Civil Society in Cameroon* (Bamenda, Cameroon, 2011): 193–194.

6. *Chinese Investments in Africa: Opportunity or Threat for Workers?* (ALRN, 2009): 38–45.

7. When Biya visited the US in 1985 elderly referred to him as “papa Biya.” With the passage of time, he was more routinely referred as the “Father of the Nation.” Party uniforms also referred to him as father of the nation.

8. Blaine Harden, *Africa: Dispatches from a Fragile Continent* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1990), 217. In the chapter titled, “The Good, the Bad, and the Greedy,” Harden writes of a typical African “strongman: “His face is on the money. His photograph hangs in every office in his realm. His ministers wear gold pins with tiny photographs of Him on the lapels of their tailored-striped suits. . . . His every pronouncement is reported on the front page. He sleeps with the wives and daughters of powerful men in his government. He shuffles ministers without warning, paralyzing policy decisions as he undercuts pretenders to his throne. He scapegoats minorities to shore up popular support. He bans all political parties except the one he controls. He rigs elections. He emasculates the courts. He cows the press. He stifles academia. He goes to church,” 217.

9. Author’s interview of Ambassador Janet Garvey, US Embassy, Yaoundé, Cameroon, July 2008; Eyene, 112.

10. Pamphlet, 40eme Anniversaires des Relations Sino-Camerounaises, 1971–2011, p. 5, MINFA; “Cameroon and China set Higher Goals,” *Cameroon Tribune*, 22 July 2011; Nzeugang, 32; Khan and Baye, 4.

11. *Accord de Coopération Commerciale, Economique et Technique Entre le Gouvernement de la République du Cameroun et le Gouvernement de la République Populaire de Chine*, Yaoundé, 30 aout 2002, MINFA; *Avenant No. 1 au Protocole d’Accord du 13 Jan Janvier 2006*, 3 July 2007, MINFA; Konings: 193.

12. Relève des Conclusions de la Visite des Responsables de L’ Entreprse Chinois <<HANGZHOU CHINA—AFRICA BIOTECH Co Ltd>> (HCABC) au Cameroun

du 10 au 22 Juin 2007, Yaoundé; Avenant No 1 au Protocole D'Accord du 13 Janvier 2006 entre le Government de la Peublique du Cameroun et la Societé Denomme integrate-Indusrty-Commerce Corporation of Shaanxi Land Reclamation and States Farms Relatif a la Realization des Investissements Agricoles au Cameroun, Yaoundé, 3 Aout 2009; Letter, M. Xue Jinwei, Ambassadeur de la République Populaire de Chine au Cameroun a S. E. M. Andre Mama Fouda, Ministre de la Santé Publique de la République du Cameroun, 24 Janvier 2012, MINFA.

13. Accord de Cooperation Economie et Technique entre le Government de la République Populaire de Chine et le Government de la République du Cameroun, Yaoundé, 24 mars 2012.

14. Protocol d'Accord en matiere de formation des nouvelles technologies dans le reseau postal Camerounais entre La République du Cameroun et Huawei Technological Co., Limited, Yaoundé, mars 24, 2010, MINFA.

15. Letter, Minister of Public Health to Minister of External Affairs, Programme d'exécution de l'accord culturel Sino-Camerounais, Ref. M/L no3734/DIPL/D1/B/EO, 19 Juin 1989, MINFA; Eyene: 87–88.

16. Memo, *Situation étudiants Camerounaise en Chine*, 20 Jan. 1989, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Yaoundé, MINFA.

17. Serge Michel and Michel Beuret, *China's Safari: On the Trail of Beijing's Expansion in Africa*, trans. Raymond Valley (New York: Nation Books, 2009), 118. Jean-Germain Gros, "Preface," in *Cameroon: Politics and Society*, xv.

18. Michel and Michel, 118.

19. "Cameroon, Life in Douala, one of the World's Most Expensive Cities," *IRIN* (August 12, 2008), <http://www.irinnews.org/report/79784/cameroon-life-in-douala-one-of-the-world-s-most-expensive-cities>. (Accessed December 5, 2013).

20. *Forum on China-Africa Cooperation* (no publication city or date), 5; Hickey and Guo, 130.

21. *Forum on China-Africa*.

22. 40eme Anniversaire, pp. 2, 6, Cameroon Embassy, Beijing 2012, Ministry of External Relations.

23. Nkendem Fobinake, "Exemplary South-South Cooperation," *Cameroon Tribune* (January 12, 2011: 10); Shey Peter Mabu, "Ties that Bind," *Cameroon Tribune* (July 20, 2011), 3.

24. Paul Biya, "China Remains Reliable, Faithful Partner," *Cameroon Tribune* (July 21, 2011), 4.

25. Paul Biya, "Address by the Head of State Meeting with the African diplomatic Corps in the People's Republic of China, Beijing," *Cameroon Tribune* (July 21, 2011), 5.

26. Accorde de Cooperation Economique et Technique entre le Gouvenement de la Republique Populaire de Chine et le Gouvenement de la Republique du Cameroun, le 24 mars 2010, Yaounde, Cameroun, MINFA.

27. Paul Biya has gone after those he believed embezzled state funds. Former senior government officials in jail include Ephraim Inoni (prime minister from 2004–2009), Marafa Hamidou Yaya (former secretary general in the presidency), Jerome Mendouga (former ambassador to the UN), Yves Michel Folso (former Camair head),

and many others. Assisting him is the US embassy policy not to grant visas to travel to the US to those who have been identified as embezzlers including their families. Former US ambassador to Cameroon Janet Garvey explained this policy in her office in July 2009; International Final Group, Cameroon: 28.

28. Interviews conducted with three store owners in Yaoundé, June, 2013.

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Chapter Thirteen

Foreign Volunteer Organizations in Cameroon

The Case of the United States Peace Corps¹

Julius A. Amin

INTRODUCTION

Post Books and quarterly reports of United States Peace Corps Volunteers who served in Cameroon provide glimpses into the triumphs, challenges, and failures of service in that country. Nicknamed in streets as “*whiteman*,” “*oyebo*,” “*nasara*,” and “*le blanc*,” Volunteers wrote extensively about their work in *Post Books*.² In the town of Konye, Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV) Mike Kuta experienced the “best of Peace Corps: adventure, another culture, language, farming, and meaningful transformation.” At another location, PCV Erin Nilon’s greatest challenge was “finding counterparts and . . . motivated people with whom to work.” She continued, “So often people refuse to collaborate . . . unless they will gain something material,” she wrote. For Jami Cull, the Peace Corps was “life-changing” and helped to restore her “self-confidence.” It was different for Jeannie Frazier, who “experienced the worst sexual harassers in Cameroon.” She wrote, “I’ve been grabbed, grubbed, and touched inappropriately numerous times.” And Volunteers’ other headaches included weak language skills, isolation, and lack of understanding of the role of Peace Corps on the part of the host country’s nationals.³ Yet Volunteers stay on in Cameroon, where the Peace Corps has served uninterruptedly since inception in 1962 to the present. As of 2011, 3,227 Volunteers had served in Cameroon, and of that number, 1,674 were women.⁴

On March 1, 1961, John F. Kennedy used an executive order to create the Peace Corps, and in September, the US Congress passed the Peace Corps Act with the goal “to help the peoples of developing areas in meeting their needs for trained manpower, and to help promote a better understanding of the American people on the part of the peoples served and a better

understanding of the other peoples on the part of the American people.”⁵ Established at the height of the Cold War, the Peace Corps has outlived that East-West ideological conflict as Volunteers are currently serving in Cameroon and many other African nations. In Cameroon, Volunteers worked in education, community health, HIV prevention, agro forestry, and small-business development.

This chapter examines the role of the Peace Corps in Cameroon from its inception to the present. It argues that, as a foreign volunteer and governmental organization, the Peace Corps played a vital role in Cameroon’s development during the first three decades following that nation’s independence, but that from the 1990s, the agency’s role in Cameroon has been more uncertain and as a result, has produced mixed results.

SERVICE IN EDUCATION

Peace Corps service in Cameroon began in the area of education, and education has remained a focal point of Volunteers’ service to the present. In the area of teaching, Volunteers were assigned to secondary, technical, and high schools where they taught several disciplines, including history, geography, computer literacy, mathematics, biology, chemistry, literature, English, and more. In the immediate period after independence, Cameroon’s education faced critical shortages in not only teachers, but also in every form of teaching aide. Volunteers stepped in and filled an important vacuum. In addition to classroom teaching, they started libraries and reading clubs, and they introduced Cameroonians to aspects of American culture. Their service enhanced the nation’s bilingualism, especially in their role as English teachers in Francophone Cameroon. Plus their service helped to stabilize existing secondary and teachers’ training schools, and contributed to the creation of new post-primary school institutions.

But teaching in Cameroon came with problems. Such basic classroom materials as textbooks, chalk, pens, pencils, and desks were absent. Volunteers were also shocked at the work culture in which Cameroonian colleagues showed neither commitment nor seriousness. For example, the rate of absences by teachers was alarmingly high. Teachers took off for long periods—without any consequences. PCV Andrea Cermanski never understood why many of her colleagues at the *Lycée de Yabassi* were frequently absent despite an already severe shortage of teachers in the school. Some Volunteers spent time in Yaoundé looking for transfer possibilities out of Yabassi because the community, they claimed, was too rural for them. Chris Camillo’s high school in Banyo “was not well-run because two of the administrators

were frequently absent.” Zachery Clarke had similar observations at *Lycée Bilingue de Tibati*.⁶ And so it went. Schools went without basic maintenance.

As if those were not enough problems. Teachers frequently engaged in questionable conduct in a variety of forms. For instance, having sex with students was a common practice. At *Lycée de Kribi*, PCV Serena Williams initially adopted a policy of “see no evil hear no evil,” but she was overwhelmed by the sexual exploitation of students. To say that “teachers sleep with students,” she wrote, “is putting it mildly.” PCV Kelly Vaughn shuddered over the revelation that many teachers engaged in sexual acts with their students at Bakondji. Volunteers’ post books are filled with examples of such activities. In addition to witnessing sexual abuse and exploitation, Volunteers resented the common practice of physical punishment at institutions. In Cameroonian schools, PCV ED Kay observed, “Corporal punishment is literally used, but beyond that, the students are subjected to a constant stream of verbal abuse. . . . The behavior of the Cameroonian teacher seems to reflect the surrounding society which is strongly authoritarian with subordinates fawning over them and at the same time, treating their underlings with disdain.”⁷

Not all problems were the result of forces beyond the control of Volunteers. Volunteers’ performance as teachers was problematic as well. The only qualification of many of those assigned to the Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) program was that they were native speakers of English, and this often proved to be simply not enough. In college, many Volunteers majored neither in English nor education, nor did they have the pedagogical skills to serve as teachers. Others taught courses that they themselves had “flunked” in college. Volunteers were clearly in a different educational system in a different country, and therefore many were lost when it came to such basic issues as preparing lectures and enforcing class discipline.⁸ Of course the problem was not unique to Cameroon. As Jonathan Zimmerman concluded, “For many Volunteer teachers in Africa lesson planning, lecturing, homework assignments, and student discipline all proved enormous hurdles for Americans” (Zimmerman 2006, 143).

Associate Peace Corps Director Sammy Enyong noted: that “some of them [PCVs] were not just qualified for the job they came to perform” and that a fraction of the Volunteers were in Cameroon “for tourism,” and “a 2 year paid vacation.” Former Peace Corps Country director Robert Strauss repeatedly questioned the caliber of Peace Corps recruits, writing that it is “much less clear what inexperience Americans have to offer Cameroon.” Cameroonian Peace Corps training officer David Tiomajou agreed, stating, “The Volunteers who come do not have any experience, are not qualified, they are very young. Most often, the objectives of these Volunteers are not in line with that of Peace Corps.” Other criticisms included the fact that Volunteers “have

diplomas without experience,” and “Some are in Cameroon just to improve their academic c.v.” Volunteers’ American accents presented additional difficulties. And personal stresses complicated Volunteers’ experiences. Isolation, sexual harassment, and financial problems were common. Other problems, Enyong wrote, included “medical, pregnancies, HIV, [and] etc.”⁹

Without much knowledge of an educational system heavily dependent on exams, Volunteers resorted to makeshift measures. They did not understand Cameroon’s General Certificate Exam (GCE) program in the schools, and so school principals generally did not assign Volunteers to teach students scheduled to take the GCE; rather, they were given lower-level classes to teach. In short, the effectiveness of Volunteers as teachers was questioned at several levels. PCV Heather Kathrens argued that the impact of Volunteers in teaching was minimal: “PC has been in Cameroon for 50 years now. . . . Villages have had English teachers for 50 years and still don’t speak English.”¹⁰

A recurring problem Volunteers faced in Cameroon was that of underemployment. Many were assigned to an average of only ten to fifteen hours per week, and as a result they had much free time. PCV Janice Kay “found herself underemployed at her secondary school.” Others were simply bored—and frequently just left their station without permission. “I was in Yaoundé a lot. . . . The first three months I stayed here pretty much, after that I went every other two or three weeks. I think if I hadn’t went to Yaoundé as much as I did I would have had early termination” wrote a Volunteer assigned to a school in Monetélé. Clearly, Volunteers traveled extensively.¹¹ In 2001, of the thirty Volunteers assigned to teaching math and sciences, roughly twenty percent were frequently away from post without authorization (*clandos*). Complaints from local Peace Corps administrators did not curb the practice.¹²

There were other problems. There was alcoholism, with multiple examples of “binge drinking,” “substance abuse,” and “visible irresponsible sexual” activities, which reinforced perceptions that Americans are reckless and “easy.” Others displayed a pattern of “dismissive, condescending, and rude” attitudes toward Cameroonians. Volunteers couldn’t wait for the weekend “when they can get together and party.” Chronic violators of policy often rebuked and ignored those who attempted to correct them, prompting others to list “being around other Volunteers” as one of their biggest challenges in Cameroon. Strauss lashed out at the “indiscipline” and a feeling of “entitlement” by certain Volunteers, calling on others not to give up on their colleagues:

It is not only around sexual relations that some Volunteers make unhealthy decisions. Drugs and excessive alcohol consumption are significant problems in our community and we are all responsible to one another to make sure that a problem does not evolve into a tragic and avoidable event.¹³

Yet lack of discipline by Volunteers was commonplace in African nations. RPCV Michael Buckler wrote in *From Microsoft to Malawi: Learning on the Front Lines as a Peace Corps Volunteer* about Volunteers' excesses in Malawi. Houses rented by the Peace Corps office for Volunteers who came to urban centers turned into dungeons for sex and alcohol. "As Volunteers arrived in town," Buckler wrote, "It is time for an adrenaline-fueled smorgasbord of food, sex, drugs, Internet, alcohol, and dance clubs." Volunteers who served in Mali, Nigeria, Ghana, and other nations documented similar experiences. "The Peace Corps harlot," a female Volunteer was labeled in Nigeria after she was caught having an affair with a married man. In other cases some were accused of much more "unprofessional conduct."¹⁴

In Cameroon, other problems existed. Too often the site administrators were ill-informed, ill-briefed, and ill-prepared for the arrival of Volunteers. Volunteers arrived at work sites only to realize there was no one waiting for them and their residences weren't even ready. When PCV Aviva Grasso first arrived at her site, "the community wasn't really sure what to do with me." Arriving at work in Tignère, Christine Eyeslork's assignment "lacked a lot of clarity and focus." McCormick wandered what the "hell" his job description of "Technical Advisor to the Nso Area Coffee Cooperative," meant. "What was the Nso Area Cooperative," he asked. Unfortunately, many examples of similar experiences are documented by Volunteers.¹⁵

And yet, despite the range of problems, Volunteers were respected in their communities. Students appreciated their work, and generally liked hanging out with them. When parents of Volunteers visited from the US huge celebrations were made in their honor. The parents of Kelly Vaughn, Pat and Ellen Vaughn, experienced firsthand the hospitality when they visited Bakondji in 2003, and Ellen later described the welcome celebration as very moving. Never had they seen people with so little material wealth give so much to people they knew so little about. It was their way of thanking them for letting Kelly teach in their community. The Vaughns left Cameroon with an understanding of the immense challenges faced by people in developing areas, and they increasingly became aware of many of the things Americans take for granted.¹⁶ Over the years, parents, relatives, and friends have visited Volunteers in African nations as a result of their experiences.

SERVICE IN AGRO-FORESTRY AND PERMANENT FARMING SYSTEMS

In 1991, Cameroon's Agro-Forestry and Permanent Farming Systems were introduced in the western province, and in 1999 services were extended to

North Cameroon. Volunteers placed within the domain of Agro-Forestry assisted farmers with knowledge on how to maximize output while at the same time avoiding practices that result in soil erosion and further desertification. The project began with twenty-one Volunteers in 1999, rose to twenty-six the following year, and has remained at an average of roughly twenty Volunteers annually. Volunteers in the program organized a series of environmental education activities, including protection awareness campaigns, use of trash cans, recycling of paper, tree planting, and they disseminated information on the importance of biodiversity, bee farming, live fencing, and nurseries. In schools, Volunteers formed the Friends of Nature Club and mobilized youths to be involved in environmentally conscious projects. They also worked on fisheries and poultry farms. PCV Erik Schiff, who worked on fisheries and animal husbandry in Wum, Bansa, and other communities in the Northwest province from 1982–1984, helped to encourage fish culture in the Northwest province.¹⁷ PCV Harlan Gene Peuse worked at a poultry farm in Kumba in Meme Division. Warren Oster served as an agricultural extension officer in Taku village, Donga-Mantung Division in the Northwest Province. In fact, Volunteers served in different capacities in all ten provinces in the nation. As with others, Agro-Forestry Volunteers selected secondary projects, and many of these projects dealt with youths and HIV prevention programs.¹⁸

Achievements made by Agro-Forestry Volunteers took different forms. In Kumba, “one of the farmers with who I worked,” Harlan Peuse wrote, “expanded his poultry operations and became a very successful businessman. . . . He was a born entrepreneur and my spending a lot of time with him gave him the confidence and pride to move ahead.”¹⁹ In 1996 in Belo, PCV Dillon Banerjee used a variety of demonstrations to show the techniques of soil preservation, live fencing, and appropriate use of fertilizer. In Ukpwa, Charlotte Wolf rallied the community and created a nursery of 10,000 seedlings, prompting associate director George Yerbit to describe her as “just wonderful [and] . . . working very hard.” In Bambili, PCVs Cheryl and Albert Onega did outstanding work at the Agricultural School, teaching farming systems and business classes. In North Cameroon, Calley Jones helped Alhadji Daou, a farmer, to transform his nursery into a money-making venture by focusing on a nursery of timber species. Natalie Parks did several animations and demonstrations of the techniques of field burning. PCV Richard Waite, assigned to Bangang, successfully encouraged farmers to use medicinal plants to treat such common illnesses as malaria; this proved so effective that many families in the community established private medicinal plant gardens. Lea Loizos, assigned to Bati in the West Province, received a grant that was used to purchase a corn mill. The corn mill benefited an estimated eight thousand people.²⁰ Alice Kelly, in Mozongo, worked with her community to develop a

forest reserve. In the Far North, Eric Pohlman encouraged women to market their culture. With his organizational help, womens' dance groups produced a brochure designed to encourage tourism. In 2009, Arthur Green introduced in Galim-Tignère in Adamawa pastures of *Bracheria* and *stylosanthes* for cattle, encouraged the establishment of vegetable gardens, and started youth environmental groups.²¹

Despite the successes, problems persisted. Untrained in agriculture extension work in tropical Africa, Volunteers' achievements were short-lived. In an article in the *New York Times* (January 9, 2008), Strauss argued that Agro-Forestry Volunteers were ill-trained and ill-prepared for the job in Cameroon, noting that the only agricultural experience some recruits had "was puttering around in their mom and dad's backyard during high school. And the less-than-ideal situation was not helped by the training program in Cameroon, which failed to provide the desired technical skills to work in the community. Warren Oster, who served in Ngaoundéré, discovered in the field that much of the technical training at the "center" was irrelevant. Given that Volunteers spent much time in grant writing, he was surprised that there was "no training . . . given in writing grants for community projects." In addition, funding was a constant problem.

"Cultural training," PCV Gene Peuse wrote, "was weak," and trainees "spent too much time at the center as opposed to visiting villages on a regular basis" (Responses to questionnaire). That was a common complaint, and over time the Peace Corps has not been able to correct the problem. As with other programs, lack of motivation was an issue with the Agro-Forestry program. Farmers were simply not motivated. And understandably, because positive results in agriculture took time, farmers were uninterested in demonstrations. They did not see the relevance of squandering time listening to Volunteers whose ideas were not going to produce immediate results. Without appropriate knowledge to navigate the culture, Volunteers were unable to come up with ideas for behavior change. Language remained a thorny issue. Many people in villages neither spoke nor understood French or English, and as a result the assignment was challenging for Volunteers. Farmers who were not landowners were uninterested in what Volunteers had to teach. As with other services, transportation to villages was always a problem.

Volunteers were impatient with the slow pace of change in agriculture because they wanted to see concrete results of their efforts before the close of service. As a result, many turned their attention to attainable secondary projects. They worked on HIV prevention programs, organized youth and women groups and sporting programs, and taught in schools.²² Whatever the rights and wrongs of their actions, their most significant achievements were neither in the number of trees they planted, nor the nurseries created, nor

the demonstrations made. Their influence came mostly in the hope that they instilled in people. By living and working with farmers, Volunteers made residents realize that their opinions matter.

SERVICE IN SMALL ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT (SED)

In 1999, the Peace Corps introduced a new program in Cameroon, Small Enterprise Development (SED), and it tapped Tyrone Gaston as the program's head. A former PCV in Cameroon, Gaston was familiar with both the potential challenges and prospects of such a program. He was optimistic that "SED will make a difference in the lives of the people, adding, "Given that most Cameroonians do not have access to the formal sector of the economy SED was a necessity."²³ SED's primary assignment at microfinance institutions was to improve the overall efficiency of financial institutions through training and technical assistance in management and business skill transfer. Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) provided access to loans and savings for the poor, most of whom would not qualify for similar services from more traditional banks.²⁴ The microfinance movement took off in the early 1990s as a result of the economic crisis. Marketed then as "small farmer credit," microfinance institutions emerged to play a major role in the economy.

The beginnings of MIFIs date back to the early 1960s when cooperatives were created in Anglophone Cameroon. The most significant development was the creation of the Cameroon Cooperatives Credit Union League (CAMCCUL), and today, as the largest microfinance institution in the country, it boasts a membership of over 300,000. A consequence of bank restructuring in the late 1980s led to the collapse of many banks, and former workers of defunct banks proceeded to form microfinance institutions. In the 1990s, the Cameroon government established laws regulating MIFIs. A 1998 law, for instance, placed MIFIs under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Finance, and the microfinance department of the Central African Banking Commission (COBAC) was charged with creating policies to regulate MIFIs. Despite regulation, microfinance companies developed in rapid succession. As of December 2005, there were 714 approved MIFIs in Cameroon, with a membership of roughly 480,000 members.²⁵ Because MIFIs developed quickly, many were plagued with problems, and topping the list were inefficiency in such banking procedures as loan management, bookkeeping, income statement, and financial projections. In addition, computer knowledge among workers was at a very elementary level. Equally detrimental was the chronic corruption of those institutions. It is within this overall context that SED's work in

Cameroon needs to be understood. In 2000, fourteen SED Volunteers went to work, and during the next ten years there was an average of twenty-three SED Volunteers annually.

Placed under the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, SED Volunteers were assigned to “credit unions, community-based banks and local government organizations (NGOs) providing microfinance services to the general population.” At the beginning SED’s partners included the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, *Caisse Populaire Pour L’Agriculture et Commerce* (CPAC), *Mutuelle Communautaire de Croissance* (MC2)-community based bank, Cameroon Cooperative Credit Union League Ltd. (CamCCUL) Ltd., *Crédit du Sahel*, Micro Finance for Development (MIFED), *Project Crédit Rural Décentralise*, *Fonds Commun d’Investissement du Sud* (FODIS), Appropriate Development for Africa Foundation (ADAF), and National Investment and Savings Cameroon (NIS-CAM). With time, additional partners were brought into the program. SED began slowly, but by 2004 it was in all ten provinces of Cameroon. At the end of Gaston’s tenure as associate director of SED he was “proud of SED’s accomplishments.” There were thirty Volunteers assigned to SED that year.

SED Volunteers taught immediate skills for long-term growth. They provided technical support, training in computers, financial projections, income statements, cash handling, feasibility studies, budgeting, cash flow, loan management, bookkeeping, and project design. Carolyn Jillson, an SED Volunteer in Akonolinga, collaborated with taxi drivers to create an association designed to improve their business practices. With her help, taxi drivers created the *Association de Transporteurs par Moto* (ATM). The association empowered drivers to collaborate and create better working conditions for members. In Maroua, Andrea Kersten educated people on the importance of saving money in banks, and she encouraged residents to be involved in the operation and management of the village bank. In Tokombéré, Caroline Anderson worked with her counterparts to encourage local people to save money in banks. Frances Provencher-Kambour, assigned to Appropriate Development for Africa Foundation (ADAF), worked with twenty-eight MC2 community banks. With her colleagues she “audited banks, helped determine appropriate collateral for loans, taught filing, excel, etc. including marketing, feasibility plans, project/plan completion for loans, etc.”²⁶ In Buea, Kathrens worked at Nkong Hill Top to re-evaluate the organization’s strategy: “I would say that the biggest impact is just getting people to think about organizational issues with a different perspective. Fund-raising diversification has been a success with NCIG, as well as strategic planning/streamlining.”²⁷

A SED powerhouse was Shannon Ewan. Assigned to FODIS Ebolowa, Shannon was innovative and had a can-do spirit. When things slowed down

at her primary assignment, she went out and looked for work. She worked with small entrepreneurs on basic accounting, pricing, and marketing strategies, she taught computer skills, and she wrote an *Employee Task Manual*. She learned early that “many domestic problems in Cameroon stem from gender inequalities in education and economic empowerment,” and therefore she directed many of her activities toward uplifting women. For example, she visited and spent many hours interacting with women, working with PCV Carolyn Jillson to create Women’s Entrepreneur and Life Skills seminars in Bertoua and Ebolowa. Their collaboration led to the production of a business skills textbook. Clearly, she was a champion for women’s issues, and her work empowered and provided hope to the community.

Still, despite these achievements, Volunteers faced numerous challenges in their SED employment. With degrees in business and economics from American universities, many SED Volunteers had little or no experience in business practices in Cameroon and as a result faced many frustrations. The three-month training session was insufficient to educate them on business culture and values in Cameroon. Ross Connelly had “zero business/microfinance” experience and not surprisingly could not contribute much to the functioning of the bank. In Buea, Kathrens’ challenges included “time management . . . lack of planning . . . [and] financial dependence on the outside world.”²⁸ A nagging problem was Volunteers’ lack of knowledge of Cameroonian culture, attitudes, and values, which often led to feelings of desperation and impatience. Operations at MC2 were fundamentally different from those at a banking institution in the United States. Often Volunteers became frustrated over their inability to bring rapid change. Unable to get her way at microfinance in Babadjou, PCV Jeanah Lacey hastily placed blame on Cameroonians: “Babadjou doesn’t want development. . . . They want charity. . . . They want free labor. . . . They want the appearance of development. We don’t even have a decent development committee in this community.”²⁹ Reactions like these revealed a subtle arrogance imbedded in Volunteers’ attitude. Repeatedly, Volunteers defended their shortcomings and inexperience by arguing that Cameroonians didn’t have what it took to conduct business in the modern world.

By 2010, SED boasted about its assistance in changing the business culture of some micro-finance companies, yet its greatest achievement was in the ability to empower people to develop businesses. By working with street vendors, taxi drivers, and women, SED helped those groups realize their capacity to grow. Indeed, it is within the work of SED that the Peace Corps truly can claim success in the area of sustainability. Business ideas introduced by SED Volunteers outlasted their stay in Cameroon. SED gave people the power and courage to believe in their capabilities to bring change. By so doing, SED inevitably gave people hope for a better future. The program’s

biggest achievement, wrote SED Michel Virgin, was the Volunteers' "coming and friendship."³⁰

SERVICE IN HEALTH PROGRAMS

The Peace Corps' significant involvement in Cameroon was community development and health. During the agency's tenure in Cameroon, Volunteers served in preventive care, water resource management, hygiene, and sanitation. They worked in hospitals, clinics, and outpatient facilities. In postindependent Cameroon, almost everything needed for adequate health care was in short supply. There was a shortage of trained manpower, medicine, and medical equipment. The stark reality was that over 70 percent of the population had no access to basic health care. Moreover, policy emphasized "curative" rather than "preventive" care.

Peace Corps community development and health services in Cameroon began in 1962 when Volunteers were placed under the tutelage of the Ministry of Agriculture to work in rural areas. Volunteers served as agricultural extension workers—and in sanitation and hygiene services. In 1988 the program was extended to include the Maternal Help and Child Survival Health Project, which was attached to the Ministry of Public Health. And ten years later, in 1999, the Peace Corps redefined its health project to focus "primarily on preventive activities, encouraging communities to assess their local health and water/sanitation problem, prioritize these problems and identify appropriate interventions." Another change in 2001 emphasized water and sanitation, reproductive health, HIV/STI prevention, and community development. Then in 2003 water and sanitation were folded into community health. Whatever the changes in job titles, PCVs assigned to community health served as "local resource agents for health education and prevention activities."³¹ Their services took place at schools, hospitals, clinics, and with village communities and youth groups. In those villages, everything involved with health care was either at its bare minimum or absent: medicine, gloves, syringes, bandages. And sanitation conditions were deplorable.

Volunteers received funding for work in villages, encouraged and participated in the construction of latrines and springboxes, worked with community groups to dig and maintain wells, and put in place ways to change behaviors designed to prevent common diseases such as diarrhea, and filarial. Lauren Fry, for example, helped to build springboxes and latrines. Springboxes are concrete boxes constructed around springs, and given existing conditions, they were vital for clean water.³² PCV Ukeme (UK) Eyo, who served in Mellen, observed "changes in attitudes and behaviors . . . [and] meats

from bush are being prepared longer now to kill worms.” Melissa Horn, in Abong-Mbang, worked with the “Baka (pygmies) on development and water projects.” Amber Light, at Ndu, did animations on “life skills, sex education, malaria, water sanitation, and hygiene.” Eastman Kristin Kahala, based in Monatélé, organized water committees in several villages, and with funding from the British High Commission, mobilized the community to build spring-boxes and forty-one latrines in four villages. Kate Reinsman collaborated with Dr. Patrick Okwen, the physician at St. Theresa Catholic Medical Center in Mambu-Bafut, and they successfully convinced traditional doctors to change practices that they thought were linked to the spread of Hepatitis C.³³ Volunteers encouraged such practices as washing hands, and they inculcated general cleanliness. With funds from the British High Commission, PCV Carrie Muntifering, assigned to Koza in the north, focused on prenatal care education. She collaborated with the Koza Health District, conducted workshops, and produced a birth-preparedness form that was distributed to other health centers. She explained the importance of early consultation with physicians, as well as safe delivery practices. Her work was particularly important for a community in which prenatal care was almost nonexistent.³⁴ At a time when almost “50% of infant deaths are related to diarrhea, due in large part to poor sanitation, lack of portable water, and socio-economic factors,”³⁵ Volunteers’ services were vital at all levels.

The most dramatic Peace Corps involvement, however, was in the area of HIV prevention. By the mid-1990s, HIV was on the rise in Cameroon, and government response to the epidemic was at best makeshift and uncoordinated. The nation’s National AIDS Control Committee, charged with the fight against HIV, achieved little. Coupled with sexual promiscuity, numerous traditional beliefs worked against preventive measures. Beliefs in “*Kontri Sunday*,” which in some communities translates into casual sex in the name of celebration, as well as polygamy, the normalcy of multiple sex partners, and many other beliefs and practices complicated matters. At an HIV workshop in Abong-Mbang on November 20 and 21, 2002, PCV Amanda Strombeck was exposed to common society beliefs used to challenge HIV prevention programs. But the Volunteers did not give up.³⁶

Volunteers were at work to change behavior. In lectures and home visits they explained to the local population that HIV was real and that to imagine that it didn’t exist would not make it disappear. Erin Finnegan, assigned to Meyo-Ville in 2000, introduced a variety of measures to raise awareness on HIV. She and two of her colleagues organized an AIDS Awareness Soccer Tournament. It was a unique way to get the population involved because soccer is the only sport in the nation that attracts everyone’s attention. In Cameroon, interest in soccer transcends gender and age boundaries. The

Tournament lasted for two weeks, during which time the community was educated on various aspects of HIV prevention. It was a creative way to reach the population, and its impact reached over 1,500 people. In addition, she visited women and discussed such topics as nutrition for children, prevention of diarrhea, and general hygiene. To empower women and young girls, she introduced “Take our Daughters to Work Day.” Britney Buchan, who served in Tignère, was equally active in HIV prevention. She and colleagues Teresa Litchfield and Sabina Harvey organized six seminars in several villages. With a grant of FCFA 3,519,880 from the Small Assistance Program, they organized seminars and wrote a manual on how to integrate AIDS education and behavior change in elementary schools. Participants included 133 teachers, who all learned how to integrate AIDS education in their classes. These Volunteers also spoke against discrimination of those who were HIV positive.³⁷ In Mvangan in the Southwest province, Heidi Miller collaborated with physicians to develop counseling programs for HIV patients.³⁸ In Mayo Baleo, PCV Paul Roddy organized and taught seminars that empowered “32 men from Mayo Baleo and surrounding villages to educate their peers about HIV prevention.” Through his efforts, HIV prevention education was integrated in schools. PCV Kelly Vaughn engaged her students in a series of conversations about HIV prevention. Jeannie Frazier who served at Nkolkosse, was surprised that by the end of her service many of those who initially opposed her HIV prevention message had come onboard. “I found signs up about AIDS,” she wrote, “and an entire church painted with words anti-SIDA in Eton. Flabbergasted? A little—the same people I once had heated arguments about the existence of AIDS were coming up to ask me how they could prevent it—they were scared.” She had not only succeeded; she had also empowered people to take charge of their lives.³⁹

Additionally, Volunteers’ work helped to tear down gender barriers. Parts of North Cameroon were not only remote, but also among the most oppressive for women. Women had little or no control over “labor distribution,” and traditionally did not inherit property. They had no earned income and were robbed of initiative. They did most of the fieldwork and could not partake in events outside the home without the husband’s permission. Physical abuse was common. In Mbangassina in the Center Province, PCV Jodi Nelson’s observation was apt: “The men are often drinking palm wine and beer throughout the day. The women usually go to the fields in the morning, cook all afternoon, clean, and take care of the kids.” Marnie Sanborn experienced enormous “challenges trying to motivate . . . women” in Adamawa. According to Britney Buchan, “cultural and social constraints made working with women extremely difficult.”⁴⁰ While government policy has mandated reforms—especially with the establishment of a cabinet position on women affairs—the pace of change

remains very slow, especially in rural areas. But the presence of female Volunteers challenged attitudes of gender inequality and traditional ideas that marginalized women. The fact that over 50 percent of the Volunteers were females proved the capability of women to affect change. Volunteers became *de facto* role models for women in the community.

But again, for all the work and achievements of Volunteers, the Peace Corps' work in community health remained plagued by problems, and many not of the making of Volunteers. Because many Volunteers assigned to health were neither trained nurses, nor trained public health officials, nor water resource engineers, nor technicians, certain weaknesses always remained. They came from a wide array of backgrounds with a common goal to help the less fortunate, but in the field that was not enough. Former PCV and current Director of Programming and Training at Peace Corps Yaoundé, Kim Ahanda commented on the diverse educational experience and background of the recruits: "PCTs come to PST with a variety and range of knowledge and experiences from Public Health Masters International PCTS to those who are CPR certified or have worked as a candy striper."⁴¹ The diverse background, Kim continued, was a fundamental "challenge" to creating a training program for Trainees. Already at a disadvantage because of limited technical knowledge, the training didn't help. Ronald Green complained, "no training on hydrogeology . . . was a serious flaw because the project was spring development." He continued that no one in his "session had experience in spring development including Fred Weber who was in charge of training in that area."⁴² Trainers were provided with little information about the realities in the field. Despite the challenges and to their credit, Volunteers did not give up. Their services provided hope and encouraged locals to take charge of their lives.

ASSESSING VOLUNTEERS' SERVICES

During the last half century, Cameroonians showed their appreciation of Volunteers' services in numerous ways, including the giving of gifts, establishing friendships, offering love, bequeathing village titles, and naming children in their honor. Lindsay Miesko, for example, was crowned *Mafor* (mother of the chief) two weeks into her service in Gunneku-Mbengwi. Others received similar titles. Volunteers were given land in villages and named honorable members of the community. It was in that spirit the late Don Scott's life was celebrated.⁴³ Scott taught at St. John's College in Nchang from 1965 to 1967, and he truly became integrated into the community. He willed, wrote Debbie Scott, that "his ashes be returned to the land and people of Cameroon—a

place that he loved and a place that had such an impact on his life.” His wishes were honored on January 22, 2011.⁴⁴

Cameroonians described Volunteers as “determined,” “caring,” “punctual,” “industrious,” “efficient,” “courageous,” “calm,” “efficient,” “visionary,” and “good mannered.” Asked if they had a message to send to RPCVs, Cameroonians wrote: “We miss you,” “We love you,” and “We want you to come back.” To many Cameroonians, the two years of a Volunteer’s Peace Corps service is too short.⁴⁵ Clearly, Volunteers’ service empowered people, gave them hope, and made them believe in themselves. It was particularly uplifting for those in rural areas to have Volunteers as their neighbors and friends.

But they were also critics of Volunteers. A recurring criticism was that Volunteers “lacked experience” and as a result were ill-equipped to perform the tasks assigned to them. “Parachuting” Volunteers from America through a three-month training program does not make up for the lack of educational background or experience, Cameroonians noted. Medical officers questioned the rationale of masquerading BA generalists as nurses and public health officers. Compounding the problem was that the community was never told that Volunteers were neither trained doctors nor nurses. Others raised questions about why the Cameroon government pays hundreds of thousands of dollars to bring in unqualified Volunteers to work when tens of thousands of Cameroonian university graduates languished in a life of unemployment. And the Cameroon government also pays for Volunteer housing. Associate Peace Corps Director Sammy Enyong stated that the annual cost of taking care of a Volunteer, which includes housing, food, training, services, insurance, and re-instatement allowance, comes up to about \$30,000. Because the Cameroon government contributes a fraction of the money, critics charged that money could be used to recruit Cameroonians who would do a better job in those services.

CONCLUSION

As Peace Corps Cameroon celebrated its half century mark, it can most certainly be said that it had made a difference. Whether in villages or urban areas Volunteers worked hard, and in the process were transformed. In a “Tribute to Peace Corps Volunteers,” former Peace Corps Country director Larry Brown wrote in a poem, “Who are you my brave soldiers for justice, that you endure: The abusive calls of crude racism. . . . What manner of a person are you. . . . Peace Corps Volunteers, that against All odds you Raise hope among those with no reason for it, Add purposeful smiles to the faces of the downtrodden . . . Demand a better world, Live among those who may never

live to see it, [and] Create hope out of failure and destruction.” Though written for Volunteers in Uganda, the poem captured the essence of Volunteers’ life and service all over.

At a time when American foreign policy is increasingly identified by Special Forces, military drones, other forms of armed intervention—and arrogance—Volunteers’ services showed another side of US global involvement, especially in the area of development. Volunteers represented the best of American idealism, and their work helped to humanize American actions in the world. In Africa, PCVs also reversed the invisibility of Africans. Africans are visible. They are human. And their voices matter. In many villages, Volunteers were frequently at neighbors’ homes dining, planning future projects, encouraging children, taking strolls to corner bars, haggling for produce in the local market, and reflecting on their service. Later RPCVs became ambassadors and propagandists of African culture to the global community. Proudly, they wear their African regalia, decorate their homes with artwork from Africa, enjoy a meal of “*fufu*” and “*jama, jama*,” use riddles and jokes to teach and entertain, and dance to Lady Pounce’s *Bitkusi* and Petit Pays’ *Makossa*.

In quantitative terms, Volunteers achieved much: schools, book drives, libraries, funding for projects, clinics, latrines, environmental protection, water systems, HIV prevention, preventive health care measures, microfinance institutions, and scholarships. The list of professionals impacted during their formative years by Volunteers is equally impressive. By living in villages they inevitably pushed the Cameroonian government to extend services to previously neglected regions of the country.

Volunteers’ work in Africa undermined society’s class structure, brought to the forefront issues of gender equality, debunked long-standing stereotypes about women, shattered notions of racial superiority, accelerated the process to “decolonize” the African mind, and dispelled beliefs of “difference” and “other.” A particularly important lesson of Volunteers’ work is what Cameroonians and many Africans alike have still to learn. A major difficulty in creating and implementing development projects in the continent is that indigenous Africans do not look beyond their immediate ethnic group, village, and community. Too often projects are determined based not on national interest but on ethnicity and patronage. By serving so far away from their home and in regions they hardly ever heard of, Volunteers taught indigenous Africans that development for national progress should not be prioritized based on ethnicity.

For the Volunteers, living in Africa was an awakening. They learned the universal nature of humanity, the equality of all humans, and the notion that, irrespective of geographical location, humans all over the world strive for the same human rights and dignity, something that policy makers still have

to acknowledge. Volunteers often correctly minimized their contributions, arguing that they gained way more than they could ever have conceivably put in. Many projects they initiated collapsed after their departure and therefore were not sustainable. Given the treatment they had received in Africa, as they returned stateside, many PCVs joined the anti-racism struggle in America. Many found it difficult to explain to their African hosts the continuous incidents of police brutality against blacks and immigrants in America. In an increasingly anti-immigrant discourse in American politics, Volunteers are dismayed by failures of American political leaders to accept the reality of an interdependent global community. The Peace Corps gave Volunteers time to reflect and reshape the directions of the life. They took time to identify their passion, and as they returned, they were more mature and more prepared to pursue their determined objectives. Finally, in a world obsessed with materialism and a “me” mentality, Volunteers did something for others, gave hope to the hopeless, befriended the marginalized, and set in motion a process to empower the powerless. For all their weaknesses, deficiencies, and perceived failures, Peace Corps Volunteers made a difference.

NOTES

1. Portions of this chapter were published in *Africa Spectrum* and *International Journal of African Historical Studies*.

2. Post Books were written by Volunteers in preparation for the Close of Service (COS) conference and contain information about communities in which they served. They are located at the Peace Corps Office, Yaoundé, Cameroon.

3. Mike Kuta, Konye, South-West—Cameroon, Post Book, no date; Erin Nilon, Quarterly Report Form, Health and Water Sanitation Project, April–June 2006; Letter, Jami Cull to Maria, August 30, 1999; Letter, Jeannie Frazier to Karen, October 20, 2001, Peace Corps Office, Yaoundé (hereafter referred to as PCY); Erin Nolan, Quarterly Report Form, Health and Water Sanitation Project, April–June 2006, PCY.

4. Post Demographic Report: Cameroon, furnished to author by Peace Corps Washington, 2/4/2011; Lawrence F. Lihosit, *Peace Corps Chronology, 1961–2010* (New York: iUniverse, Inc., 2010), 90.

5. Kennedy, “Remarks Upon Signing the Peace Corps Bill,” September 1961, *Public Papers*, 1: 614–15; US Statutes at Large (September 22, 1961, 87th Congress, 1st Session), 75:612.

6. Serena Chinyere Williams, Post Book, Kribi, September 3, 1999–May 30, 2001, p. 25, PCY; Kelly Vaughan letters, PCKV.

7. Letter, Ed Kay to All, November 26, 1995, PCEK.

8. Zimmerman, 2006. *Innocents Abroad: American Teachers in the American Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 143; Peace Corps Cameroon,

Project Status Report, TEFL, 2006, Declassified in November 2011 by Peace Corps Office, Washington, DC.

9. Peace Corps documents received from Sammy Enyong PCSE; Strauss, "Too Many Innocents Abroad," *The New York Times* (January 9, 2008); Responses to author's questionnaire; Aviva, Grasso, PCAG.

10. Responses to author's questionnaires.

11. Letter, Ed. Kay to Everyone, October 8, 1995, PCEK; Peace Corps Cameroon, "A Little Diary," Nkolkosse, Cameroon, PCY; Post Books show that Volunteers were in and out of station, PCY. In responses to questionnaires Volunteers talk about traveling all over the country.

12. Project Status Report, FY 2001, Cameroon_PSR_ED_2001.

13. Peace Corps Cameroon *Staff Newsletter* (May–July 2003), 3; *Staff Newsletter* (July–September, 2004), 1–2; Responses to questionnaire; Wollan, TEFL History, 2001, PCY.

14. Buckler, *From Microsoft to Malawi*, 186; Hirsch, *Alhaji: A Peace Corps Adventure*, 64–65; Caroline Anderson, Post Book, PCY.

15. Aviva Grasso, PCAV; Christine Eyeslork, Post Book, work, January 2001, PCY; McCormick, *Diary of a Kimbang*, 57.

16. Wessize Tchange Martin, "A Welcome Speech to Mr. and Mrs. Pat and Ellen Vaughan to Government Bilingual Secondary School, Bakondji," January 3, 2003, Bakondji, Cameroon, PCKV.

17. William J. Collis, Final Report: 1982 Fisheries In-Country Training Program, Mbengwi, North West, Cameroon, October 11, 1982, Peace Corps Documents given to the author by RPCV Erik Schiff (hereafter referred to as RPCV).

18. Cameroon Environment Project Status Report, FY 2003; Agro Forestry and Permanent Farming Systems Project, Batibo, North West Province, 2002, PCY; Christopher C. Daniel, Final Report, December 18, 1995, PCV; Responded to questionnaires; Memorandum, George Yerbit, Site Visit Report to Highlands Agroforestry PCVs, February 23, 2004.

19. Responses to questionnaires.

20. Project Status Report. FY 2001. Cameroon_PSR_AG_2001.

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23. Author's interview of Gaston.

24. Charlier and N'Cho-Oguie, *Sustaining Reforms for Inclusive Growth in Cameroon*, p. 127; Ian Long, "Perceptions of Microfinance in Cameroon: A Case Study of NUICS, Yaoundé," (2009), ISP Collections, Paper 729, http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/729. (Accessed March 19, 2012).
25. Charlier and N'Cho-Oguie, *Sustaining Reforms for Inclusive Growth in Cameroon*, p. 127; Ian Long, "Perceptions of Microfinance in Cameroon: A Case Study of NUICS, Yaoundé," (2009), ISP Collections, Paper 729, http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/729. (Accessed March 19, 2012).
26. Responses to questionnaire; Cameroon Project Status Report SED, FY 2004; Caroline Anderson, Post Book: Tokomberé SED Post Book, 2006–2008, PCY. There were thirty Volunteers assigned to SED that year.
27. Heather Kathrens' response to author's questionnaire, February 27, 2012.
28. Ross Connelly, Post Book, no date, PCY; Kathrens' response to questionnaires.
29. Jeanah Lacey, Quarterly Report, 7/18/2005, 3, PCY.
30. Author's interview of Gaston; Response to author's questionnaire.
31. Project Status Report, Cameroon PSR Health Water Sanitation, 2003, declassified November 2011.
32. Lauren Fry, "Spring Improvement as a Tool for Preservation of Water-Related Illnesses in four Villages of the Center Province, Cameroon" M.Sc. Thesis, Michigan Technological University, 2004.
33. Project Status Report FY 2006.
34. Peace Corps Cameroon Community Health & Sanitation Project Plan, October 1996, 1, PCY.
35. Peace Corps Cameroon Community Health & Sanitation Project Plan, October 1996.
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41. Project Status Report, CAM-PSR-HE-2006, declassified, November 2011.
42. Responses to author's questionnaires
43. Post Books, Responses to author's questionnaires
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45. Three hundred Cameroonians who were either co-workers of Volunteers or their students or who observed closely Volunteers' interaction with the community completed a detailed open-ended questionnaire (hereafter referred to as Responses to questionnaires from Cameroonians). The people live in all ten regions where the Volunteers served.

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Section 5

MIGRATION

Chapter Fourteen

Cameroonians on the Move

Searching for Promised Lands¹

Joseph Takougang

The last few decades have witnessed a tremendous surge in global migration. According to the United Nations Population Center (2014), the population of migrants around the globe increased by almost 50 percent, from 154.2 million in 1990 to 231.5 million in 2013. Although the population of African migrants remained lower than migrants from Asia and other parts of the world, Africa has nevertheless witnessed a significant increase during the same period, from 15.6 million to 18.6 million (United Nations Population Center 2014). Cameroonians have been part of this new migration. Spurred by social, political, and economic difficulties at home and by the overall allure of life in the West that has been perpetrated through the Internet and foreign programs aired on Cameroonian television. Cameroonians, like many of their African counterparts, are searching for “promised lands” or Nyanmjoh’s (2011) fictional *Muzunguland*, one of several global destinations where these migrants hope for a better life for themselves and their family members back in Cameroon. These emigrants—or *bushfallers* (Nyamnjoh 2011; Ollong 2013; Konde 2014),² as they are known in Cameroon’s creative pidgin English—a re-creation of the English language spoken in various forms in former British West African colonies—represent symbolic hunters in the village who go hunting in hopes of returning with a kill to feed the family. However, for many *bushfallers*, the new “hunting grounds” (Nyamnjoh 2011) now extend beyond the village limits to foreign destinations thousands of miles away. And while these *bushfallers* may not return home as often as family members expect, they are still looked upon to fulfill the same obligation as the metaphorical hunters in the village upon arrival at their final port of call (Jua 2003). This chapter examines contemporary Cameroonian migration, with a focus on the United States. Included in this analysis are

the reasons for the surge in migration since the early 1990s, as well as the efforts by these migrants to help improve the lives of family members still in Cameroon. A background discussion focuses on pre-1990 migration. Unlike the post-1990 migrants, whose primary objective is to establish permanent residency abroad, the pre-1990 migrants were sojourners who intended to return home after completing their education abroad in order to contribute to the task of nation-building in the newly independent state.

CONTEXTUALIZING CAMEROON MIGRATION WITHIN POST-COLONIAL AFRICAN MIGRATION: 1960–1990

Following independence in the 1960s, many African governments faced the daunting task of training their citizens to fill the administrative and institutional vacuum created by the departing colonial powers, especially since few Africans had been adequately trained to occupy those positions during decades of colonial occupation. Moreover, because there were few institutions of higher education in the newly independent states in which young Africans could be trained, the new governments had no choice but to educate their citizens at institutions in the former colonial metropolis. As was the case in many of the newly independent nations on the continent, post-colonial Cameroonian migration was marked by three discerning factors.

The first factor was that it was male-dominated. That was because the colonial system had reinforced traditional African beliefs that marginalized and undermined the role of women in Cameroon (Kaberry 1952; Goheen 1996; Kevane 2014) and throughout the continent. This was evident in the colonial educational system, one that prioritized male education since men were needed as proxies in the execution of various colonial policies or to serve in positions such as tax collectors, bailiffs, or plantation headmen; this was because there were no Europeans to occupy those positions or simply because it was cost-prohibitive to send European officers to perform those services (Arthur 2009; Kalu 2011; Uwakwe 2014). Indeed, while women played important political³ and economic roles in some traditional African societies (Kaberry 1952; Goheen 1996; Gordon 2013) and were the proverbial glue that held the family together by virtue of the fact that they provided nourishment for the family and took care of the children, the colonial system promoted a sexist system that portrayed men as the principal providers in the family (Kaberry 1952; Goheen 1996; Mbaku 2004). Gordon (2013, 309) argued that, even though the colonial economy exploited both men and women, men, nevertheless, gained some access to important resources such as money, skills, land, and education; resources that were less available to

women. A classic illustration of this sexist mindset was evident in Cameroon's colonial educational system. For instance, Le Vine and M'Ballah (1962) reported that only 14.7 percent of the 114,722 children enrolled in school in 1946 were girls. Similarly, in his publication on women and politics in Cameroon, Konde (2014) detailed the lack of educational opportunity for girls, especially in the Moslem region, where school attendance for boys was 36 percent compared to only 2 percent for girls on the eve of independence in the former French trusteeship. By 1937, there were only 741 girls among the 5,465 pupils attending all 212 Government, Native Administered and Assisted Schools in the former British Southern Cameroons (Konde 2005). There were also fewer opportunities for post-primary education for girls. In fact, Queen of the Rosary College, the first all-girls Catholic Secondary School in the British Southern Cameroons was opened in 1956, seventeen years after its all-male counterpart, Saint Joseph's College, had admitted its first group of students (Konde 2005). Meanwhile, there were no women among the 948 Cameroonian students sent by the French colonial administration to pursue post-secondary education in France between 1957 and 1959. Perhaps not surprisingly, where girls had the opportunity for an education, the focus was on such careers and skills as nursing and home economics; fields of study that were aimed at making them better mothers and spouses (Arthur 2009; Cooper 2013; Berger 2014; Bryson 1979; Galega and Tumnde 2004). Freedman (2013) argued that, apart from the traditional and colonial mentality that may have delayed their migration to Europe and elsewhere, other factors, including gendered barriers and the lack of financial and other resources, also restricted women's ability to seek educational and other career opportunities abroad.

A second characteristic of the pre-1990 migration was that it was supposed to be temporary. As mentioned earlier, the colonial powers left Cameroon and many newly independent African states unprepared and ill-equipped to govern themselves because of their failure to educate the requisite manpower that could assume the institutions of governance following independence. For example, in his 1984 television series titled *Africa: A Voyage of Discovery* (Program 7: The Rise of Nationalism), Basil Davidson argued that the lack of trained Africans contributed to the chaos that engulfed the former Belgium Congo (Congo Libreville) following the country's independence. In a rush to produce the required manpower that was needed by the newly independent states, the new governments, together with financial support from foreign governments, provided scholarships to young Africans to be trained overseas. These young men were expected to return home after acquiring their education in order to participate in the task of nation-building. Except for the National School of Administration, now known as the National

School of Administration and Magistracy (ENAM) that was established in 1959, on the eve of independence by the French colonial authorities there were no institutions of higher learning in Cameroon capable of training Cameroonians for high-level administrative positions. It was not until 1962 that the University of Yaounde, the first university in Cameroon, was also established with substantial financial and personnel support from France (Ngwang and Usongo 2016).

The third and final identifying factor of the early post-colonial migration was that the destination points were mostly to former colonial metropolises. That was because the educational foundation that students had received in secondary educational institutions in their respective countries made the former colonial powers the best destinations for university and other forms of higher education. Therefore, it was not unusual that students from Gabon, Senegal, and Cote d'Ivoire went to France, while those from Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya went to Great Britain. In fact, in his contribution to this volume (see chapter 10), Ndille notes that there were 504 Cameroon students on French government scholarships studying in French institutions by 1963. As Table 14.1 demonstrates, many luminaries in the administration during the first two decades of Cameroon's independence—including Paul Biya, Cameroon's current president since 1982—were products of this early migration (Le Vine 1971; Ngayap 1983; Takougang 2014).

Although Europe remained the main destination for students during this period, a few Cameroonians also attended educational institutions in the United States. In fact, the United States government saw the education of African students at American institutions as part of its global strategy of promoting democracy and creating an effective bulwark against the spread of communism on the continent during the Cold War (Veroff 1963). In order to achieve these twin objectives, a select group of students from the continent received financial aid and sponsorship to study in universities and colleges in the United States; this aid and sponsorship from several American institutions and organizations, including the African Scholarship Program for American Universities (ASPAU), the African Graduate Fellowship Program (AFGRAD), the Ford Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation. Laosebikan (2012) reported that ASPAU had succeeded in selecting, placing, and financing 1,594 African students in American colleges and universities between 1960 and 1970. While a few Cameroonians were beneficiaries of these programs, others were sponsored by the Cameroon government. Others came on their own, with minimum financial support from their families (Takougang 2014). And like most of their African counterparts, these Cameroonians were expected to return to Cameroon after completing their studies.

Table 14.1. Selected List of Cameroonians in the Upper Echelon of Government during the First Two Decades of Independence Who Received Tertiary Education Abroad

Name	Country/ Educational Institution	Selected List of Government/Administrative Positions
Abondo Jerome-Emilien	School of Advanced Commercial Studies, Lille, France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of FONADER • President of the Confederate Bureau of the National Union of Cameroon Workers
Awunti Chongwain Joseph	Oxford University, Oxford, England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vice Minister of Agriculture • Vice Minister of Territorial Administration • Minister Delegate at the Presidency in Charge of State Inspection and Administrative Reform
Bassong Isabelle	University of Sorbonne, Paris, France; Indiana University, Bloomington and University of Denver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Served in the Ministry of Public Health • Translator at the National Assembly
Biya Paul	University of Sorbonne and the Institut des Hautes Etudes d'Outre-Mer Paris, France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In charge of Mission at the Presidency of the Republic. • Secretary General at the Presidency • Director of Cabinet at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture
Egbe-Tabi Emmanuel Ekah-Nghaky Nzo	University of Durham Oxford University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President of the Republic of Cameroon • Minister of Justice • Minister of Posts and Telecommunication • Minister of Health and Population • Minister of Labor and Social Welfare
Eteky-Mboumoua William	École Nationale de la France Outre-Mer, Paris, France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical Advisor in the Ministry of Territorial Administration • Minister of Education, Youth and Sports • Special Advisor to President Ahidjo

(continued)

Table 14.1. (continued)

Name	Country/ Educational Institution	Selected List of Government/Administrative Positions
Fonlon Nsokika Bernard	University of Ireland, Sorbonne and Oxford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs • Minister of Transport
Njeuma Dorothy Tsanga Delphine	Brown University and University of London School of Nursing and the Red Cross, Toulouse, France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minister of Health and Social Welfare • Vice Minister of Education • Minister of Health and Public Affairs • Minister of Social Affairs

Source: Mark W. DeLancey and H. Mbella Mokeba. 1990. *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Cameroon*. Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

Indeed, while some of these students returned to Cameroon after completing their course of study, others remained in the country either because they had gained employment or because they had started families with their American spouses. Even so, the population of Cameroonians in the United States remained relatively small compared to immigrants from other African countries. According to the 1990 figures from the Department of Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), for example, only 187 Cameroonians were admitted into the country in 1989, compared to those who came from Nigeria (5,213), Ethiopia (3,389), Ghana (2,045), Liberia (1,175), and Kenya (910). The INS also reported that there were only 38 Cameroonians with American citizenship living in the country in 1990, compared to 1,370 Ethiopians, 714 Ghanaians, and 1,415 Nigerians. Altogether, there were only 3,161 Cameroonian immigrants in the United States in 1990, compared to 55,350 Nigerians, 20,889 Ghanaians, and 34,805 Ethiopians (Takougang 2014).

While Europe and the United States were popular migration destinations for Cameroonians interested in pursuing university education during this period, many others went to neighboring African countries. In fact, for decades after independence, there were Cameroonian students and businessmen in Nigeria, Gabon, the Central African Republic, and even as far away as Cote d'Ivoire. For instance, the need for workers in Gabon's booming oil sector and the country's massive infrastructure and construction projects in the 1970s and 1980s attracted thousands of African immigrants, including Cameroonians, to the country. Gray (1998) estimated that by the mid-1980s, almost 20 percent (100,000) of the population of Gabon was non-Gabonese. Despite the lack of accurate figures on the population of Cameroonians in Gabon during this period, Gray (1998) reported that almost 10,500 Cameroonians were evacuated by the Cameroonian government following the 1981 anti-immigrant violence that was directed at Cameroonians living in the country. Unfortunately, this figure does not include the thousands of Cameroonians who fled the country through other means during the height of violence. Although a similar anti-immigrant sentiment had led to the 1983 expulsion of thousands of African immigrants, including Cameroonians, from Nigeria, the Nigerian government allowed thousands of Cameroonians who had entered the country before 1963 to remain in the country (Olaosebikan 2013).

While it is difficult to ascertain the population of females during this early phase of Cameroonian migration to the United States and other destinations, we can reasonably assert, based on the lack of educational opportunities for girls discussed earlier, that most of the immigrants were men.⁴ However, the situation has changed significantly since the early 1990s. The discussion that follows examines post-1990 Cameroonian migration and the mitigating factors that have contributed to the large-scale migration of

Cameroonians to various global destinations and to the United States in particular. It begins with a discussion of how Cameroon's post-colonial, political, and economic conditions may have served as a deterrent to large-scale emigration before 1990.

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STABILITY AS CONSTRAINTS TO LARGE-SCALE MIGRATION

Straddled between Central and West Africa, the triangular-shaped nation of Cameroon, with a population of almost 22 million in 2016, has been ruled by only two presidents since the former French trusteeship gained its independence in January 1960, followed by reunification with the former British Southern Cameroons in October 1961.⁵ But while its neighbors were mired in a series of military coups d'état and other forms of internal crisis during their first decade of independence, Ahmadou Ahidjo, Cameroon's first president, shepherded the country through a complex and often violent undemocratic political process that culminated in the formation of a single-party system in 1966 and the creation of a unitary state in 1972.⁶ The country also maintained a strong economy fueled by revenue generated from its export products. With a stable political system and a strong economy averaging 6 percent GNP during this period, Cameroon was perceived by Western nations and global financial institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund as a model African state and one of the continent's most credit-worthy nations (Takougang and Krieger 1998). This perception was buttressed in 1982 by the peaceful transfer of power from President Ahidjo to his protégé and successor, Paul Biya.

Although President Biya continued with Ahidjo's policies that had ensured political stability and garnered international recognition for more than two decades, he was determined to emerge from the shadows of his predecessor by establishing his footprint on the nation's political history. The latter was accelerated when Ahidjo attempted to undermine Biya's authority following a series of political and administrative decisions that the new president undertook without conferring with Ahidjo. That included the decision in February 1984 to change the country's name from the United Republic of Cameroon to the Republic of Cameroon. This was followed in March 1985 with a change in the name of the nation's only party, the Cameroon National Union (CNU) created in 1966, to the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) at the New Deal Congress in Bamenda in the country's Northwest province (Ngho 1988; DeLancey 1989; Takougang 1993; Takougang and Krieger 1998). An earlier decision in August 1983 to break up the Northern Province

into three new provinces (Far North, North and Adamawa) had effectively neutralized the former President's influence in the region.⁷ Bayart (1989) posited that the latter was also an effective move by Biya to build his own patronage base among the pagan and Christian populations in the region who had not been treated fairly during Ahidjo's presidency. In fact, an attempt in April 1984 by a faction of the military associated with elements loyal to the former president was not only unsuccessful in topping the Biya regime, but also responsible for massive arrests, imprisonment, and execution of many of the coup's plotters. In other words, unlike in many African states where military coups had contributed to significant political instability, Cameroon survived another threat to the nation's unity and stability.

Because of its robust agricultural output and an oil economy that enjoyed favorable price on the world market (Jua 1991), Cameroon enjoyed a strong economy until the mid-1980s. As a result of the revenue generated from its exports, the administration could indulge in a spending spree as more cabinet positions were created and as the bureaucracy expanded to absorb the growing population of university graduates. Jua (1991) estimated a government bureaucracy of about 180,000 civil servants and contract workers in 1988. At the same time, corruption was rife at all levels of the government and the administration as it became increasingly difficult, and perhaps unnecessary, to scrutinize every aspect of government spending. A report in the July 18, 1991, edition of the newspaper *Le Messenger* indicated that between November 1982 and September 1991, high-ranking officials in the administration had embezzled more than FCFA 2,000 million (\$800 million), deposited in personal accounts in Switzerland, France, the United States, and the West Indies. In other words, Cameroon's political stability and a strong economy had made it less likely for Cameroonians to leave the country. In fact, in the mid-1980s, the administration embarked on an aggressive policy aimed at recruiting and encouraging Cameroonians who had completed their studies abroad to return home. In the United States, for example, the incentives included job offers, housing allowance, shipment of personal belongings, and repatriation of family members to Cameroon.⁸

DOMESTIC UNCERTAINTIES AND THE NEW GLOBAL MIGRATION

Despite the strong economy and apparent political stability, however, a convergence of factors beginning in the late-1980s led to a surge in the number of Cameroonians who were prepared to leave the country. For one thing, a severe decline in the price of its exports on the World Market severely

depressed government revenue, leading to a decline in the revenue that farmers received for the sale of their coffee, cocoa, and other export crops. Additionally, corrective measures such as the stringent World Bank and the IMF Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), together with France's unilateral devaluation of the Franc CFA (the common currency used in Cameroon and throughout the former French African colonies), as well as a drastic cut by 70 percent in the salaries of most government employees in 1994, only made matters worse. Parents could neither afford tuition for their children in secondary schools nor provide living expenses for those already in universities and other institutions of higher learning. With unemployment estimated at 30 percent in the early 1990s (Ngome and Mpoko 2009), university graduates were unable to find jobs in an already bloated bureaucracy where employment was based on whom one knew in the upper echelon of the government rather than on one's experience and educational credentials (e.g., see chapter 16 by Nkwi in this volume).

The political environment in Cameroon also witnessed a tectonic shift beginning in the late 1980s, as the democratic winds of change blowing across the continent, together with the call for multiparty politics, revealed the true underbelly of an authoritarian system that had stifled free speech and political transparency for decades. From the late 1980s, a game of wits between young Cameroonians anxious for rapid economic and political change and an administration bent on maintaining the levers of power aggravated the economic and political situation in the country. In 1992, Operation Ghost Town, an effort by the youths to shut down businesses and halt public transportation, made it difficult for goods and people to be moved across many parts of the country. As if these economic and political difficulties were not enough motivation for young men and women to leave the country, the allure of Europe and America as seen on the Internet and television programs added another layer of enticement for desperate Cameroonian youths in Douala, Yaounde, Bamenda, Limbe, and other cities across the country. This is how Nyanmjoh and Page (2002, 628) described the influence of the media on youths across the continent:

Thanks to national and international television, a young person in the heart of an African village, who has never been to the capital or the nearest African city, is more likely to know the streets of Paris, London or New York by heart. The average African young person is generally better informed about the West than about their own country, and this has been blamed on television—both local and international—that often contrasts the modern buildings, technological sophistication and high life in Europe with rats, potholes, refuse heaps and misery in Africa. Western media representations of the West are always positive, but African consumers of these images are prone to selective retention of those rep-

representations that perpetuate their fantasies and keep alive their hopes of personal wealth. This imagined geography elides the spaces of the west with worlds of material consumption as the basis of an enduring dream.

For many Cameroonians, therefore, the only solution to the untenable situation at home was to seek greener pastures around the globe.

SEARCHING FOR PROMISED LANDS: 1990 AND AFTER

Cameroon's economic and political problems in the last two and a half decades have led to a dramatic surge in the population and migration destinations of Cameroonian emigrants. According to statistics from the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the population of Cameroonian emigrants around the world increased from 228,383 in 2000 to 291,792 in 2013.⁹ Although France remains a major destination, with an estimated population of 78,561 Cameroonians having legal residency in 2013, Cameroonians can also be found in many other European countries. For instance, there were 14,414 Cameroonians living legally in Germany in 2006, an increase of about 36 percent from the 9,311 in 2000 (Fleischer 2012). Tadjon (2006) reported that other European countries with a significant number of Cameroonians in 2006 included Great Britain (5,000), Switzerland (4,000), and Spain (2,500). Canada's National Household Survey Profile estimated that in 2013 there were 10,555 Cameroonian immigrants in the country in 2011. Meanwhile, according to UNICEF, France, Germany, Italy, the United States, South Africa, and Great Britain remain the top destinations for many students from Cameroon.

While some of these immigrants are likely to have entered these countries as students or tourists, they eventually seek refugee status, apply for political asylum once they arrive, or legalize their status by marrying citizens of those countries (Fleischer 2012; Feldman-Savelsberg 2016). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that between 1995 and 2004, 30,809 and 33,228 Cameroonians requested asylum and refugee status, respectively, around the world (UNHCR 2004). Aspiring emigrants often did whatever was necessary to leave the country or seek asylum in a country upon their arrival, including the creation of false pre-emigration documents, documents that these migrants intend to use to buttress their request for asylum in the United States or other migration destinations. As recently as 2016, for example, Nick Castellano (US Assistant Regional Security Office) and Roberto Quiroz (Public Affairs Officer at the American embassy in Cameroon) noted that the prevalence of false documents in the U.S. visa application process

has led to the ranking of Cameroon as the top visa-denial country in all of Africa (*Cameroon Daily Journal* 2016). Similarly, at a one-day conference on February 4, 2015, in Bamenda, in the Northwest region of Cameroon, Jean Francois Caumiant, representative of the Belgian Ministry of Interior, expressed his country's concern in the number of Cameroonian migrants living illegally in his country:

They start fabricating stories of how they are being chased from Cameroon because they are homosexuals, lesbians or because of SCNC activities. Some change their names and get married to Belgian women illegally. . . . They tell a lot of lies and are bent on making us believe the fake certificate they present.¹⁰

China, India, South Korea, and the Gulf States are also destinations for many Cameroonians. In fact, despite the autocratic nature of the regimes and social restrictions in many Gulf States, the need for foreign workers in the region's burgeoning building and construction industry continues to attract many emigrants from sub-Saharan countries, including Cameroon (Crush and McDonald 2000; Maharaj and Moodley 2000; Whitwell 2002; Pelican and Tatah 2009).

Cameroon migrants are not restricted to overseas destinations. According to UNICEF, major African destinations for Cameroonian emigrants in 2013 included Gabon (48,255), Nigeria (48,162), and Chad (27,597). In spite of stricter border and visa control measures, together with an aggressive deportation policy, post-apartheid South Africa is also an important destination for many Africans, including Cameroonians (Crush and McDonald 2000; Maharaj and Moodley 2000; Pelican and Tatah 2009).¹¹ However, for many Cameroonian emigrants, America remains the ultimate migration destination.

MIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

According to the US Census Bureau, there were about 1.5 million sub-Saharan African immigrants were living in the United States in 2013. Although Nigeria (234,500), Ethiopia (195,800), Ghana (149,400), Kenya (110,700), South Africa (95,200), and Liberia (78,900) have maintained their rankings as countries with the most immigrants from the sub-continent, Cameroon ranks seventh with a population of 48,952, or 3 percent of the population from sub-Saharan Africa.¹² In other words, there has been a 145 percent increase from the 3,161 Cameroonian immigrants in the country in 1990. It is estimated that 76.6 percent of the Cameroonian immigrants in the United States entered the country after 2000 (McCabe 2011). While the political and economic conditions at home were motivations for the increased migration to the

United States, it should also be mentioned that stricter immigration policies in many European countries in the 1990s made it difficult for Cameroonian and other immigrants to enter those countries (Whitwell 2002; De Wenden 2004; Pelican and Tatah 2009). Meanwhile, the Diversity Lottery Program (DLP), part of the United States' 1990 Immigration and Naturalization Act that was aimed at increasing the population of immigrants from underrepresented countries around the world (including sub-Saharan countries), created opportunity for Cameroonians to enter the country. Under the program, Cameroonians fortunate to win the lottery and also meet the requirements for entry into the United States automatically qualify for a Green Card and permanent legal residency status upon their arrival. In other words, the program has increased the chances of entering the country by Cameroonians who might have had little opportunity of doing so because of the difficulties in obtaining an American visa.

These post-1990 Cameroonian immigrants are different from the earlier generation in two significant ways. First, unlike the previous generation, whom Mbouge (2008) described as the "America Wandas" because of their determination to achieve an American education, many post-1990 immigrants of the "*Bushfaller*" generation are not interested in the length of time and the financial burden of acquiring university degrees—or what some of these new immigrants characterize as "unnecessary paper qualification." Rather, they are determined to enrich themselves in the shortest time possible without the financial burden of acquiring a college degree. That often means selecting careers and skills that will optimize their earning potential as soon as possible. In other words, for many of them a PhD or other academic credentials that might take a long time to attain are not a priority. Mbouge (2008) posited that this group of immigrants are often unscrupulous, jobless university graduates [from Cameroon], poorly remunerated civil servants, bankrupt businessmen, or former politicians who had fallen out of favor with the regime and whose main objective in coming to America is to make "fast money" at all cost.

Like Cameroonian emigrants in other global destinations, those who enter the United States without the benefit of the DLP or through other legal processes soon find creative ways to change their status. That includes well-documented pre-emigration stories that would buttress their request for asylum or refugee status. According to figures from the United States Office of Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS), seventy-seven Cameroonians were granted refugee status in the country between 1999 and 2009, while 4,444 were granted asylum during the same period. In fact, Cameroon was not only the leading refugee-sending nation in Africa in the early 1990s, but was also among the top-five source of global asylum seekers during the same period (Nyamnjoh 2011). The narrative among those seeking asylum or refugee status in the

United States and other global destinations often included the following: fear of persecution by Cameroonian authorities if they were sent back home because of their involvement in opposition politics, including being members of the Social Democratic Front (SDF), one of the major opposition parties that emerged in the country following the legalization of multiparty politics in the early 1990s, or because of their involvement in the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), a group that advocated for independence of the former Southern British Cameroons or a return to the pre-1972 federal structure.

A second characteristic of the post-1990 immigrants to the United States is the significant number of women. As indicated earlier, while the immediate post-colonial emigrants were often men, women have become important players in Cameroon and Africa's contemporary migration history (Whitwell 2002; Adepaju 2004; Arthur 2009; Atekmangoh 2011; Freedman 2013), thanks to increased educational opportunities for women in post-colonial Africa, especially in the last three decades (Arthur 2009). Although girls represented less than 42 percent of all students enrolled in secondary schools in Cameroon in 1999, the figure represents a significant improvement compared to the decade before independence. In fact, as part of the government's effort to encourage girls' education as advocated at the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women, President Biya instituted policies aimed at encouraging school attendance for girls in rural areas throughout the country (Galega and Tumnde 2004). Fonkeng and Ntembe (2009) reported that 37 percent of the 75,471 students in institutions of higher learning in Cameroon during the 2001/2002 academic year were women.

The new economic reality in Cameroon and elsewhere on the continent since the early 1990s has also forced many women to seek solutions to their problems, including taking risks and doing whatever is necessary to leave the country for an imagined greener pasture. According to UNICEF, women made up almost 44 percent of the 291,792 Cameroonian emigrants worldwide in 2013. McCabe (2011) estimated that females were 51.8 percent of the Cameroonian immigrants in the United States in 2013, compared to 48.6 percent in 2007. At the same time, most of these female emigrants are younger, with post-secondary education. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that almost 17 percent of Cameroonian emigrants in 2000, including women, had obtained higher education before leaving the country. These women are no longer waiting for a husband from the United States, Canada, or Europe to swoop in and rescue them from their difficult socio-economic conditions in Cameroon. They are forging their own paths and creating new opportunities for themselves and their families back in Cameroon (Arthur 2009). Indeed, Cameroonian immigrants are taking full economic advantage of their American migration journey. With an average

employment rate of 74 percent and a median income of \$30,000 in 2009, Cameroonian immigrants earned more than the \$29,000 median income of all Black immigrants in the country (Capps, McCabe, and Fix 2012).

MIGRATION AND ALTRUISM

Thus for many Cameroonian families, hard decisions must be made on possible migration destination and which family member should have the priority and family support in the migration process (Fleischer 2007; 2012), especially since families often see migration as a survival mechanism and a vehicle for supplementing diminishing household resources (Adepoju 2004). In other words, families must often select and invest in those who have the optimal potential of generating migrant earnings and sending remittances. And because the migration process often involves great financial sacrifice, family members are expected to pull their resources together to ensure that it is successful. This may involve the sale of the family farm and other assets or mortgaging the family home in order to raise the finances needed to purchase a plane ticket or obtain a visa to the United States or other migration destination. Making such an investment also means that the family may no longer be able to afford tuition or other educational expenses for siblings left behind. Therefore, the choice of which family member should migrate is also based on who the family thinks is serious, caring, and best positioned to take care of the family once they arrive at their final migration destination (Jua 2003; Fleischer 2007 and 2012). In fact, altruism is the bedrock of African and Cameroonian cultures. In his book on culture and customs of Cameroon, for example, Mbaku (2005) demonstrated how educated and well-to-do Cameroonians in the cities have the responsibility of taking care of their nieces, nephews, and other relatives from the rural areas or those from less privileged backgrounds who either live with them or spend the summer holidays with them. In exchange for taking care of some of their back-to-school financial needs, these relatives are expected to perform various household chores during their stay with the relative. The same financial support is expected from relatives who succeed in their migration journey.

Upon their arrival to the United States or other foreign destinations, these Cameroonian emigrants soon realize that it is not all peaches and cream as they had imagined. In a land where the individual is more important than the community, they must work long hours just to survive. At the same time, however, they are expected to help family members who had made significant financial sacrifices in sending them to America in the first place. In many instances, they suddenly become the sole provider that family members look up

to. Such expectations often lead to economic and emotional stress; these new immigrants are under severe pressure to survive in a foreign land while also trying to take care of family members in Cameroon. While many emigrants are honest and hard-working in their migration destinations, others resort to unscrupulous means of enriching themselves. Ndjio's (2008) essay on "Cameroonian *Feymen*" and "Nigerian 419" scammers remains an excellent expose of the extent that Nigerian and Cameroonian emigrants in Europe and elsewhere are willing to go in order to enrich themselves, including defrauding businessmen and unsuspecting individuals. These emigrants are determined to do whatever it takes to make money. While many of these migrants in the United States and elsewhere may not be able to visit home as is the case with the fictional hunter who is expected to bring back a kill within a short period, their migration has significantly enhanced the socioeconomic situation of families and relatives back in Cameroon (Adarkwa 2015; Nyamnjoh and Page 2002; Ollong 2013; Takougang 2014). The World Bank reported that the amount of remittances from the Cameroonian diaspora increased from \$23 million in 1990 to \$167 million in 2008. Ratha, Mohapatra, and Silwal (2011) estimated that between 1991 and 2011, the total remittances from Cameroonian emigrants was \$1.29 billion. However, this amount does not include money that is often sent through unofficial channels and that could be as high as fifty percent of the \$1.29 billion.

The importance of remittances to families in Cameroon can be measured by the proliferation of Western Union, MoneyGram, and other money transfer agencies in towns and cities across the country. It is not unusual on any day of the week to find long lines of family members waiting in front of these money agencies to collect money that has just been sent by a family member in one of many global destinations. For many families in Cameroon, having a son or daughter abroad who is able to send remittances home is a lifesaver, as they can now afford basic needs that would have been impossible prior to the departure of their sons and daughters. For instance, remittances are used for a variety of economic and social needs, including tuition for siblings, medical expenses, renovating and building of new homes for the family, and purchasing such household items as refrigerators, television sets, and furniture. Diaspora Cameroonians are also building hotels, educational institutions, and other forms of investments in Cameroon. These investments have created a multiplier effect, including employment opportunities and the overall improvement of the condition of many families in Cameroon. Many migrants also provide the financial resources to siblings back in Cameroon to procure visas and other travel documents needed by the American embassy or by the embassies of other potential migration destinations. In fact, for many Cameroonian emigrants,

helping their siblings leave the country for the perceived greener pasture is the best investment that they can make to help them.¹³

CONCLUSION

After years of economic and political stability under authoritarian regimes in post-colonial Cameroon, the collapse in the price of Cameroon's raw material on the global market beginning in the mid-1980s, coupled with demands for political transparency and democratic change in the early 1990s, unmasked Cameroon's image as a model African state. The rise in unemployment, especially among young university graduates, and various repressive measures by an administration determined to remain in power forced many Cameroonians to look for alternative destinations around the globe where they hoped for a better future. While European countries remain the main destinations for these emigrants, the United States has also attracted a significant number of Cameroonians in the last two decades. Cameroonians can also be found in other far-away destinations, including China, South Korea, South Africa, and the Gulf States. Through remittances, these emigrants have become important local income multipliers back home (Taylor 2004). Indeed, for many Cameroonians, the *bushfaller* phenomenon remains alive and well because it represents the only solution to a life of despair.

NOTES

1. I wish to thank my colleagues at the 59th Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association in Washington, DC, for insightful comments and suggestions on an earlier draft of the paper.

2. The term *bushfaller* is a recent neologism coined by Anglophone Cameroonians to refer to those who have successfully emigrated and now reside in North America, Europe, and other global destinations.

3. Some of the prominent female political leaders included Queen Amina of Hausaland, Nzinga of Angola, and the *agba ekwe* among the Igbos of Nigeria.

4. For instance, when I arrived in Chicago in September 1978, there were only two females among the twenty or so Cameroonians in the city.

5. For a comprehensive discussion of the struggle for independence and the reunification of the former French trust territory and the British Southern Cameroons, see Victor T. Le Vine (1964) and Willard R. Johnson (1970).

6. For more information in the process leading up to the formation of the single party and unitary state, see (Ngoh 1988; De Lancey 1989; Takougang and Krieger 1998).

7. For details on the rift between Ahidjo and Biya, see (Ngoh 1988; Takougang and Krieger 1998). Many Cameroonians have also speculated that the change from provinces to regions by a presidential decree on November 8, 2008, was yet another effort by President Biya to rid the nation of one of the last vestiges of the Ahidjo presidency.

8. A handful of Cameroonians in Chicago returned to Cameroon under this program.

9. As a result of inaccurate government data on migration and because many migrants often leave the country through unofficial process, it is difficult to ascertain the number of Cameroonian emigrants. For example (Ollong 2013), estimated the number of Cameroonian emigrants at about a million in 2012.

10. See Chris Mbunwe, 2015, "Belgian Government Decries Asylum-seeking Cameroonians." http://www.cameroonpostline.com/Belgian_govet_decries_asylum_seeking_Cameroonians/. (Accessed February 12, 2015).

11. For more information on the immigrant population in South Africa, see www.statssa.gov.za.

12. As is the case with other African countries, it is difficult to ascertain the actual population of Cameroonians in the United States since many of them enter the country illegally. In fact, some Cameroonians have speculated that the population of Cameroonians in the country may be as high as 300,000.

13. Many Cameroonians in the diaspora see the financial support they provide to their siblings to help them leave the country as a better investment because it provides those who eventually migrate with the opportunity to take care of themselves instead of always depending on financial support from them.

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Chapter Fifteen

The Concept of Homeland

The Choice of Burial Place for Cameroonian Immigrants in America

Zacharia N. Nchinda

INTRODUCTION

The immigration of Cameroonians to the United States has been increasing since the 1990s, fueled partly by many federal government regulations that have eased limitations on immigration from other regions outside Europe.¹ These immigrants have not severed their relationship with their country of origin, however, and many still identify with and demonstrate a mind-set that attaches them somehow politically, economically, and socioculturally with the place they call “homeland.” They also contribute in various ways in the development of “home,” keeping in contact with friends and families through various platforms, including by phone, text, Facebook, instant messaging, LinkedIn, telegram, and WhatsApp. But this forging of ties between Cameroonian immigrants and their homeland has not been limited to, and manifested only by, the actions of those alive. Many of them wish that, after death, their bodily remains be repatriated and buried back “home.”

Death is the only certainty in life, after birth, that mankind is sure of, and though some people may attempt to “control” when and where it occurs, most people cannot influence the place and time of its occurrence. Cameroonian immigrants, like all human beings, know that birth is the beginning of death and, recognizing that death is inevitable, they are forced to confront the question of what happens when death occurs and where they will be buried.

This chapter examines the burial preferences and motives behind Cameroon immigrants’ choice of homeland as burial location. How they arrive at this decision is still a fertile area of investigation. Little attention has been focused on the repatriation of their bodily remains, on why those who have lived in the United States for decades choose “home” as their final resting

place, on how they organise to make this happen, and on the role that a burial association, *Solidarite Agissante* (SAGI)/Active Solidarity, plays in this process of repatriating corpses. The chapter also explores the ideas of homeland and of belonging to Cameroonians. What is the significance of returning their remains home for burial? What does it mean to belong to a community while alive? Does belonging end with living? Does burial generate another status of belonging? By examining Cameroonian burial preferences and practices, can we deduce how they interpret their stay in America? The repatriation of immigrants' bodily remains attracts a form of reasoning in which the meaning of the social world is objectified through kinship and social ties in the country of origin and host country. It has become part of the context through which Cameroonian immigrants can manifest their uniqueness, belonging, oneness, community, and identification with their country of origin—and their difference with their host country. The elaborate preparation and shipment of the corpse for burial back home points to the multifaceted and complex character of Cameroonians' notion of belonging to America.

This study has been divided into six parts. It begins with a look at the methodology. Part two examines the concept of “home” and “homeland” and what it means to Cameroon immigrants. Part three explores the Cameroonian's notion of death and burial. What happens when one dies? Is death an end to human connections? The fourth part presents the various motivations advanced by Cameroonian immigrants to justify their preference for home burial. Part five looks at the issue of cost, at how financing the repatriation of remains is done, and at the challenging role SAGI plays in aiding such moves. The conclusion highlights the fact that death is a complex phenomenon and difficult to understand, even scientifically. Our attempts to give meaning to it can only be done through the ways we think it serves our purpose.

METHOD

I have attended many African “Celebration of Life” or “Transition to Eternal Peace” ceremonies in Wisconsin and have noted four different conclusions on how the final wishes of the deceased were fulfilled. The first bereaved family, that of Dr. Victor Nwagbaraocha who died in 2011, decided to bury him in the United States; the second, that of Dr. Samuel G. Akpan who left the United States in 2015 for a visit to Nigeria and died, was buried there; the third grieving family, that of Dr. Abalo Nunyakpe who died in the United States in 2015, was cremated and the “ceremonies of life” carried out in Liberia; the fourth bereaved family, that of Sir Jonathan Unanka, organized a fund drive to raise money to repatriate his bodily remains to Nigeria for

burial. When I became interested in investigating the reasons why some African immigrants in the United States wished to be buried back home, I contacted representatives of African communities in Milwaukee (originally from Nigeria, Ghana, Togo, Senegal, Gabon, Cameroon, and Ethiopia) to find out what aid they provided to those who wanted to be buried in their country of origin. I realized that none of these African immigrant groups—except Cameroonians—had a unique fund pool geared solely toward the repatriation of bodily remains for burial. Beginning in 2009, a group of Cameroonians based in Maryland created the organization *Solidarite Agissante* (SAGI)/Active Solidarity Ltd whose sole purpose is repatriating the corpses of members for burial in Cameroon.

SAGI membership is opened to all Cameroonians in the US. However, each member must belong to a local Cameroonian community organization whose president or representative is expected to serve as the sole liaison between the organization and the SAGI executive in Maryland. SAGI's importance and value to its members can be measured almost entirely by the nature of its response to the demands of its members since it was created in 2009. It began timidly but became fully operational in 2011 as its activities expanded tremendously. An initial registration of twenty-six member associations was reported in 2011, but by 2015 the number of associations had increased to 270. At the same time, the number of active Cameroonians in the associations increased from 1,068 in 2011 to 7,904 in 2015. Although the total amount contributed by each member of SAGI through their respective organizations for the repatriation of corpses has fluctuated annually, due to the number of registered deaths, the amount has averaged less than \$50.00 (see Table 15.1). So far, SAGI has emerged as the largest pan-Cameroonian association in the United States, with members affiliated through their respective local Cameroonian groups. It is also the only association capable of rallying all Cameroonian immigrants irrespective of their ethnicity, gender, religion, political affiliation, economic status, or social status. The desire for home burial has brought together unlikely bedfellows under the same philosophy. It reminds Cameroonians that they have common shared memories. In other words, even though they may enjoy separate lifestyles as immigrants, they realize that they all came from the same country and that their immigration status did not mean an abandonment of their homeland. SAGI thus offers Cameroonians a sense of belonging and the best opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate their shared past and their mutual desire to honour the wishes of the departed ones. At the same time, those who did not and do not want to be buried in Cameroon were indirectly displaying their desire to cut off their present and future roots from their place of origin, comfortable in their acceptance of the United States as home.

Table 15.1. SAGI Annual Reports, 2009–2015

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total
No. of registered Associations	1	7	18	56	76	60	52	2015 (270)
No. of Withdrawals	0	2	1	26	10	13	15	2015 (67)
No. of Active Members			1068	1481	2064	1583	1268	2015 (7,464)
No. of Deaths			2	17	10	17	19	2015 (65)
Total Contribution per member		6	\$26.48	\$59.90	\$43.20	\$47.72	\$40.59	2015 (\$271.89)
Total Amount contributed up to date			\$30,000	\$255,000	\$150,000	\$255,000	\$285,000	2015 (\$975,000.00)

Source: SAGI General Assembly, *SAGI Ordinary General Assembly, Saturday, December 6, 2015*, Courtyard Marriott, Washington, DC. See: <http://www.sagiusa.org/aboutus/>

See: <http://sagiusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/SAGI-Report-2015.pdf>

The data sources for this case study were gathered from phone interviews I conducted in 2015 and 2016 with SAGI members in California, Georgia, Maryland, Minnesota, Texas, and Wisconsin. The interviews involved thirty respondents, and to be eligible to participate, the participant had to be over twenty-four years old and either a Green Card holder or a naturalized US citizen.² This was to ensure that their decision to be buried in Cameroon was a deliberate and conscious choice. While a key feature of social science research is the random selection of subjects, there are situations, however, in which subjects cannot be randomly assigned to the different circumstances, mostly if they do not “differ in other ways that themselves have bearing on the outcome of interest to the researcher” (Lieberman 1987, 15). To locate my samples, I asked Cameroonians I knew in Wisconsin (SAGI or non-SAGI members) to link me up with Cameroonians in other states, and then within those states located other SAGI members. I selected California, Georgia, Maryland, Minnesota, and Texas partly because these are the states with the largest population of Cameroonian immigrants in the United States and partly because they have the largest number of registered SAGI members. When I called a SAGI member, I introduced myself, stated how I had gotten his or her number, and explained the purpose of my call. None of them refused to answer. I deliberately selected twenty-five men and five women for the interview mainly because, having gone through the names of thousands of SAGI member, I realized that there were more male than female names.³ I called the subjects mostly in the evenings and during weekends, between 6:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. local time, and had to call about three times before I got some of them. In most of the households where both husband and wife were members of SAGI, I interviewed only the first person who answered the phone. The process of the interview often took between fifteen to twenty minutes, starting with conversational icebreakers such as the general challenges immigrants face in the United States. That I was a fellow Cameroonian made it easier for the subjects to be more open, honest, and complete in their response. I informed the interviewees that I was recording their responses in order not to miss what they said. I later transcribed the responses, and then classified the responses by themes. Social science research that involves human beings often comes with human daily difficulties, and so sometimes an interview took longer, either because I was placed on hold or because the respondents had to call me back later due to some pressing and more important matter.

The interview was standardized; all subjects were asked the same set of questions. As Berg (1998, 60) pointed out, “standardized interviews are designed to elicit information using a set of predetermined questions that are expected to elicit the subjects’ thoughts, opinions, and attitudes about the subject-related issues . . . operat[ing] from the perspective that one’s thoughts

are intricately related to one's actions." The focus of the question I asked, following the example of Claudine Attias-Donfut et al. was direct: "Where will you like to be buried or cremated: in [the US], in your home country, in another country, or no preference?" (Attias-Donfut et al. 2005, 704). The thirty members of the sample that I interviewed readily and candidly responded to the question. The fact that all the members of SAGI-USA association registered with the wish to be buried in Cameroon throws direct light on the deeper choice of the members. The result illustrates the dilemma Cameroonian immigrants' face about their death wishes.

CAMEROONIAN IMMIGRANTS' CONCEPT OF HOMELAND

The repatriation of bodily remains from the host country to the country of origin for burial provides a huge context for considering the notion of homeland and the notion of belonging for Cameroonian immigrants. For most people, the concept of home conjures up diverse ideas: a place of safety, security, assurance, peace, and tranquillity—a place like no other. For instance, in her examination of the repatriation of the bodily remains of Sarah Baartman from France to South Africa and that of "El Negro" from Spain to Botswana, Connie Rapoo extrapolated a Botswanan proverb that identifies one's home as a refuge and comforting in

[t]hat "home is where one belongs," "there's no place like home," "one feels safe at home," and that "one will always be welcome at home." The Notion of "home" . . . evokes a sense of protection and comfort . . . the notion of 'home' is inextricably linked to kinship ties and a sense of belonging. (Rapoo 2011, 133)

Rapoo argues that such repatriations should be seen not only as social performances that constitute diaspora reversals or "ritualistic reburials and remembering ceremonies [that] challenge our understanding of the meanings of the notion of diaspora," but also as actions, as in this case, by Cameroonian immigrants in the United States "to re-connect with their original homeland" (Rapoo 2011, 135). Here, the notion of the homeland refers to the country of origin, and the remains of both Sarah Baartman from France to South Africa and of "El Negro" from Spain to Botswana were welcomed in both countries as a national achievement.

The concept of ethnicity and culture also comes into play here in cementing the notion of home. Perpetual Crentsil sees the "concept of ethnicity as emphasizing a shared place of origin and other aesthetic cultural pattern exemplifies the salience of culture as a system of sharing meaning" (Crentsil 2012, 35). Home burial is thus attached to ethnicity, especially since the

choice of burial place reminds the living that their sense of belonging has a dual meaning: one that was temporal and materially sustaining and another that was genuine, long-term, and tied to the world beyond. Even within Cameroon, rural migrants to urban areas still preferred to be buried at home, in their case “home: meaning their village of origin, and they interpreted this as the highest sign of belonging.

A practice still common in Cameroon today—and one that links to home burial after death—is the burial of the placenta of a newly born baby in the village of the baby’s father. The idea behind this ritual is that a child belongs not only to the father and mother, but also to the paternal parent’s village. Then, wherever that child later chooses to settle and work as an adult, he or she still has the obligation to constantly come back home—and in the event of death, the bodily remains must be returned full circle to the village resting place. Citing Mebenga (1991, 234–35), Peter Geschiere (2005) argue that Cameroonian authorities honored this tradition of home burial “by facilitating the transportation of the corpses of all civil servants to their village to be buried there,” and this deliberate effort carried out by the government was partly tied to the idea that “I must be buried where my placenta was buried.”

The introduction of multiparty politics in Cameroon in the 1990s came along with the task of identifying where people belong. One of the “best ways” of doing this was to examine the place of burial: Where will the individual be buried when he or she dies? That location of burial was associated with the place of belonging. In other words, home and belonging, which were often associated with funeral and burial location, took on new political dimension. The identification of “home” then went beyond the place of birth to include the village where your parents originated, and above all, the village where your father originated. Because of the widespread practice of patriarchy, fathers thus had greater say in where family members had to be buried. Thus many Cameroonians are immigrating at a time when democratization and political liberalization have unleashed a heightened politics of belonging, the greatest litmus test of which has been the place of burial. It is what Daniel Jordan Smith refers to as “one of the most powerful symbolic indicators of the continuing (and, perhaps, growing) strength of ties to place of origin” (Smith 2004, 569)

CAMEROONIANS’ CONCEPT OF DEATH

Although mankind has always been fascinated with death, it is its inevitability that has posed the greatest challenge and captured our imagination the most. For most Cameroonians, while birth opens the door into the world of

the living, death opens the door into the world of the dead, providing a unique opportunity of linking both worlds, harvesting the fruits of the latter to secure, stabilize, strengthen, and harmonize a better welfare in the former. Despite the growth and advances in education, urbanization, industrialization, and medical knowledge, Cameroonians have not completely rejected the close ties between the living and the dead. Death is seen both as an end to bodily life and the start of a relationship with the afterlife—between the living and the gods, with the dead acting as a bridge.

Certainly one of the most persistent aspects of any culture is its funeral rites, and the vitality of these rites lies in the fact that they express the deepest concept about life. This vitality, as Gerard van't Spijker (2003) points out, citing O. Bimwenjyi-Kweshi (1981, 382ff), lies at “the heart of all popular belief” and losing it “is [like] losing one’s identity” (Kweshi 1981, 158–59). Thus death is often accompanied by the performance of various rituals that are necessary in preparing and linking the passage of the dead into the living world of the ancestors. Or, as Lee and Vaughan put it, “to allow the living to get on with living” (Lee and Vaughan 2008, 342). There is a wide variety of mortality and funeral rites in Cameroon, and these vary according to the family tradition, to wealth and social status, to the philosophy about nature of death, to the age of the deceased, to the location of the burial spot, and to the entourage of family friends. While some rites are simple, most are generally complex. Because Cameroonians believe in the concept of a soul, the funeral ceremonies provide the ritual means for preparing the soul’s transition into the afterlife.⁴ Funerals then, as Linda Sun Crowder (2000) posited, “offer a family the opportunity to demonstrate duty, devotion, and honour to the deceased and to enhance the status of the family” (Crowder 2000, 453). Funeral ceremonies are believed to efficiently guide the souls of the dead to their final resting place and pave the way for them to perform their duties as ancestors.⁵

Therefore, for many Cameroonians in the United States, death is a matter of public concern to the bereaved family, to the Cameroonian community in the host country, and to friends and families back in Cameroon. The announcement of a death follows a simple procedure. The first confirmation is the wailing of the immediate family members present, followed by phone calls back home to announce the death. Later phone calls, text messages, Facebook and instant messages, telegrams, and emails are sent to friends and well-wishers—and to the Cameroonian community in the United States—to announce the death. These modern means of communication have greatly facilitated the rapid dissemination of the death information. As arrangements are made for the corpse to be placed in a mortuary, discussions are also held by family members and friends on how the remains will be transported to Cameroon.

MOTIVATIONS FOR HOMELAND BURIAL

All Cameroonian immigrants who register as SAGI members do so with only one goal in mind: the repatriation of their corpses to Cameroon for burial when they die. Therefore, it is SAGI's responsibility to provide the money necessary to make that happen. SAGI provides the bereaved family a fixed sum of \$15,000, of which at least \$12,000 is spent for funeral home expenses and transportation of the corpse to the village, and the remainder of the sum for miscellaneous expenses. The motivations advanced by many immigrants for their choice of homeland burial are diverse, and I have categorised them per the various themes that occurred frequently. They vary from a sense of nostalgia and belonging, to cheaper funeral costs, to the cementing of social ties at funeral ceremonies, to performing proper burial rituals, to investigating the "real" cause of death, to the hold of tribalism/ ethnicity, to the "proper" transition to ancestor, to influencing the living.

Sense of Nostalgia and Belonging

All the respondents expressed their belief that nostalgic feelings and belonging were at the heart of the need for repatriating their remains back to Cameroon and motivating them to register with SAGI. As Mayo, a thirty-five-year-old participant in the study indicated, "I did not come to America to stay. I came here to search for my small gari [food] and want to go back to Cameroon, where I came from, when I die." Another participant, forty-four-year-old Njoh opined that, "The dying wish of my late brother was to be buried in Cameroon though he was married to a non-Cameroonian. When he died, his children decided to fulfill their father's wish and sent his body home to Cameroon for burial." We can also see here the desire to follow what Ngoketudia, a 28 year-old interviewee, called "a respect for human dignity, a respect for the wishes of the deceased, trying to respect what he said." This deliberate effort to repatriate the bodily remains back to a place they call home for burial can also be seen symbolically as a reversal of the African Diaspora trend. The return of the corpse contributes, as Rapoo (2011) has put it, to "the process of diaspora identification and iterative practices of African cultural production" (Rapoo 2011, 142). And it also

evokes the desire to *restore* them to their "natural" ancestral [homeland]; an act that [strengthens] African cultural memory and identification . . . repatriations, re-burial rites and re-membling ceremonies are embodied ritualised acts that permit social actors to restore African bodies that were dismembered—geographically, ideologically, and anatomically—and to conceptualise alternative

ways to remember, re-member and restore them to their “fatherland.” (Rapoo 2011, 138)

All the participants acknowledged that home burial for Cameroonian immigrants has something to do with fulfilling a certain level of belonging. In fact, as Manyi, a fifty-eight-year-old participant in the study put it: “My father used to say that he cannot accept to be buried outside of his home town so that his remains fertilize the soil of others. He gave strict instructions that he should be buried at home, no matter what. I want to follow his example.” Another participant, Matuke, fifty years old, explained that, “my navel [*netong*] was buried under a plantain plant at home and my family have been eating that plantain ever since I was born. When I die, I must be buried back home, to be one with that soil where my navel was buried.” Obenekang, a thirty-five-year-old study participant shared the same idea: “I believe that where I was born, where my navel [*netong*] was buried, is eventually where I belong and it is eventually where I must end. . . . You see, it is like a spiritual attachment to my roots. It feels as if part of my body is somewhere and I have to be re-united with it, you know.”

By using funeral rituals and home burial as a means of establishing a sense of belonging and as a social event that ties the dead in the network of kinship, Cameroonians are also demonstrating where they feel one really belongs, whether in the city, the host country, or the village of origin. Six informants in our study highlighted this idea. For example, Essong, 35-years-old, reflected that “in Cameroon, my soul cannot be roaming in a foreign land. That is where I was born and that is where I need to be buried”; Achidi, 68, and Bate, 45, were surprised that I even ventured to ask the question. “How can you manage to ask me that kind of question about Cameroon? Why? I will be buried there, eh,” Bate said; Rachael, 50, explained that “all my family is in Cameroon. Furthermore, is this my country?” Ma-Agbor, 31, pointed out that “this is a passing-by land that we are in. Our families are back home. Why wish that my soul is left in a foreign land?” And finally, fifty-six-year-old Agbor, stressed, “Only in Cameroon. For here is Whiteman’s land, it is their land, not my land. God forbids.”

Yet, those Cameroonians who had left their home for greener pastures in the United States and are now being returned, not as living beings but as corpses ready for burial, begs the question: Is the Cameroon they are returning to the same as the one they left behind? Will their spirits be in peace with the ancestors despite the years of absence, or as the Biblical prodigal son was, will they be welcomed with open arms? Are the communities they left behind the same, along with the burial ceremonies they knew?

Cheaper Funeral Cost

Most immigrants make significant economic contribution in the development of their family and home country, either through direct investments, remittances, or philanthropic assistance. When death occurs, it robs the Cameroonian family not only of a member, but also of a provider of economic resources. One of the best ways to console a grieving family is to allow them to see and bury their dead. But the greatest hurdle to home burial had been the cost of repatriating the bodily remains. SAGI stepped in to solve the problem in two ways. First, all the participants were pleased with the assurances provided by SAGI to repatriate their bodily remains home for burial, thus taking the high cost of burial off the table. It was one less stress and burden to worry about when death occurs. As one participant, Pa Wanda, 65, puts it,

It is cost effective to use SAGI. It can pay for my burial in Cameroon at a reduced cost. Why should I not take the advantage? For those who are unemployed or whose work cannot provide them with the needed burial insurance, SAGI is there, or even if my job provided some insurance, SAGI will become supplementary to my family if I pass away.

Even some immigrants with life insurance policies still enrolled with SAGI since the entire cost is covered, including the necessary paper work from the funeral home, embassy requirements for repatriating remains, as well as transportation and burial costs in Cameroon. As most people know, “pleading to people to raise funds to repatriate a corpse is not an easy thing,” as one informant told me. As Ngomba, 36, put it: “I am sure. If the money is there, then there will be no reason why I will not be buried at home.” Second, the unique opportunity provided by SAGI has encouraged many Cameroonian immigrants to invite their parents and grandparents to visit children and grandchildren in the United States, especially since they know that their remains will be repatriated to Cameroon if they die during their visit.

CEMENTING SOCIAL TIES AT FUNERAL CEREMONIES

Survival in the host country requires that Cameroon immigrants form or join social networks, and these networks may be those of village, ethnicity, hometown, alumni, or national organizations. These associations reinforce the identity of home within the immigrants and reassure them that they belong to something bigger than the host country. Because these social networks also

embrace the idea of home as the final resting place, they often discuss the issue in their meetings. As Mokoto, a thirty-eight-year-old study participant stressed, "I am begging for Cameroon and for Buea where I was born. My family and friends need my body." Majong, a forty-four-year-old participant highlighted this in these words: "Apart from family ties we still have a lot of social ties in Cameroon. Family members and social relations that look up to you . . . and the social context of home burial is unique and special."

Funeral ceremonies have always served as social events where members of the family, friends, and well-wishers all come together to celebrate the life of the deceased. In a social sense, repatriating one's remains allows the bereaved family to control "the sense of loss of the loved one, the personal deprivation, but also the guilt and self-accusation that so often accompany the departure of a close kinsman" (Goody 1962, 34–35). It helps, to an extent, to reduce the development of long-term family conflicts and provides an avenue in some cases for the "reallocation of the rights and duties of the deceased with regard to roles, property, and women" (Goody 1962, 36). They provide a social forum where "people meet potential mates, discuss village affairs, get news, exchange gossip, renew friendships, and meet distant relatives" (Jindra 2005, 361). Since Cameroonian culture recognizes the rights of the extended family or tribe over the corpse, there is communal interest in burial, and as Nantang Jua pointed out, "the community retains a hermeneutic monopoly over this cosmology" (Jua 2005, 341). Thus, participation in the funeral ceremony plays a huge role in cementing family relations and directing the social life of the family vis-à-vis the society.

Performing Proper Burial Rituals

In Cameroon, the dead are entitled to proper burial rites, but the nature of these rites may be influenced by such other factors as the manner of death; whether a death was a bad death (from leprosy, swollen belly, elephantiasis, suicide, a lightning attack, pregnancy, or during child birth); or the age, gender, wealth, social class, and status of the deceased (Jindra 2005, 359; Ogbuagu 1989, 89). As one participant, Ebanga, age 24, asked me, "Woah you have the heart to ask me that question. I beg you in Cameroon. Do you want bad luck (or 'country fashion') to follow me?" In other words, many of the participants believed that only by repatriating their remains to Cameroon could they be guaranteed that they would be given a proper burial.

The proper burial rites could be sub-divided into two categories: a traditional or indigenous rite and a syncretic rite that blends traditional and Christian elements. Both forms entail pre-burial, burial, and post-burial events. As Lee and Vaughan argue, these rituals are vital "[b]ecause they attempt

to mediate between the world of the living and the world of the dead” (Lee and Vaughan 2008, 344). The funeral rites serve a dual purpose. On the one hand, they provide the living with the best occasion to grant and fulfill the last wishes and rights of the deceased and to celebrate his or her achievements with the social group. The rites provide a formal acceptance of death and the transition of one of their own. On the other hand, these rituals provide a forum for the bereaved to request that the dead guard, protect, and think of those left behind. They are an acknowledgment that, from henceforth, the dead will be playing a different role and serve in a different capacity. Proper funeral rites, as Ogbuagu (1989) explained it,

... are performed to enable the spirit of the dead person to travel safely to the world beyond, to establish a continued link between the dead person and his kin, and also to satisfy societal expectations that the family show how virtuous and successful (in terms of personal achievement, etc.) and well-loved their deceased kinsman was. (Ogbuagu 1989, 89)

For those Cameroonians who wish to be buried at home, the funeral rites performed in the United States are mostly syncretic. Upon death, the death announcement follows and the cadaver is placed in a mortuary. While frequent visits to pray for the corpse are taking place, arrangements are made to acquire the necessary paper work for the repatriation of the corpse. A church ceremony is generally held before the shipment of the body. The bulk of the traditional burial rites are carried out in Cameroon, and these begin with the selection and sewing of the funeral attire for close relatives (traditional and church), the reception of the corpse at the airport and transportation to the place of burial, the pre-burial ceremony, sitting arrangements, selection of the burial ceremony, the ceremony, and the post-burial formalities.

The close bond between the living and the ancestors is best cemented only if the deceased is buried at home, reconnected with the larger community to which he or she belonged, and reducing the chances of the deceased’s spirit wandering about or being unsettled. Home burials multiply the chances for a future veneration of the ancestor, the restoration of the social reproductive rights, and participation in the construction of the society. The rituals can be simple or elaborate and can take several days and various forms, such as talismans, sacred places, shrines, religious objects, symbols, songs, dances, and proverbs—all vital in maintaining the stability and harmony of the community.

This obligation to be buried at home is more pressing for village titleholders. For example, as a study informant, Nchong, age 62, explained,

I am a titleholder in the village. I gained it by heredity. I am the head of the family at home even though I am here. By hereditary, when you are a successor

you must be around the family you have inherited so that you can pour libation with the ancestors on behalf of your people and keep open the communication line between the living and the dead. When you are dead and the rituals are performed, you are reunited with them. I feel that if I am buried outside, that connection will be lost, you know.

The importance of this was supported by another informant, Nkogho, 60:

The norm of going through the cultural rights and traditional rights of burying a person will be more valuable at home than here. And lots of the people who join me in performing the needed rituals are back home, not here. This is a spiritual issue because ancestral powers cannot be ignored.

INVESTIGATE THE “REAL” CAUSE OF DEATH

Despite the general recognition by Cameroonians that death is inevitable, few deaths (except those of the very elderly) are accepted easily as natural. What “really” caused the death of that person? Why did it occur now? What agents made or facilitated this “natural” occurrence to happen? Whose or what supernatural spirit did the decease offend? Due to these beliefs, it is a common practice for the bereaved family to overtly or covertly seek the assistance of diviner(s) or of a “medicine man or woman” to identify the true cause of death and to reveal the agent(s) that were responsible for or facilitated the occurrence of death.

The quest for a “sufficient or genuine” explanation, beyond the medical reasons, for the cause of death of a loved one can best be solved when the corpse is brought back home where inquiry into the puzzle can be performed even after burial has taken place. Because those who die abroad are brought home for burial in already sealed caskets, family members resort to diviners or medicine men/women, mostly after the burial, for answers as to why death occurred in the first place. It appeases family relations, perhaps not for all, but certainly for those who had doubts as to the medical reasons for one’s death. This consolation provided by the presence of the body was captured by one of those interviewed, Tabenjon, 55:

Now imagine that you are a parent, back home in Cameroon and you are told that your child in China is dead and is buried in China without you seeing the body. It will forever be to you like a hoax; it will be like you are living a dream. You will always feel as if some day will arrive when your child will come home and then you will meet again. It will be more stressful to accept the lost when you did not see the body than when you really see and bury the body. The loss is painful, but the parents can try to accept it when they see the body. You see,

when someone dies in the village and family members shave their hair or put on a mourning dress, they are accepting the death as such. If you do not provide your last respect it will always appear as if the death did not occur.

For many Cameroonians, as Goody notes that “[d]eath is treated as a social phenomenon and attributed to some conflict in the social system, either with the living persons (witches, workers of curses, and sorcerers), or with past members of the society (ancestors), or with nonhuman agencies (shrines)” (Goody 1962, 208). It is often attributed to supernatural forces such as gods, demons, witchcraft and magic, or ancestors. As Ogbuagu (1989) pointed out, citing Beattie, “. . . all deaths are thought to be intentional, whether the intention is thought to be that of a living person practicing sorcery or witchcraft, or that of a ghost or spirit” (Beattie 1964, 75). Rarely do Cameroonians attribute death to natural causes or to God, particularly death of those who are not very old. Home burial can, at least psychologically, provide avenues for solving the puzzle.

The Hold of Ethnicity

The ethnic pull among Cameroonians is still strong, and the political culture has only added to this. As a study participant, Bessem, 48, explained, “We want to keep our cultural identity. In our culture, when a person dies, they must be buried following our tradition and custom. We want to see the corpse, we want to be buried in the ancestral land. . . . We do not want to be lost.” Another informant, Nkwelle, 42, continues, “Note that the family bond in Cameroon is still very strong: the immediate family, the extended family, and the neighbours all act as one. To be buried abroad affects everybody and will be very disturbing to the harmony of these family units.” Supporting this idea, another participant, Bokossa, 55, argued that

To allow one to be buried far away appears to mean that we have abandoned our brother in a foreign land. . . . It will raise various speculations about the family: people doubting whether the family lacked the financial means, or dispute within the household or with the deceased. . . . Home burial provides the opportunity for the family to sit down, reassess their journey, discuss common issues, forgive each other, reconcile and move on.

This desire by many Cameroonian immigrants to be buried at home is also rooted in the country’s post-colonial history. The first president, Ahmadou Ahidjo (r. 1960–1982) carefully crafted a policy of regional balance that stressed the need for the creation of a single political party to blend the diverse ethnic groups into a common identity for the interest of national development. To

fulfill this goal, civil servants were recruited and sent to perform their duties in various parts of the country irrespective of their ethnic origins. However, at a person's death, the government provided the funds needed for the corpse to be repatriated to the designated village for burial. This policy was heightened to a new level with the birth of multiparty politics under the current President Paul Biya, who has been in power since 1982. The political liberalization that swept the African continent after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989 engendered an "increasing obsession with 'autochthony' throughout the continent. . . . [It] triggered a politics of belonging in which the village and the region assume new importance as a crucial source of power at the national level" (Geschiere and Gugler 1998, 306). Thus, instead "of promoting national citizenship, as implied by the idea of 'nation-building' that dominated politics during the years of independent struggle and the decade after independence, these regimes now seem to be more intent on producing 'autochthons'" (Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 2000, 425).

To herald the new multiparty atmosphere in the country, a new constitution was introduced in 1996 that directly encouraged ethnicity. It required all Cameroonian citizens to carry an identity card, which bears an ethnic label: the "native origin" of a person's father and not the place where that person was born. In this climate, then, irrespective of where one was born, grew up, built wealth, and owned property, the burial location was identified as one's proper home; it was where one could "genuinely" be in sync and "communicate" with one's ancestors. Thus, despite migration, "it is [the immigrants'] 'spiritual interest' that make them retain their links to 'the sacred place' of the village" (Mebenga 1991, 234–35), and home burial becomes a way of appeasing the spirit, providing it with a rightful place, and avoiding its wandering into oblivion.

However, home burial is also guided by another simple desire: the possibility of allowing the tribe to celebrate the passing away of their loved one in the best way they know how. Death to many is a shock, whose closure may never come, but its long-term impact is mitigated a bit if burial takes place according to the wishes of the deceased. It reflects the reverence held toward the departed and his or her family in their specific network of social relations, and it offers an opportunity for them to distinguish themselves from the "others," that is, from those who have been Americanized in body and spirit. Finally, the desire to respect ethnicity and to transport the corpse home for burial have also been facilitated by an explosion in the provision of private mortuary services in Cameroon that allows for the preservation of corpses for a longer time as a person's burial arrangements are made. Therefore, Cameroonians are now accustomed to the delays before burial that come with the

death of a loved one either at home or when the death occurs overseas. They are psychologically prepared not only for the delay, but also for the time it takes for a corpse to come home.⁶

“Proper” Transition to Ancestor

In Cameroon, the perceived power of ancestors and the belief in their hold on the living is strong. Ancestral reverence has a prominent place in the ethnic beliefs, religious ceremonies, and psychological structure of the communities. One of the best ways to maintain family unity, secure a brighter future, and avoid bad luck is to make sure the ancestors are pleased through rituals.⁷ One informant, Mbake, 27, highlighted this aspect, noting, “I am the son of a chief so it will be an abomination for my body to remain here. Even if I don’t have money my dad will make sure I am buried back home. Note that many traditional ceremonies have to be performed always over my grave.” Another subject, Asongayi-Ngwa, 31, asserted, “I cannot miss connecting with my roots and the ancestral spirits. Burial at home is the only way I can get back to my African roots.”

While proper burial rites can always secure that transition into the afterlife, a burial at home has the added advantage not only of using the individual spirit, but also of securing the collective spirits of the extended family. From a familiar location, the ancestors can be called upon to reward the family with good fortune for many years to come.⁸ The performance of these rituals is at times dependent, for effectiveness, upon a visit to the burial spot, and when the burial takes place at home, it makes it easier for members of the family to carry out such vital rituals as needed. As Lee and Vaughan pointed out, the “dead could only find their place as ancestors, rather than vengeful ghosts, if their loss had been properly registered, not only by the individuals closest to them, but by the social groups of which they were members” (Lee and Vaughan 2008, 342).

Every effort is made to prepare grounds for the dead individual to be placed among his ancestors and to create an ancestral shrine for future religious ceremonies as needed, for it is only then that they can bless the family and community in the future.⁹ As Jindra (2005) noted:

The future prosperity of the family depends on blessing from the ancestors and, to please them, the living descendants must perform a death celebration in their honour, one that follows all the cultural prescription of gifts to relatives, involvement of societies and general hospitality. . . . Ultimately, the death celebration “remembers” the ancestors by inviting [their spirits] to come and witness how the family [has] “come together.” (Jindra 2005, 361)

The dead can best be brought back to join the rank of the ancestors, to occupy their place, and perform their rightful duties in protecting and serving the living family and the community if they are buried at home.

Influencing the Living

Interestingly, some of those who prefer that their dead bodies be shipped back to Cameroon for burial believe that they are carrying out a personal, family, and social responsibility geared toward protecting their loved ones left behind—and that they are doing so even from the grave. By preferring home burial, they are looking beyond the moment, serving the interest of their limited family in the US by linking them fully with their extended families in Cameroon. One of those interviewed, a sixty-four-year-old named Eposi, expounded on this:

My burial home will maybe force my children to come home occasionally, even if it means once in a lifetime. . . . Cameroon will offer the opportunity for my children and their grandchildren to come home. My grandchildren will ask questions about me and they will want to see my grave. I will be waiting.

Another person interviewed, Kensop, 51, echoed the same point of view when he commented,

What do you think carries me back home often? It is the family and when I go home I cannot miss going to the grave of my parents to seek for blessing. Once a people lose their root or are cut off from their root then they are a dead people. We do not want to be lost. The home burial will force or take the children there, to show them where their parents and grandparents came from; attached them to the homeland.

One study subject, Chidung, 60, stressed that, through home burial, she hopes to indirectly oblige or make her children and grandchildren travel to Cameroon, at least to see her grave:

I do not want my children to be completely lost here. By being buried at home it will force them, if not now, sometimes in the future, to look for where their mother or grandmother was buried and in that case, they will visit my grave in Cameroon. If they need my blessing, they will come over.

Resolving the Issue of Cost

The influx of Cameroonian immigrants in the US has been accompanied by the establishment of diverse networks of associations that bring them together

and cater to their different interests. One of these vital interests is how to respond in case of death of a Cameroonian.

Cameroonian Associations in the United States

Cameroonian Associations in the United States are scattered all over. They meet physically and regularly and while, depending on the population, many of these groups are local and city-wide, there are others that are state-wide and nation-wide. These associations are of different categories, such as church, ethnic groups, township, alumni, political association, Pan-Cameroonian groups, and burial associations, the last to be created. They offer a variety of functions, one of which is to resolve the issue of where to bury one of their own. The “self-conscious display of support and solidarity . . . serve to demarcate the [Cameroonian] immigrants as a community of caring people who assume responsibility for the proper burial of their loved ones and are prepared to travel far to show their last respects to a bereaved family” (Karen Fog Olwig 2009, 525). But their response to the loss of a member who must be buried at home is influenced by various factors, such as membership in an association and financial capabilities.

Members without Financial Means or Burial Association

One of the major responsibilities of these organizations is to respond to bereavement within the immediate family of one of their own, and in this endeavour, a distinction is made between a death in the nuclear family of a member and the death of a member. Generally, a predetermined amount of money is allocated in both cases, with a higher amount provided in case of the death of a member. In cases where the bodily remains must be repatriated home, the question of who pays for the cost of transportation and burial comes up. While there are many Cameroonians who have made financial provisions to cover the cost of their death, either through insurance policies or through joining SAGI, there are many others who wish to be buried in Cameroon but have been unable to set aside funds for that purpose.

Fulfilling the death wish of one who knew that death was a certainty but did not plan for it has not always been easy and has often divided the community into two opposing camps. One camp, the most vocal, argues that it is annoying and wrong for any Cameroonians who wish to be buried at home not to make funding provision for such eventuality while they are alive. They point to existing life insurance companies and SAGI that could alleviate and shoulder burial cost. Another camp, using emotional and moral appeal, argues that it was in the interest of all Cameroonians to make sure the corpse

was repatriated home for burial and for them to bury their hatchet, as it were, and bury the deceased with dignity. They use the occasion to sensitize, motivate, and warn those who have not secured funds for their burial to do so.

Once it is understood that the dead wanted to be buried at home but had made no financial arrangements for the funeral cost and transportation of the bodily remain, efforts are carried out to acquire the needed funds. The net for the fund solicitation is cast wide, as a goodwill gesture, and addressed to members of any association(s) the deceased belonged to, to friends and co-workers, to church members, to well-wishers. And then “go-fund-me” Facebook efforts are carried out.

Members with Life Insurance

There are many Cameroonians who have taken up life insurance policies that include death coverage. Some of the policies may be through their employers or as part of their various ethnic groups, township, alumni, political associations, and Pan-Cameroonian groups. The amount provided for death benefits from these groups vary, but generally they are enough to pay the over \$12,000 needed to repatriate the bodily remains of a member home.

Members of Burial Associations

The establishment of burial societies by Cameroon immigrants in the US is a new phenomenon. For those who want to be buried at home, there are two organizations specifically tailored for that purpose which are open to them: (1) *Solidarite Agissante* (SAGI) (English: *Active Solidarity*) and (2) *Cameroon Death Assurance Group* (CAMDAG), which was started in 2015 by a few Cameroonians in Texas and Oklahoma.¹⁰ The overriding goal of both groups is to make sure that all deceased registered members are transported home for burial and “not left behind in the US.” Because of the high costs involved in the repatriation of the bodily remains, a single family often faces a huge challenge coming up with the amount.

CONCLUSION

The immigration of Cameroonians to the United States and their quest for survival in the host country have not prevented them from establishing and maintaining close relationships with Cameroon. Most of them still identify with and demonstrate a mind-set that attaches them somehow politically, economically, and socio-culturally with the place they call “homeland.” This

home, for many, is not America, which they see as a temporarily survival location, but their country of origin, where they assume genuine safety, security, and peace can be achieved. Because the living body, due to the necessities of survival, cannot achieve its needs and wants at home and must immigrate for diverse reasons, the United States often serves as the host. But death presents a new dilemma. For the Cameroonian, death goes beyond the physical event, which destroys the visible bodily life of a person and the social status that was attributed to the individual. It is the start of a new life in another world, the opening of a new avenue of communication between the worlds of the living and those of the gods with the dead acting as the intermediary. To the living, death provides a unique opportunity of linking both worlds, harvesting the fruits of the latter to secure, stabilize, strengthen, and harmonize a better welfare in the former. But for the dead to effectively serve as a bridge to the gods on behalf of the living, the proper burial rites must be performed, and this can only be best achieved if the corpse is repatriated.

Cameroonians have advanced various justifications for their choice of homeland burial. This range of reasons was presented here. The desire for homeland burial can also be interpreted as a form of nationalism, the final manifestation of a “Cameroonianess” that might be dormant and emerges only at the last moment, as immigrants negotiate their new identities in America. One of the greatest hindrances to fulfilling these goals for Cameroonians has been cost. But with their enrollment in various forms of life insurance schemes and the establishment of social institutions such as SAGI, the love for home burial has gained an added boost. All those whose spirits cannot rest in peace abroad on a foreign land now have the possibility of fulfilling their wishes.

Death is a complex phenomenon and difficult to understand, even scientifically. Our attempts at giving meaning to it can only be done through the ways we think it serves our purpose. Thus, though it strikes at the heart of the society, it cannot be an end. Each living being wants to feel itself immortal, and one of the best ways of securing immortality involves the establishment of a linkage between its living beings and the dead. For Cameroonians, home burial secures this link and solidifies an integral part of the country’s history.

NOTES

1. These immigration policies include the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, the Refugee Act of 1980, and the Immigration Act of 1990 (Diversity Visa Lottery). The population of sub-Saharan immigrants in the United States jumped from 574,000 in 2000 to 1.4 million in 2013, see Monica Anderson, *A Rising*

Share of the U.S. Black Population is Foreign Born, Pew Research Center, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/04/09/a-rising-share-of-the-u-s-black-population-is-foreign-born/>; for the case of Cameroonian immigrants in particular, see Joseph Takougang, *Cameroonian Immigrants in the United States: Between the Homeland and the Diaspora* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014).

2. The question one may ask is how the opinion of these subjects will change when they retired and/or have grandchildren. Will they still want to be buried at “home?” I did not investigate this question. But since many Cameroon immigrants do construct their retirement homes at “home” as a sign of honor, it goes along that many may want to be buried there.

3. When I asked some subjects during our conversation why they thought more men than women wanted to be buried in Cameroon, all of them chuckled, and said most Cameroonian women in the US did not envisage going back, “dead or alive to stay again.”

4. Yet, this reverence for the dead and the need for its proper preparation to enter the world of the ancestors has not been smooth and equitable for all. The huge loss of lives generated by man-made and natural disasters such as civil war and genocides, drought and famine have left many dead Cameroon not buried with the proper ceremonies to prepare them for the after-life with the ancestors.

5. This phenomenon that death is not the end and that the deceased will rise “in one form or another, to the peace of human association” can be likened to the “Christian church guarantees” to all believers that Christ “had triumphed over death and freed all his disciples from it,” see R. Hertz (1960), “A Contribution to the Study of the Collective Representation of Death,” in *Death and the Right Hand*, 27–171, trans. Rodney and Claudia Needham, intro. E. E. Evans-Pritchard (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press), 78.

6. The development of private mortuary services in Cameroon has exploded since the 1990s and most are in various urban centers nationwide. While some of them are independent business ventures, others are tied to ethnic or tribal development groups e.g. the Bali–Nyonga Development and Cultural Association (BANDECA).

7. For an overview of some authors who have provided diverse interpretations of the importance of rituals in death celebrations and their views which include rituals as part of social value and each shaping the other, reflection on human life, society’s interpretation of death, transmission of cultural ideals and attitudes, mythological communication, religious manifestations, maintenance of individual stability, and family unity, see M. Egbe, (2013), *Death, the Deceased and the Dead: Changing Trends in the Funeral Rituals of the Bayang People of Cameroon* (Berlin: ResearchGate), 1–2.

8. Michael Jindra argues, in the case of the Cameroon Grassfields, that Christianity instituted the celebration of burial rites for everyone. While prior to Christian contact only chiefs/fon, lineage heads, elites, titleholder men, and few important women were buried and gained the status of ancestors, the rest of the population did not. The introduction of Christianity came along with the creation of new title holders, the belief in the afterlife, and the wide spread practice of formal funeral rites for all types of individuals; ancestral worship was now open to all and not only to a select few, see M. Jindra (2005), “Christianity and the Proliferation of Ancestors: Changes in Hierarchy and Mortuary Ritual in the Cameroon Grassfields,” *Africa* 75 (3): 356–77.

9. There are many variations in the nature and structure of funerary and mourning rituals performed in the quest to prepare the transition of the dead into the afterlife. But this veneration of the dead is contingent on the fact that the dead died a good death. Death by suicide is often problematic.

10. This group is still on the drawing board, and for more on this organization see <https://www.bizapedia.com/tx/cameroon-assurance-group-camdag.html>.

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Chapter Sixteen

Return Youth Migrants in Cameroon

Understanding the Other Side of Bushfalling, 1990–2015

Walter Gam Nkwi

INTRODUCTION

On its weekly Sunday program “*Cameroon Calling*” on July 7, 2015, the Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV) focused on the stories of returned female migrants from Kuwait. It detailed the treatment of young girls from Cameroon who had traveled to Kuwait and other Gulf States in search of greener pastures, but who had returned, frustrated and disappointed by their adventure. The young women recounted how they had been lured by agents who enticed them with prospects of good jobs and higher wages in these states. While it was often difficult and expensive to procure the necessary travel documents, those who managed to do so soon realized that the promise of a good job and high wages was a mirage. Many of the girls ended up as maids, working long hours, often as long as twenty hours a day, with little or nothing to eat. One of the girls recounted how she had been forced to share a room with four cats for days, surviving on stale food. Another recounted how she had been forced into a sexual relationship with her master, but when she brought the matter to the attention of the wife, both husband and wife threatened to kill her. Another girl narrated how her diplomas, passport, and belongings had been confiscated upon arrival and how for two years she was never paid the salary she had been promised before she left Cameroon. Another girl with a degree in Modern Letters and Social Sciences from the University of Yaoundé 1, narrated how she had gone to Kuwait hoping to be a teacher, only to end up doing menial jobs as a maid. Other girls were overcome with emotions as they recounted how they had lived in virtual isolation and were never allowed to call their relatives or friends back in Cameroon.

The voices of these young girls, coupled with the prevailing economic situation in Cameroon that had prompted their migration, are the focus of this chapter. Conceptually, I position this chapter within the triple context of *bushfalling* (a popular concept describing a new breed of Cameroonian migrants), returned migration, and human trafficking. By examining the *bushfalling* phenomenon, I intend to understand the economic and sociopolitical conditions leading to the migration of these young girls in the first place. In fact, the prevailing literature on *bushfalling* often ascribes the phenomenon to young men and women who, in spite of initial hardship, have settled and now enjoy a good life in their migration destinations. However, while current scholarship on Cameroonian migration has focused on the *bushfaller* phenomenon, understood in terms of the successful migration of Cameroonian youths to various global destinations (see, for example, Alpse 2012; Jua 2003; Konde 2014; Pelican and Tatab 2009; Ngwa and Ngwa 2006; Nyamnjoh 2005 and 2009; Nyamnjoh and Page 2002) and their contribution in improving the lives of their families back in Cameroon and the Cameroonian economy as a whole through remittances (Takougang 2014), there has been little discussion on return migrants. This chapter examines the complexities surrounding the migration of Cameroonian youths to and from Kuwait and the Gulf States. Specifically, it focuses on young female migrants whose dreams of a better life were shattered.

METHODOLOGY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This chapter draws on two main sources. First, a series of focus group discussions were conducted with the returned migrants. Each discussion group was made up of 7–9 young girls between the ages of 21 and 35. Additionally, I conducted individual discussions with a total of twenty participants. The interview conditions were often stressful because emotions had the better of most of the respondents, especially since many of them had initially been reluctant to grant the interview. The interviews often took place at the homes of the participants, but some also were conducted in public places, including drinking spots, restaurants, and cafés. The interview questions were intended to provide an understanding of the migrants' experiences in Cameroon and Kuwait, seeking out their background information and responses related to their educational background, their reasons for migrating, the choice of Kuwait and the Gulf States rather than other countries as their migration destination, the length of stay, their wages and working conditions, and the challenges they faced on their return to Cameroon. I also interviewed people who were related to or had interacted with some of the returned migrants.

In addition to oral interviews, secondary literature and a careful review of a series of television programs on migration and return migration were important sources of information in this study. While the study sample was small, it nevertheless provided an opportunity for a deeper understanding of the stories of Cameroonian women and those of women from other sub-Saharan nations. Their experiences in the Gulf States need to be part of the current discourse on global migration.

POST-COLONIAL AFRICAN MIGRATION/ THE NEW AFRICAN MIGRATION

Human migration is not a new phenomenon in African history and has been the subject of much research by scholars (see, for example, Davidson 1954; Van Onselen 1976; Amin 1974 and 1995; Adepoju 1979, 1998; Harris 1994; Konseiga 2005; Black et al. 2003). According to Adepoju (1979), pre-colonial population mobility in Africa was largely associated with the existing sociopolitical and environmental conditions, as well as the search for permanent settlements, internecine warfare, natural disasters, and the perennial search for fertile farm land. All had an impact on migration patterns in Africa. These movements were exacerbated with the advent of European occupation of the continent. More recently, Adepoju (2011) has also focused on intra-regional migration in sub-Saharan Africa and the dynamics of such migration, including the feminization and diversification of migration destinations and the emigration of skilled healthcare and other professionals from the continent.

Following independence, African migration was dominated by young men who went mostly to Western Europe and the United States in search of educational opportunities (Apraku 1991; Arthur 2000). Post-colonial migration was also the result of famine, wars, and other forms of natural disaster that have plagued parts of the continent in the last three decades or so. According to the United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs, there were 20.6 million African migrants among the 243.7 million international migrants in 2015, compared to 15.7 million of the 152.6 million migrants in 1990. One of the significant changes in African migration, especially since the early 1990s, has been the increased participation of women in this global movement. Indeed, the United Nations estimates that 48 percent of African migrants in 2015 were women. But while many of these women were forced to leave their place of origin in search of a better life for themselves and their families (Whitwell 2002; Arthur 2009), others are victims of human trafficking, which the United Nations defines as

. . . the illicit and clandestine movement of persons across national and international borders, largely from developing countries and some countries in transition with the end goal of forcing women, girls and children into sexually or economically oppressive and exploitative situations for the profit of recruiters, traffickers, crime syndicates, as well as other illegal activities related to trafficking, such as forced domestic labour. (Salah 2001, 2)

While Aghatise (2005) focused on the overall problems of trafficking of women from West Africa, especially from Nigeria to Italy, and on the economic, social, and cultural dimensions of such trafficking, Lawrance and Roberts (2012) examined the continuities and discontinuities in time and space of the trafficking of African women and children. Indeed, while studies on African migration in general and on the *bushfaller* phenomenon in Cameroon have been the focus of much research (Adepoju 2004 and 2008; Alpse 2012; Bakewell 2008; Ferguson 1999; Pelican 2006; Martin 2003; Stoller 1999; Pelican and Tatah 2009), not enough attention has been paid on return migrants, especially women. The International Organization of Migration (IOM) has defined a return migrant as a person returning to his or her country of origin or habitual residence. By focusing on return female migrants from the Middle East and the Gulf States, this chapter addresses an issue that has not yet been addressed in Cameroonian diaspora scholarship (Takougang 2014; Konde 2014; Langmia 2007).

THE CAMEROONIAN SITUATION AND FEMALE MIGRATION

For decades after independence, Cameroon enjoyed relative political stability and a strong economy, thanks to the favorable price that it received for its exports on the World Market and the “economic pragmatism and liberal policies of the government, the dynamism of its private class and the nation’s remarkable political stability” (Takougang 2014, 17). However, with the collapse in the price of its exports (cocoa, coffee, rubber, for example) beginning in the mid-1980, the country began experiencing severe economic difficulties and social instability. Additionally, as a result of the Structural Adjustments Programs (SAPs), recommendations by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on African nations that were seen as the solution to their economic problems, the Cameroon government was forced, in 1994, to impose a 75 percent reduction in the salaries of civil servants and reduce its workforce by 30 percent. Rather than solving the country’s socio-economic problems, these prescriptions plunged the country further into social, economic, and political chaos (*Cameroon: Poverty Reduction*

Strategy Paper 2003). The nation's unemployment rate was estimated at 30 percent in 2001, with about a third of the population living below the international poverty threshold of \$1.25 a day in 2009 (Takougang and Krieger 1998; Jua 2003). Even more problematic has been the institutional corruption in the country. In 2005, for example, Cameroon was ranked as one of the most corrupt nations (137 out of 159) surveyed by Transparency International, the Berlin-based non-governmental organization that monitors corruption around the globe (Corruption in Cameroon 2005). According to Ndiyah (2011), almost 50 percent of the youths interviewed in her study on corruption in Cameroon admitted to giving bribes in order to procure a job or obtain other favors from government officials. Such levels of corruption and the high rate of employment have contributed to the migration of highly-educated Cameroonians, including women, to Europe, North America, and more recently to the Middle East and the Gulf States (Malit and Oliver 2013; Nyamnjoh 2002; Takougang 2014). For instance, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that 17 percent of Cameroonians with a higher education emigrated in 2000. The report also noted that 46 percent of Cameroonian doctors and 19 percent of its nurses had left the country, mostly to the United States and European countries between 1995 and 2005. Altogether, the World Bank estimated that nearly 280,000 Cameroonians, or 1.4 percent of the country's population, were living abroad in 2010 (*Migration and Remittances Fact Book* 2011).

But while most of the migrants had been men, the 1990s marked an important beginning in women's migration in the history of post-colonial Cameroon. That is because the passage and signing of the Liberty Laws by President Paul Biya on December 19, 1990, made it easier for all Cameroonians to obtain passports. It also allowed women to obtain travel visas from any embassy in the country so long as they could pay the requisite fee. Additionally, for the first time in the country's history, married women could obtain visas without the written consent of their husbands (Galega and Tumnde 2004). Perhaps in reaction to Ahidjo's presidency, when women were encouraged to be housewives and mothers and dedicate their lives to taking care of their offspring, Paul Biya, the nation's second president, in a speech to the nation in February 1994 indicated that his presidency was committed to improving the lives of all Cameroonians, including women who had been marginalized for a long time. Among other things, he promised special action to empower women and pledged that women's work would be recognized and valued throughout the country (Galega and Tumnde 2004).

With passports in hand and the right to obtain visas, women no longer had difficulties travelling abroad when the nation experienced severe economic hardship beginning in the early 1990s. In fact, according to

the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), women accounted for about 45 percent of the 265,344 Cameroonian migrants in 1990 and 44 percent of the 291,792 in 2013. Although Europe and the United States remained the favorite destinations for these women and many Cameroon migrants, the recent imposition of restrictive immigration policies in some of these countries have forced many Cameroonians (particularly those from the Anglophone Northwest and Southwest regions) to look for alternative destinations, like Kuwait and other Gulf States, which have become the magnet in the new global labor-migration movement (Baldwin-Edwards 2005; Pelican and Tatah 2009). Unfortunately, while these women hoped for greener pastures in Kuwait and the Gulf States, many of them returned to Cameroon disappointed and unable to fulfill their migration dreams.

Through the voices of some of these returned female migrants, we are able to appreciate the dynamics and the challenges of this new migration. Beatrice represents one of those voices. Born in Nkambe, in the Northwest region of Cameroon, she obtained the General Certificate of Education (GCE), an advanced-level diploma in history and economics from the Government Bilingual High School, Nkambe. She proceeded to the University of Buea, from where she graduated with a degree in history in 2012. According to her testimony, she eventually left the country in 2013 because of the economic situation at the time. She saw her departure to Kuwait as the only solution to her economic predicament. In a family of five, with her father retired and little prospect of a job in Cameroon, she could not imagine how her siblings would get the financial support needed for their education without her leaving the country to seek her fortunes in Kuwait.

Beatrice's dilemma is symbolic of the difficult economic situation in Cameroon and the challenges that many Cameroonian youths have faced since the early 1990s. Faced with these challenges, many youths like Beatrice fell victim to unscrupulous domestic labor-recruiting agents who advertised the opportunity to go to Kuwait on flyers commonly found plastered on the walls of bars and various drinking spots, electric poles, and other strategic locations in major cities throughout the country. A typical advertisement reads as follows: "Good jobs in Kuwait for good salaries of up to FCFA 600,000 (approximately USD 1,000) per month; your visa and work permits will be ready in two weeks upon payment of FCFA 1.5million (about USD 2000)." These ads often include telephone numbers for interested individuals to call. For many desperate and unemployed youths living under difficult economic conditions at home, the prospect of jobs and high wages in the Middle East and the Gulf States represents a potential solution to a life of frustration and disappointment.

THE ALLURE OF THE GULF STATES AND THE RECRUITING PROCESS

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Gulf States have become important destinations in global migration (Fergany 2001). Migrants are attracted by the demand for foreign labor needed in the booming construction and service industries in the region (Whitwell 2002; Abella 1994; Esim and Smith 2004). While most of the migrants are traditionally from Southeast Asia and other Middle Eastern countries (Choucri 1986; Osella and Osella 2007; Suter 2005; Evans and Papps 1999; Fargues 2013), the region has also experienced an influx of migrants from sub-Saharan African countries, including Cameroon. In fact, Cameroonian migrants can be found in Saudi Arabia, Dubai, and Kuwait (Pelican and Tatah 2009). As the main commercial hub in the region, Dubai attracts many businessmen from across Africa who buy a wide variety of imported products from Asia for their domestic markets. It is also an attractive commercial center for most African traders because of the extremely low Value-Added Tax (VAT) for its goods. Additionally, traders are able to negotiate the prices on bulk purchases, allowing them to buy goods at relatively low prices (Baldwin-Edwards 2005). The presence of African traders has also created job opportunities for Cameroonian and other African migrants in the country, who often serve as intermediaries and facilitators for visiting businessmen or as commercial liaisons in purchasing goods, providing storage facilities for the goods purchased, and ultimately in transporting the goods back to Africa. Just as was the case during the colonial period, when agents often recruited labor from the hinterlands to work in mines and on coastal plantations (Muyoba 1983; Prescott 1959), some of these migrants in Kuwait are also involved in the aggressive recruitment of young boys and girls for the service industry.

In both situations, the recruiting agent facilitated the movement of the recruits from the interior of the country to their work destinations (Muyoba 1983). In Cameroon, for example, the history of labor recruitment dates back to the rise of plantation agriculture in the littoral quadrant during the German colonial occupation, and later under the British and the post-colonial administration. These plantation workers were often recruited by relatives, friends, or parents who were already working on the plantations (Rudin 1938). While most of the recruits during the colonial period were often men, the need for domestic help by relatively wealthy individuals or family members in urban areas also led to the recruitment of female migrants for their service as domestic workers (Muyoba 1983).

Unlike the colonial and immediate post-colonial period, when labor recruitment often involved personal contacts and relationships, recent improvements

in communication technologies, especially the use of the Internet, has radically changed the methods of labor recruitment. Indeed, many Cameroonian youths have found themselves in Kuwait and other Gulf States through the help of agents in Cameroon who use a complex network of agents in facilitating the migration process. For instance, it is easier for recruiters in Cameroon to liaise with agents and other networks of recruiters in Kuwait simply through the Internet and the use of cellphones. In other words, these recruiting agents are able to get young girls from Cameroon to Kuwait or other Gulf States without actually accompanying them to those destinations. However, while the Gulf States seem to offer job opportunities to Cameroonians, getting there has its own difficulties and challenges. Prospective migrants operate through travel agencies or migration brokers who, in exchange for a fee, organize visas and flights for them. Some migration brokers also promise potential migrants with accommodation and assistance in securing well-paying jobs—a promise that is often unfulfilled once the migrants arrives at their destination. It is a virtual recruiting network in which the recruitment and the procurement of visas and other travel documents are often made through a complex tangle of agents who function in cyberspace and are paid by their supervisors based in Cameroon or in Kuwait.

The journey to Kuwait, for example, is often costly, with potential migrants paying between FCFA 1 and 3 million (about \$4,615), depending on the arrangement with the migration brokers, popularly referred to as “connectors.” The story of Georgiana, who currently lives in Buea, the political and administrative capital of the Southwest region of Cameroon, illustrates how the recruitment process works. Georgiana arrived in Kuwait in 2013, but returned to Cameroon in 2015. According to her, she knew of Kuwait only through a recruiting agent who apparently used the fake name Richard. In order to help her procure a passport, visa, and a job in Kuwait, Richard demanded FCFA 1.5 million (about \$3,000). Since she could not afford the money on her own, her already impoverished parents were forced to incur more debt by borrowing money from friends, in addition to selling part of the family land. She indicated that the only time that she actually met her recruiting agent was during a brief meeting at the Douala airport, where he handed her a passport with a visa to Kuwait. On her arrival in Kuwait, she was picked up by another agent, who immediately took her passport, even before driving her to a location where she met other young girls from different African countries, including Kenya, Nigeria, Gabon, Congo, Ivory Coast, and Ghana. As it turned out, this was the location where Kuwaiti citizens and other wealthy individuals and families interested in domestic help came to look for girls from their preferred African country. A few days after her arrival, a couple came asking specifically for a Cameroonian maid,

and Georgiana was handed over to them. She left without knowing where her passport was.

Another informant, Susanna, whom I contacted in Bamenda, the capital city of the Northwest region, shared a similar experience. Both ladies indicated that the network of recruiters included people charged with different tasks in the recruiting process. For instance, there were agents who focused just on procuring passports, others in charge of securing visas, and finally those who purchased the airline tickets. The latter was often the individual in contact with the agent in Dubai or Kuwait and was also responsible for providing temporary accommodations for the immigrants. And because the cost of living in the Gulf States is relatively high, these migrants often need additional financial support from family members back home in Cameroon while waiting to be employed. Some of the returned migrants interviewed indicated that Kuwait was not their primary destination of choice but they chose to go there after unsuccessful attempts by the migration agent or “connectors” to secure a visa to the United States or a European destination. In fact, these young men and women expected to use Kuwait and other Gulf States simply as temporary destinations from where they could eventually leave for the United States or any European country. Mary was one of those migrants who had hoped to use the region as a transit point to Europe. Speaking in pidgin English (a popular form of creole spoken by many Cameroonians, especially in the Anglophone regions) she noted,

my plan no be bi for stop for that kontri. I bi want just rest then pass over to Germany after I don get ma visa. As days dem di pass tings dem come strong sorte and for get visa ei come bi na another wahala I just decide for stay me for that kontri” (My initial plan was not to stay in that country. I just wanted to rest there and then go to Germany after I got my visa. As days went by, things became very difficult and I decided to stay in that country even with all the difficulties).

Although I was unable to interview any of the recruiting agents in Cameroon, a report in the November 23, 2015, edition of the *The Post* newspaper documents how two tailors, Demia Burinyuy Mbon and Rene Fonyuy, both in Kumbo in the Northwest region, had established a network of agents that extended from Kumbo to Yaounde, the nation’s capital, and finally to Kuwait. According to the narrative, through family connection, the two men had established contacts with Kadija, another agent in Kuwait. They also had a network of people in Yaounde who facilitated the procurement of passports and visas for the cost of FCFA 1.3 million (\$2,800) for a potential migrant to be in Kuwait. (For details on the story, see, Peter Adi Fonte, “Investigations open on Kumbo-Kuwait Axis” *The Post* No. 01680, Monday, November 23, 2015).

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Although the young girls are usually promised jobs commensurate with their academic credentials, upon their arrival in Kuwait, they discover that it is not often the case. They soon realize that they have been taken for a ride and are instead treated as property by the local sponsors. The case of Claudette and Halisu provide evidence of the difficulties and challenges that these young men and women often experience. Claudette had gone to Kuwait with hopes of working as an English teacher. But upon her arrival, she was hired as a domestic helper by Emer Abdulai and his wife, Amina—a job she dreaded. It was only after she decided to return to Cameroon instead of working as a maid that she was informed by her master/boss that she had indeed been purchased from Damia Mbon, one of the recruiting agents back in Cameroon, for the sum of FCFC 1.2 million (\$2,500), which meant that she had to refund the money if she really wanted to return to Cameroon. Unable to raise such an amount in Kuwait, Claudette's fiancé back in Cameroon was forced to borrow money from friends and relatives, which he sent to Claudette in order to procure her freedom. Upon her return to Cameroon, she lodged a fraud charge with the police against Mbon. While Mbon acknowledged during police interrogation that he had indeed received money from Claudette, he indicated that he alone should not be responsible for repaying the money since there were many other agents who were part of the recruiting process. He also acknowledged that he had been involved in sending more than twenty other young girls to Kuwait at the cost of FCFA 1.2 million each (\$2,307) (*The Post* No. 01680, Monday, November 23, 2015).

Although he was a young man, not a woman, Halisu's story is also typical of the complexities in recruiting these young Cameroonians and of the extent that family members will go to in order to help their siblings achieve their migration dream. According to his narrative in the same issue of *The Post*, Halisu's brother, Wirba Hassan, had approached Mbon's friend, Rene Fonyuy, to help his younger brother leave for Kuwait. Fonyuy requested FCFA 1.3 million (about \$2,450) for the transaction. A portion of the FCFA 1.3 million was given to another agent, Christopher, a policeman in Yaounde whose responsibility was to procure a passport and visa for Kuwait. However, unable to procure a visa for Kuwait, Christopher convinced Halisu to go to Dubai instead. Upon his arrival in Dubai, Halisu found nobody waiting for him at the airport as he had been promised. Apparently, he had also signed a contract to teach English for six months without understanding the terms and conditions of the contract. Ultimately, he returned to Cameroon, where he too launched a fraud complaint against Fonyuy. And as was the case with Mbon,

Fonyuy acknowledged in the interview with *The Post* that he was a recruiting agent for young boys and girls interested in going to Kuwait. He also acknowledged that he was responsible for sending ten young girls and boys to Kuwait, who had also returned to Cameroon rather than enduring the difficult life in Kuwait. (*The Post* No. 01680, of Monday, November 23, 2015).

Mary Elizabeth, another victim of this migration scam, recalls how she was called a “slave” throughout her brief stay in Kuwait. Another girl, a trained nurse who had been recruited in Cameroon with the promise of making a lot of money as a nurse in Kuwait, ended up in another Kuwaiti home where her story was not very different from that of the other migrants. In all these cases, the young women ended up performing work that was well below their skills and educational background. Similar stories were highlighted in focus group discussions that I conducted with a group of returned migrants from Kuwait on February 7, 2016. A summary of their experience included long working hours, sexual abuse and exploitation, physical violence, and other forms of inhumane treatment. In fact, some of the migrants were called “*kadama*,” or slave. Anna and Angelina, who had lived in Kuwait since 2008, and who returned to Cameroon in late 2014, were more graphic in their account of exactly what they had endured:

You woke up at 2 a.m. The first thing was to clean the house, get to the kitchen and wash the kitchen utensils. By 6:30 a.m. you must have started preparing breakfast, which must be ready by 7:30 a.m. and is consumed at 8 a.m. While the family is having breakfast, you are expected to stand by the dining table to take any instructions that you may be given. Following breakfast, you are expected to clean the table, the dishes and utensils that had been used. Following breakfast, one was expected to clean the bedrooms, a task that often lasted an hour or so before you embarked on preparing the day’s lunch and other domestic chores, which often continued until midnight when they went to bed.

This treatment of migrants serving as domestic workers in the homes of wealthy families in Kuwait and elsewhere in the Gulf States is not restricted to Cameroonian or African migrants. Godfrey et. al. (2004) documented similar long work hours and difficult living conditions by migrants from Asia. In a 2001 survey, he noted that almost all domestic workers who enter Kuwait on visas acquired from private recruiting agencies were often isolated because their labor went unrecognized, was unseen, was undervalued, and was not covered by the country’s labor laws. These workers often lived with their employers and expected to work long hours—often as much as 78 to 100 hours a week, and for a very low salary. Clearly, they are in a vulnerable situation and at risk of abuse by their employers and hiring agencies.

REACTION TO RETURN MIGRANTS

These stories are certainly dehumanizing. However, with the aid of foreign embassies, especially that of the Central African Republic, some migrants have been able to communicate with their families in Cameroon, and many eventually returned to Cameroon. Often, some of these migrants returned with tales of misery and frustration—and unable to repay friends and family members from whom they had borrowed money for their migration journey. But in a society like Cameroon's, where migration is seen as an indication of personal success and young migrants as role models, these young girls from Kuwait and the other Gulf States who return home without accomplishing their migration dreams of enriching themselves or going to Europe or the United States are seen as failures. They are scorned and mocked by society and even by their family members. One of the returned migrants remarked in pidgin English that she was often ridiculed by friends: “*Dem bi talk say dem don fall bush, if na so the bush dey better na ma market we I di sell my groundnut!*” They boasted that they had reached the ends of the world by going to Europe. If that is what going to Europe means, then I prefer selling my groundnuts in the market.” Jane, the sister of another returned migrant, remarked that she was “totally disappointed in the way her sister Mary had returned from Kuwait,” adding that “if that Kuwait was brought to my doorsteps I will not even go there.” Indeed, many returned migrants were frustrated and felt abandoned by family members who had made profound financial sacrifice in order to send their sons and daughters abroad. One father noted that he “was in great shock and pain to see my daughter coming back with nothing.” She had left in January 2014 and never called back until they heard a knock at the door on June 15, 2015. He continued, Then I asked, “Who is there?” “It is me, daddy,” came the answer. When I opened the door, she came in looking like a ghost. When I asked how everything was, she simply wept. It took her two weeks to open up and narrate her story. The good thing anyway is that she came back alive. The trauma of the returned migrants and the challenges faced by their families prompted the administration to re-address the problem of illegal migration, human trafficking, and the recruitment of young Cameroonian boys and girls to other countries, including Kuwait and other Gulf States, by enforcing the 2005 law aimed at combatting human trafficking. In addition to criminalizing child trafficking, the law imposed a twenty-year prison term for anyone found guilty of human trafficking (*Cameroon Post*, Thursday, July 20, 2017). The Cameroon government also decided on reinforcing the 2011 anti-trafficking law (Section 30 of the penal code) punishing offenders, co-offenders, and other accomplices involved in human trafficking. Additionally, the Prime Minister and Head of Government decided to set up a National

Inter-Ministerial Committee on Trafficking aimed at providing counseling and other forms of assistance to victims of human trafficking. In September 2015, for example, the prime minister, in partnership with two NGOs—Vital Voices and Nkumu Fed Fed—set up three anti-trafficking regional task forces in the Northwest, Southwest, and Littoral regions. These task forces included magistrates, judicial police officers, ministry stakeholders, members of civil society organizations, and mayors. In fact, Nkumu Fed Fed has been very active in the Southwest region, where it continues to work with the police in identifying victims and documenting their testimonies with the police. The group is also active in investigating known traffickers in Cameroon and their agents abroad. In 2003, Nkumu Fed Fed established Gnow Multi-purpose Centre in Bali in the Northwest region, the first Rehabilitation Center in Africa for victims of child trafficking (ILO Report 2003). In addition to psychological counselling, the center also provides vocational training to victims. Graduates of the center are provided with capital and other resources that enable them to start a business.

At the continental level, a few African countries have also taken measures aimed at restricting the migration of children and women, who are most vulnerable to inhumane treatment (see, for example, Kebede 2001; Adnew 2003; Beyene 2005; De Regt 2007 and 2012). In October 2013, for instance, the Ethiopian government officially banned its citizens' domestic workers from going abroad, especially to the Middle East and the Gulf States. In issuing the order, a spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted that the exodus being pushed by illegal human traffickers has created immense problems for the people of the nation and the image of the country and has resulted in immense socio-economic problem for the country (Al-Jazeera 2013).

CONCLUSION

While scholarship on migration has focused on the apparent success of Cameroonians' migration in their migration destinations, this study examined the other side of the narrative. Its particular focus was on the growing importance of women in post-colonial Cameroon migration history as the economic crisis that engulfed the nation beginning in the late 1980s forced Cameroonian youths to seek greener pastures abroad. Unfortunately, in the quest for a better life for themselves and their families, many young girls who saw migration to the Gulf States as a solution to their economic dilemma became victims of unscrupulous agents were all too willing to take financial advantage of these young women. These girls and women were forced into a modern-day slavery under which they had to toil from dawn to dusk just to make a meager living.

In the end, many of them had no choice but to return to Cameroon, where they are often shamed and ridiculed by society.

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Conclusion

The Endless Protest

Julius A. Amin and Joseph Takougang

Three years ago, when we initially conceived the idea of this volume, Cameroon was generally peaceful, despite its many problems. That is why the current book addresses topics such as the coffee industry, the changing roles of women in the country, youth migration, Cameroon's foreign relations, Southern Cameroon's case for self-determination, and much more. The chapters were intended to set the context for us to more fully understand current events and developments in Cameroon, and then to point to new directions in Cameroonian studies. But three years later, the country was engulfed in an inferno. For almost a year the Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon were on the brink of a political upheaval that threatened what Professor Kofele-Kale (1980) described as an "African experiment in nation building," the result of what now looks like an unholy marriage between the former French trusteeship and the British Southern Cameroon. Given ongoing upheavals in the country, we decided to provide a panoramic view of those important events in this last section.

Beginning in October 2016, a strike by lawyers and teachers in the two regions against a culture of imposing the use of French in courts and schools in English-speaking Cameroon quickly turned into an Anglophone demonstration against the marginalization of their region by the Cameroon government. Yet there was nothing new about this problem. The Anglophone problem has dominated the writing of scholars over the last two decades (Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997 and 2004; Anyangwe 2009; Angwafo 2014). But this time things were different. The voices of protest cut across age and gender lines. The population was mobilized. Within a few days, the protest turned violent, with running battles between civilians and law enforcement authorities in towns and cities throughout the Northwest and Southwest Regions. As in the

past, Biya's response was typical. His security machine responded with armored vehicles, tear gas, arrests, batons, and killings. Elite forces from Kou-taba and the *Batallion D'Intervention Rapide* (BIR) were brought into Anglophone towns, where they struck terror (Amin 2012). Observers shuddered with images of young students dragged in mud, beaten with batons, their apartments broken into and students dragged out into courtyards, and much more. The excessive force used by Cameroon's security force prompted the UN, the African Union, the British High Commissioner to Yaoundé, and human rights groups to demand that the Cameroon government work to stop the atrocities (*The Post*, March 17, 2017).

Biya's heavy-handed response seemed to have backfired. Rather than dispersing people and forcing them into their homes as had happened many times in the past, it strengthened their resolve. Rather than pushing the different ethnic groups to turn against one another, they became more united. At least from the beginning Northwesterners and Southwesterners saw this as a fight to improve their lot, thereby avoiding the type of suspicion that had marred relations between E. M. L. Endeley and John Ngu Foncha at the Fouban Conference over half a century ago (see, for example, Le Vine 1964; Welch 1966; Johnson 1970). And rather than squandering time to define who constituted an Anglophone, they focused on the problem at hand. The people in the region were united by a common condition of oppression, rejection, abuse, and dehumanization, and they blamed the government of the *La Republique* for their plight.

With the deepening crisis, Cameroonians resurrected a call for the creation of Gorji Dinka's Ambazonia Republic (Anyangwe 2008), while others—including the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), founded in 1995 and now emboldened—received more support for its call for the independence of Southern Cameroon. At the frontline in Cameroon there was overwhelming support for the restoration of the federal system. Strike leaders resorted to the previously used tactics of “ghost town” (Takougang and Krieger 1998). Initially, businesses were closed on Mondays, and later the closure period was extended from Monday to Wednesdays each week. Schools were closed in the Northwest and Southwest regions. In fact, pre-university education was brought to a halt in the region. Government, parochial, and private schools were all affected, and violators were hunted down. Few could adequately provide answers as to why elementary and secondary school children were made to bear the brunt of the strike, as noted in interviews conducted in Kumba, Cameroon, in June and July 2017. Many blamed the closing of schools on the government, arguing that schools would resume as soon as the government met the demands requested by the teachers and lawyers. Parents from the English-speaking region rushed to enroll their

children in schools in the Francophone region. The impact of the strike on schools was in part a key reason why bishops in the Anglophone region sent a letter to the government offering to mediate in the strike (*The Guardian Post*, December 30, 2016). John F. Kennedy once noted that providing education to youth is among any nation's most sacred obligation. Clearly, depriving youth of education is tantamount to a violation of human rights. And yet, all attempts to get Cameroon's children back to school failed. Parents became intimidated and resorted to keeping children at home rather than put them in harm's way.

As weeks turned to months, there was no headway in discussions to end the strike. Talks between representatives from the different striking factions and the government made little progress. The government delivered on some of the promises, including the creation of a Common Law section at the *École Nationale d'Administration et de Magistrature* (ENAM) in Yaounde. Voices of those who called for secession, though not initially part of the grievances submitted to the government, became dominant. Irritated, and dismissing secessionists as destructive voices in the shadow, they cancelled further discussions and pursued other options.

Then several things happened simultaneously. As discussions faltered, Biya's machine sought out and arrested perceived leaders of the strike. While some left the country, others stayed put. Among those arrested were two notables: Barrister Nkongho Felix Agbor Balla, president of the Cameroon Civil Society Consortium and a human rights activist; and Dr. Fontem Aforteka'a Neba, secretary-general of the Consortium and university professor and leader of the National Syndicate of Teachers of Higher Education (SYNES), University of Buea chapter. They and others were arrested and taken to Yaoundé, where they were detained at Cameroon's notorious Kondengi prison. They were charged with violating the 2014 terrorism law and scheduled for trial at the Military Tribunal (*The Post*, March 27, 2017; *The Guardian Post*, February 1, 2017). Six months later, along with other detainees, they were released by a presidential pardon, even though many others who had been arrested remained in detention.

Cameroonians in the diaspora weighed in, and in the already well-known tactic, they organized demonstrations in front of embassies in Western countries thousands of miles away from the frontline in Cameroon. They publicized acts of police brutality on the Internet and wrote opinion pieces of events unfolding in Cameroon. Many rejected any suggestion of their returning to Cameroon to physically join the protesters. "It was too dangerous," was the usual answer as to why they didn't go back to Cameroon and support the protest. It was a typical armchair response to make their opinions known from a faraway land. They organized websites, discussion groups, fund-raising events, and

much more to dramatize *La République's* “colonialism” of Anglophone Cameroon (Anyangwe 2008). Almost a year into the protest, over a hundred people had been killed, hundreds arrested, and an immeasurable amount of economic and social loss. Yet the solution remained elusive.

In his New Year's Eve message to the nation on December 31st, 2016, Biya acknowledged that the protest in English-speaking Cameroon “raised substantive issues,” and he promised “appropriate solutions” to them. Yet almost a year later, every quantitative measurement showed that no new “substantive” programs had been introduced to resolve the problems. Rather, the focus had turned into a war of words. The Biya regime, through its propaganda tsar, Communication Minister Issa Tichoroma Bakary, initially denied there was an Anglophone problem in the country, and later made the rounds on every available radio and television show blasting diaspora Anglophones. He stated that Cameroonians living outside the country called for nothing short of secession and had used their secessionist mission to exploit legitimate claims made by Anglophones in the country. He labeled them opportunists. Cameroonians in the country challenged the government to provide the same level of development it provided to the Francophone region. They rejected Biya's solution for “gradualism” and called for a Marshall Plan-type of economic package for the Northwest and Southwest regions of the country. For too long the region had suffered from neglect, they argued. Local newspapers, including *The Guardian Post*, *The Post*, and *Eden*, were relentless in the coverage of the crisis. And unlike some Internet sites, those papers were more respectful when they published images of fatalities; they blurred the faces. Things moved into the stage of bluffs and counter-bluffs, jabs and counter-jabs, and action and counter-action.

Despite immense loss of life, arrests, and the economic and social decay, the situation on the ground in Cameroon remained tense. Schools remained generally closed in Anglophone Cameroon. A sense of malaise and fear remained in the region. The rate of kidnappings increased and the population remained scared. Publicly, many were afraid to discuss the Anglophone problem, noting that the government had planted spies all over (*The Post*, May 12, 2017). This paranoia was a reminder of the Ahidjo era, when it was believed that the tentacles of his secret police ran deep in society and were everywhere (Joseph 1978).

Whatever the rights and wrongs of the protest, the grievances were real and serious. Those presented by Anglophone regions were many. First, there was a Jim Crow-type culture that denied Anglophones major positions and appointments in the country. Since the founding of the Cameroon nation, Anglophones were never appointed as ministers to the key ministries of Defense, Finance, Commercial and Industrial Development, Territorial Administration, Communication and External Relations. Neither had an

Anglophone ever served as Director of Civil Cabinet at the Presidency. This culture of marginalization was extended to appointment of members of the diplomatic service: Anglophones never served as ambassadors to such major nations as the US, Britain, France, and Nigeria. In December 2016, *The Post* newspaper reported that, of the 700 ministers who served under the Biya administration from 1982–2016, only seventy-six were Anglophones, and of the sixty-three current ministers, only six were Anglophone and only one had a “full ministerial portfolio.” (*The Post*, December 23, 2016). The Beti, Ewondo, and Fang ethnic groups of the Center and South regions regularly had over twenty major ministerial appointments, while the Northwest and Southwest—with over one hundred ethnic groups—received only a few non-strategic ministerial appointments (Angwafo 2014, 153). In addition, the General Managers of petroleum companies, such as the *Société Nationale de Raffinage* (SONARA), the *Société Nationale des Hydrocarbures* (SNH), and the *Société Camerounaise des Dépôts Pétroliers* (SCDP), have never been Anglophones. It gets even worse, more especially as SONARA is located in the heart of the Anglophone region. In short, of the 130 people who head State Corporations, roughly only a dozen are Anglophones. And it is worse still with divisional appointments: in 2016, of the fifty-eight senior divisional officers in the country, only six were Anglophones.

Second, Cameroon’s legal system had systematically disadvantaged the Northwest and Southwest regions of the country. The near absence of a Common Law system was a major grievance made by lawyers from the onset of the protest. The end of the federal system in 1972 led to systematic efforts to undermine the Common Law Traditions, which were crucial to the English-speaking regions of the country. There was neither a Common Law section in the Supreme Court, nor at the School of Administration and Magistracy (ENAM). The problem was compounded by recent trends in which Francophone magistrates and judges had limited communication skills in English language, and Common Law legal system increasingly presided over cases in Anglophone Cameroon. English-speaking lawyers pointed to numerous examples of Cameroon’s unfair judicial practices. A large proportion of Magistrates and Bailiffs sent to the English-speaking region were French-speaking. In 2016, of the 148 Magistrates in the Southwest region, eighty-nine were Francophones, and of the thirty newly appointed Bailiffs in the Southwest region, twenty-eight were Francophones. But it was the reverse in the Francophone region; for example, of the 119 Magistrates in Douala, only two were Anglophones, and of the 107 in Yaoundé, only two were Anglophones (*The Post*, December 23, 2016; *The Guardian Post*, January 5, 2017). Similarly, of the over two dozen generals in Cameroon, only three are Anglophones (Angwafo 2014, 153–154).

Third, Anglophones resented the fact that enrollment into professional colleges had been hijacked by Francophones. Over the years, fewer and fewer Anglophones were recruited into the nation's top professional schools. At ENAM, Anglophone sections have since been abolished (*Guardian Post*, January 5, 2017). Other professional schools, including the International Relations Institute of Cameroon (IRIC), the *École Supérieure des Sciences et Techniques de l'Information et de La Communication* (ESSTIC), the *Institut national de la jeunesse et des sports* (INJS), the *Centre Universitaire des Sciences de la Sante* (CUSS), the *Ecole Normale Supérieure des Postes et Télécommunications* (ENSPT), the *Institut de Recherche Agricole pour Le Développement* (IRAD), and the new technical schools were filled with Francophones. There, too, the main language of instruction was French. It has been only in the last few years that the Cameroon government created a technical school branch of the University of Buea in Kumba, but most of those enrolled in it came from Francophone Cameroon, prompting observers to note that "the government has made technical education in Cameroon a preserve for the Francophones" (*The Post*, December 23, 2016). The absence of Anglophone Cameroonians in technical fields and the failure to admit them in the nation's top professional schools were at the foundation of many of the region's problems. Because Anglophones were not readily admitted into the nation's institutes of higher learning, it was therefore not surprising that many of those sent to staff the legal profession, high schools, and other significant fields were French-speaking. Government policy systematically failed to prepare Anglophones to serve as doctors, lawyers, technicians, and administrators in the country. What was at stake for Anglophones was a problem of scarcity? Anglophones did not have enough doctors, judges, science teachers, computer specialists. Certainly his problem was at the very heart and beginning of the teachers and lawyers strike. Teachers condemned the practice of assigning Francophones who could neither speak nor write English effectively as teachers in high schools in Anglophone Cameroon. It was the same situation in so many other professions.

Fourth, Anglophone Cameroonians denounced the second-class position assigned to English. Most of the nation's communication was in French, and in many cases in which English was added, often the translation was either rushed or poorly done. Another illustration of English's secondary status was found in Cameroon's main television network, CRTV, which carried few programs in English. French versions of shows imported from English-speaking countries such as the United States were the ones shown in Cameroon. The nation's official newspaper, the *Cameroon Tribune*, originally published in French and English, progressively became more French, and currently the English version of *Cameroon Tribune* is almost extinct. In government of-

fices in Yaoundé and Douala, posters on walls were mostly in French. A recent visit to most sections where doctors see patients at *L'Hopital Generale* in Douala proved the point; though there were many large posters on the walls, there was none in English. There is an apparent obsession to communicate only in French. At police stops on Cameroonian highways, things became so bad that even English-speaking police officers preferred to communicate with Anglophones in French, even when cases of grammatical inexactitudes became evident. In July 2017, when our team vehicle was stopped by gendarmes on the road between Yaoundé and Bamenda, the officer who came to inspect the vehicle was someone from the Bakossi ethnic group in Anglophone Cameroon. But he chose to address us in French until a member of our team saw his name tag, spoke to him in the dialect, and asked why he couldn't speak English to us. It became a linguistic brawl in part because the English-speaking gendarme felt embarrassed that he was called out. There had been a systematic attempt to do away with English and its culture.

Finally, a recurring complaint was the total neglect of the English-speaking regions. Even though this region contained such vital economic resources as oil and agricultural products, the government failed to invest in the economic growth of the region. The region's infrastructure was among the worst in the country. Existing paved roads were rapidly collapsing. A trip from Kumba to Bamenda, for instance, took three hours longer than usual because vehicles had to go through Douala rather than cross over through Loum. If the Loum road was repaired, that trip will be cut by hours. Economic signposts in English-speaking Cameroon collapsed quickly after unification. Those included the Cameroon Bank, West Cameroon Marketing Board, Yoke Hydro-Electricity Dam, Tiko Airport, West Cameroon Electric Power Company (POWERCAM), Limbe Seaport, and many more (Anthony Ndi 2016). Their collapse began soon after the creation of Ahidjo's united republic. The region was never the same again. Other reasons for the protest included Biya's inability to implement his long ago promised decentralization policy, as well as the high rate of unemployment of the nation's youth.

The protest created both heroes and villains. Agbor Balla, Fontem, and Bixiey became household names. Following their arrest, each day Cameroonians turned to CRTV to find out whether they had been released or to learn about their fate. Their release became a pre-condition for further negotiation with the government. Their courage and determination in the face of threats and danger were reminiscent of the generation that had engineered the original "ghost town protest" in the early 1990s. While it may be too early to assess their place in the nation's protest history, it remains true that their ability to remain firm in the face of intimidation helped to empower and mobilize the population. Others suffered a similar fate. They were arrested, jailed, and

tortured in some of the nation's worst prisons. Chief Justice Ayah Paul Abine, former parliamentarian and leader of the People Action Party, and Justice Sokem Ngale Mborh, Attorney General for the Southwest region were also detained. The hundreds arrested whose names may never appear in history books were perhaps the true makers of this protest. Their courage, determination, and sacrifice made their nation a better place.

Joseph Wirba, an SDF parliamentarian, deserves particular mention here. He used his platform in parliament to chastise the government. He blasted government inaction in the face of police brutality at the University of Buea as a betrayal of the highest magnitude. In a fiery speech in the National Assembly, he admonished his colleagues for their failure to act even after seeing the acts of brutality against students. At UB, gendarmes beat, molested, and raped students. Wirba thundered, "I was one of the believers in a unified Cameroon and I want to tell this house that what had happened to those children in Buea University and in Bamenda has convinced me that the people who say that Cameroon should go in two parts are correct" (*The Standard Tribune*, December 14, 2016). Unlike others in parliament, Wirba was blunt, unapologetic, and angry. He had seen and heard enough. The time to act had long passed, he noted. He championed the cause of the voiceless during their maximum hour of need. He acted while his colleagues waited. He was bold, while his colleagues chose caution. No wonder he was hailed and crowned by some as "Papa Wirba."

Villains also emerged from the protest. Around the world, Biya's absenteeism, inaction, and neglect were widely condemned. Even though a section of his country was imploding, he never saw the crisis as serious enough for him to address the nation on television. To some, he still just didn't get it. Soon after his security forces brutalized the population, Internet services were disconnected in Anglophone Cameroon. But people found other ways to inform the outside about happenings in the country. Nalova Lyonga Limunga, the then Vice-Chancellor of the University of Buea, was next in line. She invited security forces to the University of Buea campus, and did nothing when students were tortured. Images of the brutality on campus prompted Jacques Fame Ndongo, then Minister of Higher Education and Chancellor of Academic Orders, to note that gendarmes and police forces must not come to campus and molest students. He added, "When gendarmes and police come to the university campus, it is at the invitation of the Vice-Chancellor or Rector." It was a blunt rebuke of Vice-Chancellor Lyonga. Lyonga also questioned the argument that Francophones dominated at the University of Buea arguing that the campus was full of Northwesterners whom she referred to a "graffis." Members of the Southwest Forum championed by Peter Mafany Musonge promoted an anti-Northwesterners propaganda in Buea, thereby undermin-

ing the protest movement (*The Guardian Post*, February 3, 2017). To argue that the anti-Northwest pronouncements were government attempts to divide the Anglophones is patent nonsense. Anti-Northwest propaganda in Buea pre-dates the protest. Perhaps the true face of rebuke by Anglophones was that of Issa Tichiroma Bakary, Cameroon's Minister of Communication. His blunt statement that there was no Anglophone problem in Cameroon turned off many. What was going on, he argued, was an invention of a crisis created by "secessionists" who live overseas. He labeled them as opportunists, losers, and muckrakers, whose real intention was to destabilize the nation.

Anglophone grievances were deeply rooted. Anglophones were considered "different," and part of the "other" in their country. The bilingual and multicultural commission created by Biya as a response to the protest was considered a joke because it failed to address the bedrock foundation of the problems (*The Post*, March 17, 2017). The response revealed the naiveté of the Biya regime to the complexities of the nation's problems. The Biya regime seemed ill-prepared, ill-briefed, ill-ready, and ill-equipped to deal with changing global realities (*Eden*, January 4, 2017). In an age of Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter, the Biya regime must realize that old solutions to issues raised by a protest for legitimate reforms are no longer sufficient. Technology has brought the world much closer, and Anglophone Cameroonians can more easily draw parallels between themselves and the condition of minorities in other nations. The protest confirmed that the existing status quo in Cameroon was no longer sustainable. A change must take place.

This volume has delved into several areas, some of which are critical of the Biya administration and the political, economic, and social system it put in place. The book has reaffirmed that, for a country with such wealth, Cameroon should be in much better economic shape. The leadership of the country must be prepared to engage in bold experiments to move the country forward. In a nutshell, the protest of 2016–2017 originated from an economic, social, and political system that has consistently marginalized the poor. As in most societies, those with power control the direction of the society. In Cameroon, Anglophones were denied access to the corridors of power and as a result received little from Yaoundé for economic growth. To borrow and paraphrase the famed American president Abraham Lincoln in a different context, the Anglophone protest showed that Cameroon cannot survive as half-free and half-colonized. While things seemed to have toned down, the lessons of the protest must be well understood.

The protest imploded notions of apathy among ordinary Cameroonians. "We have been suffered long enough," a market woman in her sixties in Kumba stated. The protest was much more than a youth movement or an *Okada* movement. Its support base came from all segments of the population

who joined “ghost town activities,” kept children away from school, boycotted government offices, and generally obeyed their leaders’ call for non-violence. They stayed the course for almost a year. They were committed in a river of no return. The protest established a way forward. The demonstrators demanded that the government make amends. They gave the Biya government an opportunity and the time to do the right thing. Anglophone Cameroonians are now more empowered than they have ever been. They are no longer terrified of Biya’s security machine. They buried the dead and returned to the streets. For them, there will be no turning back. They understand the road ahead will be rugged, but they are more determined than ever to make Cameroon a better place for the next generation. Their message to the men in Yaoundé was simple: Anglophone Cameroon must receive its appropriate share of the nation’s resources, more especially because a significant portion of those resources are generated in the region. For the union of Francophone and Anglophone Cameroon to thrive there must be a commitment to rise above provincialism in the development of a national consciousness. The country must create and commit to the implementation of a social justice agenda that until now was found only in the president’s speeches.

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