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# The quest for autonomy: The case of Anglophone Cameroon

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The former British Southern Cameroons opted in a UN organised plebiscite in 1961 to reunify with La Republique du Cameroun to form a federation of two states that were said to be on a footing of equality. But contrary to declarations and expectations, the federation was not one of equal states. It was instead a veiled preparatory stage for the total assimilation of the Southern Cameroons into the highly centralised La Republique du Cameroun francophone unitary state. Through a number of assimilation stages, the Southern Cameroons has lost its autonomy to La République du Cameroun, its people marginalised, institutions destroyed, and the territory neglected in terms of socio-economic development. This has given rise to agitations by Southern Cameroonians (Anglophones) seeking for a redress of the situation by re-establishing the federal system or, failing which, the autonomy of the Southern Cameroons in a separate state. The Anglophones have genuine grievances and solid legal arguments for their case, but they are faced with a number of obstacles in the struggle to liberate themselves and their territory from *La Republique du Cameroun*. The obstacles include, besides the resistance strategies of the regime, the lack of credible and committed leadership manifest in the existence of numerous uncoordinated groups with conflicting objectives, and an inappropriate strategy; lack of a uniting factor among Anglophones; intra-Anglophone rivalry, differences. These obstacles facilitate the use of various resistance strategies by the regime such as trivialisation, demonisation, divide and rule and repression, together with which they stand firmly in the way of the Anglophone quest for identity. Consequently, unless a credible and committed leader emerges with an appropriate strategy that will convince Anglophones to sink their differences and unite for the struggle, the re-establishment of the autonomy of the Southern Cameroons remains a forlorn hope.

**Key words:** Assimilation process, leadership, divide and rule, Anglophone agitation.

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## INTRODUCTION

The country known as the Republic of Cameroon is part the former German colony (Kamerun) which was in 1916 following the outcome of the First World War, disproportionately divided between France and Britain. According to the Milner-Simon Boundary Declaration of 1916 four-fifth of the territory containing three-quarters of the population went to France and became known as French Cameroon, while one-fifth made up of two

disconnected territories and inhabited by one-quarter of the population went to Britain and became known as the British Northern and Southern Cameroons. France governed its own portion of Cameroons (French Cameroon) as an autonomous part of its colonial empire while Britain administered the British Northern Cameroons and Southern Cameroons respectively as parts of the Northern and Eastern regions of its colony of

Nigeria (Osuntokun, 1975; Eyongetah and Brain, 1974; Ngoh, 1996)

The two allied powers held their respective shares of Kamerun first as Mandated Territories of the League of Nations and later as Trusteeships of the United Nations until 1960 for France and 1961 for Britain. In 1960 French Cameroon gained independence as *La République du Cameroun*. In 1961 following a UN organised Plebiscite British Northern Cameroons opted to merge with Nigeria while the Southern Cameroons chose to reunify with *La République du Cameroun* (LeVine, 1964; Ardener, 1967; Rubin, 1971). The reunification of British Southern Cameroons with *La République du Cameroun* resulted in a federation of two states which were to be on a footing of equality<sup>1</sup>. Consequently, *La République du Cameroun* became the federated state of East Cameroon (Francophone) and the Southern Cameroons, the federated state of West Cameroon (Anglophone). President Ahmadou Ahidjo of *La République du Cameroun* became the President of the federation while John Ngu Foncha, Prime Minister of Southern Cameroons, became Vice-President. Composed of Francophones and Anglophones the federation was and the country is still said to be, in principle, bilingual<sup>2</sup> with English and French as the official languages (The 1996 constitution Article (1:3).

But contrary to declarations and expectations the federation was not one of equality between the Anglophones and Francophones. It neither provided for equal partnership nor for the equitable preservation of the cultural heritage of each territory. It was instead a veiled preparatory stage for the assimilation (reminiscent of French colonial policy) of Anglophones and their territory into a highly centralised Francophone unitary state. Thus, the so-called federal constitution that followed reunification provided merely for a 'sham federation' which was 'safe for appearances and for the annexation of West Cameroon/Southern Cameroons' (Takougang and Krieger, 1998). Under the new constitution, West Cameroon/Southern Cameroons lost the autonomy it had enjoyed prior to 1961. The assimilation process accompanied by processes of marginalising Anglophones has given rise to Anglophone grievances commonly known as the Anglophone problem (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997), for which Anglophones have been seeking a redress in the form of re-establishing a genuine two-state federation or, failing which, the autonomy of the Southern Cameroons. This paper examines the probability of Anglophones achieving this objective. In other words, are the Anglophones capable of forcing the regime either to re-establish a genuine two-state federal

system or relinquish its grip on their territory? If not why?

Scholars who have examined the Anglophone problem have tended to be lopsided in their analysis of and conclusions on the obstacles to the Anglophone quest for identity. Viewing regime resistance as the only rather than the other side of the coin, they are inescapably unanimous in their conclusions, namely that the successive Francophone dominated regimes have used various strategies to frustrate the Anglophone quest for identity. It has, for instance, been pointed out that the manipulation of regional rivalries and differences among Anglophones (Bayart 1979), the use of divide and rule tactics championed by elite associations (Nyamnjoh and Rowlands, 1998), the use of appointments and sinecures (Eyoh, 1998); the use of intimidation and repression (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997); the control over the media, the construction of new ethnic identities and persistent refusals by the regime to negotiate with Anglophones about either a return to the federal system or peaceful succession (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2000) are the various strategies deployed by the successive regimes to thwart Anglophone efforts at reconstructing their identity.

This implies that the success of Anglophones in re-establishing their autonomy either within a federal system or in a separate Southern Cameroons sovereign state depends solely on the attitude of the regime which must be either supportive of or indifferent to, Anglophone mobilisation, toward this end. This kind of thinking runs counter to both the theory and empirical evidence on the behaviour of states toward separatist movements within their borders, irrespective of how those borders were acquired. It is a well known fact that because separatist movements stand in the way of a state's official nationalism and challenges its ability to play its fundamental role of ensuring security, "they are feared and resisted by state governments everywhere" (Kellas, 1991). Although, resistance can take various forms depending on the strength and strategy of the separatists, no government democratic or autocratic can afford to be indifferent to separatist movements within its borders. The regime in Cameroon is not an exception to this rule.

Yet, in spite of this inherent government resistance, some separatist groups do succeed in achieving their objectives. One of such examples is Eritrea which in 1993 re-established its autonomy outside Ethiopia. It can therefore be argued that if Anglophones are unable to regain their autonomy it is because of more reasons than the resistance of the regime. Consequently, it is argued in this paper that although, from both practical and legal perspectives the Anglophone grievances are genuine, the achievement of their political objective in the form either of re-establishing a genuine two-state federation or the autonomy of their territory of the Southern Cameroons, is currently hindered by a number of obstacles. The obstructing factors which also tend to facilitate the deployment of resistance strategies by the regime include, inter alia, the lack of credible and committed leadership, and intra-Anglophone differences and rivalry.

<sup>1</sup>In a speech to the 13th session of the United Nations General Assembly in February 1959, President Ahmadou Ahidjo asserted that if our brothers of the British zone wish to unite with us, we are ready to discuss the matter with them on a footing of equality.

<sup>2</sup>Though said to be bilingual Cameroon is in reality multilingual with 236 language-units that are completely non-inter-comprehensible (Tadajeu, 1985:179).

### The assimilation process

The assimilation of the Southern Cameroons by French Cameroon (*La République du Cameroun*) which started with reunification in 1961 has subsequently been effected in several ways. A few months after reunification, Ahidjo created a system of regional administration in which West Cameroon was designated as one of six regions (Takougang and Krieger, 1998), thereby clearly ignoring the federal character of the country. In 1962 changes were made in (1) currency which changed from the pound sterling to the French Franc CFA and (2) traffic system in which left-hand drive was replaced with the right-hand drive that existed in French Cameroon. The second stage was the extension in 1966 to West Cameroon of the one-party system that was existing in French Cameroon at the time of reunification in 1961 (Bayart, 1970). All existing political parties in West Cameroon (the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP) of John Ngu Foncha; the Cameroon People's National Congress (CPNC) of Emmanuel Endeley; and the Cameroon United Congress (CUC) of Solomon T. Muna) were absorbed by President Ahidjo's lone *Union Camerounaise* (UC) party that existed in East Cameroon, and was on September 1, 1966 re-baptised *Union Nationale Camerounaise* (UNC) or Cameroon National Union (CNU)<sup>3</sup>. This disappearance of all Anglophone parties heralded the drowning of the Anglophone voice.

The 1972 controversial referendum<sup>4</sup> by which President Ahidjo transformed the federation into a unitary state, the United Republic of Cameroon, was the third stage of the assimilation process. Following the introduction of the unitary state, the Anglophone West Cameroon was divided into two provinces, the North West and the South West Provinces; and the Francophone East Cameroon into five and later eight provinces, now referred as regions. The fourth and final stage was effected by president Ahidjo's successor President Paul Biya who in 1984 issued decree N° 84-001 of 4/2/84 changing the name of the country from the United Republic of Cameroon to the pre-reunification appellation of East Cameroon, *La République du Cameroun* thereby removing the last visible symbol of the 1961 union.

This phased and overt assimilation process has been underlain and firmly buttressed by a subtle and systematic policy of Francophonising the Anglophones and obliterating anything Anglophone- erasing all cultural and institutional foundations of Anglophone identity (Fonlon, 1964; Kofele-Kale, 1986; Takougang, 1993; Nyamnjoh and Rowlands, 1998). This is evidenced by the

imposition of the French language on Anglophones by the use of the monopolistic public broadcast media where seven-eighths of broadcast time is reserved for French language Programmes; issuing official texts and documents including inscriptions on the national currency only in French; ensuring that where both languages are used on the same document the words in French are bold and those in English too fine to be legible; compelling all cinema theatres in the Anglophone region to screen only French language films (AACI, 1993); and imposing Francophone administrative system and appointing Francophones as governors and divisional officers in Anglophone regions to administer in the French language (the first appointed governor to the Anglophone Northwest province was a Francophone who spoke no English and the current governors of the two Anglophone regions are Francophones).

The assimilation process which according to President Ahidjo, 'stating from independence and passing through reunification, must lead to the apotheosis of national unity' (Bayart, 1973) has inevitably led to the disappearance of the autonomy of the Anglophone region. But what is intriguing is that although the Anglophone territory has lost its autonomy to *La République du Cameroun*, the customs check points that existed between the two territories prior to reunification 1961 have remained intact and across which goods are subjected to strict controls.

### THE MARGINALISATION OF ANGLOPHONES

The successive Francophone dominated regimes have adopted a systematic policy not only of assimilating but also of marginalising Anglophones. This has given rise to a variety of Anglophone grievances according to which:

'We have been disenfranchised, marginalised and treated with suspicion. Our interests have been disregarded. Our participation in national life has been limited to non-essential functions. Our natural resources have been ruthlessly exploited without any benefit accruing to our territory or to its people. The development of our territory has been negligible and confined to areas that directly or indirectly benefit Francophones. Through manoeuvres and manipulations, we have been reduced from partners of equal status in the Union to the status of a subjugated people (AAC, 1993).'

In concrete terms it is pointed out that Anglophones are discriminated against and regarded as outsiders. Thus, in the heat of the disputed 1992 presidential election results between the incumbent Paul Biya (Francophone) and Ni John Fru Ndi (Anglophone) French President Francois Mitterand declared on *Radio France* on October 11, 1992 that 'no English man will ever be president of a French Province (Toh, 2001). With regard to appointments to high-level posts, (1) an Anglophone has ever been

<sup>3</sup>The party was in 1985 rebaptised 'Rassemblement démocratique du peuple Camerounaise (RDPC) or the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) (Fonchingong 1998:119).

<sup>4</sup>The referendum was controversial because it violated article 47(1) of the federal constitutions which stipulated that 'any proposal for the revision of the present constitution which impairs the unity and integrity of the federation shall be inadmissible'.

appointed to head any of the important ministries such as the Armed Forces, Territorial Administrative, Finance, Education and Foreign Affairs; (2) of the 58 administrative divisions in the country only two are headed by Anglophones even though 13 of the divisions are in the Anglophone region; (3) out of fifteen military generals only two are Anglophones and none of the eight military regions in the country is headed by an Anglophone (*The Post* May 25, 2000); (4) Anglophones are appointed mainly into subordinate positions to assist Francophones even where the latter are less qualified or less competent (AACI 1993/18); and (5) only two Anglophones besides the Prime Minister (who is a Prime Minister only in name and not in fact because he has no powers) are members of the current Cabinet of 34 members appointed June 30, 2009. The two Anglophones have moreover, been assigned the unenviable portfolios of Culture, and Forest and Wildlife (*The Eden* July 22, 2009).

With regard to development projects the Anglophones point out that their region is completely neglected despite the fact that due to petroleum, it accounts for 70% of the country's GDP (IFPRM 2005). The oil refinery *Societe nationale de raffinage (Sonara)* near the Anglophone town of Limbe (formerly Victoria) 'has always been headed and predominantly staffed by Francophones, while revenue from the oil is used to stimulate development only in the Francophone region' (*The Post* January 8, 2010). Thus, neglected, the road infrastructure in the Anglophone regions is so deplorable that going from the Northwest to the Southwest is only possible through the two Francophone regions of Littoral and the West thereby tripling the length of the journey.

Anglophones also resent the fact that the successive Francophone regimes have taken over and destroyed the financial and other institutions that existed in West Cameroon. Such institutions that have been destroyed in favour of those based in the Francophone region include the West Cameroon Marketing Board; Cameroon Bank; the Santa Coffee Estate; the Yoke Power Station, the Tiko, Victoria and Mamfe sea/riverports, the Tiko, Bisongabng, and Bali airports (Toh, 2001). Recently one of the remaining two Anglophone founded banks, the Amity Bank, has been stealthily and illegally sold by the regime to Francophones. In a protest memo the Anglophones have described the act as 'the most spectacular economic robbery--- and another grave abuse of the human and people's rights of the Anglophone community' (*The Guardian Post* September 28, 2009). Attempts have been made at destroying even the Anglophone education system (Nyamnjoh, 1996).

The celebration of 50 years of independence by the regime in 2010 is another issue that irks Anglophones. The celebration is protested by Anglophones describing it as 'rape on English-speaking Cameroonians' because the present day Cameroon which is made up of Anglophones and Francophones did not get independence on January 1, 1960. It was French Cameroon that got

independence on that day while Anglophone Cameroon became independent on October 1, 1961, the reunification day. Therefore, celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence in 2010 is 'a deliberate distortion of historical facts in order to deny the existence of Anglophones as a people with a history' (*The Star* January 25, 2010).

It appears however, that the regime regards the Anglophones as a captured people. This is implied in a statement made by the regime's Minister of Communication and Government Spokesman Issa Tchiroma Bakary in a recent Press Conference that 'Southern Cameroons was never independent' (*The Post* January 8, 2010). Although, his party does not ally with any of the Anglophone pressure groups, Ni John Fru Ndi, Chairman of the SDF describes the minister's statement as irresponsible, generates ill feeling and tends to reinforce the concept of first class and second class citizens' (*The Post* January 15, 2010). Furthermore, and in spite of Anglophone agitation against marginalisation, in his 2010 New Year message President Biya outlined projects to be executed during the year completely ignoring the two Anglophone regions as usual, an act described as 'fanny the flames of disunity' (*Eden* January 11, 2010).

The preceding grievances are indicative of an underlying problem of marginality which is recognised not only by Anglophones who refer to themselves as a colonised people but also by objective thinking Francophones. Thus, whereas Carlson Anyangwe an Anglophone activists laments the fact that 'there is no other colonial people who have suffered the kind of indignity we have suffered without taking up arms' (*The Post* April 9, 2003), Dr Adamu Ndam Njoya a Francophone member of parliament and President of the Union Democratique Camerounaise (UDC) political party, criticises the regime for 'treating Anglophones as a conquered people' (Toh, 2001).

## ANGLOPHONE AGITATION

Overt agitation by Anglophones started in the early 1980s when Paul Biya succeeded Ahidjo as President in 1982 and introduced a limited degree of political liberalisation. In the 1980s and the early 1990s Fon Gorji Dinka a prominent Anglophone lawyer and the first president of the Cameroon Bar Association and Albert Mukong a leading member of CAM and an ardent opponent of the regime had petitioned the UN in vain to intervene on behalf of the Anglophone minority (Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997).

In 1983 students boycotted classes and demonstrated against a Government promulgated order to modify the Anglophone General Certificate of Education (GCE) to make it similar to the French *Baccalaureat*. Although, the demonstrations were brutally repressed by police, the order was not implemented.

Following the change of the official name of the country in 1984 from the "United Republic of Cameroon to Republic of Cameroon (*La République du Cameroun*), the pre reunification appellation of East Cameroon, three reactions came from Anglophones. The first reaction was made by Fon Gorji Dinka by distributing a memo describing the change of the country's name as a withdrawal by the Francophone region from the union and calling on Anglophones to declare their independence and rebaptised the Southern Cameroons as the Republic of Ambazonia (Dinka, 1985). The second and third reactions were simultaneous memoranda submitted to the Bamenda Congress of the ruling UNC party by Northwest and Southwest elites resident in Douala highlighting the plight of the Anglophone minority that is sidelined from political power (Nyamnjoh, 1996). This explains why the first opposition party in the country since 1966 appeared in the Anglophone region during the political and economic crisis.

On May 26, 1990 the Social Democratic Front (SDF) party was launched in Bamenda, the capital of the Northwest province within the background of severe protest by the government resulting in the deaths of six Anglophone youths. The regime not only tried to deny responsibility for the bloody outcome, but reacted to the launching of the party in a way that shocked and further angered the Anglophone community. Because of the launching, leading members of the regime referred to Anglophones as 'traitors, enemies in the House etc, and told to them go where they belong if they are not satisfied (Nyamnjoh, 1996). As a consequence, the Anglophone architect of reunification John Ngu Foncha resigned as the First Vice-President of the RDPC party. In his resignation letter he complained that:

*The Anglophone Cameroonians whom I brought into the union have been ridiculed and referred to as 'les Biafraïses, les ennemis dans la Maison, les traîtres', etc, and the constitutional provisions which protected this Anglophone minority have been suppressed, their voices drowned while the rule of the gun replaced the dialogue which the Anglophones cherish very much (quoted in Mukong 1990).*

The leader of the SDF Ni John Fru Ndi became very popular among the masses because of his courage and populist appeal such that the party spread its influence rapidly not only to the Anglophone regions but also to Francophone provinces and soon became the leading Anglophone party and the major opposition party in the Country. The SDF turned the Anglophone region into the bed-rock of rebellion resulting in serious confrontations with the regime, in particular the 1991-1992 'ghost town' campaign, which was a prolonged demonstration of civil disobedience organised by the SDF and allied opposition parties to force the government to hold a sovereign national conference (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2003).

Although, the SDF has contributed greatly to Anglophone awareness and activism, it has not adopted a pro-Anglophone stand. In trying to deny persistent government charges that it was championing regional rather than national interests, and also to attract Francophone membership, the party increasingly presented itself as a national organisation and has therefore not embraced calls by Anglophone pressure groups for a return either to the two-state federal arrangement or an independent Southern Cameroons (Krieger, 1994; Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2003). In trying to avoid eliminating either Anglophone or Francophone members, the party adopted the rather ambivalent position of a four-state federation and a capital territory without specifying the boundaries of the states and the site of the federal capital territory (Takougang and Krieger, 1998; Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2003). In his New Year speech on December 31, 2009, Fru Ndi reiterated his party's stand on a four-state federal system claiming that 'it is the only structure and context through which Cameroon's nagging problems could be resolved' (*The Post* January 8, 2010).

## ORGANISATION OF ANGLOPHONE RESISTANCE

Following the political liberalisation measures occasioned in part by the forceful launching of the SDF in 1990, several associations and pressure groups were reactivated or created by Anglophone activists to defend their interests. These include The Free West Cameroon Movement (FWCM); the Ambazonia Movement (AM); the Cameroon Anglophone Movement (CAM)/the Southern Cameroons Restoration Movement (SCARM); the Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL); the Southern Cameroons Independence Restoration Council (SCIRC); the Southern Cameroons Peoples Organisation (SCAPO); the Southern Cameroons Liberation Movement (SOCALIM) and the South Cameroons National Council (SCNC). Of all the movements only the last named, the SCNC has had a somewhat credible but short-lived leadership as well as the intention, though not concretised, of setting up structures that would facilitate the mobilisation of followers. Even CAM/SCARM which is the oldest and the only Anglophone association operating legally in the country (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2003), does not have structures that are conducive to the mobilisation of followers.

The impetus to organise anglophone movement was the Tripartite Conference that President Biya was forced by the civil disobedience (ghost towns) campaign to convene in 1991. Although, participation at the Conference was not on a bicultural (Anglophone/Francophone) basis, the four Anglophones (Sam Ekontang Elad, Simon Munzu and Benjamin Itoe from the South West Province and Carlson Anyangwe from the North West) who participated at the conference provided the nucleus for organised Anglophone Movement and leadership. Having

unsuccessfully tried to convince their Francophone counterparts about the necessity of returning the country to a federal system, the four Anglophones produced the 'EMIA' constitution (named after their initials) which provided for a West Cameroon state in a loose federation (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997).

Following an announcement by the regime in 1993 of a national debate on constitutional reform, the EMIA quartet convened the first All Anglophone Conference (AAC1). The Conference brought over 5000 Anglophones of all works of life<sup>5</sup> to meet in Buea, capital of former Southern Cameroons for "the purpose of preparing Anglophone participation in the forthcoming National Debate on Constitutional Reform" (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997). The Conference set up a 65-member Anglophone Standing Committee, elected Sam Ekontang Elad its Chairman, adopted as its motto 'The Force of Argument, Not the Argument of Force', and issued the Buea Declaration. The Buea Declaration stated, among other things, that: 'the imposition of the unitary state in Southern Cameroons in 1972 was unconstitutional, illegal, and a breach of faith; the only redress adequate to right the wrongs done to Anglophone Cameroon and its people since the imposition of the unitary state was a return to the original form of government of the reunified Cameroon; to this end, all Cameroonians of Anglophone heritage were committed to working for the restoration of a federal constitution and of a federal form of government which takes cognisance of the bicultural nature of Cameroon and under which citizens will be protected against such violations as have here above been enumerated; and the survival of Cameroon in peace and harmony depended upon the attainment of this objective towards which all patriotic Cameroonians, Francophones as well as Anglophones, should relentlessly work (AAC, 1993).

The Anglophone Standing Committee produced, and submitted a draft constitution of the desired federal system, but the regime ignored it. Faced with the regime's refusal to discuss the constitutional proposals, CAM officially declared itself in favour of the 'zero option', that is, total independence for the Southern Cameroons, and the Buea Peace Initiative (BPI) to be discussed at AACII in Bamenda (*Cameroon Post* December 1, 1993). The BPI is the blueprint for a negotiated, peaceful separation between the Southern Cameroons and *La Republique du Cameroun* which proposes, inter alia, that 'the Southern Cameroons and *La Republique du Cameroun* should agree to a formal separation into two independent states; that the territory of Southern Cameroons should declare its independence in the same way as *La Republique du Cameroun* did in 1984, and sever all political and economic links with *La Republique du Cameroun*; and that the two entities should negotiate

economic and political protocols in various areas (*Today* April 29, 1994).

The Second All Anglophone Conference (AACII) that held in Bamenda from April 29, to May 2, 1994 adopted the 'Zero option'. Thus, the Bamenda Proclamation issued during the Conference stated that if the government either persisted in its refusal to engage in meaningful constitutional talks or failed to engage in such talks within a reasonable time, 'the Anglophone Council should proclaim the revival of the independence and sovereignty of the Anglophone territory of Southern Cameroons and take all necessary measures to secure, defend and preserve the independence, sovereignty and integrity of the said territory' (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997).

The conference also resolved to (1) replace the Anglophone Standing Committee with a 55 – member Anglophone National Council which was in August 1994 re-baptised the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), while the All Anglophone Conference (AAC) became the Southern Cameroons People's Conference (SCPC) (*Cameroon Post* August 26, 1994); (2) create an Anglophone Advisory Committee of 33 members; and (3) approve the creation of Anglophone Liaison Committees in every administrative unit, town and village of Anglophone Cameroon and elsewhere; (*Cameroon Post* May 13, 1994).

The ACC II was the high water mark of organised Anglophone efforts in the struggle to re-establish the autonomy the Southern Cameroons. As a nationalist movement it is however, poorly structured. The liaison committees recommended at ACCII have never been created. The result is that with only the National Council and the Advisory Committee, the structure of the movement is not conducive to the mobilisation of the masses. Separatist or nationalist movements require mobilisation since, to be effective they must be mass movements, at least in aim. The mobilisation requires an organisation whose structure allows the leader 'to direct, impose discipline and demand action whenever it is necessary' (Kedourie, 1970). 'Without nationalists organised in nationalist parties and political organisations', it has been pointed out, 'nationalism would be largely ineffective politically' (Kellas, 1991). The absence of such a structured organisation is a major problem for the Anglophone activists. Thus, since 1994 the SCNC has been calling on Anglophones, without much success, to boycott such events as the 20<sup>th</sup> May National Day and 11<sup>th</sup> February Youth Day Celebrations. In May 2000, the SCNC also tried but failed to get Anglophones to demonstrate during the UN Secretary General's visit to Cameroon (*The Herald* June 2, 2000).

## Leadership

The effectiveness of a nationalist movement depends largely on the nature of its leadership. To be politically

<sup>5</sup> The Prime Minister at the time an Anglophone as well as other Anglophone members of government, parliamentarians and Senior Public officials boycotted the conference (AACI 1993:6).

effective a nationalist movement must have at its helm a competent and committed leader who should be obsessed with the romanticism of the struggle; 'an obsession which seizes him, which is cultivated by him and which is communicated to his followers' (Shepherd Jr, 1965). The absence of such a leader is a major obstacle to the Anglophone quest for identity. The EMIA quartet which provided the initial leadership was not committed to struggle. Thus, by 1996 only three years after ACCI, all four members had abandoned the struggle. Even before AACI in 1993 one of the four, Benjamin Itoe a former justice minister of the regime withdrew from the struggle and began seeking the regime's favours. His overtures paid off as he was soon appointed president of the administrative bench of the Supreme Court (*Dikalo* January 10, 1994).

Shortly after AACII, two other members, Simon Munzu and Carlson Anyangwe also abandoned the struggle and left for jobs in Rwanda and Zambia respectively (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997). Being university law professors the decision of the two men like that of Itoe (also a lawyer) to abandon the struggle was very likely induced by the realisation that more commitment and sacrifice were needed than they were prepared to offer especially since the regime was determined not to give in peacefully. Similarly when in 1996 the remaining member of the quartet the SCNC Chairman, Barrister Sam Ekontang Elad, left for an unexplained prolonged private visit to the United States of America, it was obvious that he too had abandoned the struggle. He had on August 21, 1995 come under severe attack for allegedly issuing a press release which was repeatedly announced over radio and television informing the population of the suspension of the SCNC sensitisation tour in the aftermath of the historic SCNC mission to the UN. Although he argued that he was a victim of a government plot to undermine him and the SCNC, many people continued to believe that he was bribed by the government especially when he returned from the USA and distanced himself from the SCNC (*The Herald* August 24, 1995).

With Elad also out of the struggle the SCNC leadership split between Henry Fosung and Ndoki Mukete none of whom proved to be a credible leader (*Cameroon Post* November 12, 1997). Preoccupied with trading mutual accusations in vying for authenticity, the two factious leaders became even less vocal on the main issue resorting instead to urging Southern Cameroonians to pray asking God to save us from political bondage (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997). In the absence of a credible, courageous and committed leadership, the provisions of the 1994 Bamenda Proclamation and especially of the 1995 London Communique have not been effectively implemented.

The London Communique signed in London at the end of the SCNC historic mission to the United States, United Nations and United Kingdom by members of the delegation was said to 'mark the beginning of an irrevocable

and irreversible process of the implementation of the "zero option"; total and unconditional independence of the Southern Cameroons' (Takougang and Krieger, 1998). The Communique contained the following programme of activities towards the said independence: a signature referendum, in the Southern Cameroons on independence; the creation of a Constituent Assembly; a mission to the UN to file an application for independence and UN membership; and negotiations with La Republique du Cameroun in June- July 1996 on the basis of the Buea Peace Initiative in the presence of the UN and the United Kingdom (*The Herald* July 5, 1995).

The first activity, the signature referendum was carried out before the departure of Elad, and although the results released in April 1996 showed a 75% participation rate and a 99.97 vote for Southern Cameroons' independence (*Cameroon Post* June 18, 1996) the rest of the programme has, for want of leadership, stagnated.

In the absence of a committed and courageous leader, some of the activists led by Justice Frederick Ebong Alobwede decided to take the challenge by capturing the radio station at Buea, the former capital of Southern Cameroons, and using it to proclaim, in accordance with the Bamenda Proclamation, 'the revival of the independence and sovereignty of the Southern Cameroons' on December 30, 1999 (Toh, 2001). The reaction of the two SCNC leaders to the action of Alobwede clearly indicated their attitude toward the struggle. Instead of mobilising Anglophones to secure, defend and preserve the declared independence as provided for in the Bamenda Proclamation, they not only individually openly condemned the proclamation and dissociated themselves from it, but proceeded to resign from the SCNC (*The post* January 5, 2000). Thus, when Justice Alobwede, and three other activists were arrested and detained in Yaounde for fourteen months following the proclamation, there was no leader to mobilise the Anglophone public to react. And, although while still in detention Alobwede was proclaimed the first President of the Federal Republic of Southern Cameroons during what was said to be 'the first meeting of the reorganised SCNC' on April 4, 2000 (*The Post* April 7, 2000:7), the leadership problem persisted.

When he was released from jail on March 15, 2001 'President' Alobwede feeling disappointed and discouraged by the lack of support either in the form of public protest when he was arrested or jubilation when he was released, decided to self- exile himself to Nigeria where he has remained to date, thereby compounding the leadership problem. Due to his prolonged absence, the SCNC again split into two factions with one still recognising him as the leader and the other headed by the ailing Chief Ette Otun Ayamba. Since Alobwede is resident abroad, his faction is unable to proceed with the independence programme while ailing Chief Ayamba is unable to provide the type of leadership required for such a struggle.

This lack of a competent and committed leader is also

reflected in the disunity among the Anglophone activists (many movements which are unable to meet and concert their action); the strategy adopted for the struggle (seeking to gain freedom by the use of only legal arguments as evidenced in the SCNC motto (the force of argument, not the argument of force); and conflicting objectives.

Whereas until recently the objectives have varied from a two-state federal structure to the total independence of the Southern Cameroons, another group of activists has emerged with a third objective. The group does not have a name but its member claim to represent what they refer to as 'United Nations Organisation (UNO) State of Cameroon' and are requesting the UNO to cede to them the former British Trust Territories of the Northern and Southern Cameroons (*The Vanguard* February 4, 2010). This group is inspired by a clause contained in the so-called Green Tree Accord signed by Nigeria and Cameroon in the aftermath of the International Court of Justice (ICJ)'s ruling on the Bakassi Crisis between the two countries. The Accord stipulated, among other things, that both countries should respect their territorial boundaries acquired at independence. The British Northern and Southern Cameroons were not part of any of the two countries at independence and as such they are still UNO territories which the activists want ceded to them.

In effect the Anglophone activists lack not only what (Mboya, 1963) refers to as 'the simplification of the struggle into (an inspiring slogan) and into one distinct idea which everyone can understand' but also a 'heroic father-figure leader as a symbol of unity capable of commanding unquestionable discipline from the different groups that rally behind him'.

### Strategy

A corollary of the lack of a competent and courageous leader is the adoption of an inappropriate strategy. When the motto of 'the force of argument, not the argument of force' was adopted it was in hoped that the government would be willing to dialogue. But since the government has persistently refused to engage in negotiations about either a return to the federal state or peaceful separation, the SCNC has not been able to adopt a more confrontational strategy or even armed struggle. Instead, the SCNC and SCAPO believe that legal arguments and appeals to international organisations constitute the way out. Such a strategy is unlikely to change the attitude of the regime toward the problem, and can at most only gain passive international awareness. The United Nations, the Commonwealth, the African Union and other international organisations are reluctant to support separatist movements within member states because they respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of these states.

In international politics, it is might and not the force of argument that is right. For example, the right to Eritrea self-determination was never actively recognised by the

international community in spite of the fact that the Eritreans had a legally excellent case for self-rule based on the abrogation of international agreements by successive governments in Addis Ababa and even the fact that they had a physical control over some of the land they claimed. Instead, it was only when Eritrea won a military victory over the government in Addis Ababa that its independence was recognised (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2003). This is the conventional way in which the international society recognises new states. East Timor as well did not get its freedom through legal arguments, it was through physical confrontation. This is why despite the fact that the Anglophone activists have declared the independence of their territory, designed a flag and a passport and applied to the UNO, AU and the Commonwealth for membership there has been no recognition from any state or international organisation. Another serious problem facing the activists relates to intra-Anglophones differences and rivalry between the North-west and Southwest.

### The North-west/South-west divide

The two Anglophone regions are geographically and culturally/ethnically dissimilar. The Northwest region is situated inland and it is upland with a savannah vegetation commonly referred to as the grassfields, while the Southwest is at the coast, low land and has a forest vegetation, the coast. The people of the Northwest namely, the Tikars, the Widikums the Chambers are culturally and ethnically different from the Bakweris, the Bafaws, the Bayangs, and the Balondos of the Southwest. The people of the Northwest are instead geographically and culturally/ethnically akin to the Bamilekes and Bamums of the neighbouring Francophone West region while those of the Southwest claim to share common cultural bonds and traditions with the Duala and related groups in the adjacent Francophone Littoral province (Eyoh, 2004). In other words, the two Anglophone regions are more dissimilar from each other than either is with its neighbouring Francophone region. Therefore, besides colonial experience, there is no ethnic or any other marker of identity for the peoples of the North-west and Southwest regions. As a result the Southwest Elite Association (SWELA) could in 1996 merge with the SAWA of the Francophone Littoral province to form a united front of coastal/forest people strong enough to thwart attempts by the grassfield people (North West) and the Bamilikes (Francophone West province) to grab power (Nyamnjoh and Rowlands, 1998), an alliance which Konings and Nyamnjoh (2003) rightly asserts that 'had (and continues to have) a devastating effect on Anglophone identity and organisation' as the Francophone-Anglophone divide is 'cross-cut by alliances that opposed the coastal people, the Grand SAWA to the grassfield people, the so-called Grand West'. This lack of ethnic affinity among the Anglophones deprives the



Anglophone activists of what Jewsiewick (1989) refers to as the “distinctive duality of ethnicity”, namely “a cultural identity and consciousness laden with possibilities for political mobilisation”.

Furthermore, although colonial experience is an important marker of Anglophone identity in Cameroon, it has a nuance resulting from a number of factors. First, the English language which is one of the most obvious colonial legacies is popular only among the literate minority and is also used by francophone elites when it suits their purpose to do so, while the most popular language among the Anglophone masses is the pidgin, which is a mixture of English, French and local dialects, and it is also widely used by the Francophone masses.

Secondly, not all English-speaking Cameroonians who lived under British colonial rule in the Southern Cameroons consider themselves to be Anglophones, at least by origin. In other words, there are people in the Anglophone regions who are Anglophones by colonial experience but not by origin. These are people whose parents, grand-parents or even great-grand parents originated from French Cameroon and settled in the Southern Cameroons. These are the so-called members of the Eleventh Province/Region or what Kofele-Kale (1986) terms ‘ethnic transvestites’. They were born in the Anglophone territory, received Anglophone education and socialisation, but are Francophones by ethnic origin. They are people of two worlds. They side with Francophones when it is in their advantage to do so, but are also able to revert to Anglophonism when nothing of consequence is at stake. It is thus, in their interest to maintain the status quo. This means that they are unlikely to cooperate in the struggle.

Finally, many Francophone parents are currently sending their children to be educated in Anglophone schools. Although this may be induced by the desire to benefit from the pre-eminence of the English language in the world, it also tends to weaken the English language or even Anglophone education as a marker of Anglophone identity because as mentioned above, one does not become an Anglophone simply by acquiring Anglophone education and socialisation. Like members of the ‘eleventh province’, this category of ‘Anglophones’, may not believe that there is an Anglophone problem, let alone agitate against it. This gives the wrong impression that not all Anglophones believe that there is an Anglophone problem.

This does not mean that Anglophone identity does not exist. On the contrary it means that it is so unique and entrenched that education and socialisation alone cannot bestow it to individuals because it has not only a historical but, more importantly, a territorial foundation. Consequently, for the purpose of the Anglophone problem, the geographical/territorial dimension is crucial in determining who an Anglophone is in Cameroon. From this perspective, an Anglophone is a person whose ancestral roots are in the Southern Cameroons, or as

Sindjou puts it ‘someone belonging to one of the territory’s autochthonous ethnic groups’ (quoted in Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997).

### Intra-Anglophone rivalry

Another factor that hinders Anglophone unity for the struggle is Southwest fear of Northwest domination. Demographically, the Northwest is, and has always been, the more populous of the two regions (Eyoh, 2004). Since colonial days there has been an increasing flow of migrants from the Northwest to the Southwest originally to provide labour in the plantation economy established under German colonial rule (1884-1916) and subsequently, to engage in other economic activities (Konings, 1993). In some coastal districts like the then Victoria division (now Limbe), the local population ‘almost became overwhelmed by these strangers even before the Second World War’ (Gwan, 1975). With time the grassfields immigrant population actually out-numbered the indigenous population in the major coastal urban areas. The entrepreneurial spirit and hard work of the migrants gradually enabled them to dominate agriculture, trade and housing, a situation that was envied and resented by the local population (Ardener et al., 1960).

Although, the Southwest elite had dominated the Political scene of the Anglophone territory of the Southern Cameroons until the 1959 elections, the victory of the Northwest based Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP) in the 1959 elections signalled the start of Northwest political leadership in the territory. Thus, throughout the period of the Federation (1961-1972) the south-westerners felt dominated by the north-westerners not only in the economic but in the political scene as well. South-western memories of north-western domination in the Federated State of West Cameroon, are understandably creating resistance among the South West elite to any advocacy for a return to the two-state (Anglophone/Francophone) federal arrangement. The South West Elite Association (SWELA) and the South West Chiefs’ Conference (SWECC) formed to defend South West interest, are opposed to a return to a two-state federation. Hence, in 1993 when Anglophone activism was coalescing, nine representatives of the South-west Chiefs’ Conference (SWECC) travelled to Yaounde to pledge their unalloyed allegiance to president Biya. They told him that they ‘were alarmed at the numerous demonstrations, blackmail, civil disobedience, rebellious attitudes and recurrent activities designed to destabilise the state and the government, and strongly condemned any attempt to partition the country on the basis of Anglophone/Francophone culture (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997; Takougang and Krieger, 1998). On its part and talking on behalf of the South-west elites, SWELA maintains that ‘the South West people stand for one and indivisible Cameroon’ (*The Post* August, 2000)

Thus, when in September 1996 a South-westerner,

Peter Mafany Musongo, was appointed to replace Simon Achidi Achu, a North-wester as Prime Minister and more South-westerners than North-westerners maintained both in the cabinet and ruling-party hierarchy, the South-westerners 'went wild with excitement and jubilation and loudly praised the Head of State' for having at last listened to the cry of South-westerners who for over 36 years were 'confined to the periphery of national politics and socio-economic development' (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997). This antagonistic rivalry between the North-west and South-west elite for economic and political eminence is hindering them from uniting to pursue a common objective.

In addition, mutual stereotyping by the North-westerners and South-westerners is also a hindrance to the growth of a sense of unity among Anglophones. As Eyoh (2004) points out, in the popular folklore of the indigenous South-westerners, 'peoples of the North-west are hard-working, frugal, ambitious, aggressive and prone to ethnic solidarity and excessive deference to traditional authority'. The North-westerners reciprocate by characterising the South-westerners as 'un-enterprising, having a consumerist attitude, a weak sense of community and an incapacity to unite around common goals'. By emphasising the differences rather than the similarities among Anglophones, stereotyping aids in deconstructing rather than constructing Anglophone identity.

## REACTIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT

The reaction of the regime to the Anglophone activists is, not surprisingly, in the form of various resistance strategies. These include the trivialisation and demonisation of the Anglophone problem; divide and rule tactics, and repression. The regime has often tried to trivialize the Anglophone/Francophone divide in a number of ways. First, by highlighting the existence of a common identity under German colonial rule which is said to be recognised along with the multicultural nature of the nation in all constitutions of the post-colonial state. In a speech on December 13, 1991 in Bamenda, President Biya emphasized:

*Let us not oppose Anglophone and Francophone...The Language should not be a political problem in our country. Mind you, at the start of this century Cameroonians were neither Anglophones nor Francophones. Why should the wars of others divide Cameroonians at the dawn of the third millennium?* (Quoted in Takougang and Krieger, 1998)

It is true that all of Cameroon was a German colony, but apart from a few buildings that stand as the relics of the German colonial rule, there is no such thing as a German colonial identity in the country today.

Secondly, in trying to convince the national and international communities that Cameroon's policy of

bilingualism is successful Biya claimed in 1999 that secessionist tendencies were being manifested by a tiny Anglophone minority and that 'he was ready to even call a referendum, if it became necessary' (Takougang and Krieger, 1998). The president was just bluffing on the issue of the referendum because in spite of persistent Anglophone agitation and a pledge by English-speaking Cameroonians in North America to bear the cost of the referendum, he has since, been silent about it.

Echoing the president's trivialising strategy the former Prime Minister Peter Mafany Musonge, an Anglophone from the South-west, argues not only that 'those with separatist ideas are few among Cameroonians and are people who are out for self-interest or people who are confused and do not even know what they are doing', (*The Herald* August 10, 2001), but also that it is 'Anglophones who are marginalising themselves'. He therefore, admonishes Anglophones to 'desist from self-marginalisation and consider themselves as fully fledged Cameroonians with the same rights and responsibilities as Francophones' (Nyamnjoh and Rowlands, 1998).

The third way of trivialising the Anglophone problem is by rejecting the federal system on economical and political grounds. Thus, Biya, like Ahidjo before him, has claimed that 'the federal system is costly, weak as far as state power is concerned and divisive, provoking ethnic and regional sentiments rather than a national consciousness', and consequently that the unitary state is the form of state that suits Cameroon best) (Takougang and Krieger, 1998). The President is apparently overlooking the fact that the unitary state's patrimonial tendencies and its politicisation of ethnicity may be even more costly and divisive (Chabal and Daloz, 1999; Gabriel, 1999; Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2003).

## Demonisation

Imbued with the Gallic centralist conception of the state, the regime abhors any form of power devolution and has therefore tried to demonise the Anglophone call for federalism by equating it with secession. In spite of the fact that Anglophone pressure groups have continued to call for dialogue and peaceful negotiations, they are regarded as extremists who are seeking to destroy the state. As such the SCNC is seen as a rebel organisation whose activities are banned and leaders and members are constantly harassed. It is from this perspective that the current Prime Minister, Philemon Yang from the North-west sees the SCNC as a threat to the state and cautions that 'at no moment should the North-westerners be identified as people working against the vital interest of Cameroon', because in his view 'Cameroon remains one and indivisible' (*The Post* November 6, 2009).

## Divide and rule

The existing contradictions between the North-west and

South-west as well as intra-Anglophone rivalry has facilitated the use of divide and rule tactics by the regime. In reaction to South-west complaints about North-west domination President Biya appointed a South-wester to replace a North-wester as Prime Minister in 1996 and appointed more South-westerners than North-westerners into cabinet positions and the ruling party hierarchy (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2003; Eyoh, 1998; Takougang and Krieger, 1998). As such the regime intended to give the impression that the North-westerners, not Francophones are the enemies of the South-westerners.

Biya has also sought to use his allies among the Anglophone 'traditional' and 'modern' elite to defend the unitary state in exchange for rewards in the form of appointments and sinecures. In turn, his allies tend to castigate the leaders of the various Anglophone movements for their 'demagogic and irresponsible' calls for federation or secession and to dispute their claims of being Anglophone spokesmen. It was in this light that in November 1996 Prime Minister Peter Mafany Musonge blamed the Anglophone activists for leading 'hostile campaigns at home and abroad to foster division and hatred among Cameroonians' (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2003). Earlier in 1993 certain members of the South-west chiefs' Conference (SWECC) and South-west Elite Association (SWELA) who were known to be allied with the regime, tried to dissociate the South-west province from the deliberations of the AACI and the Buea Declaration. In Bamenda, a meeting of a previously little-known North-west Cultural and Development Association (NOCUDA) was held to dissociate the North-west province from AACI by branding it a South-west affair. The meeting was organized by allies of the regime who in 1994 actively worked against the holding of AACII in Bamenda in a bid 'to kill the Anglophone dream' (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2003).

## Repression

The government has from the outset, been very uneasy with any action that is likely to mobilise Anglophones and has always tried to prevent it. In an attempt to prevent the holding of AACI in 1993 government refused the use of public buildings such as the University of Buea for the conference which was held only after Catholic Mission authorities permitted the use of the hall of Mount Mary Clinic. In 1994 agents of the government also attempted to obstruct the organisation of AACII in Bamenda by carrying an announcement on the public CRTV to the effect that the AACII meeting had been postponed by the convenors. The announcement was purported to have been signed by Dr Simon Munzu, Dr Carlson Anyangwe, and Barrister Sam Ekontang Elad, all of whom refuted the claim. CRTV was not only unable to provide to the AAC spokesman, Dr Simon Munzu, a copy of the announce-

ment alleged to have been signed by him and his colleagues, but also refused to broadcast a disclaimer prepared by him (Konings and Nyamnjoh 2003). From the aforementioned it is clear that government uses even fraud as a tool of suppression.

The government initiated another fraudulent act in 2004 to frustrate Anglophone efforts at defending their rights. In 2003 SCAPO and SCNC took the Anglophone problem to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in Banjul where it was registered as case No. 266/2003 pitting Kevin Ngwane Ngumne and co. Representing the SCNC/SCAPO and the State of Cameroon.

In 2004, the government Minister of Justice, Mr Ahmadou Ali stroke a deal with two Anglophones, Theodore Leke and Chief Isaac Oben and signed a press release to the effect that the SCNC was already negotiating with the government. The press release was in May 2004 taken to Banjul by the two accomplices hoping to use it in pleading that Communication No. 266/2003 be withdrawn since the two parties were dialoguing as earlier recommended by the UN Secretary General, Kofi Anan. The mischievous mission failed as the Commissioners at Banjul wondered aloud 'how can different people sue a matter and different persons come to withdraw it' (*The Vanguard* February 4, 2010). Mr Theodore Leke who is now confessing for having betrayed the SCNC says his own share from the deal which was 15 million CFA Francs was not all paid. Could this be why he has decided to confess?

Members of the Anglophone pressure groups are frequent victims of government repression. Repression increased in the aftermath of the SCYL attack on military and civil establishments in the North-west Province in March 1997 in reaction to the arrest of its leader Mr Ebenezer Akwanga. The government responded to the attack very ruthless resulting in the dead of three gendarmes and seven of the assailants. A good number of SCNC members were arrested and imprisoned in Yaounde for two years before bringing them to trial in 1999. By the time they were brought to trial in 1999 some had died in prison and the rest were treated not as political prisoners but as criminal offenders (Konings, and Nyamnjoh, 2003).

Meetings and rallies of the SCNC are brutally disrupted on a regular basis and their members have become 'easy pickings for the armed forces' (*The Post* October 13, 2008). Sixteen people including pregnant women, senior citizens and a mental patient were recently arrested in a village in Donga-Mantung Division of the North-west for holding what according to government agents was an SCNC meeting. They were taken to Nkambe, the chief town of the Division where the mental patient was released while the remaining 15 were imprisoned and are, according to the local administrative and judicial authorities, still awaiting to 'face trial for secession and disruption of public peace'.

Admitting that the detainees were languishing in prison

where they sleep on the bare floor in spite of their ages and conditions, the Senior Divisional Officer for Donga-Mantung maintains that 'anyone who interrupts peace should be ready to go through the same sufferings' (*The Vanguard* February 4, 2010). It is not certain either that the detained persons are SCNC activists or even whether the holding of a meeting by this category of people in one of the remotest villages in the country can amount to anything close to secession and disruption of public peace. What is quite certain however is that government is prepared to suppress not only actual but also potential and imagined Anglophone activists. In this way it is hoped that the fear of suffering in the hands of government agents would kill Anglophone activism. But as Mukong (1990) opines, 'until those who hold out for justice, liberty, etc, admit this suffering as the only way to victory, we shall never arrive. And if fear turned all of us off the path, then the cause is completely lost'. By opting for 'the force of argument, not the argument of force' the Anglophone activists are unwilling to admit that suffering is the only way to victory, but may also be unable to prevent the cause from completely being lost.

#### THE ANGLOPHONE PROBLEM AND THE ANGLOPHONE POLITICAL ELITE

The importance of the rule of the political elite in the outcome of any separatist or nationalist movement cannot be overemphasized. 'The position of the political elite', Kellas affirms, 'is crucial and it is only when it fragments that nationalism is able to make progress'. For example, Irish nationalism was greatly boosted after 1916 when 'nearly all M.Ps. and local officials in the South of Ireland supported the break from Britain' (Kellas, 1991). Similarly it was due to the active participation of its political elite in the struggle that Eritrea succeeded in re-establishing its autonomy. By 1995, Eritrea had lost so much of its autonomy that, unwilling to tolerate, 'its Prime Minister and the Secretary General of the Union Party that had advocated federation with Ethiopia resigned their government posts and threw their weight behind the nationalist movement' (Thompson and Adulf, 1998).

Even the success of the British Southern Cameroons in obtaining a regional autonomy within the federation of Nigeria was due to the role of its political elite. Thus, in 1955 all Cameroon's 13 legislators in the Eastern Legislature at Enugu agreed that "if for any reason the motion to create a Cameroon's House of Assembly was rejected; they would stage a walk-out" (Awasom, 1998). In the present situation in Cameroon the Anglophone political elite seems rather united in denying and/or downplaying the existence of the Anglophone Problem. Hence, not a single Anglophone political elite has resigned from a public post in protest against the marginalisation of Anglophones. Nor is there any Anglophone political elite either of the ruling party or of the opposition who is an activist of the Anglophone problem.

Even traditional rulers do not support the SCNC and its attempt to create an independent Southern Cameroons state. Thus, many traditional rulers particularly in the North-west may as 'individuals identified with the Anglophone grievances (Konings, 1999), as a group the North-west Fon's Union (NOWEFU) has not endorsed the SCNC'. (*Today* February 6, 2000). This is because they are said to be auxiliaries of administration and in order to protect that position they must support the regime in power. Consequently, a number of South West and North West traditional rulers 'have repeatedly condemned the call for an independent Southern Cameroons, appealing to the head of state to employ every available means to defend the unitary state (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1999).

Thus, unable to progress toward its objectives the SCNC has rightly blamed its failures on the Anglophone elite's turpitude and cupidity or what Bayart (1993) terms "the politics of the Belly"; manifest in 'the disunity, treachery, betrayals and back-stabbing among Anglophones' who have to prove their loyalty and patriotism to the Francophone power brokers 'by denying the truth, in order to gain appointments and other sinecures' (*The Socialist Chronicle* 32, 2000). SCNC activists also lament what they regard as the cushioning role of the SDF which prevents 'our uppercuts from landing *La Republique du Cameroun* on the floor in disgrace'. Like the liberal Party in South Africa it is pointed out that 'the SDF is prolonging the agony of the people by giving them tiny doses of democracy that cannot kill the disease of dictatorship and annexation' (*Today* April 8, 2000).

Consequently, although Anglophone activists have proclaimed the restoration of the sovereignty and independence of the Southern Cameroons (*The Post* 15, 2000), composed an anthem, designed a flag and applied for membership of the United Nations Organisation, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), and the Commonwealth, (*Today* 14, 2000), designed a passport (*The Star* February 15, 2010); the reestablishment of the autonomy of the Anglophone region remains a forlorn hope, unless Anglophones sink their differences, put the common good before individual interest and decide to fight it.

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