Impact of Separatist Actions on the Council Socio-Economic Development Roadmap in the Northwest and Southwest Regions (Cameroon)

René Ngek Monteh

Department of History University of Yaounde 1, Cameroon

ABSTRACT

Since October 2016, the socio-political conflict in the Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon, commonly referred to as the "Anglophone problem/crisis/struggle or conflict", has persisted and transformed into an armed conflict characterised by unprecedented violence between government forces and non-state armed or separatist groups, otherwise known as the "Amba Boys". This scenario rapidly escalated into a secessionist political conflict that is threatening the unity of the country and has the potential to degenerate into a complex emergency. The systematisation of Ghost Town and Lockdown operations imposed by the separatists, recurrent clashes between soldiers and secessionists, fires in public and private institutions and buildings, kidnappings, and even murders of public authorities, security forces personnel, traditional authorities, religious authorities, and civilians, among other havocs, didn't work well for the various municipalities. This study thus assesses the impact of the separatist actions on the socioeconomic development plans of the Northwest and Southwest Regions. In fact-finding, the study adopted an exploratory research design. Data was collected from the field through observations and correspondence with communities, as well as newspaper and online news reports and scientific works. Resulting from our findings, it is revealed that the separatist actions in these regions have adversely disrupted the socioeconomic roadmap of the council's developmental plans. Therefore, it is recommended that efforts to restore peace and stability be prioritised, as this will create the enabling environment to revive the council's developmental objectives in these areas.

Keywords: separatist actions, anglophone crisis, socioeconomic development, Northwest and Southwest Regions.

RESUME

Depuis octobre 2016, le conflit sociopolitique dans les régions du Nord-Ouest et du Sud-Ouest du Cameroun, communément appelé « problème/crise/lutte ou conflit anglophone», a persisté et s'est transformé en un conflit armé caractérisé par une violence sans précédent entre les forces gouvernementales et les groupes armés ou séparatistes non étatiques, également connus sous le nom de «Amba Boys». Ce scénario s'est rapidement transformé en un conflit politique sécessionniste qui menace l'unité du pays et risque de dégénérer en une situation d'urgence complexe. La systématisation des opérations « Ville Morte» et « Lockdown» imposées par les séparatistes, les affrontements récurrents entre soldats et sécessionnistes, les incendies dans les institutions et bâtiments publics et privés, les enlèvements et même les meurtres d'autorités publiques, de membres des forces de sécurité, d'autorités traditionnelles, d'autorités religieuses et de civils, parmi d'autres ravages, n'ont pas bien fonctionné pour les différentes municipalités. Cette étude évalue donc l'impact des actions séparatistes sur les plans de développement socio-économique des régions du Nord-Ouest et du Sud-Ouest. Pour la recherche des faits, l'étude a adopté un modèle de recherche exploratoire. Les données ont été collectées sur le terrain par le biais d'observations et de correspondances avec les communautés, ainsi que d'articles de presse et de travaux scientifiques en ligne. Nos conclusions révèlent que les actions séparatistes dans ces régions ont perturbé la feuille de route socio-économique des plans de développement du conseil. Il est donc recommandé de donner la priorité aux efforts visant à rétablir la paix et la stabilité, car cela permettra de créer un environnement propice à la relance des objectifs de développement du conseil dans ces régions.

Mots clés: actions séparatistes, crise anglophone, développement socio-économique, régions du Nord-Ouest et du Sud-Ouest.
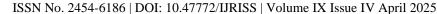
INTRODUCTION

Before 2014, Cameroon enjoyed a continental and even global reputation as a haven of peace and stability, in particular because of the careful nurturing of internal peace over the years and the absence of conflicts, especially cross-border conflict with other countries. Unfortunately, this reputation was shattered at the start of 2014 in the eastern part of the country with the spill-over from the Central African conflict and most especially in the Far North Region with the infiltration into Cameroon of the Islamic sect Boko Haram from neighbouring Nigeria. Because of the terrorist activities of this group in Cameroon, the Head of State of Cameroon declared war on them in May 2014, marking the country's official entry into the insidious war that has continued till this day.

Like many other African countries, Cameroon has for some years now been experiencing serious and persistent security problems, particularly in three of its ten regions, namely the Far North Region, where the Islamist sect Boko Haram is carrying out deadly terrorist attacks, and the two English-speaking regions (the Northwest and Southwest), where armed secessionist groups are battling government forces. The situation of vulnerable people living in these regions is not often known to the general public. Following demonstrations and demands by a number of corporate groups in the English-speaking parts of the country in 2016, some citizens took up arms in an effort to separate these regions from the rest of the country, resulting in widespread violence and confrontations with government forces. The instability in these regions has had considerable and persistent human, economic, and social consequences. According to numerous authors, some of the causes of the crisis in these regions can be traced back to the colonial period or, at least, to the period just after independence, while other more recent causes are the result of poor governance by the two regimes that the country has known.

The "Anglophone problem", as many call it, that came to the fore in 2016 is as old as Cameroon itself. According to a 2018 report by the International Crisis Group, the problem started as far back as 1906, when the League of Nations granted trusteeship of the German protectorate known as "Kamerun" to France and the United Kingdom. Each of these two countries left its own legacy (linguistic, cultural, and institutional) on the part it administered. The French-speaking part, known then as "East Cameroon", gained independence in 1960 and became *La République du Cameroun*. The area administered by the British, known as "West Cameroon", was made up of two parts: "Northern Cameroon" and "Southern Cameroon". Their paths to decolonization were a bit more complicated since, for them, the international community under the United Nations had excluded the independence option. They were then given the choice to either join Nigeria or *La République du Cameroun*. Northern Cameroon opted to join Nigeria, while Southern Cameroon voted to join *La République du Cameroun*. The Southern Cameroon of that period is the part that makes up the current Northwest and Southwest regions. The different colonial pasts of these two linguistic parts of the country, with their underlying separate cultural identities, have been the main source of constant friction, punctuated more or less regularly with protests and political demands.

It was within the context of this latent conflict that the crisis erupted in October 2016. In addition to sporadic "ghost town" days and one-off corporate demands by the Diaspora that had been common in these regions, new political challenges emerged and became intertwined with long-standing demands, resulting in the multidimensional nature of the crisis as we know it today.

The complex scenario of multiple hotspots in different parts of the country and the Anglophone conflict are of particular relevance. It involves a range of identifiable actors on the side of the government, the separatist movements, the international community, the diaspora, and civil society. Even though a political solution still seems far away, some of these people are qualified and actively engaged in finding ways to end violence and restore peace. Thus, the process of negotiating a solution to the Anglophone conflict may shed light on possible ways forward in the country's multiple conflict scenarios. All these events in the said regions have adversely influenced the municipal council's developmental objectives. The terms "Anglophone", "Anglophone problem", "Anglophone wart", "Anglophone struggle", "Anglophone conflict", and "Anglophone crisis" are frequently used in public and academic debates in Cameroon and beyond. This thus describes the predominately English-speaking people living in the Northwest and Southwest Regions of the country. However, in this paper, we shall

consistently use the term later besides the Anglophone crisis to refer to the conflict's complex historical and socio-economic dimensions, which will be elaborated on in the later part of this paper.

This paper is thus structured into four main parts. The first part of this paper situates the genesis of the crisis commonly referred to as the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon. Part two discusses the evolution of the crisis and separatist actions in the council areas of the Northwest and Southwest Regions. Part three introduces the socio-economic impact of the crisis in the council areas. The last section, part four, discusses the current attempts made by the Cameroon government to end the crisis.

The Genesis of the Crisis in the English-Speaking Regions of Cameroon

In this section, we shall discuss the origins of the crisis in the two English-speaking regions of Cameroon. In this sphere, emphasis shall be placed on the historical background backed by the colonial regimes to the understanding of this crisis before it got to its climax in 2016.

Colonial Legacy as a Factor Responsible for the Crisis

The German government and the traditional Douala chiefs signed a treaty in July 1884, establishing a protectorate called Kamerun. Its territories were shared out after the German defeat at the end of World War 1. The League of Nations appointed France and the UK as joint trustees of Kamerun. The Anglophone problem and a number of other weaknesses in present-day Cameroon have their roots in the colonial period.[1]

During the period of the mandate and the trusteeship, each colonial power shaped its territories in its own image. This resulted in major differences in political culture. English was the official language in the territory under British administration. The Common Law, which was the justice system, the education system, the currency, and social norms, followed the British model. The system of indirect rule allowed traditional chiefdoms to remain in place and promoted the emergence of a form of self-government to the extent that freedom of the press, political pluralism, and democratic change in power existed in Anglophone Cameroon prior to independence. The territory was administered as though it were part of Nigeria, and several members of British Cameroon's Anglophone elite were ministers in the Nigerian government during this period.[2]

In contrast, the Francophone territory was directly administered by France following the assimilationist model, although colonisers and the traditional elites also practised a form of indirect government, especially in the north of the country. French was spoken, and France's social, legal, and political norms shaped the centralist political system of successive regimes. Bogged down in a total war against the nationalist movement (*Union des populations du Cameroun* - UPC), which challenged the French presence, the Francophone territory was less democratic.[3]

Independence and Reunification Dreams

The process leading to the reunification of the two Cameroons is at the heart of the Anglophone Problem. The Francophone territory gained independence on January 1, 1960, becoming the Republic of Cameroon. The British territory comprised Southern Cameroons and Northern Cameroon. In the referendum held on February 11, 1961, Northern Cameroon chose to join Nigeria, and Southern Cameroons chose to join the Republic of Cameroon. Southern Cameroons became independent on October 1, 1961, when it joined the Republic of Cameroon.

At the time of the 1961 referendum, the political landscape in Southern Cameroons was already dynamic. According to reputed historians, the majority of the population aspired to independence. But the UK and some developing countries were against it on the grounds that Southern Cameroons would not be economically viable and that it was best to avoid the creation of microstates. They advocated a vote in favour of joining Nigeria. The UN therefore excluded the independence option and limited the referendum to a choice between joining Nigeria

[1] Crisis Group Africa Report N°250. (2017). Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis at the Crossroads. 02 August.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Yonatan Morse. (2017). Cameroon has been in crisis for six months. Here is what you need to know. The Washington Post. 2 June.

and reunification with the Republic of Cameroon. The main figures among the Anglophone political elites, Emmanuel Mbella Lifafa Endeley, John Ngu Foncha, Solomon Tandeng Muna, and Agustine Ngom Jua, pleaded at the UN for an independent state of Southern Cameroons, or alternatively, for temporary independence during which time it would negotiate the terms of unification from a better position.[4] The UN's rejection of the independence option left two opposing camps during the referendum. Endeley, the leader of the Kamerun National Congress (KNC), campaigned in favour of joining Nigeria. Foncha, the leader of the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP), who left the KNC in 1955, Muna, and Jua campaigned in favour of reunification with the Republic of Cameroon. Influenced by these prominent political leaders and by a certain fear of being absorbed by the Nigerian giant, the vote went in favour of reunification.

Representatives of Southern Cameroons and the president of the Republic of Cameroon, Amadou Ahidjo, met at Foumban in the west of Francophone territory from July 17 until July 21, 1961, to negotiate the terms of reunification. Even today, the failure to keep the promises made at the Foumban conference, which did not produce a written agreement, is among the grievances of Anglophone militants. The Anglophone representatives thought they were participating in a constituent assembly that would draught a constitution guaranteeing egalitarian federalism and a large degree of autonomy to federated states, but Ahidjo imposed a ready-made constitution that gave broad powers to the executive of the federal state to the detriment of the two federated states (West Cameroon and East Cameroon). The Anglophones, who were in a weak position, accepted Ahidjo's constitution and only obtained a blocking minority by way of concession.[5] The National Assembly of the Republic of Cameroon approved the federal constitution in August 1961, and Ahidjo promulgated it on September 1, while Southern Cameroons was still under British trusteeship. The constitutional process for reunification and abandonment by the British left Anglophones with the impression of having been deceived by the Francophones, which also explains the bitterness of Anglophone militants towards the UK.[6]

Post-Independence Grievances

French Cameroon became independent in 1960 and was named the Republic of Cameroon. With Nigeria becoming independent the same year, the British trust territory of the Northern and Southern Cameroons was given the opportunity to decide its own political future in February 1961 in an UN-organised plebiscite. Only two options were provided: to remain in Nigeria or to reunite with Francophone Cameroon. A third alternative, forming an independent British Cameroons was considered unviable by the UK and the UN and thus ruled out as an option.[7] While Northern Cameroons decided to join Nigeria, Southern Cameroons opted for a federation with independent Francophone Cameroon, now under the rule of President Ahmadou Ahidjo. However, the newly formed Federal Republic of Cameroon, consisting of Anglophone West Cameroon and Francophone East Cameroon, did not endure. In 1972, Ahidjo abolished the federal system and instituted a highly centralised, unitary state, an act that Anglophones attributed to the desire of the Francophone political elite to "dominate the Anglophone minority and erase the cultural and institutional foundations of Anglophone identity".[8]

In 1982, Paul Biya took over power from Ahidjo and introduced a limited degree of liberalism. Two years later, he changed the country's official name from the "United Republic of Cameroon' to simply the "Republic of Cameroon". This earned him much resentment among the Anglophone population, which read it as a measure to reinforce Anglophone assimilation into the Francophone-dominated state. In 1985, the Anglophone lawyer and first president of the Cameroon Bar Association, Fon Gorji Dinka, addressed a memorandum to President Biya, denying him the right to unilaterally secede from the union and calling for the former Southern Cameroons to become independent. This was the first time the name ¨Ambazonia" derived from Ambas Bay at the foot of

[4] Crisis Group Africa Report N°250. (2017).

[5] Carlson Anyangwe. (2009). Betrayal of Too Trusting a People. The UN, the UK and the Trust Territory of the Southern Cameroons. Buea.

[6] Martin Zachary Njeuma. (1995). Reunification and Political Opportunity in the Making of Cameroon's Independence. Paideuma. No. 41: 27-37.

[7] Michaela Pelican. (2022). The Anglophone conflict in Cameroon - historical and political background. ABI Working Paper No. 20. Freiburg Germany. September.

[8] Konings, P. and F.B. Francis Nyamnjoh. (2019). Anglophone Secessionist Movements in Cameroon. Secessionism in African Politics. Palgrave Series in African Borderlands Studies, L. de Vries et al. (eds.): 66.

Mount Cameroon, was introduced to refer to an envisioned independent Anglophone Cameroon.[9]

The calls for independence and secession intensified during the 1990s, a period characterised by economic and political liberalisation and the reintroduction of a multiparty system. Anglophone interests came to be represented by associations and pressure groups initiated by Anglophone elites, such as the All-Anglophone Conference (AAC), which organised two major meetings in 1993 and 1994, and called for a return to the federal form of government. When the government did not respond to their demands, the Anglophone leadership embraced a secessionist stance. They formed the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) and declared October 1, 1996, the date of independence for Southern Cameroons. In contrast to the current secessionist movement, the AAC and SCNC strictly advocated for peaceful negotiations. They successfully sought recognition of Anglophone grievances by international bodies, such as the United Nations, the African Union, and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, but failed to gain support for their secessionist claims.[10] The idea of an independent Southern Cameroons was also promoted by Anglophone university students who could draw on earlier experiences of protest action. Motivated by long years of marginalisation in the Francophone-dominated university system, they formed the Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL) to serve as the militant youth wing of the SCNC. In sharp contrast to the peaceful strategies of the Anglophone elite, the SCYL opted for armed struggle and planned attacks against military and civil establishments.[11] They were soon identified and violently counteracted by the Cameroonian government, with several of its members being arrested, killed, or forced into exile. Some have resurfaced as vital actors in the current Anglophone crisis.

An important feature of the democratization period of the 1990s was the degree of civil disobedience exercised by the population in support of the political opposition. For example, in 1991–1992, over a period of more than nine months, the population of the Northwest, Southwest, West, and Littoral regions realised so-called Ghost Town Campaigns (*Operation Villes Mortes*) and effectively halted economic life in an attempt to force the government to hold a sovereign national conference. The Ghost Town campaigns involved the voluntary closing of businesses, shops, and taxi services and the refusal to pay government taxes. In October 1991, in Cameroon, the Ghost Town campaigns had taken full swing. This was in addition to the presidential elections in October 1992 and living through the subsequent state of emergency that was imposed on the Northwest and Southwest regions, which lasted for three months. The government's approach to the current Anglophone conflict strongly resonates with the measures adopted by the current regime at the time.[12]

While the Anglophone cause enjoyed full support among the English-speaking population in the early 1990s, it lost momentum in subsequent years. The country's economic situation has been deteriorating since the late 1980s as a result of structural adjustment programmes imposed by international donors. Moreover, with the repeated re-election of Paul Biya, both the political opposition and the Anglophone population gradually lost hope in any meaningful political and economic change. This resulted in a general political lethargy and motivated many Anglophones Cameroonians to leave the country and look for more promising opportunities in Europe, the US, and elsewhere.[13] It was only by the end of 2016 that the Anglophone cause acquired new impetus.

However, the roots of the Anglophone problem lie in a badly organised reunification that was based on centralization and assimilation and in economic and administrative marginalisation. Personal and ethnic ambitions and rivalries among the elites did not help matters. They have not always been able to present a common front to defend an increasingly heterogeneous Anglophone cause. Since the 2000s, the Anglophone question has deeply divided society. It finds expression in the mutually negative perceptions of the Anglophone and Francophone populations and the occasional reciprocal stigmatisation. The current crisis represents an especially worrying resurgence of this old problem. Never before has the Anglophone question manifested itself with such intensity, which gives rise to the next section handling the manifestation of the separatists in these

[9] Michaela Pelican. (2022). The Anglophone conflict in Cameroon.

[10] Piet Konings. (2005). Anglophone university students and Anglophone nationalist struggles in Cameroon. African dynamics; Vanguard or vandals: youth, politics and conflict in Africa, J. Abbink, and W.M.J. van Kessel (eds.). Leiden: Brill: 161-188.

[11] Ibid.

[12] A.N.T. Mbu. (1993). Civil Disobedience in Cameroon, Douala: Imprimitive Georges Freres.

[13] Marie-Emmanuelle Pommerolle and Hans de Marie Heungoup. (2022). The "Anglophone crisis": A tale of the Cameroonian Post-colony. African Affairs 116 (464): 2017, 526-538. Cited by Michaela Pelican. The Anglophone conflict in Cameroon.

regions.

The Evolution of the Crisis and Separatist Actions

This political and historical trajectory of Cameroon partly underlies the complexity, controversies, and complicated process rekindled by the corporate demands of teachers and lawyers in October 2016. In this section, we shall discuss two major issues: how the current crisis started in the two English-speaking regions of Cameroon and, later, the separatists' actions that hijacked the movement in the regions earlier mentioned.

From the Strike to the Crisis

The current crisis began on October 11, 2016, in Bamenda, when lawyers from the Northwest and Southwest went on strike. Their demands, ignored until then by the justice ministry under Lawrent Esso, were related to the justice system's failure to use the Common Law in the two regions. The lawyers demanded the translation into English of the Code of the Organisation for the Harmonisation of Business Law in Africa (OHADA) and other legal texts. They criticised the French system of Common Law jurisdictions, with the appointment to the English zone of French-speaking magistrates who did not understand English or the Common Law and the appointment of notaries to do work done by lawyers under the Common Law system. A lack of trust in the government and the brutality of the security forces aggravated the problem and radicalised the public.[14]

On November 8, 2016, the lawyers mobilised hundreds of people for a march in Bamenda and reiterated their demand for the full restoration of the Common Law system as it was at the time of the federal system. They added a demand for federalism. While the march was taking place peacefully, gendarmes violently dispersed the crowd, manhandled some lawyers, and arrested some motorbike taxi drivers, or "Okada boys". In response, some youth and Okada boys set up barricades at several crossroads, and clashes between demonstrators and gendarmes left several wounded. On November 21, teachers went on strike as well. They organised a rally against the lack of English-speaking teachers, the appointment of teachers who did not have a good command of English, and the failure to respect the "Anglo-Saxon" character of schools and universities in the English-speaking zone. At the rally, several thousand people joined teachers to express grievances ranging from the lack of roads in the Northwest to the marginalisation of Anglophones. The police and the army violently dispersed the demonstrators. Several people were severely beaten, dozens of others were arrested, and at least two people were shot dead, according to a report by the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms.[15] Several other incidents took place in Bamenda at the end of November, leading to riots in this part of the country.

On November 28, the crisis, which had until then been limited to the Northwest, spread to the Southwest. Students at Buea University organised a peaceful march on the campus to call for the payment to students of the president's achievement bonus, denounce the banning of the University of Buea Student Union (UBSU) in 2012, and protest at the introduction of a penalty for late payment of education fees and the additional fee charged for accessing examination results. The university rector's response was to call the police onto campus. They brutally repressed the students and arrested some of them in their homes. Female students were beaten, undressed, rolled in the mud, and some were raped.[16]

The most violent confrontation took place on December 8 in Bamenda, when the CPDM tried to organise a pro-government rally in the English-speaking regions. The angry crowd prevented the rally from taking place. In violent clashes, four people died, several were wounded, and around 50 were arrested. Demonstrators set fire to a police station, government buildings, and vehicles. The then prime minister (Philemon Yang), the CPDM secretary general, the governor of the Northwest region, and the national security adviser, who were due to attend the rally, had to hide all day in the governor's residence to escape the violence. The government responded to these demonstrations by militarising the region, causing the social climate to deteriorate even further.[17]

---

[14] Crisis Group Africa Report N°250. (2017).

[15] Ibid.

[16] Yonatan Morse. (2017). Cameroon has been in crisis for six months. Here is what you need to know. The Washington Post, 2 June.

[17] Crisis Group interviews. (2017). University academics and researchers. Buea and Bamenda, March-April.

The violence in Buea on November 28 and in Bamenda on December 8 aggravated the crisis and led to extensive media coverage. Images, especially from social media, of abuses by the security forces quickly spread on the internet and on to international television channels. They had a decisive impact on public opinion and opened Pandora's Box for the Anglophone problem. Further incidents took place in January and February 2017 in Bamenda and other towns such as Ndop and Kumbo. They led to riots that left many dead, while government buildings and vehicles were set on fire. From October 2016 to February 2017, at least nine people were killed and more sustained gunshot wounds. There were 82 arrests, including journalists and lawyers, according to the communications minister, and about 150 according to the SDF. They appeared before a military court under the terrorism law. The security forces also arrested and intimidated prominent Anglophones, with Paul Abine Ayah as a case study.[18]

Since the new phase of the conflict began in 2017, rebels in English-speaking regions have continued to engage military forces in Cameroon and the Anglophone Crisis, and both sides have been accused of committing serious crimes against civilians. These include the closure of schools in these regions, the burning down of villages, and the killing of both civilians and military forces. The next section will thus discuss armed separatist activities in these crisis regions.

The Ambazonia Movement and Armed Separatist

This entry of armed separatists commonly referred to as "Amba Boys" argues that it is these violations of universal human rights and freedoms by the government that prompted the call to arms since 2017 of the English-speaking regions as a means of self-defence against the indiscriminate torture, murder, arson of villages, and rape of women and young girls. While these "Ambazonian" militias also attacked and killed 22 government forces in 2018, the conflict was declared a formal confrontation on November 30, 2017.[19]

The unilateral declaration of independence for Ambazonia on October 1, 2017 ushered in a new era of "Anglophone Politics", with fragmented and conflicting political authorities, mainly based in the diaspora, as well as about 30 armed groups with stronger or looser ties to the political groupings. An additional relevant actor in the conflict is the diaspora Cameroonians, who provide ideological, organisational, and financial support for the Anglophone cause and who connect with the separatist forces via social media. The main political split initially was between Ayuk Tabe's IG and Cho Lucas's AGC. However, in January 2018, Ayuk Tabe and nine other IG leaders were arrested in Nigeria and extradited to Cameroon. They were detained without trial and later sentenced to life imprisonment by a military tribunal in August 2019.[20] With Ayuk Tabe detained, US-based Samuel Ikome Sako was elected as interim IG president. However, infighting ensued with a split in early 2019 between IG Sisiku and IG Sako. Despite its initial rivalry with the Interim Government, the AGC supported the IG Sisiku faction, and formalised cooperation ties in August 2019.[21]

On August 20, 2019, the government sentenced ten leading leaders of the separatist Anglophone movements to life in prison and imposed a lockdown for any strike, forcing the indefinite closure of schools in the region. Several new armed groups, such as the Ambaland Forces, the Vipers, the Tigers, the Ambazonia Defence Forces, and the Southern Cameroonian Defence Forces, have emerged to counter government military forces. Increasingly, these groups have become more organised and have started acquiring advanced weapons. Moreover, they have adopted new warfare tactics such as kidnapping for ransom and targeting civilians that are suspected of supporting the government.[22]

In 2021, the AGC also formed an alliance with Biafran separatists in Nigeria, the Indigenous People of Biafra.
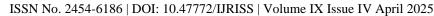
[18] Ibid.

[19] International Crisis Group. (2023). Cameroon: The proposed Anglophone general conference deserves national and international support", 2018. Accessed from https://www. crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/camerounla-conference-generale-anglophone-merite-un-soutiennational-et-international, retrieved June 2023.

[20] Maurice Beseng et al. (2023). From "Anglophone Problem" to "Anglophone Conflict. in Cameroon: Assessing Prospects for Peace. in Africa Spectrum, Volume 58, Issue 1.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Billy Agwanda et al. (2021). Cameroon and the Anglophone Crisis. in African Journal on Conflict Resolution. 21(1): 9-34.

Cho Lucas has also encouraged French-speaking Cameroonian groups to take up arms against Biya's regime.[23] Militarily, while the ADF remains the largest group, there is a proliferation of smaller armed groups, for instance the Southern Cameroons Defence Forces (SOCADEF), Ambazonia Restoration Forces, Red Dragons, Tigers of Ambazonia, and Vipers (Bone, 2020), comprising around 4000 fighters. Allegiance to the political factions varies, with Red Dragons and SOCADEF believed to be aligned with IG Sako, while others have no clear affiliation. Initially, fighting equipment was rudimentary, including hunting rifles and machetes. But the armed groups' combat strength has increased through the acquisition of more sophisticated weaponry, including improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and rocket launchers, with a greater intensity of operations.[24] Precise casualty figures are unknown, but both sides have lost considerable numbers of combatants.

While this war is unremitting, one characteristic is that the rival "Interim Governments" have "limited influence on the ground", perhaps unsurprising given that the political leadership is either in the diaspora or imprisoned, while the plethora of armed groups operate relatively independently. The picture is complicated further by the phenomenon of "Fake Ambas", armed criminals who carry out abductions and extort money from civilians in the name of "supporting the struggle", making it difficult at times for local people to distinguish between those genuinely fighting for independence and those not.[25] These armed separatist "Amba Boys" see themselves as freedom fighters who defend independent Ambazonia, its territory, and its population against the intrusion of the French-speaking aggressor, whom they call *la République*. They largely draw their members from the large segment of disgruntled English-speaking youths in these regions who have lost family to violent military interventions, many of whom feel abject by the regime in place and without a future in the French-dominated formal labour market. Relatively little is known about the organisational structures of the separatist forces.[26]

These armed militias in early 2022 have an estimated membership of 2,000 to 4,000 combatants, and there are another 20 smaller groups with localised purviews. Their strategies include closing government schools, which they see as symbols of the Francophone state; imposing lockdowns to disrupt public life; targeting state agents and combating security forces; and punishing individuals suspected of collaboration with the government (so-called blacklegs). Furthermore, they have engaged in acts of kidnapping for ransom, for which they have targeted traditional rulers and middle-class English-speaking people, just to name but these.[27] Table1 below presents the configuration of the armed separatist presence in the area under study in 2019.

Table 1: Armed Separatists Presence in the NoSo Regions

Group	Leader	Stronghold	Numbers (estimate)
Manyu Tigers	Martin Ashu	Manyu Division (SWR)	500
Southern Cameroons Defence Forces (SOCADEF)	Ebenezer Akwanga	Meme Division (SWR)	400
Ambazonia Defense Forces	Benedict Kuah	Both regions	200-500
Red Dragons	Olivier Lekene Fongunueh (Field Marshall)	Lebialem Division (SWR)	200
Seven Kata		Batibo town and Momo Division (NWR)	200

[23] Cameroon News Agency. (2021). Ayaba Calls on Cameroonians to Overthrow Paul Biya. Accessed from: https://cameroonnewsagency.com/ayaba-calls-on-cameroonians-to-overthrow-paul-biya/, retrieved June 2023.

[24] M. Bone. (2020). Ahead of Peace Talks, a Who's Who of Cameroon's Separatist Movements. Accessed from: https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2020/07/08/Cameroon-Ambazonia-conflict-peace-whos-who, retrieved June 2023.

[25] J. Craig. (2021). Violence in Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis Takes High Civilian Toll. Cited by, Billy Agwanda et al. Cameroon and the Anglophone Crisis. Accessed from: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/1/violence-in-cameroon-anglophone-crisis-takes-high-civilian-toll (retrieved 1 October 2021).

[26] Michaela Pelican. (2022). The Anglophone conflict in Cameroon: historical and political background. Arnold Bergstraesser Institute, Working Paper No.20, Freiburg, Germany September: 16-17.

[27] Ibid., p.17.

The Sword of Ambazonia (TSOA)		Meme Division	200
Ambaland Quifor	Silas Zama	Mezam Division (NWR)	200
Southern Cameroons Restoration Forces	"Général" RK	Boyo Division (NWR)	100
Warriors of Nso	Warriors of Nso	Bui Division (NWR)	100

Source: R. Ngek Monteh. (2021). Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) a new Paradigm in the Resolution of the ongoing Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon: Myth or Reality. in *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science* (IJRISS), Volume V, Issue I, (ISSN: 2454-6186), January, 390-400.

From this perspective, the Anglophone conflict has increasingly taken on the character of a market of violence in which separatist leaders act as warlords and use violence to create an economic basis for survival.[28] Among the major atrocities attributed to separatist militias are several attacks on public buildings, especially council premises, business centres, hospitals, and schools. In this regard, the next turn handles the social and economic setbacks occasioned by these separatist groups in the various council areas of the Northwest and Southwest regions.

The Socio-economic Impact of the Crisis in the Council Areas

The English-speaking parts of Cameroon have witnessed devastating consequences because of the rise of arms trafficking in these regions. Due to the poor handling of the crisis by the military, the "Amba Boys", armed separatists, sprung up. With the rise of armed separatist activities, many individuals, organisations, and state businesses operating in these council areas gradually suffered setbacks, while others died down. It is on the basis of this that we shall then examine the impact of the separatist activities in the socio-economic sphere within the various municipalities in the English-speaking regions of the country.

Social Impact

In the case of Cameroon, it has been more than 60 years of the Anglophones living on a day-to-day basis complaining about the situation of bad governance, "Deaf Ears" are all that most leaders have in many countries, especially in developing countries like Cameroon. In Africa and Cameroon in particular, the forces of repression have aggravated social conflicts into acute political conflicts, just like in the case of Sudan and now the two English-speaking regions of Cameroon.

Cameroon had only one serious political instability, which was widely faced in 1990. Which was widely called the Ghost Town, with the Social Democratic Front (S.D.F), seeking political reforms, and in some cases, there were clashes with the central government. Most of these conflicts are characterised by the forceful displacement of thousands, loss of property, sexual abuse, and economic stagnation. Most countries that have had conflicts confirm that the best way to solve a political conflict is not through war. Unfortunately for Cameroon, a crisis that started with a peaceful protest by the lawyers and teachers trade unions ended in a mature arms conflict. The conflict in Cameroon has broken down the Social Structure and unity that had existed for more than 60 years. Both the English and French-speaking people have been coexisting even in a tough climate, but in one void from violence.[29]

Socially, there has been massive population displacement in these two regions. The Anglophone crisis has caused over 900,000 internally displaced persons and 60,000 refugees. Thousands of people have fled to the

---

[28] M. T. Nwati. (2020). The Anglophone Crisis: The Birth of Warlords, the Impact of Warlords Activity on the People of North West and South West Region of Cameroon. Advances in Applied Sociology 10: 157-185.

[29] Morgan Tebei Nwati. (2021). The Anglophone Crisis: The Rise of Arms Trafficking and Smuggling, its Effects on the Two English Regions of Cameroon. Advances in Applied Sociology: 1-13.

predominantly French-speaking region and across the border into Nigeria. In villages that are conflict hotspots, around 80% of the inhabitants have escaped and sought refuge in the bushes or forest. The most hit areas are the Boyo and Meme Divisions of the Northwest Region and the Southwest Region, respectively, where dozens of villages have almost been emptied of their population.[30]

In the health sector, the conflict is taking a serious toll on the health of the population. Internally displaced persons and the populace that fled to the bushes are living in unsanitary and unhygienic conditions. There is rampant open-air defecation, enabling the possible spread of diseases in the crowded living conditions in the bushes. The most vulnerable are the elderly, pregnant or lactating women, young girls out of school, and children under the age of 5. The insecurity has caused the closure of many health facilities. Many hospitals and health centres, especially in rural areas, have been attacked and torched. Others have been abandoned because their staff is afraid of being kidnapped or caught in the crossfire. As of December 2018, an estimated 34% of health facilities in both regions were not functioning. Those left are often poorly equipped and under pressure to treat the influx of the sick. Limited access to adequate health care exacerbates the suffering of the Anglophone population.[31]

Furthermore, the social system in the two English-speaking regions is broken. Water and electricity are constantly in short supply. It is common for people in the two English speaking regions not to have electricity for more than a month. The local government has weaponized electricity. According to the locals, the government is using electricity as a means to control the crisis. In longer periods of no electricity, this means the conflict in that area is so serious that it is rationing the supply of electricity in areas of peace and stability. The condition of Health centres is deteriorating. Most Rural areas have not been able to have health personnel since 2016. Due to the constant ghost town roadblocks and travel restrictions, it has become impossible for the sick and needy to have health care.[32]

Besides that, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the fragile state of Cameroon's health system (Bang et al. 2020) and further compounded the health problems of the population in the English-speaking regions. The website of Cameroon's Ministry of Public Health reported 21,430 cases of coronavirus on October 22, 2020, with just 424 deaths. This figure is probably underreported since COVID-19 testing and data collation have not fully included insecure areas due to the Anglophone crisis and the Boko Haram insurgency.[33] We contend that while the pandemic can exacerbate the Anglophone crisis, the crisis can also affect the virus's spread. The conflict restricted movement in the English-speaking regions. This did not change much with COVID-19. The limitations on movement and lockdowns can prevent the transmission of the virus. On the other hand, the restrictive measures imposed by the government to control the virus increased the suffering of the populace. A report about COVID-19 quotes a man in the Northwest Region who described both the Anglophone crisis and COVID-19 as "monsters" that have seriously affected his ability to feed his family despite being jobless. In 2020, the OCHA estimated that only 46% of the population in the conflict-ridden Anglophone regions had access to the information required for the prevention of COVID-19. This has implications for implementing infection prevention and control measures disseminated to the public. With 34% of the health facilities in the conflict-ridden region not functioning, access to medical care for COVID-19 is limited.[34]

Culturally, the rich English-speaking culture has not been left unaffected. Traditional rulers and custodians of the cultures and traditions of these regions, particularly those perceived to be collaborating with the government, have been publicly attacked, beaten, kidnapped, or killed. In February 2018, armed men killed the supreme chief of the Balondo people in Ekondo Titi, Southwest Region. A few months later, eight chiefs in Fako Division were
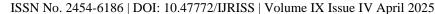
[30] Henry Ngenyam Bang & Roland Azibo Balgah. (2022). The ramification of Cameroon's Anglophone crisis: conceptual analysis of a looming Complex Disaster Emergency. Journal of International Humanitarian Action, volume 7, January.

[31] UNOCHA. (2018). Emergency response Plan-Cameroon North-West and South-West-Summary. Accessed from https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/emergency-response-plan-cameroon-north-west-and-south-west-summary-may-2018.

[32] J. Craig. (2020). Violence and obstruction: Cameroon's deepening aid crisis. https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2020/03/18/cameroon-conflict-aid-crisis.

[33] M. T. Nwati. (2021). The Anglophone Crisis.

[34] OCHA. (2023). CAMEROON: COVID 19 emergency situation report No. 03. 2020. Accessed from https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/cameroon_covid19_emergency_situation_report_no._03.pdf, retrieved June 2023.

kidnapped. Inevitably, dozens of tribal chiefs went into hiding and currently live out of their palaces.[35] In the Northwest Region, women have carried out burial rites in some of the crisis hotspots, a role traditionally reserved for men. Women were forced to bury corpses in Belo village, Boyo Division, in July 2018, when all the boys and men had fled from the security forces. Furthermore, dramatic footage emerged from the press and social media in January and February 2019 showing women carrying out burial rights in Bafut village, Mezam Division, after a military raid on armed separatist groups caused all the men to flee from the village.[36] Prior to the crisis, it was taboo in the cultures and traditions of the Anglophone region for women to perform burial and funeral duties.

Furthermore, palaces have been attacked and looted. For instance, in September 2018, Cameroon's Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR) soldiers damaged parts of the roof of the Royal Palace in Bafut, Northwest Region, with the pretext of searching for separatist fighters. Under the same guise, soldiers raided the same place on September 24 and almost killed the brother of the paramount *Fon* of Bafut, Abumbi II, when he was shot and wounded. They then allegedly looted the museum in the palace and took several rare, centuries-old artefacts. In both instances, no separatist fighters were found. Ironically, under the recommendation of Cameroon's Ministry of Arts and Culture, UNESCO placed the Royal Bafut Place on its tentative List of World Heritage Sites. The government, therefore, has the obligation to protect the Bafut Royal Palace and preserve its artefacts since the palace is one of the most significant historical and cultural heritage sites in the country.[37]

In the educational sector, this demon has been at the core of the dissenting voices of the Anglophone minority. All seven legalised Anglophone teachers' trade unions launched a campaign to abolish the unfair treatment of the English/Anglo-Saxon education sub-system in Cameroon. The conflict has repercussions for education due to separatist demands for educational establishments in the region to shut down until all education grievances that led to the crisis have been resolved. Educational facilities that defy the orders have been subjected to violence. Schools have been destroyed, and their teachers and students have been threatened, abducted, and/or killed. In response, most educational institutions have been abandoned, keeping over 780,000 children out of school. Indeed, over 80% of schools have been closed in the restive region.[38] Consequently, primary school to university attendance dropped drastically, with implications for enrolment in the General Certificate of Education Ordinary and Advanced Levels. In 2017, enrolment for the General Certificate of Education Ordinary and Advanced Levels dropped by 28%, increasing to 75% in 2019. Some students have relocated to study in the crisis-free regions, say in the West, Littoral, and Centre regions. The domino effect of non-school attendance is social ills like child exploitation and child labour, early marriages, teenage pregnancies, juvenile delinquencies, increased teenage alcohol consumption and drug use, and more stealing/robbery.[39] These issues have long-term implications for increased illiteracy and poverty.

At the University level, the two Anglo-Saxon universities (Buea and Bamenda) have also been adversely affected. Insecurity has kept some students and lecturers away from the campuses and constantly disrupts academic activities. University lecturers are vulnerable to attacks and kidnapping. Many are frightened to continue working normally and have been seeking to leave the country. In 2019, the Institute for International Education Scholar Rescue Fund in the USA received an unusually high number of applications from Anglophone Cameroon scholars citing threats to their lives and academic careers amidst the ongoing Anglophone crisis.[40]

Economic Impact

Economically, the crisis in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon has huge economic and financial

[35] Journal du Cameroun. (2018). Gunmen kidnap eight Fako chiefs. https://www.journalducameroun.com/en/gunmen-kidnap-eight-fako-chiefs/, retrieved June 2023.

[36] Ibid.

[37] M. T. Nwati. (2021). The Anglophone Crisis.

[38] UNICEF. (2019). Geneva Palais briefing note on the situation for children in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon. Accessed in https://www.unicef.org.uk/press-releases/anglophone-crisis-in-cameroon-causes-closure-of-80-per-cent-of-schools-in-the-region-denying-more-than-600000-children-access-to-education, retrieved June 2023.

[39] D. Ludovica. (2016). Tensions rise in Cameroon as teachers' demand 'respect for Anglo-Saxon heritage. Accessed in https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/tensions-rise-cameroon-teachers-demand-respect-anglo-saxon-heritage-1593018, retrieved June 2023.

[40] M. T. Nwati. (2021). The Anglophone Crisis.

repercussions. Cameroon's Gross Domestic Product growth rate, which was 5.8 in 2015 prior to the crisis, was downgraded to 3.9 in 2019.[41] The Internet shutdown seriously affected Cameroon's economic growth, with an estimated loss of 499 billion francs. Weekly "ghost towns", restrictions on movement, and insecurity are affecting business transactions through a slowed flow of goods, people, and services. Businesses and transport vehicles that refuse to respect "ghost town" days have been threatened and targeted.[42] The security forces have also been accused of vandalising and burning business premises and markets. Consequently, hundreds of businesses have been paralysed in the region. The conflict has also devastated the local economy, which accounts for about one-fifth of the country's GDP. Major state-owned companies, such as the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) and PAMOL, which employ tens of thousands of people in the Anglophone regions, are experiencing serious problems. There is no thorough assessment of the conflict's economic impact, but in July 2018, the Cameroon Employers' Association (GICAM) estimated the value of losses at FCFA 269 billion. It also calculated that 6,434 jobs had been lost in the formal economy, and a further 8,000 jobs were under threat, as subsequently discussed.[43]

Economic activity has been heavily impacted by the crisis in the Northwest and Southwest. Displacement has meant a loss of resources for food self-reliance. It primarily affects access to land to cultivate, the loss of livestock, and the families' productive assets. Men, who are overwhelmingly titled landowners, are affected by the spoliation of their property or by the fact that it has become inaccessible. Women are also heavily affected. The rural sector is mainly driven by women, who represent 71.6% of the informal agricultural sector. The men, who were wage earners, gave up their jobs or left the villages because they could not continue their work due to the prevailing insecurity. Low living standards and a lack of access to essential services, particularly for those displaced, have significantly increased women's workload due to a rise in morbidity and the fact that children are out of school, resulting in increased care. Also, collecting water or firewood is time-consuming and exposes women to danger. As a result, and because these tasks require significant daily investment, women are particularly affected by a lack of access to income-generating activities, with less resting time and lower access to decision-making forums.[44]

In the agricultural and commercial sectors, the two English-speaking regions of Cameroon had a dynamic agricultural and commercial sector before the outbreak of the crisis. Over 75% of the population engages in agricultural and farming activities. The economies of the two regions were significantly driven by agricultural activities.[45] Indigenes of rural communities in both the Southwest and the Northwest regions invested much in the production of corn, beans, cocoyams, potatoes, and all sorts of vegetables, which they supplied to other parts of the country. Also, the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) had estates in four out of the six divisions of the Southwest region. The CDC, an agricultural parasternal, was the second-highest employer in Cameroon after the public sector. It had people employed in the different estates, which had palm plantations, rubber plantations, and banana plantations. The General Manager of the CDC pointed out in December 2018 that the corporation is almost closing down as most of the estates have stopped production and some of the estates cannot pay their workers. The CDC has lost some 42,000 hectares of rubber, palm, and banana plantations, and about 22,000 workers are affected as a result of the crisis. Other agricultural companies within the affected regions have stopped production, even those owned by private individuals (The Guardian Post Newspaper, 2018).[46] Cocoa and coffee farms have been abandoned by most owners, who have been internally displaced, and some have been killed, leaving the farms unattended.

[41] IMF. (2019). IMF staff completes review mission to Cameroon. https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2019/11/08/pr19406-cameroon-imf-staff-completes-review-mission, cited by, M. T. Nwati. (2021). The Anglophone Crisis.

[42] E. Mboumien. (2018). Assessing the socio-economic internet shut down in the English speaking regions of Cameroon from a multi stakeholder and multi sector perspective. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a9efdd2f2e6b149480187ea/t/5ad4f4fb88251b5c5ddebd93/1523905789279/Final+Report+Research+Study+Internet+Shutdown+in+Cameroon.pdf.

[43] Ibid.

[44] UNOCHA. (2020). Cameroon Humanitarian Needs Overview. revised June 2020.

[45] P. M. Monju, & J. C. Fomunjong. (2020). The Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon: Exploring Development Gaps during the Crisis. WACSI, Accra Ghana: 10-12.

[46] E, N. Ngalame. (2019). FEATURE-Cameroon conflict turns climate stressed farmers into 'food beggars. Accessed in https://af.reuters.com/article/cameroonNews, retrieved June 2023.

This is supported by respondents in this study. 45 percent of respondents noted that the agriculture and commercial sectors had been 'extremely badly' affected by the crisis. While 45 percent noted that the crisis had 'to a great extent', affected the agriculture and commercial sectors, 10 percent indicated that the crisis had 'to some extent', affected these sectors. With the crisis taking a toll on human capital and inhibiting the possibility of exploring the full potential of its natural resources, the Southwest region has lost its top spot as the major cocoa-producing region in the country. According to the Cameroon Employers' Association, the region's capacity stood at 35% in the 2017/2018 year, down from 45%.[47] This resulted in a loss of 3 billion FCFA by cocoa farmers and a 56 billion FCFA revenue loss in export, which can scale up to between 78 and 130 billion FCFA in revenue loss in export and between 49 and 81 billion FCFA losses for Southwest cocoa producers in 2019 if the crisis persists. This has direct effects on households and communities that predominantly depend on farming, especially cocoa farming, for their livelihoods.[48]

The rampant and consistent calls for ghost towns by separatists have equally affected businesses. Many businesses are bound to close their doors when the ghost towns are announced. Failure to do so could lead to the business being burned down or its proprietors being attacked. Also, the government delegate of Bamenda city council and the mayor of Buea have been noted for undertaking such measures as sealing shops in respect of ghost towns. These measures have had a negative effect on businesses in these major towns in the region. As the crisis persists, about 60 percent of businesses have completely shut down in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon, and the proprietors have relocated to the French-speaking regions. Over 6,434 jobs have been lost, and approximately 8,000 more in the formal sector are being threatened.[49] The few surviving businesses in the crisis affected regions are witnessing slow growth due to the fact that people have been displaced and there is little or no money in circulation, as well as the continuous calls for ghost towns, which ground businesses for as long as 10 days during certain periods. Findings from this study justify the conclusion that the crisis has had significant negative impacts on businesses and the agriculture sector.[50]

On the other hand, the crisis has resulted in a significant contraction of the economies of the Northwest and Southwest regions. Given the extent of the destruction of productive assets as well as the adverse effects of the crisis on the local credit market, the impacts may be lasting. The consequences are starting to be felt at the national level since the Northwest and Southwest regions' diminished productive capacity impedes Cameroon's productive potential. Yet the economic impact to date has been more mixed beyond the Northwest and Southwest due to several mitigating factors. For example, some production facilities have been moved from conflict-affected areas into neighbouring regions; most companies located in the Northwest and Southwest have partially or totally redeployed their staff to more secure regions; households have moved their savings away from the affected areas to safer large agglomerations; improved tax administration has helped mitigate the drop in revenue collected in the two affected regions; and access to education has been increased elsewhere in response to displacement.[51]

Economic activity in the Northwest and Southwest regions has contracted substantially as a result of the crisis. A government assessment of the economic impact estimated a drop of more than 30 percent in the performance of industrial units and services installed in these regions in 2017 (Ministry of Economy, Planning, and Regional Development 2018). The largest national private sector union (GICAM) surveyed formal enterprises in nine sectors and estimated that the loss in turnover from 2016 to June 2019 had reached almost 800 billion CFAF (GICAM 2018). The same survey suggests that many large businesses closed their local production units and suspended their investments. For units that are still active, the measures necessary to mitigate security risks have increased operating costs. Furthermore, the oil sector, the primary economic activity in SW, was guarded by the authorities and was not affected by the crisis. The proximity of SW to big urban centres like Douala (just a 30-

---

[47] Ibid.

[48] S. Andzongo. (2018). Cameroon could lose 60,000 to 100,000 tons of cocoa in 2018-19, due to Anglophone crisis (GICAM). Business in Cameroon. Accessed in https://www.businessincameroon.com/agriculture/ 1709-8357-cameroon-couldlose-60-000-to-100-000-tons-of-cocoain-2018-19-due-to-anglophone-crisisgicam.

[49] B. Mbodiam. (2020). CDC expected to partially resume activities in Q3, 2019. cited by Henry Ngenyam Bang & Roland Azibo Balgah, 2022.

[50] Ibid.

[51] World Bank Group. (2021). The Socio-Political Crisis in the Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon: Assessing the Economic and Social Impacts. The World Bank Group. Washington DC 20433: 45-48.

minute drive from Buea, the region's capital) provided additional resilience compared to the more isolated and mostly rural Northwest region.[52]

Tax revenue trends confirm the Northwest and Southwest declines in economic activity. Fiscal revenues had increased between 2014 and 2016 by about 15 percent in the Northwest and by almost 40 percent in the Southwest. Estimates based on reports from the tax administration for 2014, 2016, and 2018 suggest that the gap in fiscal revenues associated with the crisis reached 10 percent in the Northwest and 21 percent in the Southwest. These regional dips have not led to a decline in fiscal revenues at the national level, which have continued to grow since 2016. Government measures to improve tax administration, including further joint tax and customs controls, cross-checking of customs and tax data, and the rationalisation of value-added tax exemptions, have largely compensated for the fall in revenue collected in the two regions.[53]

The crisis has affected the implementation of public investments. In 2018, the rate of execution of the domestically financed public investment budget was 54 percent in these regions, compared to 93 percent in the Northwest and 82 percent in the Southwest in 2016. This low execution rate is primarily due to security issues and the displacement of civil servants. Neighbouring regions, such as the West, also have low rates. In 2018, the rate was 75 percent in the west and 77 percent in the littoral. This decline in the implementation of public investments has both short-term effects by limiting the activities of the businesses carrying out these projects and long-term adverse effects on economic productivity.[54]

Employment levels were seriously affected by the violence and collapse of economic activity. Forced lockdowns and internal displacements severely reduced employment. A CGE counterfactual analysis estimates that close to 2 million workers in the Southwest and 1.2 million workers in the Northwest were likely affected by the crisis. The bulk of the employment gap represented individuals remaining in the region who were incapable of working due to forced lockdowns (ghost towns), security concerns, and the collapse of economic activities. The employment effect seems to have been more pronounced in the Northwest, as its economy was hit harder. In both regions, unskilled workers seem more affected than skilled workers, reflecting the devastation in agricultural sectors where most unskilled labourers are employed. Skilled workers are more intensively employed in services and manufacturing in urban areas, where the security situation is far better.[55]

According to the CGE model, revenue collected by the government in 2019 was 4.8 percent lower than it would have been without the crisis. Revenue from direct and indirect taxes in the two regions was significantly reduced, not only by the decline in economic activities but also by the near incapacity of government institutions to operate in most parts of the affected regions. In 2019, revenue was also affected by the officially declared tax armistice for enterprises operating in affected regions. The level of spending remained high by necessity, so the fall in revenues led to a substantial deterioration of the overall fiscal balance. The overall deficit was 5.5 percent larger than in the reference scenario in 2019. The combined effects of lower income due to reduced employment and increases in consumption prices due to supply chain disruptions took a heavy toll on household welfare. Household welfare at the national level, measured by real consumption, was 3.4 percent lower in 2019 than in the reference scenario. The impact on the two most affected regions was catastrophic. Welfare in 2019 was lower than in the reference scenario by 13.2 percent and 21.2 percent in the Southwest and Northwest, respectively. The Northwest was the most affected region due to its weaker employment situation.[56]

On the other hand, the separatists believed that cutting off the circulation of brasserie products and preventing CDC workers from going to work would tremendously affect government revenue, and the government would find it difficult to prolong the war and thus call for a peace talk. These brewery industries, which operated in the Northwest and Southwest regions, lost about 40 million francs CFA, while theft and vandalism cost the brewery

---

[52] GICAM, (Groupement Inter-Patronal du Cameroun). (2018). Insécurité dans les régions du Sud-Ouest et du Nord-Ouest: Conséquences économiques et impacts sur l'activité des entreprises. Douala, Cameroun : GICAM, Accessed in https://reliefweb .int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/rapport-impacts-de-la-crise nord%20ouest% 20et%20sud%20ouest%20du%20Cameroun.pdf.
[53] P. Ningaye et al. (2020). Analyse socio-économique de la crise du NOSO: Les approches exploratoires. Unpublished background paper, cited by World Bank Group 2021.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid., p.48.
[56] GICAM. (2021).

companies an estimated 500 million francs CFA in material losses. In the telecommunications sector, about 300 million francs CFA worth of equipment were destroyed and more than one billion francs CFA was lost monthly. As of July 31, 2018, there were a total of 114 installed telecommunications sites. 20% of the 618 sites in both regions were either partially or completely destroyed.[57]

However, while the economic effects are gloomy for Cameroon, some individuals, interest groups, and a few institutions have benefited. Business is probably booming for contractors supplying arms to the security forces and separatist fighters. Some political jobs were created and filled by Anglophones for the first time in Cameroon's history. Anglophones were appointed as Ministers of Territorial Administration and Secondary Education. The government created a commission for the promotion of bilingualism and multiculturalism and a national disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration committee with Anglophones at its helm. Furthermore, common law divisions were created at Cameroon's Supreme Court and the National School of Administration and Magistracy. These appointments and new institutions helped a bit to diffuse the crisis hijacked by the armed separatists in these regions. The next section discusses government efforts to solve the crisis.

Government Efforts to Solve the Crisis

The Cameroon government did not remain silent when the crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions reached its climax in 2016 with a series of protests by lawyers and teachers of the English-speaking part of the country, which were later hijacked by armed separatist activities. A number of decisions and concrete actions were put in place by the government in an attempt to redress the ongoing Anglophone crisis. In this regard, some of these agreements and measures were put in place on the eve and after the national dialogue held in 2018. Some of these reactions by the state and the parties concerned are thus discussed in this section.

In this regard, the Lawyers and Teachers Trade Unions agreed on a set of recommendations that were accepted by the government as a third party. First of all, the government agreed to implement the redeployment of Francophone teachers without a qualified mastery of English to schools in the Francophone areas. Furthermore, the government agreed on the creation of a department of French in the Higher Teachers Training College (ENS) Bambili and another Higher Technical Teachers Training College (ENSET) for the French-speaking people. The parties also agreed on the creation of a poly-technique for the English sub-system of education and the special recruitment of 500 Anglophone lecturers for the Universities of Buea and Bamenda.[58] The number of specialties in English-speaking technical schools was increased, and a subvention of two billion France CFA was provided to assist lay private schools and mission schools in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon. Some Anglophone leaders were released in connection with the peaceful protests in 2016 and 2017, respectively. Internet services were restored in the Northwest and Southwest regions. Also, the cases against some churches and their leaders were discontinued, such as those against the moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) and the Executive Secretary of the Cameroon Baptist Convection (CBC).[59]

The Lawyers and Teachers Unions agreed with the President that admissions into Anglo-Saxon medical schools should respect the Anglo-Saxon traditions under the supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education and the respective medical counts. The dialogue also resulted in an agreement on the abolition of the penalty of 10.000 francs CFA for late payment of registration fees at the University of Buea and the payment of the Presidential Excellence Award Grants of 50.000 francs CFA. The parties also agreed on the provision of the official English version of the Uniform Acts and the Cameroon Penal Code (OHADA) and the creation of the English-speaking section at the National School of Administration and Magistracy (ENAM). An agreement for the establishment of a common Law Bench at the Supreme Court of Cameroon and the creation of a Faculty of Law and political Science at the University of Buea were also set. Creation of a department of English Law at the Universities of Dschang, Maroua, and Ngaoundere and also the establishment of public Law at the universities of Buea and Bamenda.[60] Integration, promotion, and re-deployment of magistrates throughout the national territory were agreed upon, which took into account their mastery of the official languages. Lastly, the parties agreed on
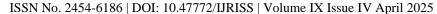
---

[57] G. I. Menyoli. (2021). The Anglophone crisis in Cameroon: 52-53.

[58] George Ikome Menyoli. (2021). The Anglophone crisis in Cameroon Historical and contemporary perspectives. Master's thesis in Peace and Conflict Transformation, SVF-3901, the Artic University of Tromsø - Norway, October: 61-62.

[59] Ibid., p.62.

[60] Victor Julius Ngoh. (2019). Cameroon 1884 - Present (2019) The History of a People. Design House, Limbe, Cameroon.

establishing appointments of English-speaking magistrates to the post of President of the Judicial Bench at the Supreme Court and the recruitment and placement of appropriate judicial personnel in the Northwest and Southwest Courts of Appeal.[61]

In December 2018, the Government of the Republic of Cameroon, in order to resolve the crisis in the Northwest and Southwest Regions, continued to carry out initiatives aimed at stabilising the situation and ensuring a gradual return to normal life. These initiatives include the establishment by presidential decree of the National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism on January 23, 2017, and the implementation of the emergency humanitarian assistance plan for the Northwest and Southwest Regions, developed in June 2018, in conjunction with an emergency humanitarian assistance coordination centre.[62] The target of the Presidential Plan for the reconstruction of the Northwest and Southwest regions is to build and rehabilitate: 350 schools, 115 health centres, 40 bridges, 400 water points, 600 km of rural roads, 45 markets, 17000 private homes, 25000 hectares of farmland and grazing land, and 300,000 personal documents. The plan, which will cost some 89 billion CFA francs, will be funded by the government of Cameroon and development partners.[63]

In this light, President Paul Biya, in addressing bilingualism, bi-culturalism, and multiculturalism, created a national commission on the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism by decree No. 2017/013 of January 23, 2017. The aim of this commission was to have an organ that was responsible, notably, for submitting reports and recommendations on issues relating to the protection and promotion of bilingualism and multiculturalism to the President of the Republic and the government.[64] The creation of this commission, on the other hand, drew mixed feelings amongst the Anglophones. Some welcomed the idea, whereas others felt it did not address the issue raised by the Lawyers and Teachers Trade Unions.

In 2018, the Prime Minister announced a humanitarian assistance plan in both Anglophone regions worth 12.719.500.000 billion Franc CFA to support internally displaced persons, victims of abuse in the host localities, and compensations to the affected families in the Northwest and Southwest regions.[65] Although most of the socio-professional grievances were addressed by the government, some secessionists, which included some of the lawyers and teachers who dialogued with the government during the National Dialogue, are still fighting for independence in the two Anglophone regions in 2021. The government, the churches, and some well-intentioned Cameroonians are still searching for solutions that will bring peace and preserve the unity and territorial integrity of the country.

Six months after its establishment on November 30, 2018, under the coordination of Fai Yengo Francis, the National Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration Committee (NDDRC), which concerns former Boko Haram fighters and former members of armed rebel groups in the Northwest and Southwest Regions, has centres in Bamenda, Buea, and Mora, welcoming many former secessionist and jihadist fighters.[66] The NDDR has been playing a significant role by bringing the armed separatists out of the bush.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we discussed the historical and political background of the conflict in Cameroon's English-speaking regions (Northwest and Southwest), which threatens to destabilize the Cameroon and the Central African region. The conflict has caused significant socio-economic and physical damage to grassroots people since 2017. In this arena, the crisis has increased poverty levels and damaged livelihoods and human capital conditions, besides causing permanent damage in these council areas. Some economic operators within these

[61] Ibid.

[62] IAGCI Home Office. (2020). Country Policy and Information Note Cameroon: North-West/South-West crisis", Version 2.0, December: 29-33.

[63] Ibid., p.32.

[64] V.G. Fanso. (2019). Cameroon history for secondary schools and colleges. Macmillan, first published 1989, 2nd edition 2008 & 3rd edition.

[65] Victor Julius Ngoh. (2018). Cameroon 1884 - Present (2019) The History of the People. Cited by George Ikome Menyoli. (2021). The Anglophone crisis in Cameroon Historical and contemporary perspectives: 62.

[66] UN Security Council. (2019). Letter dated 19 July 2019 from the Permanent (…). 5 August.

council areas were forced to make difficult adjustments to survive, whereas others left the conflict zones for neighbouring council areas. All these, besides other manoeuvres caused by the separatist activities, drastically hijacked the various socioeconomic plans envisaged by these council areas. Stakeholders from these regions are demanding urgent measures, including genuine dialogue, justice, and reconciliation, to end the conflict and implement sustainable peace-building and reconstruction processes. The conflict has degenerated and become more violent, with sophisticated weapons used by the "Amba Boys". National, regional, and international actors must ensure an immediate ceasefire, inclusive dialogue, and address the root causes of the conflict to ensure sustainable peace, social cohesion, and development in these regions and Cameroon as a whole.

REFERENCES

1. Agwanda Billy et al. (2021). Cameroon and the Anglophone Crisis. African Journal on Conflict Resolution, 21(1): 9-34.
2. Andzongo S. (2018). Cameroon could lose 60,000 to 100,000 tons of cocoa in 2018-19, due to Anglophone crisis (GICAM). Business in Cameroon. Accessed in https://www.businessincameroon.com/agriculture/ 1709-8357-cameroon-couldlose-60-000-to-100-000-tons-of-cocoain-2018-19-due-to-anglophone-crisisgicam.
3. Anyangwe Carlson. (2009). Betrayal of Too Trusting a People. The UN, the UK and the Trust Territory of the Southern Cameroons, Buea.
4. Beseng Maurice et al. (2023). From "Anglophone Problem" to "Anglophone Conflict" in Cameroon: Assessing Prospects for Peace. Africa Spectrum. Volume 58, Issue 1.
5. Bone M. (2020). Ahead of Peace Talks, a Who's Who of Cameroon's Separatist Movements. Accessed from: https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2020/07/08/Cameroon-Ambazonia-conflict-peace-whos-who, retrieved June 2023.
6. Cameroon News Agency. (2021). Ayaba Calls on Cameroonians to Overthrow Paul Biya. Accessed from: https://cameroonnewsagency.com/ayaba-calls-on-cameroonians-to-overthrow-paul-biya/, retrieved June 2023.
7. Craig J. (2020). Violence and obstruction: Cameroon's deepening aid crisis. https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2020/03/18/cameroon-conflict-aid-crisis.
8. Crisis Group Africa Report N°250. (2017). Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis at the Crossroads. 02 August.
9. Fanso V.G. (1989). Cameroon history for secondary schools and colleges. Macmillan, first published 1989, 2nd edition 2008 & 3rd edition.
10. GICAM (Groupement Inter-Patronal du Cameroun). (2018). Insécurité dans les régions du Sud-Ouest et du Nord-Ouest: Conséquences économiques et impacts sur l'activité des entreprises. Douala, Cameroun: GICAM. Accessed in https://reliefweb .int/sites/ reliefweb.int/files/ressources/rapport-impacts-de-la-crise nord%20ouest% 20et%20sud%20ouest%20du%20Cameroun.pdf.
11. IAGCI Home Office. (2020). Country Policy and Information Note Cameroon: North-West/South-West crisis", Version 2.0, December: 29-33.
12. Ikome Menyoli George. (2021). The Anglophone crisis in Cameroon Historical and contemporary perspectives. Master's thesis in Peace and Conflict Transformation, SVF-3901, the Artic University of Tromsø - Norway, October.
13. IMF. (2019). IMF staff completes review mission to Cameroon. Accessed in https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2019/11/08/pr19406-cameroon-imf-staff-completes-review-mission, cited by, M. T. Nwati, "The Anglophone Crisis", 2021.
14. International Crisis Group. (2018). Cameroon: The proposed Anglophone general conference deserves national and international support. Accessed from https://www. crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/camerounla-conference-generale-anglophone-merite-un-soutiennational-et-international, retrieved June 2023.
15. Journal du Cameroun. (2018). Gunmen kidnap eight Fako chiefs. https://www. journalducameroun.com/en/gunmen-kidnap-eight-fako-chiefs/, retrieved June 2023.
16. Konings Piet. (2005). Anglophone university students and Anglophone nationalist struggles in Cameroon. African dynamics; Vanguard or vandals: youth, politics and conflict in Africa. J. Abbink, and W.M.J. van Kessel (eds.). Leiden: Brill: 161-188.

17. Konings, P. and Nyamnjoh F.B. Francis. (2019). Anglophone Secessionist Movements in Cameroon. Secessionism in African Politics. Palgrave Series in African Borderlands Studies, L. de Vries et al. (eds.).

18. Ludovica D. (2016). Tensions rise in Cameroon as teachers' demand 'respect for Anglo-Saxon heritage. Accessed in https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/tensions-rise-cameroon-teachers-demand-respect-anglo-saxon-heritage-1593018, retrieved June 2023.

19. Mbodiam B. (2020). CDC expected to partially resume activities in Q3, 2019. cited by Henry Ngenyam Bang & Roland Azibo Balgah, (2022).

20. Mboumien E. (2018). Assessing the socio-economic internet shut down in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon from a multi stakeholder and multi sector perspective. Accessed in https://static1.squarespace.com/static/ 5a9efdd2f2e 6b149480187 ea/t/5ad4f4fb88251b5c5ddebd93/1523905789279/Final+Report+Research+Study+Internet+Shutdown+in+Cameroon.pdf.

21. Mbu A.N.T. (1993). Civil Disobedience in Cameroon. Douala: Imprimerie Georges Freres.

22. Monju P. M., & Fomunjong J. C. (2020). The Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon: Exploring Development Gaps during the Crisis", WACSI, Accra Ghana.

23. Morse Yonatan. (2017). Cameroon has been in crisis for six months. Here is what you need to know. The Washington Post, 2 June.

24. Ngalame E, N. (2019). FEATURE-Cameroon conflict turns climate stressed farmers into 'food beggars. Accessed in https://af.reuters.com/article/cameroonNews, retrieved June 2023.

25. Ngenyam Bang Henry & Azibo Balgah Roland. (2022). The ramification of Cameroon's Anglophone crisis: conceptual analysis of a looming Complex Disaster Emergency. Journal of International Humanitarian Action. volume 7, January.

26. Ngoh Victor Julius. (2019). Cameroon 1884 - Present (2019) The History of a People. Design House. Limbe, Cameroon.

27. Ningaye P. et al. (2020). Analyse socio-économique de la crise du NOSO : Les approches exploratoires. Unpublished background paper, cited by World Bank Group. (2021).

28. Nwati M. T. (2020). The Anglophone Crisis: The Birth of Warlords, the Impact of Warlords Activity on the People of North West and South West Region of Cameroon. Advances in Applied Sociology. 10: 157-185.

29. OCHA. (2020). CAMEROON: COVID 19 emergency situation report No. 03. Accessed from https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/cameroon_covid19_emergency_situation_report_no._03.pdf, retrieved June 2023.

30. Pelican Michaela. (2022). The Anglophone conflict in Cameroon: historical and political background. Arnold Bergstraesser Institute. Working Paper No.20. Freiburg Germany, September.

31. Pommerolle Marie-Emmanuelle and Heungoup Hans de Marie. (2022). The "Anglophone crisis": A tale of the Cameroonian Post-colony. African Affairs. 116 (464): 2017, 526-538. Cited by Michaela Pelican. (2022). The Anglophone conflict in Cameroon.

32. Tebei Nwati Morgan. (2021). The Anglophone Crisis: The Rise of Arms Trafficking and Smuggling, its Effects on the Two English Regions of Cameroon. Advances in Applied Sociology. 11: 1-13.

33. UNICEF. (2019). Geneva Palais briefing note on the situation for children in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon. Accessed in https://www.unicef.org.uk/press-releases/anglophone-crisis-in-cameroon-causes-closure-of-80-per-cent-of-schools-in-the-region-denying-more-than-600000-children-access-to-education, retrieved June 2023.

34. UNOCHA. (2018). Emergency response Plan-Cameroon North-West and South-West-Summary. Accessed from https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/emergency-response-plan-cameroon-north-west-and-south-west-summary-may-2018.

35. World Bank Group. (2021). The Socio-Political Crisis in the Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon: Assessing the Economic and Social Impacts. The World Bank Group. Washington DC 20433.

36. Zachary Njeuma Martin. (1995). Reunification and Political Opportunity in the Making of Cameroon's Independence. Paideuma. No. 41: 27-37.