

External Interference and Conflict Management: The Case of the Anglophone Conflict in the North West and South West Regions.

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ABSTRACT

The Anglophone conflict in Cameroon, mainly in the North West and South West regions, has turned into a defining, long-standing political conflict that transcends social, structural-cultural, and economic dimensions. This conflict that results from the exclusion of the Anglophone population by the mostly Francophone Government has attracted external attention from international organizations, foreign governments, and NGOs, among other actors. This review article seeks to analyze different external actors in the Anglophone conflict, seeking to explore diplomatic mediation, humanitarian assistance, and diplomacy pressures on the Anglophone conflict. Assistance from international actors seemed to have focused on raising awareness and rendering humanitarian support, which also encountered major problems such as lack of endorsement of third-party intervention by the Cameroonian Government. Efforts like those of the United Nations, America, and Switzerland have proved unfruitful due to poor governmental participation and exclusion of stakeholders, especially secessionist leaders. Most humanitarian aid endeavors have been faced with challenges arising from the politics of aid and the insecurity of aid personnel. The two policies of aggression, such as economic sanctions and diplomatic pressures, have not been very effective in forcing the Cameroonian Government to enter into dialogue with separatist groups. This review article posits that a better strategy is required to address the conflict by incorporating all stakeholders in order to encourage definitive discussion of the core issues that have fueled the Anglophone's need for autonomy and independence. The article provides suggestions for future research on conflict management in the region, and the context for peacebuilding is suggested as a complex multi-actor process.

Keywords: Anglophone conflict, external interference, conflict resolution, Cameroon, humanitarian aid, diplomatic mediation, international pressure

INTRODUCTION

The North West and South West regions of Cameroon have been the theatre of a protracted political and social conflict that began in the mid-2010s (Kowner et al., 2023). From historical remembrance of discontent with regard to dominance by the Cameroon government of the French-speaking people over Anglophone groups, it has turned into a war of secession by the separatists seeking to create the new nation of Ambazonia and the Cameroon government security forces aiming at maintaining the unity of the country (Banda, 2020). The region's legal system of English-speaking and Common-Law system greatly differed from that of the overarching French-speaking Francophone, which governed the country after its independence (Manion, 2024).

When the violence was ramping up, separate international actors engaged in a conflict to have a main concern on the mediating aspect of the conflict from outside. The United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), and various international and regional organizations, together with individual foreign governments, have been actively involved in addressing the humanitarian crises and mediating diplomacy between the warring factions (Okorie, 2024).

The function of external interference with the procedure of conflict resolution in Anglophone Cameroon's attempt to both quantify and conceptualize the roles and impact of external stakeholders, especially in terms of their efficiency and effectiveness in undertaking dialogue, peacebuilding, and conflict transformation processes. These external actors, when trying to reconcile the Cameroonian authorities with separatists, have balanced between being loyal to the State's sovereignty and the desire of the oppressed populations (Mehler, A. (2014).).

Theoretical Framework on Conflict and External Interference

Conflict and the nature of external intervention calls for a robust theory. By applying these theoretical viewpoints in an understanding of the Anglophone conflict in Cameroon, it is possible to explain the dynamics by which conflict starts and grows, as well as understand the role of external and internal actors in the process of the conflict.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theory can be defined more narrowly as the general proposition that society is defined by the presence of useful conflict in the production of social life. According to Nwati (2020) the North West and South West regions of Cameroon, the cause of conflict is, in general, political and social exclusion of the Anglophone people who have always considered themselves as an unwanted part of Cameroon. According to Galtung et al. (2013) one of the conflict structural violence are inevitable since violence in carrying out changes becomes legitimate. This is particularly relevant to the Anglophone crisis since the concentration of authority within the hands of the Francophone bourgeoisie has contributed to the emergence of a systematic Anglophone/Francophone schism.

Conflict is also used as a means to an end in the sense of recommending political and social goals. The Anglophone separatist movement, which can be feted by groups like the Ambazonia Defense Forces (ADF), has defied calls for autonomy or even independence, and this has been propelled by the realization that the Government has not solved their grievances (TAMEKAMTA, 2024). According to Ekah (2022) these kinds of struggle are expected when there are significant power and resource differences and such differences incite coalescing for perceived injustice resolution. Under this perspective, the aggressive and brutal character of the Anglophone crisis can be viewed as the response to deep political and economic marginalization.

External Interference in Conflict

Ideologies of interference in conflict mostly run in circles as to how different international stakeholders either contribute to the increase of violence or reduce it. Third-party can be foreign governments, international organizations, and NGOs, who all come with different practices and selves for conflict resolution.

Diplomatic Intervention and Mediation: The backbone of diplomacy is based on principles of negotiating and mediation, which is a theory that posits that the use of dialogue can solve conflict. According to Gredecki (2012) principled negotiation is important where the main emphasis is made not on positions but on interests. Various players, which include the UN, AU, and other international organizations, as well as other countries, including Switzerland, have attempted to act as middlemen meditating between the Cameroonian Government and the separatists with the hope of negotiating a ceasefire. But these efforts are not smooth because the Government is reluctant to negotiate since it regards separatism as an act of hooliganism against the state, while the separatists are equally averse to negotiating since they demand autonomy or independence, which is non-negotiable from the government side (Mayer & Dinkelaker, 2019).

Humanitarian Aid and Human Rights Advocacy: Humanitarian assistance is the other form of external inter-related intervention aimed at easing human suffering due to the conflict. Several requests have been made by the 'International Red Cross' and other 'Non-governmental organizations to ensure aid delivery to affected and displaced persons and refugees, respectively (Beigbeder, 2023). Humanitarian intervention primarily requires the rationale of humanitarianism, to mean the protection of civilians who are likely to be victimized by violence, protection, or enforcement of basic rights. The politicization of humanitarian aid, a nature that

favors one party within the conflict to the detriment of the other, or lack of it, may hamper the neutrality of these interventions to peacemaking (Chusri et al., 2011).

Peacekeeping Operations: Diehl (2013) that theories of peacekeeping hold that peacekeepers work to maintain a measure of order in a conflicted region and to keep antagonistic parties physically separated from one another. In Cameroon's context, the experience of PKO has been rather limited, and where PKO missions are present, they are experiencing many challenges due to the Cameroon government's opposition to foreign military presence and highly irregular conflict pattern (Ilori et al., 2017).

Impact of External Interference on Conflict Dynamics

Interventions from outside the country can yield good things like the provision of aid to hungry people, protection of women and children against abuse, among other crimes, and protection of human rights, among others. One of the significant problems is the sovereignty question, which means that any foreign participation appears in the eyes of the Government as an interference with the national and state's sovereignty (DeLancey et al., 2019). Pursuant to the sovereignty-sensitive view, interference from other nations, especially in those areas where these nations have stakes, tends to make people more nationalistic and develop resistance from a political perspective (Rühlig, 2022).

Third parties are also known to introduce their rationale of geopolitical relevance in conflict. According to Ache (2016) interventions are usually influenced by deliberated geopolitical factors, like containment or resource provisioning. For example, France, which Cameroon uses to classify it, has an ex-colonial master. Many Anglophone groups consider French involvement as a preconception towards the central authority. Such favoritism can pull down peace processes because it creates animosity between the warring factions.

Contextualizing the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon

The North West and South West regions of Cameroon are located in the western part of Central Africa, the Southern part of West Africa neighboring Nigeria to the south and West, and neighboring the Central, Littoral, and Western regions of Cameroon to the East (West, 2011). They are linguistically diverse from the Francophone-dominated mainstream Cameroon because of their British colonial background; social relations are highly politicized. The historical, demographic and political backgrounds of the Anglophone regions in order to conduct a historical analysis of the roots of the current Anglophone crisis.

Geography and Demographics

According to Fredland (2001) the North West and South West regions are endowed with vegetation with mountainous regions, agricultural lands, and plains along the coasts. The North West boasts of Mountain Cameroon with its spectacular, steppe-like topography; to the South West region, one enjoys plains and explained forests; swamps too are found in the South West region. These natural landscapes define the history of the inhabitants of the region, people who are involved in farming, livestock, and timber business, as well as trading.

According to NGWOH (2020) ethnic-related people mainly occupy the two regions with cultural/post-independence migrating heritages, such as Meta, Bali, and Mankon in the North West region and Bakweri, and Ejagham in the South West region. These regions constitute the "Anglophone region" of Cameroon despite the fact that the Anglophone population in Cameroon constitutes a small proportion of the large Cameroon community where most people are of the Francophone tradition.

Colonial Legacy and Political Marginalization

Current conflict in North West and South West regions of Cameroon has historic origin dating back to the colonial period. According to Geneva (2021) the League of Nations, which was established after the First World War, reassigned the German Kamerun to Britain and France. The British-controlled territories in Cameroon were divided into two parts: The former was comprised of the Northern and Southern Cameroons.

Though the Southern Cameroons, which are today's North West and South West regions, retained an English speaking legal and educational system founded on the British common law.

Ayuk (2018) the independence of Cameroon in 1960, the country has experienced a post-colonial political culture in leadership under Ahmadou Ahidjo and after Paul Biya. The Government that came into power early enough promised the Anglophone region more autonomy in its affairs but, over time, transformed the state into a Francophone-dominated centralist state. According to Ndangam (2020) the merging of the French and British trusteeship territories in 1961, and later the Cameroon state under the "One and Indivisible Cameroon" policy, did not pay adequate attention to the ethnic and political distinctions of the Anglophone and Francophone regions. The Anglophone regions were politically dominated and the Francophone system replaced the unique cultural and institutional system of the regions. These discriminations in education, language, and employment, combined with marginalization, have strengthened the Anglophone's complaint.

The Anglophone Conflict: A Struggle for Autonomy

According to Folefac (2022) the Anglophone problem started more profoundly when teachers, lawyers, and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the North West and South West of Cameroon called strikes in October 2016, protesting the marginalization of Anglophones by the Francophone-dominated Government. The protests started soon, demanding decentralization and the recognition of Anglophone identity. Some of the groups further demanded secession of the North West and South West regions to form an independent state of Ambazonia. The authorities' aggressive actions to opposition marches – the use of soldiers and force against the leaders of protests – worsened the situation and provoked the creation of militant secessionist organizations (Lawrence, 2010).

According to Akum (2009) neglect of Anglophone regions politically and economically defines the conflict at the core. Besides cultural and linguistic rights, Anglophone people have had grievances about the economic disparities, as the Government has always left infrastructure and development services of Anglophone-speaking regions while providing them for Francophone regions. According to Watson (2007) the North West and South West regions have remained weak politically in terms of occupying national political posts, hence the feeling of marginalization. The Anglophone population's grievances, as such, are not only about language and culture but also about politics and economy.

Impact of the Crisis on the Regions

The Anglophone conflict has worsened and negatively impacted the North West and South West regions. It is estimated that thousands of persons have had their abodes destroyed, and about 3,000 people perished as a consequence of conflict between government forces and separatist militias. This has affected societal operations in terms of school closures, affected markets, closed hospitals, among other facilities, and business operations that face the challenge of violence. The crisis has also created a humanitarian crisis; hundreds of thousands of people have fled to Nigeria and other parts of Cameroon in search of refuge, facing a negotiation ordeal in the refugee camps (Njung, 2021).

The psychological effect of the conflict has also been severe, cutting across the social fabric of communities through violence and fear.

External Interference in the North West and South West Regions

The crisis that began in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon due to the Anglophone problem has gained the attention of different international players ranging from international organizations, foreign governments, and other non-governmental organizations. This external participation has created burning issues regarding the applicability of intervention from outside in matters that are basically political and social issues (Sehngwi Mofow, 2023). The Anglophone conflict emphasizes more on diplomacy and human rights, structures of both humanitarian aid and diplomatic pressure, alongside the benefits and drawbacks of each initiative.

Diplomatic Mediation and International Involvement

Diplomacy has emerged as one of the core components of the external response to the Anglophone crisis. International global bodies, including the United Nations, the African Union, and other regional powers including Switzerland, have been involved in diplomatic ingénue seeking to coax the Government and separatist factions to the negotiation table. These efforts have had limited success because of the mainstream conflict nature and the Cameroonian Government that has not agreed to a third-party intervention (MacDOUGALL, 1993).

For instance, the United Nations has at different times insisted that the only way forward was through engaging in dialogue. In 2019, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mi, Chelsea Bachelet, said that the only way out of the crisis in Venezuela is a political one through dialogue and reconciliation (Young, 2020). The African Union has deplored the violence and had asked for the peaceful resolution of the conflict. Both organizations have been limited in making big interventions because the Cameroonian Government has not been very welcoming of the forces of international mediation. This principle has contributed to the failure of external mediation because the Government does not support the national sovereignty of the Anglophone regions as they want to control those areas (Lefort-Rieu, 2024).

External mediation could be best illustrated with a reference to Switzerland, which has acted as an informal mediator in many meetings of the Government with the separatist leaders. Such measures, though started with good intentions, have met many barriers (Ndekwo, 2020). Persoz (2018) Switzerland is able to start conversations; it has been unable to achieve significant changes. The makers of the approaches can only invite moderate groups to the negotiating table, and the Government has not been willing to contemplate serious compromises in relation to the issue of secession.

French presence has been at the center of controversy as well. France used to be Cameroon's colonial master and refers its support to the central Government, while its engagement in the Anglophone crisis has been accused of bias. The separatist organization has always claimed that France supports the Biya government and this has hampered the French role as an impartial mediator (Talla, 2024). France has called for dialogue; it has not applied much pressure on the Cameroonian Government to agree to meaningful negotiations. Such biases have reduced France's reliability as an external facilitator.

Humanitarian Aid and Civilian Protection

Humanitarian aid has also been another large component of aggressive support from the outside in the Anglophone crisis. Frequent acts of hostility have led to dozens of thousands of refugees internally, and many of them have fled to neighboring Nigeria. International NGOs, as well as humanitarian organizations, have come in to provide emergency relief assistance in the form of food, shelter, healthcare, and counseling services. The two most active organizations in responding to the plight of internally displaced persons have been the ICRC and the MSF (Hampton, 2014).

But humanitarian intervention has had some difficulties, for example, political agendas within humanitarian aid have emerged, and human aid workers are at risk. Different authorities have cited that the Government and separatists have been using humanitarian aid for their political battles (Brauman, 2016). The Government has been accused of limiting the access of humanitarian actors into separatist-held territories, some humanitarian organizations support separatists. Separatists have also been blamed for extorting humanitarian workers and distributing the latter to their followers. Such dynamics have made it hard for non-government organizations to work in this region and deliver humanitarian assistance with neutrality (Tronc & Nahikian, 2020).

Canton (2021) the conflict has led to a humanitarian crisis with persons fleeing the conflict and living in terrible situations in the refugee camps and that over 700,000 people have been affected. The international community realized the magnitude of this catastrophe; the Government has never tried to and continues not to find the fundamental causes of this war. Although humanitarian assistance can bring necessary solidarity, it offers no reconciliation of the political matters that stimulated the conflict.

Economic Sanctions and International Pressure

Cameroon has also received international diplomatic pressure and economic sanctions from countries such as the United States and European Union in their tries to influence the action of the Cameroonian Government. In 2019, the United States put travel restrictions on several senior Cameroonian officials in regard to human rights violations in the conflict (Willis et al., 2019). These sanctions were meant to convey to other nations that the Government was using the wrong strategies and wanted to convey a message of engaging in democracy instead of force. However, the application of sanctions has not yielded much success in altering the Government's view on the conflict (Darboe, 2019).

The process by which sanctions affect government behavior in Cameroon has been compounded due to state control of the military and other core state structures, hence the ability to endure external pressures. Analyzing the situation with the political and economic relations between Cameroon and France shows that the Government has not been subjected to severe economic isolation, and sanctions were inadequate to make the Government change its policy regarding the conflict in the Anglophone regions of the country (Caxton, 2017).

The UN and EU have also depended on the diplomacy pressure, and it has similar problems. Each has called for a cessation of the violence and has shunned stronger measures like an effective arms embargo or further economic sanctions, which will likely compel the Government to talk, not necessarily negotiate in good faith (Agwanda et al., 2020). The also fragmented unity has not allowed for coherent and effective pressure on the Cameroonian Government to push through change.

Limitations of External Interference

On advocacy for attention to the Anglophone crisis and policy review humanitarian assistance, among other supports, it has received a lot of criticism due to its shortcomings in supporting stable peace. This conflict has one of the major setbacks that the Cameroonian Government has not yielded to permit third parties to intervene and mediate the conflict. According to Beseng et al. (2023), a sovereignty-sensitive approach may provide a limited opportunity for effective external intervention in internal conflicts because governments avoid outside interference.

The proliferation of the separatist factions has searched for a solution to this problem more difficult since outsiders cannot come to a consensus on which faction to negotiate with. The separatist movement has fragmented political objectives, which have fueled the emergence of different factions within the movement, each with its representative, making it hard for external actors to identify who represents the movement. There is no unity among the separatist groups, and they have specifically declined any form of dialogue that is under the sitting Government, leading to such a diplomatic deadlock (Agbor, 2019).

Conflict Management Strategies: Internal vs. External Approaches The civil crisis in the northwest and southwest regions of Cameroon, mainly due to the political and cultural domination of the Francophone population over the Anglophone population, has led to inside and outside efforts to solve its problems (Achu, 2018). Each of the approaches is designed to address the crisis, though the efforts here are quite challenging and have produced mixed outcomes. First, it brings a critical analysis of internal and external conflict management approaches, looking at the differences in their effectiveness, drawbacks, and the experience gained from past endeavors (Nwati, 2020).

Internal Conflict Management Approaches

Anglophone conflict solving in Cameroon has mainly been spearheaded by the state, which has tackled the issue by use of force, negotiation, and use of traditional means. These strategies have been rendered so hard due to the Government's approach to conflicts, mainly through centralization and force.

Military Approach and Repression

The main internal revelation is that the Cameroonian Government has relied on the military to quash the separatists in the Anglophone territories. The engagement has involved the use of government troops to fight

the separatist militants as well as to stamp out protests. Izuchukwu et al. (2020) find that force has only worsened the situation, and civilians continue to die while being displaced and properties destroyed. The state has unleashed violence in cracking down on the protest and used force inappropriately against Anglophone civilians, and this response has deepened the crisis and eroded people's confidence in the Government. Only served to stoke rage and bitterness, which has made the civilians side with separatists.

According to Kewir et al. (2021) the employment of force to address political issues deepens the existing divisions, as exemplified in Cameroon today, because factions will not easily trust a government that has used force to quell dissent. Responses bring about what he calls 'structural violence,' namely the existence of structures that promote violence and conflict.

Political Dialogue : The Grand National Dialogue

The Cameroonian authorities responded to the intensification of the conflict under international pressure and, in 2019, launched the 'Grand National Dialogue,' a national process to seek a political resolution to the conflict. The dialogue was supposed to initiate, take stock of, and resolve the conflict through the involvement of the Government, political opposition, and civil society actors. This dialogue was criticized for its exclusiveness and devoid of essential meanings (Crawford et al., 2021). A large number of the separatist's most influential commanders were left out of the negotiations, and the Government refused to debate any type of self-governance for the Anglophone territories. The Government's dismissal of federalism as a political concept and its determination to retain a strong center killed the conversation. The dialogue yielded no victory for the Anglophone population, whose demands include enhanced political freedom and recognition of their cultural diversity (Salome, 2022).

The breakdown of the GN Dialogue also demonstrates that contentious structural political problems cannot be adequately addressed through nationally contained, vertically imposed initiatives. The aspect of dialogue mechanisms that would embrace all the parties and the Anglophones, who are a minority (Onyango, 2010).

Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

Indigenous systems of conflict management have played a significant role in Cameroon for many years through the use of elders, chiefs, and councils Hearken. These traditional systems have assumed centrality in the Anglophone regions for resolving community conflicts, bringing about reconciliation, and reestablishing peace. Annan et al. (2021). various techniques, including mediation, arbitration as well as the settling of grievances through community talk, have been successful in maintaining village and local community peace.

To regulate small-scale conflicts, they do not translate well into large-scale problems such as the Anglophone crisis. Such approaches are less authoritative and outside the means of employing real power resources to respond to deeper political questions, such as the importance of independence or autonomy as causes of the struggle. The continuous fighting and the continued existence and activities of armed separatist factions, the traditional structures do not solve the problems of post-aggression societies as they should (Fergusson & Muncie, 2012).

External Conflict Management Approaches

Intervention by external forces has remained part of the solutions to conflict in the Anglophone crisis. These external actors are the United Nations and the African Union, French and American governments, and non-governmental organizations.

Diplomatic Mediation by International Actors

Diplomatic mediation has been one of the techniques used by Cameroon in external conflict management. Intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations, the African Union, and Switzerland have tried to mediate talks between Cameroon's authorities and rebels (Nwati, 2020). Switzerland has been particularly active in this way, providing various venues for informal contacts of government employees with separatist

activists. Voluntary efforts have not been very successful to date. Bertschi (2023) the Swiss-neutral acting facilitated the conversation while the lack of a formal mandate and the Cameroonian Government's commitment to these talks did not seem credible, so there can be no significant achievements.

Mediation also has been affected by the dispersed nature of the separatist movement. Kewir et al. (2021) fragmentation and political disorganization among the Anglophones, separatist groups with divergent political beliefs and objectives remain different, and no universal interest representative has emerged.

Humanitarian Aid and Human Rights Advocacy

Foreign actors, especially non-governmental organizations and the International humanitarian agency, have also played significant roles in the provision of services to the victims of the conflict. Many NGOs that have responded to the crisis include the International Committee of the Red Cross and Médecins Sans Frontières by extending medical help, food, and shelter to the affected groups. The UN agency, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), has also been intervening in the refugee crisis occasioned by the conflict. More than 700,000 people were forced to flee due to violence, which raised complex issues for neighboring countries (Jefferis, 2018).

The politicization of aid has made the provision of humanitarian aid a difficult affair. Humanitarian assistance has also been reported to have politically been used or limited in delivery by both the Government and the separatist factions. They have also suffered harassment or violence from factions on either side of the conflict, making it difficult to deliver assistance to affected communities (Beigbeder, 2023).

Sanctions and International Pressure

The United States has sanctioned some specific Cameroonian military personnel for violation of human rights in the course of the conflict. These sanctions were meant to punish the perpetrators and to discourage the Cameroonian Government, knowing that the international community would not fold arms and watch it unleash its military might on innocent civilians (Cho & Agbor, 2022).

The success of these measures has not been very significant. The sanctions seem to bear an effect on the official who faces these sanctions but they have not proven to be effective in changing the behavior of the Government. Sanctions usually have side effects reaching other segments of the population and deepening the humanitarian crisis in the targeted countries (Robert, 2020).

Comparing Internal and External Approaches: Effectiveness and Limitations

The outcome of both internal and external conflict management strategies in Cameroon has been influenced by the following. There are somewhat more legitimate concerns, such as the Government using force and not discussing the conflict with the rebels. The exclusion of most stakeholders in the Grand National Dialogue, the secessionist leaders, made any search for a political solution virtually out of reach (Mehler, 2021).

Externally such interventions in the forms of international mediation and humanitarian assistance appear to have brought partial solutions to the conflict. Popular attraction to international treasures and curios has influenced a large number of visitors to the country, but due to the Government's rejection of international intervention and the lack of a single unified voice for the rebels, external forces cannot arrange for sustainable peace. The absence of a single concerted strategy by multiple practitioners has caused their intercessions to become watered down (International Commission on Intervention, 2001).

Challenges of External Interference in Conflict Management

Interference in conflict resolution, especially in the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon has equally encountered numerous challenges. These challenges owe their origin to the nature of the conflict, the interests of key stakeholders external and internal to Cameroon, and even reluctance from key players in the government systems of Cameroon.

Sovereignty and Resistance to External Influence

There are several reasons why external forces have not been able to intervene in Anglophone Cameroon's struggle, one of which is sovereignty. According to Duchâtel et al. (2014) any interference as diplomatic, humanitarian, or military is considered by the Government as an intrusion or incursion into its sovereign state and territory. This resistance is not an exception it is a trend that many post-colonial states face because the organizations' major concern is governing their internal affairs. According to Habiba (2018) sovereignty becomes the stumbling block to conflict resolution because governments, like that of Cameroon, worry that outsider may usurp their authority. Cameroon has been slow to engage with the international community and international mediation and instead has favored addressing the crisis domestically and, more often than not, with the use of force. This has only served to stoke tensions among the Anglophone populace and prolong the crisis.

Partiality and Geopolitical Interests of External Actors

The major problem is the bias of outside actors in a conflict-situated country. Some of the interventions, like those by France, a former colonial master to the Cameroonians, have been an issue of set credibility with the Government. Essiene (2023) explained that most of the Anglophone activists feel that the French side supports Cameroon's authorities, making Paris incredible as a mediator. Switzerland's intervention to mediate peace has been complex because both 'the Government and separatists do not trust the Swiss approach as they have no bargaining power (Schoch, 2000). Forcing external merchandise to perform neutrality in mediating is often affected by the geopolitical agendas of these actors.

Fragmentation and Lack of Coordination Among External Actors

Complexity in the actors engaged in the Anglophone crisis has also provided complexities in implementing the interventions. The UN AU and other NGOs frequently act in tandem but have no comprehensive plan of action. This disintegration results in inefficiencies and possibly renormalization or mineralization of the effectiveness of efforts (Mehler, 2021). Local stakeholders can also lack trust due to messages received from external actors where such messages are inadequate, contrasting, or confusing. Ngala (2023) absence of comprehensive and synchronized strategies among the international actors makes it challenging to build sufficient pressure on the sides in the conflict and if the Government persists in its intransigent policies.

Limited Leverage and Diplomatic Deadlock

The weak influence of external agents in the Cameroonian situation has resulted in a diplomacy stalemate. International actors may use economic policy pressure in the form of sanctions or even diplomatic campaigns in the form of condemnation, these methods have not been highly effective in influencing change in the Government. The central Government occupies a very important position in terms of managing national resources and security. To use soft power to adjust the attitudes of the key decision-makers, which means that external actors have not been able to attain a turning point in negotiations (Clarke, 2019).

Evaluation of Current Conflict Management Strategies and Future Directions

The crisis in Cameroon has raised awareness of issues of conflict management in diverse regions that are characterized by ethnic, political, and socio-economic cleavages. Sustainable peace has remained a mirage even when active third-party intervention mechanisms engaged in efforts to bring the disputants to the negotiation table. The effectiveness of the present conflict management strategies is analyzed, and shortcomings are pointed out in this section, with possible recommendations for the future to solve the crisis (Muhammadou Amadou, 2020).

Current Conflict Management Strategies

The Cameroonian Government's main approach has been to use military force to deal with separatists. As this strategy has temporarily disarmed factions, it has not tackled the underlying reasons for any of the conflict,

inclusive political exclusion, polarization of the populace in the income cycle, and cultural exclusion. Mehler (2021) agrees with the assertion that due to a lack of tangible interactions, the Government has left the Anglophone frustrated with their demands for autonomy and or political change.

There was an example of a political request of the political crisis, which has become the "Grand National Dialogue". It was widely condemned for irrelevance mainly due to the exclusion of key separatist leaders in the process, and the Government continued to frown at any form of federalization or any autonomy reforms as such dialogue did not result in effective change where Anglophone population most significantly was dissatisfied with governance, language, and political liberties (Schoch, 2000).

Externally, there have been interventions by the UN, the continental bodies, and especially the Swiss to organize a ceasefire dialog and deliver humanitarian assistance. As commendable as these efforts may have been, their main weakness has arisen from the Half-Baked conceived and coordinated lack of coordination among the parties involved, the biases of some external players involved, and the Government's reluctance to open up the country. External actors have had little role in providing sustainable solutions as their efforts have been limited by the Government and due to the lack of a united separatist group (Essiene, 2023).

Future Directions

To improve the skills of conflict solving, international actors should pay more attention to the problems of cooperation in mediation. Future attempts at peace should involve intercessions from the Government, the separatist groups, and the civil society associations in a holistic approach to the peacemaking process. To meet the Anglophone community's desire for autonomy yet maintain the nation's unity, another model for power distribution, using the sharing of power between central and regional governments or using a federal system of Government may work.

For the youth to remain loyal to the Government, the latter needs to be charged with more reconciliation efforts, which include bringing about reforms that tackle the unequal distribution of wealth and voting rights that have been a vice in the Anglophone countries. In this case, international pressure and sanctions should be employed wisely in order to make the Government sit down for the negotiations, which will be on a really serious basis. Last but not least, a sustainable peacebuilding approach that would involve efforts for rebuilding relations, reconstruction of the social economy, and support and protection of human rights will be the key to long-lasting peace.

CONCLUSION

The conflict in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon has degenerated into one of the most protracted and challenging crises in the central Africa region. Having its cause traced back to political exclusion, economic retrofitting, and cultural assimilation of the Anglophone population that the colonial authorities never brought to an end, the crisis degenerated into a militant form with severe ramifications. Despite several conducts of conflict solutions, internal and external interference have been characterized by challenges such as refusal from the Government of Cameroon, lack of collaboration from international institutions, and social hatred between the two parties in conflict.

The strategies, including the military operation and the Grand National Dialogue, have not addressed the basic concerns of post-war governance, call for self-rule, and a reasonable political power-share. Despite these attempts that may have temporarily subdued some revolt, little has been done to handle the actual roots of the clash. External interventions, despite playing critical roles in providing information and intervention, have been undermined by the Government's refusal to allow for effective mediation as well as some biased actors.

In order for Cameroon to realize sustainable peace, there is the need to engage all members of the society, including those within the separatist group and civil society, and with support from the International community. The Government needs to be urged to undertake proper reforms that will solve the political and economic problems touching on the Anglophone community. It is only through a more comprehensive

political system incorporation and a striving for another generation-long process of reconciliation and reconstruction that lasting peace may be secured in that region.

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