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CAMEROON CONFLICT INSIGHT



ABOUT THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide analysis and recommendations to national, regional and continental decision makers in the implementation of peace and security-related instruments.

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SITUATION ANALYSIS

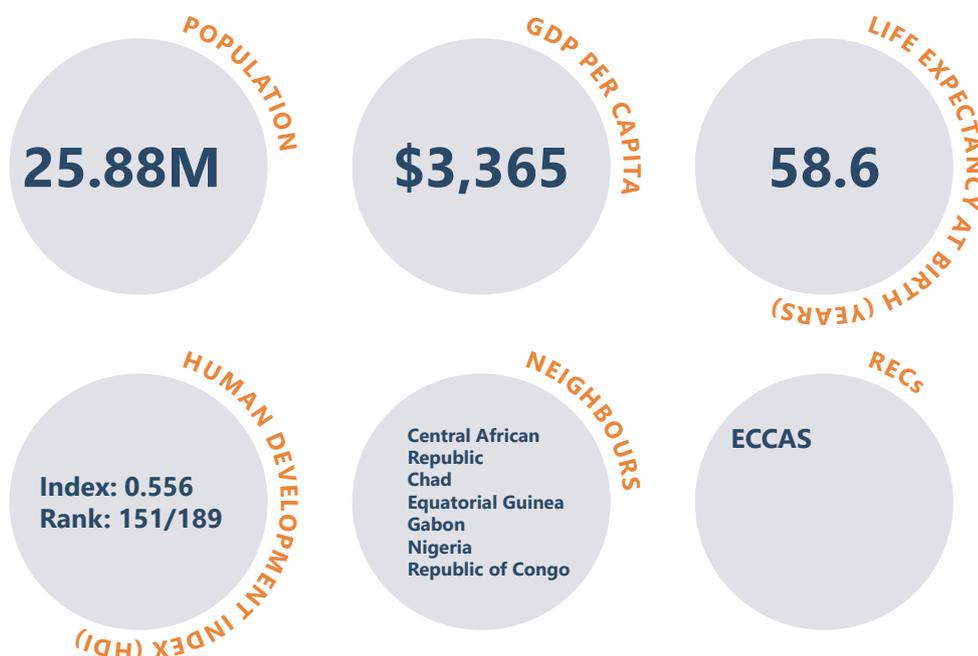


Figure 1: Country profile and demographics

Sitting at the cross roads of West and Central Africa, Cameroon is one of the most diverse and resource-rich countries in Africa.¹ It is home to about 250 ethnic groups² from the ancient tribal kingdoms in the West and the Pygmies in the South to the pastoral Muslims in the North.³ Besides its rich indigenous cultures, ethnic diversity and geography, Cameroon has also had a checkered colonial history. The failed attempt to jointly and effectively administer “Kamerun”, a former German protectorate, resulted in the partitioning of the territory between Britain and France in 1919. The French mandate comprised most of the former German territory (over 167,000 square miles)⁴ while the British mandate was an elongated strip of land along the border of colonial Nigeria. It consisted of Northern Cameroon (about 17,500 square miles) and Southern Cameroons (about 16,580 square miles), including the historical Amba Bay Protectorate.⁵ This large difference in territories awarded to France and Britain resulted in the present day Cameroon’s majority of Francophone and a minority Anglophone population, respectively. France’s territory was granted independence in 1960 while Britain’s Southern Cameroons gained independence by joining the already independent “La Republique du Cameroun” on 1 October 1961.

The unification of Southern Cameroons and La Republique du Cameroun came prior to their two-state federation agreement during the July 1961 Fouban constitutional conference.⁶ They drew up a federal constitution that guaranteed independent administration and respect of each state’s cultural identity. Southern Cameroons became West Cameroon, a constituent state of the Federal Republic of Cameroon. Both the English and French languages, a heritage from the colonial rule, eventually became the country’s official languages. Following a unilateral referendum on 20 May 1972, a new constitution was adopted which replaced the federal state with a unitary state. The country was renamed the United Republic of Cameroon and afterwards the Republic of Cameroon through another revised constitution in 1984. In a reversal of the Fouban agreement which made Cameroon a federation of two states, West Cameroon lost its autonomous status and became the North West and South West regions of the Republic of Cameroon. The country’s post-colonial and independence arrangements, therefore, help in understanding the depth of Anglophones’ grievances.

1 Minority Rights Group International, <https://minorityrights.org/country/cameroon/>
 2 Ibid
 3 Ibid
 4 Olson, James (1996). *Historical Dictionary of the British Empire*. Greenwood Press. p. 169.
 5 Ibid

6 ACCORD, <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/anglophone-dilemma-cameroon/>, July 2017

The security situation in Cameroon was mainly characterized by the conflict between Cameroon and Nigeria over the Bakassi Peninsula, governance challenges, security issues in the East Region that emanated from the crisis in the Central African Republic, piracy along the gulf of Guinea, highway robbery in the North and terrorist insecurity in the Far North. However, longstanding grievances of Anglophones in the North West and South West regions against the Francophone-dominated government escalated since October 2016 into what is today known as the “Anglophone crisis.” What initially started as peaceful protests of Anglophone lawyers and teachers ultimately degenerated into an armed insurgency. This report will, therefore, focus on the Anglophone crisis and terrorist insecurity in the Far North as they are currently the country’s most challenging conflicts with implications for national and regional stability. But how did such upheaval come to affect a country that has prided itself for decades as a beacon of stability in a conflict prone region? And why has it escalated so quickly instigating peace and security challenges for the country and the entire Lake Chad Basin area?

CAUSES OF THE CONFLICT

Contested State Structures

In trying to consolidate post-colonial national unity, Cameroon evolved through a series of revolutionary political stages which spanned across the federal and unitary system. In 1972, a constitutional referendum replaced the federal system with the unitary system.⁷ West Cameroon, which had federated in 1961 as an equal state, eventually ceased to exist. This gradually created an Anglophone political consciousness - the feeling of being exploited by the Francophone-dominated state. Cameroon also went through several changes under the incumbent president, who came to power in 1982. These included a change of name from the United Republic of Cameroon to the Republic of Cameroon (exact appellation of former French Cameroon when it got its independence), a change of national flag from two-star design (symbol of the coming together of Francophone and Anglophone parts) to a single star, and the adoption of a new constitution in 1996 that transformed Cameroon into a decentralized unitary state. These changes are the reasons why many protesting Anglophones feel that their cultural and historical uniqueness was trounced in the union.

The constitutional form of the state and the functioning of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government have, therefore, been contested since the union. The contestants are opposition parties advocating for a change of government; federalist movements demanding a return to federalism; separatist movements fighting for secession and unionist movements standing against any change to the form of the state. This continued contestation of state structures threatens peace and stability in Cameroon as evidenced by the ongoing Anglophone crisis and highly polarized political climate.

Political and Socio-Economic Inequality

Overtime, Anglophones in the South West and North West regions, who make up only about 20%⁸ of Cameroon's 25.88 million population, have felt marginalized by the Francophone-dominated government in the political, economic and socio-cultural spheres. They accuse the government of marginalizing the two English-speaking regions over Cameroon's other eight administrative regions. Politically, some argue that there is an under-representation of the Anglophone minority in key government positions as well as other

government services. For instance, out of the 67 members of government,⁹ only 3 Anglophones occupy high-level cabinet positions.¹⁰

There has also been significant economic disparity when it comes to allocation of investment projects by the State to the two English-speaking regions, compared to the other eight French-speaking regions. According to Cameroon's 2017 public investment budget, the French-speaking South region was allocated far more resources (over 570 projects with over \$225 million) than the two English-speaking North West region (more than 500 projects with over \$76 million) and South West region (over 500 projects with over \$77 million).¹¹

Social disparities equally exist due to the centralization of power, with decision making centres in Yaoundé, far from Anglophone regions. Policies in the education and judicial systems also created a fertile ground for the emergence and violent radicalization of those with grievances. There were 1,265 French-speaking magistrates and only 227 English-speaking magistrates in 2016 and out of 514 judicial officers, 499 were Francophone and 15 Anglophone.¹² The current Anglophone crisis is, therefore, a manifestation of frustration arising from both real and perceived discrimination and marginalization of the English speaking minority.

7 ACCORD, <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/anglophone-dilemma-cameroon/>, July 2017

8 GRI, <https://globalriskinsights.com/2019/06/cameroon-escalating-crisis-anglophone/>, June 2019

9 CRTV, <http://www.crtv.cm/2019/01/liste-complete-des-nouveau-gouvernement/>

10 Africa News, <https://www.africanews.com/2019/01/05/cameroon-s-cabinet-remake-full-of-messieurs-a-lone-madame/>, 5 January 2019.

11 <http://cvuc.cm/national/index.php/fr/a-propos-des-cvuc/annonces-et-evenements/752-cameroun-bip-2017-le-journal-des-projets>

12 ACCORD, <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/anglophone-dilemma-cameroon/>, 2017

Spillover effect of the Jihadist Movement

The violent operations of Boko Haram, a Nigeria-based jihadi terrorist group which began in Nigeria's northeastern Borno State in 2009, have affected several other countries in the region of the Lake Chad Basin. Cameroon is one of them and has been experiencing the spread of Boko Haram's operations on its soil since 2013.¹³ The socio-cultural, linguistic and religious ties that Cameroon's Far North region shares with northern Nigeria eased Boko Haram's spillover into Cameroon by combatants and fleeing Nigerians.¹⁴ This sparked a military response from the government, supported from January 2015 by a Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) from the Lake Chad Basin countries, overseen by the African Union. Thousands of Cameroonians eventually joined Boko Haram at different times due to ideological or religious conviction, out of opportunism or under duress.¹⁵ This enabled the jihadist movement to gather support and gain ground in Cameroon's Far North region.

After Nigeria, Cameroon is the second largest victim of Boko Haram's attacks which have led to multiple displacements and persistent insecurity in the country's Far North region. Moreover, the region shelters more than 100000¹⁶ Nigerian refugees who have fled Boko Haram's violence in their country with close to 60 000¹⁷ of them living in the Minawao camp which was specifically built for Nigerian refugees in 2013. Although the intensity of the war between Boko Haram and Cameroon de-escalated in 2016,¹⁸ the humanitarian situation remains precarious and the resurgence of attacks by the extremist group on Cameroon's northern border with Nigeria, still poses a major threat to national security.

¹³ ICG, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/cameroon-confronting-boko-haram> Nov 2016

¹⁴ Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/fes-pscc/14200.pdf>, 2017

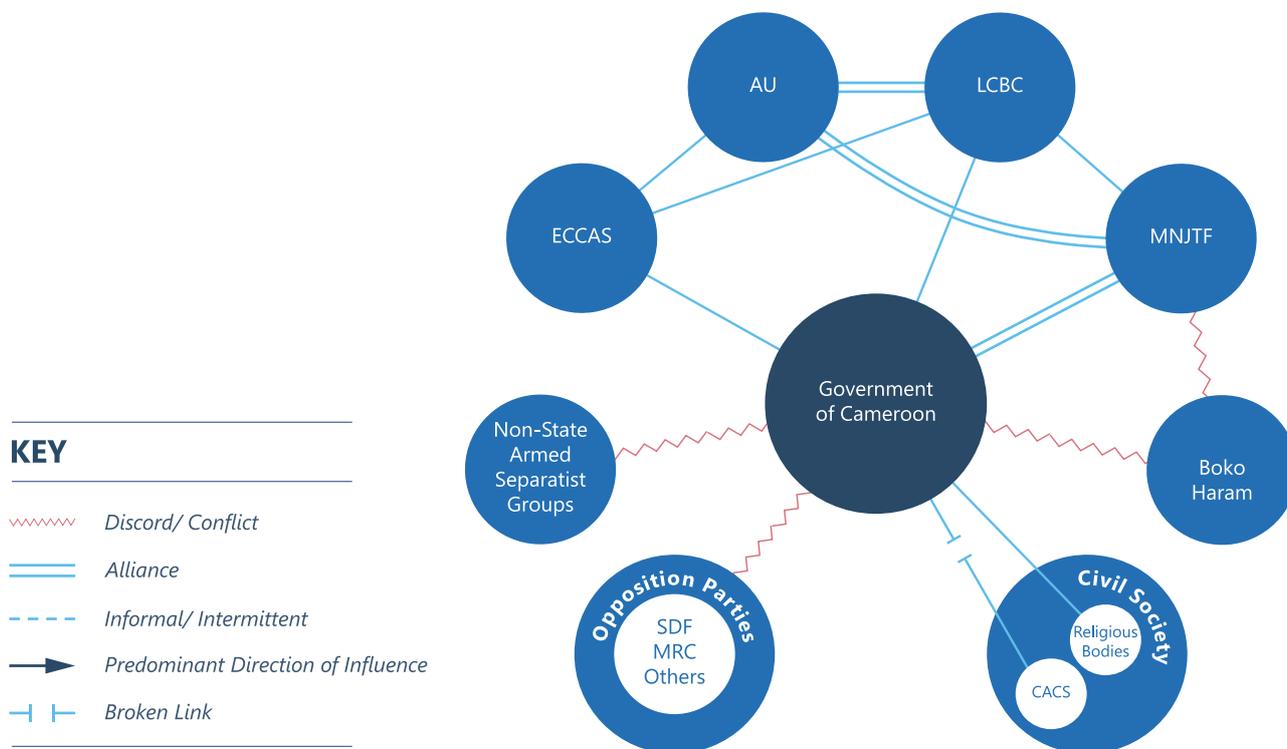
¹⁵ UNDP, https://www.undp.org/content/dam/denmark/docs/Journey%20to%20Extremism_report.pdf, 2017

¹⁶ UNHCR, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/nigeriasituation> 7 September, 2019

¹⁷ UN News, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/03/1033872>, 1 March, 2019

¹⁸ Africa Research Institute, <https://www.africaresearchinstitute.org/newsite/blog/boko-harams-shifting-tactics-cameroon-data-tell-us/>, February 2017

ACTORS



KEY

- Discord/ Conflict
- Alliance
- Informal/ Intermittent
- Predominant Direction of Influence
- Broken Link

Figure 2: Actors Mapping

The Government

The government of Cameroon is organized and administered as a unitary presidential state whereby the President serves as both the Head of State and a de facto Head of Government.¹⁹ It is member to several regional and international organizations such as the United Nations and its subsidiary organizations, British Commonwealth of Nations, ECCAS, the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF), the African Union and many others. Cameroon also maintains strong diplomatic ties with countries such as France, Britain, Canada and the USA. The ruling political party, Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement (CPDM), has been governing the country since 1985. The party controls majority of the parliament and ministerial positions with 148/180 seats at the National Assembly²⁰ and 87/100 seats at the Senate.²¹ The CPDM-dominated government is separated into the executive, legislative, and judicial branches and its main goal is to maintain national unity and territorial integrity. In this regard, the government generally implements policies to advance security and uses its armed forces of an estimated 60,000

military personnel²² in ground, air and naval forces to curb unrest and maintain national integrity.

Cameroon’s security forces have been engaged on several fronts, including in the Far North region in response to Boko Haram’s attacks and in the North West and South West regions in response to the Anglophone crisis and proliferation of separatist groups. The Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR), an elite military force and an army combat unit of the Cameroonian armed forces, has notably played a large part in the government’s war against Boko Haram.²³ Not only that but it also played a major role against the Non-state armed groups (NSAGs) fighting in the Anglophone North West and South West regions of the country.

19 The Prime Minister is the Head of Government as per Article 12 of the Cameroon Constitution.

20 Inter-Parliamentary Union, <http://archive.ipu.org/parline-el/reports/2053.htm>, June 2018

21 Inter-Parliamentary Union, <http://archive.ipu.org/parline-el/reports/2054.htm>, May 2018

22 ICG, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/cameroon-confronting-boko-haram> Nov 2016

23 The BIR was created by the Cameroonian government in 2001 to fight criminal gangs operating on its Eastern and Northern borders.

The Head of State also convened a Major National Dialogue from 30 September - 4 October 2019 aimed at resolving, among others, the Cameroonian government's conflict with Anglophone separatists. Although the Dialogue was seen by analysts as a political move and an outcome of international pressure,²⁴ it was welcomed by regional and international partners such as the AU, UN, EU and OIF. Locals, however, remained divided on the government's ability to stabilize the country and restore peace in the two English speaking regions through the national dialogue.

Opposition Parties

Since the institutionalization of multi-party system by the Law of Association of 19 December 1990 (Law No. 90/056), there have been more than 250²⁵ recognized opposition parties in Cameroon. The major ones as of 2018 have, however, been the Social Democratic Front (SDF) and the Cameroon Renaissance Movement (MRC). SDF was founded in 1990 in Bamenda, North West region, with the main objective of seizing power from the ruling party. The party's grassroots support is concentrated in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon and it is the opposition party with the highest number of seats at the National Assembly and the Senate.²⁶ SDF's constituency and power have, however, declined moving from 46 Members of Parliament in 1997 to 18 at the last Parliamentary election held in 2013. Moreover, after obtaining 14 seats at the Senate in 2013, SDF could only maintain half of those seats in 2018. Its influence which kept waning was compounded by its worst ever finish at the 2018 Presidential election where its candidate finished fourth with 3.35% of the votes. The SDF has thus lost its status of main opposition party.

MRC, which stands today as the dominant opposition party, was founded in 2012 with the aim of attaining national power and putting an end to the long standing regime. While it won, according to official figures, only a single seat in the 2013 Parliamentary election and 14.23% of the vote to come second in the 2018 Presidential election, MRC has been holding anti-government protests to dispute the results of the election. The leader of MRC, who had formed coalition hours to the opening of polls with another 2018 Presidential candidate, declared himself winner of the election prior to the announcement by the election

²⁴ ICG, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/cameroons-anglophone-dialogue-work-progress>, September 2019

²⁵ *The Commonwealth*, <http://www.electionpassport.com/files/CET-2013-Elections-Final-Report.pdf>

²⁶ *National Assembly*: SDF (18/180), UNDP (5/180), UDC (4/180), UPC (3/180), MDR (1/180), MRC (1/180). *Senate*: SDF (7/100), UNDP (2/100), UPC (1/100), ANDP (1/100).

body, ELECAM, of any figures. MRC's leader, along with over 200 MRC members and supporters, was eventually arrested in January 2019 after protests against alleged irregularities in the voting process that saw Cameroon's ruling party and incumbent president winning to claim a seventh term. At least 350 more party members and supporters were arrested by security forces between 1 and 2 June 2019 to deter other MRC demonstrations. Although charges against MRC's leader and a hundred of his supporters were dropped, the party promised to continue the fight against the regime.

The Civil Society

The Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC) is a federalist movement founded in 2016 to advocate for the rights of the English-speaking minorities in Cameroon. CACSC consisted of civil society organizations, lawyers and teachers' trade unions in the Anglophone regions. They raised concerns about the challenges faced by teachers, students and civil servants in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon. CACSC also called for a reform in the legal system, particularly with regard to the use of civil law practices and civil law-trained judges in Anglophone courts which have common law tradition. CACSC started peaceful protests in 2016 and that initiated today's Anglophone crisis. It coordinated boycotts of academic institutions and a campaign of non-participation in economic, legal and social activities in the two Anglophone regions of Cameroon. CACSC, which had demanded representation for Anglophone Cameroon within a federation during initial negotiations with the government, was banned in January 2017. Its activities were proscribed, leaders arrested and access to the internet was blocked in Anglophone regions of the country. The government's response to CACSC's demands further radicalized protesters, whose demands shifted from representation in a federal state to the creation of an independent state.

At the beginning of the Anglophone crisis, religious bodies, in particular Christian and Muslim leaders issued statements calling for an inclusive dialogue between the parties in conflict. They proposed an Anglophone General Conference to seek a solution to the Anglophone problem. A retired archbishop from the Catholic Church (Chairman of the conference), a pastor and moderator from the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC), the president of the Cameroon Baptist Convention, the imam and the chief imam of the Bamenda Central Mosque were the religious leaders who fronted for the conference. The conference, however, faced opposition from the government and suffered

several adjournments; from August to November 2018, March to July 2019 and then November 2019. Eventually, a Major National Dialogue was held from 30th September to 4th October 2019, focusing on the situation in the North West and South West regions. Since then, the Anglophone General Conference has never been on the agenda of religious bodies. This could be due to the fact that these religious leaders, especially the Chairman of the Anglophone General Conference as a key stakeholder in the Major National Dialogue, contributed in major decisions.

Boko Haram in the Far North

Boko Haram, which literally means “Western education is forbidden”, is a jihadist militant organization based in northeastern Nigeria, with the overarching aim of establishing a fundamentalist Islamic state.²⁷ Founded by Mohammed Yusuf in 2002, the group has been led by Abubakar Shekau since 2009 and is officially named “Jamā’at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da’wah wa’l-Jihād” which means “people committed to the propagation of the prophet’s teachings and jihad.”²⁸ The group’s activities are those typically associated with terrorism, including, kidnappings and mass destruction. Boko Haram uses a number of endogenous methods to finance their activities such as ransom payments, illegal operation of border exchange bureaus, hijacking of public transport vehicles, theft, enlistment of microfinance institutions, trans-border cattle theft and cattle trade, and supply of products used for terrorist acts.²⁹ The jihadist group declared allegiance to al-Qa’eda in 2010³⁰ and rapidly increased its military capabilities with the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), vehicle-borne IEDs, and suicide bombers (both male and female). They extended their operations into Chad in 2015, Niger in 2014 and Cameroon’s northern border with Nigeria in 2013.³¹

Boko Haram further pledged allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in 2015.³² In August 2016, the group officially split into two groups – Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), led by Abu Musab al-Barnawi, and Jama’atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda’awati wal-Jihad (JAS), led by a long-time militant Abubakar

Shekau.³³ Between the two factions, ISWAP is the one now officially recognized by ISIS while most attacks in Cameroon’s Far North region are carried out by JAS, the Abubakar Shekau-led faction.³⁴ Although Boko Haram has an estimated 4000 to 6000 hard-core militants operating in Nigeria,³⁵ it is difficult to track its estimated size in Cameroon. It has, since its emergence, killed tens of thousands, displaced millions from their homes, and was ranked as the world’s deadliest terror group on the Global Terrorism Index in 2015 and among the four terrorist groups responsible for the most deaths in 2017.³⁶ These increased attacks prompted the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), with the support of the African Union (AU), to deploy a Multi-national Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to degrade, decimate and defeat Boko Haram that remains a threat to security in the region.

Non-State Armed Separatist Groups in the North West and South West

The escalation of violence in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon brought to light several non-state armed separatist groups. These secessionist groups are determined to see the North West and South West regions of Cameroon completely separated from the rest of the country and form its own state referred to as “Ambazonia.” They have sustained their claims by relying on the logistical and ideological support of Cameroonians from the diaspora who played and continues to play an influential role in the emergence, escalation and maintenance of the current Anglophone crisis. The Ambazonia Defense Forces (ADF) which emerged in 2017, is one of the most prominent and active secessionist militant groups in the two Anglophone regions of Cameroon. It is the official military wing of the Ambazonian separatist movement and the military force of the self-declared Ambazonia, with an estimated 200-500³⁷ militants under its command.

The Southern Cameroons Defense Forces (SOCADEF) is also one of several militant groups participating in a conflict that has, in the last few years, rapidly grown in intensity. With a presence in the South-West region’s administrative division of Meme, SOCADEF was founded in 2017 to secure secession for the Anglophones and has an estimated 400 members.³⁸ It is the armed wing of the African People’s Liberation Movement (APLM), an Ambazonian separatist movement, and has carried out

27 Pérouse de Montclos, <https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/23853/ASC-075287668-3441-01.pdf>, 2014

28 *Ibid*

29 Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/fes-pscc/14200.pdf>, 2017

30 Pérouse de Montclos, <https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/23853/ASC-075287668-3441-01.pdf>, 2014

31 ISS <https://issafrika.org/research/books-and-other-publications/factional-dynamics-within-boko-haram>, Jul 2018

32 *Ibid*

33 *Ibid*

34 *Ibid*

35 IPSS, http://ipss-addis.org/resources/publications/nigeria_conflict_insight.php, February 2018

36 Global Terrorism Index 2018

37 ICG, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/272-crise-anglophone-au-cameroun-comment-arriver-aux-pourparlers>, May 2019

38 *Ibid*

several attacks with home-made bombs against security forces. Another separatist armed group that was created in March 2018 is the Ambazonia Self-Defence Council (ASDC). ASDC incorporates smaller militias like the Ambazonia restoration army (few dozen est. members) and other larger ones such as the Manyu Tigers (500 est. members), Red Dragons (400 est. members) and Seven Karta (200 est. members).³⁹

Several other separatist groups and recent self-defense groups such as theVipers (few dozen est. members), the swords of Ambazonia and Ambaland Quifor (200 est. members each) are also engaged in the conflict. Although they operate in different locations across the North West and South West regions, ADF and SOCADEF have claimed responsibility for most of the attacks in the Anglophone regions.

³⁹ *Ibid*

DYNAMICS OF THE CONFLICT

The hub of Boko Haram's terrorist attacks has always been in Nigeria's Northeastern Borno State. The Islamist group, however, extended its operations into Cameroon since 2013. The spillover has led to multiple displacements, suicide attacks, bombings, kidnappings, targeted killings and village destructions in Cameroon's Far North region. In response to these terrorist attacks, the Government of Cameroon focused on militarizing the Far North Region and closing border posts. It also mobilized vigilante groups in order to improve the efficiency of government authorities and security services in the fight against Boko Haram.⁴⁰ The President further declared war on Boko Haram in May 2014 and promulgated Law No. 2014/028 of 23 December 2014 on the suppression of acts of terrorism.⁴¹ In addition, the Cameroonian Government received support in January 2015 from a Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) from Lake Chad Basin countries, overseen by the African Union (AU). Although the war decreased in intensity since 2016 due to various initiatives and interventions from the Cameroon Government and the MNJTF, Boko Haram's resurgence on Cameroon's Northern border with Nigeria was evidenced by attacks in 2019.⁴²

While Boko Haram is again recruiting fighters in Cameroon and attacking the Northern border, separatists on the other hand are fighting in the North West and South West regions to create an English-speaking state called Ambazonia. To appreciate the dynamics of the ongoing Anglophone crisis, it is necessary to understand the genesis of the conflict which began in October 2016. Lawyers in the North West and South West regions initiated sit-down strikes in all court rooms in an effort to protect the Common Law system and Anglo-Saxon culture of Anglophone Cameroonians. From sit-down strikes in court rooms, they began peaceful demonstrations with marches in the Anglophone cities of Bamenda, Buea, and Limbe. They asked, among others, for the Common Law system to be practiced in Anglophone courts and not the civil law used by the French-speaking magistrate. They also asked for a return to a two-state federation, as the best framework to guarantee the co-existence of both legal systems.

The government responded by sending security forces to fire tear gas on protesters and lawyers. Thousands of teachers and university lecturers in the Anglophone regions later on joined the lawyers in November

⁴⁰ Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/fes-psci/14200.pdf>, 2017

⁴¹ The offences provided for in this law fall exclusively under the jurisdiction of military courts and includes the death penalty for citizens who, either as individuals or in a group, carry out, abet, or sponsor terrorism.

⁴² ICG, Crisis Watch Database, Cameroon, 2019

2016. They protested against the deployment of Francophone teachers who spoke no English to teach subjects other than French in Anglophone schools. They also protested against the fact that Francophones disproportionately outnumbered Anglophones in the Anglophone universities of Buea and Bamenda. Given that they had similar issues, teachers' and lawyers' unions joined to form the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC).⁴³ People across professions, ordinary citizens and Anglophone activists later joined the protests, decrying the poor state of infrastructure and difficulty in accessing basic necessities.⁴⁴ They followed CACSC and began "Operation Ghost Town" which called for Anglophones to keep their children out of school and boycott businesses on certain days of the week. All schools were subsequently shut down in the Anglophone regions, only two months and three weeks after the start of the 2016/2017 academic year. As of June 2019, 4,437 schools were closed in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon, pushing more than 609,000 children out of school.⁴⁵

In response to the protests, the government of Cameroon created an ad hoc inter-ministerial committee to dialogue with members of the CACSC. CACSC presented, among others, a draft for federalism but their demands were met with unyielding opposition from the government which banned the organization on January 17, 2017.⁴⁶ Their activities were described as illegal and against the security and unity of Cameroon. The government proceeded to arrest prominent Anglophone leaders under the country's anti-Terrorism Law while others fled the country or went into hiding. The government also shut down Internet services in the two English speaking regions until 20 April 2017 when the services were restored after 93 days. This led to the upsurge of extremist leaders and separatist movements that began to demand the independence of Cameroon's English speaking regions rather than federalism. On October 1, 2017, Anglophone separatists declared the two Anglophone regions as the self-proclaimed "Republic of Ambazonia."

Since the beginning of the conflict, separatist/secessionist groups have killed military personnel, burned down houses and schools, and kidnapped and attacked civilians. At the same time, government armed

⁴³ ACCORD, <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/anglophone-dilemma-cameroon/>, July 2017

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ UNICEF, <https://www.unicef.org/media/57801/file/Education%20under%20threat%20in%20wca%202019.pdf>, August 2019

⁴⁶ Amnesty International, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/press-releases/2017/01/cameroon-arrests-and-civil-society-bans-risk-inflaming-tensions-in-english-speaking-regions/>, January 2017

forces carried out a “scorched earth” policy, tortured civilians, fired on crowds, made arbitrary arrests, and destroyed villages in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon.⁴⁷ The Anglophone crisis has since October 2016, caused mass displacement of civilians from the North West and South West regions. At least 3,000 have been killed, more than 200 villages destroyed and an estimated 500,000 displaced internally while an estimated 40,000 others have fled to neighboring Nigeria.⁴⁸ The crisis equally disrupted the educational system and livelihood in the North West and South West regions. Around 700,000 children were deprived of schooling in their home areas; one in three people were in need of humanitarian aid; and there was very low voter turnout in those regions during the October 2018 presidential election⁴⁹ and February 2020 parliamentary election.⁵⁰

In an attempt to appease tensions, the government created a National Commission on Bi-lingualism and Multi-culturalism, implemented a special recruitment of bi-lingual teachers in secondary education and translated the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (OHADA) Uniform Acts into English. The government also announced reforms, creating Common Law Benches at the Supreme Court and a Common Law section at the School of Administration and Magistracy. It also recruited English speaking trainee court clerks and decided to accelerate the decentralization process with the addition of a dedicated Ministry; the Ministry of Decentralization and Local Development. Moreover, the government prepared a ‘Government Emergency Humanitarian Assistance Plan in the North West and South West Regions’ and a Humanitarian Coordination Center to implement the plan. It further established the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Committee in November 2018.⁵¹

Although religious leaders proposed the holding of an Anglophone General Conference to address the Anglophone problem, the conference has suffered several adjournments since 2018. It, however, is no longer on the agenda of these religious leaders, especially as the government responded to international, regional and national pressure by organizing a Major

47 HRW, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/cameroon0718_web2.pdf, July 2018

48 ICG, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/cameroons-anglophone-dialogue-work-progress>, September 2019

49 Ibid

50 Aljazeera, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/02/polls-open-cameroon-vote-overshadowed-violence-boycott-200209054421982.html>, 9 February 2020

51 The Committee is responsible for organizing, supervising and managing the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-fighters of Boko Haram and armed groups in the North-West and South-West Regions willing to respond favorably, to the Head of State’s peace appeal by laying down their arms.

National Dialogue held from 30 September to 4 October 2019. The National Dialogue, which essentially dealt with the crisis in the two Anglophone regions, made a series of recommendations such as granting a special status to the two Anglophone regions and ensuring equality of English and French in all aspects of national life.⁵² Key separatist leaders, however, refused to attend the dialogue since their demands had not been met. They demanded, among others, the withdrawal of Cameroon’s military from the North West and South West regions, the release of 10 prominent separatist leaders who were sentenced on 20 August 2019 to life imprisonment on terrorism charges, and for the dialogue to take place on a neutral ground and in the presence of an international mediator.⁵³

On the last day of the National Dialogue, the government dropped charges against the official runner-up in the October 2018 presidential polls alongside other members of his party. They had been detained and charged with sedition, incitement to insurrection and hostility against the state, among other charges, since January 2019. The leader of MRC had declared himself the rightful winner of the presidential election before the announcement of official results. He was later arrested with about 500 members and supporters of his party after taking part in peaceful protests against alleged irregularities during the 2018 presidential election. The order of his release followed an earlier presidential statement issued on October 3rd amid the dialogue. The statement ordered the discontinuance of proceedings against 333 prisoners charged with offenses committed in connection with the crisis in the North West and South West Regions.⁵⁴ The Anglophone crisis has, however, become so complex and difficult to resolve due to the ‘irreconcilable interests’ of the key conflict actors. On the one hand, the separatists insist on fighting for an independent state while the government on the other hand, insists on ‘one and indivisible’ Cameroon. Moreover, an increase in risk and insecurity is likely to occur with the upcoming legislative and municipal elections planned for 09 February 2020, especially in the restive North West and South West regions of the country. It is, therefore, uncertain that conclusions of the Major National Dialogue will end the crisis and restore peace in the Anglophone regions.

52 <https://nationaldialogue.cm/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/GDN-Report-du-rapporteur-g%C3%A9n%C3%A9ral.pdf> also see <https://nationaldialogue.cm/blog/category/resources/documents/>

53 Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cameroon-security/cameroon-releases-333-prisoners-amid-peace-talks-separatists-say-not-enough-idUSKBN1WI23V>, October 2019

54 <https://nationaldialogue.cm/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/SGPM-en.pdf>

CURRENT RESPONSE ASSESSMENT

The African Union

Following the start of the Anglophone crisis in 2016, both the former⁵⁵ and current⁵⁶ AU Chairpersons have issued diplomatic statements expressing their concern about the continued violence in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon. They both have called for renewed efforts to address and find a lasting solution to the crisis through an inclusive dialogue. Moreover, prior to authorizing the deployment of an AU Election Observation Mission (EOM) to oversee the 7 October 2018 presidential election, the AU Chairperson visited Cameroon in July 2018 and condemned the violence and its ramifications. He asserted that dialogue is the best way to settle the differences that are fuelling the ongoing Anglophone Crisis. Similarly, the European Union (EU), Commonwealth, International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF), the U.S., France and the UK have all urged the parties to refrain from violence and engage in a dialogue. A joint mission to Cameroon by the Secretary General of the Commonwealth, Secretary General of OIF and Chairperson of the AU equally took place from 26-28 November 2019,⁵⁷ following the Major National Dialogue to encourage national peace efforts.

Although regional and international pressure appears to have contributed to the holding of the long-awaited National Dialogue, the country is yet to be discussed by the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC).⁵⁸ While politics related to getting a particular country on the AU PSC's agenda have prevented Cameroon from featuring,⁵⁹ it is possible that the AU subsumed the Anglophone crisis under a national banner, assuming that the incumbent government will handle the escalation of violence without having to incur regional or international attention.

ECCAS and Neighboring Countries

The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and most other neighboring countries are not actively involved in Cameroon's conflict issues. Only Nigeria, which shares a common border with the English speaking regions, has played a role in the crisis. It arrested 47 members of separatist organizations in

January 2018 and extradited them to Cameroon. In March 2019, the Federal High Court in Abuja ruled that the forced deportation of 12 Cameroonian separatists was illegal and unconstitutional. Among them was the self-proclaimed president of 'Ambazonia' who had applied for asylum in Nigeria. The court ordered their return to Nigeria. The government of Cameroon did not heed to the ruling and the military court in Yaoundé sentenced him and nine of his followers on 20 August 2019 to life in prison - a sentence that undermined efforts to end the Anglophone crisis through dialogue.

The Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC)

The Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), along with Cameroon itself, are particularly focused on the threat of terrorism emanating from Boko Haram. The Multi-national Joint Task Force (MNJTF) was created by the LCBC in 1998 to address cross-border security issues in the Lake Chad region. Its mandate was expanded during the Extraordinary Summit of LCBC member states and Benin in October 2014 to encompass counter-terrorism operations.⁶⁰ The task force, which has had to increase its troops from 7,600 (2015) to 10,250 (July 2019)⁶¹ through contributions by Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Benin and Niger, successfully carried out a military action in Cameroon and all the countries around the Lake Chad Basin where Boko Haram operated. Efforts of the MNJTF particularly recorded successes on ground in dislodging the terrorist group and considerably reducing their military capabilities with civilian casualties dropping from 2,000 in 2015 to 573 in 2018.⁶²

The United Nations and International Partners

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) adopted a multi-year humanitarian response plan covering the period 2017-2020⁶³ in order to respond to the urgent humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable populations, particularly in the South West and North West regions of the country. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) also issued a joint statement⁶⁴ in June 2018, on the abduction of education personnel

55 AU, <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20170118-0>, January 2017

56 AU, <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20181107/statement-chairperson-african-union-commission-release-school-children>, November 2018

57 The Commonwealth, <https://thecommonwealth.org/media/news/commonwealth-statement-joint-mission-cameroon>, November 2019

58 According to Article 4(b) of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU PSC), the AU PSC is the main continental body tasked with ensuring early responses to contain crisis situations so as to prevent them from developing into full-blown conflicts.

59 ISS, <https://issaffrica.org/pscreport/psc-insights/why-the-psc-should-discuss-cameroon>, April 2019.

60 The MNJTF was mandated since 2015 by the AU PSC to restore a safe and secure environment in the Lake Chad region that are affected by Boko Haram.

61 Nextier SPD, <https://nextierspd.com/download/mnjtf-so-far-so-so/> September 2019.

62 Ibid

63 OCHA, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/cmr_brp18_v1.3_light.pdf also see https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/2019_cmr_brp_20190219_summary_print.pdf

64 UN, <http://cm.one.un.org/content/unct/cameroon/en/home/presscenter/communiqués-de-presse/cameroon--joint-statement-of-unicef-and-unesco-on-abduction-of-e.html>, June 2018

and attacks against schools in the South West region of Cameroon. The UN Security Council, on its part, held its first informal meeting on the humanitarian crisis in Cameroon on 13 May 2019⁶⁵ while Switzerland agreed to mediate peace talks between the government of Cameroon and separatists leaders.⁶⁶ International partners have also played a role indirectly, via support to MNJTF. For instance, the US government in 2015 pledged a support package of US \$45 million for training and other defense services, and a further deployment of 300 troops in Cameroon to provide airborne intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance operations in the region.⁶⁷ The EU also agreed in 2016 to support the fight against Boko Haram by donating €50 million to MNJTF⁶⁸ while the UN has been committed to raising funds to assist victims of Boko Haram attacks. In addition, France used troops already on the ground for counter terrorism operations, while Britain, China, Canada, Israel and Turkey all provided logistical assistance. The US equally notified the Government of Cameroon of their intent to terminate Cameroon's trade benefits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) as of January 1, 2020 due to persistent violations of internationally recognized human rights.⁶⁹

65 HRW, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/05/13/un-shine-spotlight-brutality-cameroon>, May 2019

66 Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cameroon-separatists-swiss/swiss-government-to-mediate-cameroon-peace-talks-idUSKCN1TS2F0>, June 2019

67 IPSS, http://ips-addis.org/resources/publications/nigeria_conflict_insight.php, February 2018

68 AU, <https://www.africa-eu-partnership.org/en/stay-informed/news/eu-support-multi-national-joint-task-force-mnjtf-fight-against-boko-haram-eu-au>, August 2016

69 US Embassy in Cameroon, <https://cm.usembassy.gov/press-release-u-s-commitment-to-cameroon-remains-strong-despite-change-in-agoa-status/>, November 2019

SCENARIOS

Best Case Scenario

The best scenario for the Anglophone crisis will be a return to the original federal system which was abolished during the incumbency of the country's first president. This will be the best way to express the government's commitment towards resolving the Anglophone crisis and ensuring sustainable peace. Similarly, the current campaign against Boko Haram may lead to the decimation and total defeat of the terrorist group in Cameroon's Far North region and other neighboring countries affected by Boko Haram. If this scenario occurs, it will prevent the escalation of Boko Haram's operations in other regions of the country that are not directly affected by the group's terrorist attacks.

Most Likely Scenario

Although international⁷⁰ and regional⁷¹ laws, as well as the Cameroon constitution,⁷² guarantee the right to self-determination, the prospects of a negotiated secession are slim, given the government's stance against federalism or secession. The most likely scenario could, therefore, be the violent repression of the separatist groups and the continuation of the unitary system with some level of decentralization. This scenario is likely to occur given that the president signed Decree No 2018/191 of 02 March 2018⁷³, creating the Ministry of Decentralization and Local Development.⁷⁴ Important reforms

70 Article 1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
71 Article 20 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (also known as the Banjul Charter)

72 Article 20 of Law No. 96-06 of 18 January 1996 to amend the Constitution of 2 June 1972

73 <https://www.spm.gov.cm/sites/sites/default/files/decret%2002%20mars%202018.pdf>

74 The Ministry is responsible for accelerating decentralization by elaborating, following up, putting

are also underway to accelerate decentralization and implement recommendations from the Major National Dialogue. For instance, one of the major outcomes of the dialogue is the recent promulgation of Law No. 2019/024 of 24 December 2019, to institute the General Code of Regional and Local Authorities.⁷⁵ The law in its Part V, Chapter I, gives the two Anglophone regions a 'Special Status'⁷⁶ founded on their historical, social and cultural specificities. The parliament of Cameroon also adopted Law No. 2019/019 of 24 December 2019 on the Promotion of Official Languages in Cameroon.⁷⁷ The law guarantees the equality of English and French in all sectors of administrative, economic, social and political activity and it has been enacted by the Head of State.

It is, therefore, probable that compromises will be reached on the effective implementation of constitutional provisions for decentralization in Cameroon and this would likely preserve national stability by guaranteeing more inclusive decision-making. Similarly, the Cameroon government will continue its campaign against Boko Haram although this may not lead to the total defeat of the Islamist group. The group remains a major threat to security as it continues to demonstrate its ability to carry out significant terrorist attacks in Cameroon's Far North region and across countries of the Lake Chad basin.⁷⁸

in place and evaluating government policy in matters of decentralization and local development

75 <https://www.prc.cm/en/news/the-acts/laws/4049-law-no-2019-024-of-24-december-2019-bill-to-institute-the-general-code-of-regional-and-local-authorities>

76 This was done in accordance with the provisions of Article 62 of the Constitution

77 <https://www.prc.cm/en/news/the-acts/laws/4039-law-n-2019-019-of-24-december-2019-on-the-promotion-of-official-languages-in-cameroon>

78 ACLED, <https://www.acleddata.com/2018/08/31/can-boko-haram-effectively-function-despite-current-limitations/>, August 2018

Worst Case Scenario

The worst case scenario would be for the Anglophone crisis to escalate into a protracted civil war and/or eventually lead to secession of the Anglophone regions from the rest of the country. Although the separatist agenda asserts that secession offers the best solution to the ongoing Anglophone problem, it is an option to be avoided. This scenario, should it occur, could have negative geopolitical implications for the region. It may inspire a renewed Biafra separatist insurgency or lead to further disintegration as the North West and South West regions do not have a cohesive political agenda. It would also lead to the annihilation of the country's linguistic diversity and national unity. This is not only a major political objective of the Cameroonian government, but also strength and enriching feature of the country's identity. In the case of Boko Haram, the worst case scenario would be the extension of the Islamist group's operations to other regions of Cameroon. This would further destabilize the country and deepen the on-going humanitarian crisis.

This worst case scenario for both the Anglophone crisis and Boko Haram insurgency could also have a very negative effect on the achievement of the country's Vision 2035, 'an emerging and democratic country, united in its diversity'.⁷⁹ It could also make the implementation of continental development frameworks such as the African Union Agenda 2063, 'the Africa we want', and the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda a clear impossibility in Cameroon.

79 http://www.cameroon-embassy.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Cameroon_VISION_2035_English_Version.pdf

STRATEGIC OPTIONS

To the National Government

Enhancing and promoting democratic practices and cultures, good governance and the rule of law are all within the purview of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG). In line with this, the government should consider a return to federalism or undertake institutional reforms in order to address the deeper Anglophone problems and prevent Cameroon from slipping into total instability. In particular, existing constitutional provisions for decentralization need to be improved and applied rigorously so as to grant more autonomy to the different regions of the country. The government should also provide a timeline for the effective implementation of the Special Status granted to the Anglophone regions.

As per Article 3(f) of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the AU (PSC Protocol), the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and respect for the sanctity of human life and international humanitarian law must be sustained while solutions are being pursued. In this regard, the government should impartially investigate allegations of abuses against civilians by its security forces and hold them accountable. The government should also ensure that security operations aimed at preserving national stability are conducted with full respect to international and regional laws.

To the African Union and RECs

The AU PSC, in accordance with the AU Constitutive Act and Article 4(b) of the PSC Protocol, should have Cameroon on its agenda of discussion since the ongoing Anglophone crisis threatens an already unstable region. It should discuss Cameroon especially since the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the body to which Cameroon belongs, has not acted in any visible way with respect to the crisis. As the UN High Commissioner for Refugees remarked in a 2017 address to the United Nations, 'Neglected local crises gather pace and become transnational with broader implications.'⁸⁰ The AU PSC and African leaders should, therefore, end their silence on the Anglophone crisis and step in to prevent further escalation and spillover of the crisis into the region.

Despite claims by Cameroon's President that Boko Haram has been defeated, the terrorist group remains a real menace to Cameroon and other LCBC member countries. The AU, ECCAS, and LCBC should, therefore, redouble their efforts towards mobilizing additional resources and supporting the MNJTF so as to enable it play its role effectively in stabilizing the areas affected by Boko Haram's operations. This will be in line with Article 7(j) and Article 16 of the PSC Protocol, as well as Article 5 of the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Area of Peace and Security between the AU and RECs, which entrenches the need to promote close harmonization, co-ordination and co-operation between RECs and the AU in the maintenance of peace, security and stability in Africa.

80 UNHCR, <https://www.unhcr.org/59fb25ad4>, November, 2017

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CONFLICT TIMELINE

1960-2020

1960-1961 - French Cameroon gains independence in 1960 while British Southern Cameroon does it on 1 October 1961 by joining former French Cameroon.

1972 - Cameroon becomes a unitary state following a national referendum and is renamed the United Republic of Cameroon.

1982 - Ahmadou Ahidjo resigns from the presidency and Paul Biya is sworn in as Cameroon's 2nd president.

1994 - Fighting between Cameroon and Nigeria flares up over disputed oil-rich Bakassi Peninsula.

1996 - A new constitution that transforms Cameroon into a decentralized unitary state is adopted.

2002 - Ruling by the International Court of Justice gives sovereignty of oil-rich Bakassi Peninsula to Cameroon.

2008 - The parliament amends the constitution removing a presidential two term limit.

2011 - President Paul Biya runs for a third term and wins a landslide re-election with 78% of the vote.

2014 - Cameroon deploys around 1,000 troops to the border with northern Nigeria to counter the rising threat from Boko Haram.

2015 - Chad pledges military support to Cameroon against Boko Haram.

2016 - October Protests begins in the North West and South West Region of Cameroon against the imposition of French in the Anglophone regions.

2017 January - The government bans the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC) and shuts down Internet services in the two English speaking regions until 20 April 2017.

2017 September - Separatist groups emerge.

2017 October - Anglophone separatists symbolically proclaim the two Anglophone regions as the "Republic of Ambazonia."

2018 January - The Nigerian government arrests and extradites 47 Anglophone separatists to Cameroon.

2018 October - President Paul Biya runs for a seventh term and is re-elected with 71.3% of the vote.

2019 January - The official runner-up in the October 2018 presidential polls and other members of his party are arrested and detained.

2019 August - The military court in Yaoundé sentences ten prominent separatist leaders to life in prison on 20 August.

2019 Sept. 30 to Oct. 4 - A Major National Dialogue in a bid to end the Anglophone crisis is held.

2019 October 3 - Proceedings against 333 prisoners charged with offenses committed in connection with the Anglophone crisis are discontinued.

2019 October 4 - Charges against the official runner-up in the October 2018 presidential polls and other members of his party are dropped.

2019 December 24 - President Paul Biya enacted Law No. 2019/024 of 24 December 2019 to institute the General Code of Regional and Local Authorities. He also enacted Law No. 2019 of 24 December 2019 on the promotion of Official Languages in Cameroon.

2020 February 9 - Legislative and Municipal Elections are held.



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