Diaspora movements and the quest for self-determination in post-colonial Africa: The case of British Southern Cameroons (Ambazonia)

By

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Dedications

My grandparents, Akom Regina Osangnyu and Andu Puis Enukwa of blessed memory. My beloved wife, Enu Elizabeth Mmabatho, my darling daughter, Enu Cedar Osangnyu and my beloved son Enu Zion Nkeng Arrey-Ara.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

AAC1	All Anglophone Conference 1
AAC2	All Anglophone Conference 2
ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Database
ACT	Ambazonia Coalition Team
ADF	Ambazonia Defence Forces
AFCON	African Cup of Nations
AFGRAD	African Graduate Scholarship Program for Postgraduate Students
AGC	Ambazonia Governing Council
AGOA	African Growth and Opportunity Act
AGovC	Ambazonia Governing Council
AIG	Ambazonia Interim Government
AIPC	Ambazonia International Policy Commission
ALIP	Ambazonia Liberation Party
ALV	African Liberation Vanguard
APEC	Ambazonia's People's Emancipation Council
APNC	Ambazonia People National Convention
ARCC	Ambazonia Recognition Collaboration Council
ASC	Ambazonia Self-Defence Council
ASPAU	African Scholarship Program of American Universities
ATF	Firearms and Explosives
AU	African Union
AWARD	Ambazonia War Draft
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BAS	Brigade Anti-Sardinards(Anti-Sardinard Brigade)
BIR	Rapid Intervention Battalion
BYA	Bakweri Youth Association
CACSC	Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium
CAF	Central Africa Francs
CAF	Confederation of African Football
CDC	Cameroon Development Corporation
CDN	Coalition for Dialogue and Negotiation
CEMAC	Central African Economic and Monetary Community
CERD	Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
CFA	Financial Cooperation in Central Africa
CHRI	Cameroon Humanitarian Relief Initiative
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CMCS	Computer Mediated Communications
CNU	Cameroon National Union
CPDM	Cameroon People's Democratic Movement
CRP	Centre for Responsive Politics
CRTV	Cameroon Radio and Television
DAC	Diaspora Ambazonia Community
DDR	Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration Centres

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DGRE	The Directorate General for External Research
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
Dos	Divisional Officers
EFF	Economic Freedom Fighters
EMIA	Combined Services Military Academy of Cameroon
ENAM	National School of Administration and Magistracy
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
ESN	Eastern Security Network
EU	European Union
FARA	Foreign Agents Registration Act
FWCM	Free West Cameroon Movement
GCE	General Certificate of Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDZ	Croatian Democratic Union
HRC	Human Right Commission
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IG	Interim Government
IG-Care	Caretaker Interim Government
IOM	International Organization of Migration
IMR	Internet- Mediated Research
IPOA	Indigenous People of Ambazonia
IPOB	Indigenous People of Biafra
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IRIC	The International Relations Institute of Cameroon
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
KNC	Kamerun National Congress
KNDP	Kamerun National Democratic Party
LGA	Local Government Area
LRC	La Republique du Cameroun(The Republique of Cameroon
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam
MNJTF	Multinational Joint Task Force
MoRISC	Movement For The Restoration of Independence of Southern Cameroons
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontiers(Doctors Without Borders)
MTTB	My Trip To Buea
NAB	National Archives Buea
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NOWEFU	Northwest Fon Union
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NUKS	National Union of Kamerun Students
OAU	Organization of African Unity

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PIG	Prison Interim Government
RoA	Republic of Ambazonia
SCACUF	Southern Cameroon Ambazonia Consortium United Front
SCAPO	Southern Cameroon Peoples Organization
SCARM	Southern Cameroon Restoration Movement
SCAWOL	Southern Cameroon Women League
SCBC	Southern Cameroon Broadcasting Corporation
SCCOP	Southern Cameroon Congress of People
SCINGA	Southern Cameroon in Nigeria
SCNC	Southern Cameroon National Council
SCPC	Southern Cameroons People's Conference
SCSAF	Southern Cameroon South Africa Forum
SCWM	Southern Cameroon Women Movement
SCYL	Southern Cameroon Youth League
SDF	Social Democratic Front
SDOs	Subdivisional Officers
SNH	National Hydrocarbons Corporation
SOCADEF	Southern Cameroon Defence Forces
SONARA	National Refining Company Limited
SPLA	Sudan People Liberation Army
SWP	Southwest Province
TPS	Temporary Protected Services
TTA	Terminator of Ambazonia
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNOCA	United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa
UNPO	Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization
USA	US of America
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas
WCA	West Cameroon Association

Abstract

This study examines the role of the Cameroonian anglophone diaspora in the Southern Cameroons quest for self-determination over time. Besides secondary research, in the form of extensive archival and desktop research, it is based on primary research in the form of participant observation as well as interviews with a wide range of role players and analysts. Respondents include leaders and representatives of major Ambazonian organisations in the diaspora, activists, journalists, retired government officials, researchers in and outside Cameroon, and members of civil society organisations working for peace in the two conflict regions.

The analysis employs post-colonial, long-distance nationalism and deprivation theories. The involvement of the anglophone diaspora in the Southern Cameroons self-determination quest started in the 1950s among students from the Southern Cameroons based in Ibadan and London, and has been sustained until the present. The main drivers were the double standards of the British colonial government and the resultant underdevelopment of the anglophone regions, the flawed or incomplete decolonisation process, the francophone regime's centralisation of power and subsequent authoritarianism, human rights abuses by state security forces against anglophones in the North West and South West regions, continued socio-economic marginalisation, the collective stereotyping suffered by Anglophones in Cameroon, the central government's dismissive response to the grievances of Anglophones, and a growing political consciousness in Southern Cameroons. The failure of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) and the French neo-colonial influence in Cameroon have also played a significant role.

The study confirms that the anglophone diaspora has played a vital role in the Southern Cameroonian struggle for independence, by means of awareness campaigns, legal initiatives, funding, humanitarian efforts, diplomacy, and conflict mediation. Tactics include the unilateral declaration of Ambazonian independence in 2017, establishing a government in exile, utilising social media for propaganda and other purposes, setting up an external television station, organising non-violent protests and marches, enforcing Operation Ghost Town, forming militia groups, and economic sabotage. Additionally, they have formed alliances with local separatist organisations and used female activism to draw attention to the liberation movement on a global scale.

The diaspora movement also faces significant challenges, including limited military capabilities, limited financial support, and infighting within the government in exile. Other hurdles include the international non-recognition of Ambazonia's independence, an undemocratic culture within the diaspora movement and the government in exile, and

excessive secrecy. Various organisations and role players also disagree about the best way to end the conflict, and issues of greed, exploitation, criminality and economic opportunism persist.

This study finds that the case of the anglophone diaspora in the Ambazonian quest for independence confirms major tenets of post-colonial theory, long-distance nationalism and issues deprivation or social exclusion. However, it also finds that the diaspora movement faces long-term structural problems of legitimacy and accountability typical of internal and external liberation movements in Africa, which should receive greater attention from researchers.

Keywords: diaspora, self-determination, decolonisation, centralisation of power, secession, human rights abuse, inequality, long-distance nationalism.

1 Introduction

A major concern in political philosophy in recent decades (Archibugi 2003; Valadez 2018) has been the rights of groups to self-determination and, at its most extreme, secession. Since 1945 a total of 193 sovereign states with United Nations membership have been born; a threefold increase in 70 years (Griffiths 2016). This number excludes the Holy See and Palestine both of which have non-member observer status. Even though the number of sovereign states has increased dramatically since World War II, the demand for new states from aggrieved or marginalized minority groups has not abated. As of 2011, there have been 55 well-established secessionist movements around the world and many more potential movements have not yet been mobilized (ibid). Political events in Scotland, Catalonia, Kurdistan, and Taiwan serve as reminders that nationalism and the right to self-determination remain powerful forces in international affairs (Keating 2018). While the right to self-determination is exercised by many discontented groups or minorities around the world, it is of great importance to note that Africa has not been immune to secessionist conflicts (Engelebert & Hummel 2005). According to one study, post-colonial Africa has been plagued by many secessionist conflicts (Troco 2018). Engelbert and Hummel (2005) posit that several African states have experienced internal conflicts where some marginalised regions or ethnolinguistic communities demanded full independence from the mother state in order to create new, independent states since the 1960s. This includes: 'Angola (Cabinda), Comoros (Anjouan and Mohedi), the Democratic Republic of Congo (Katanga, South Kassai), Ethiopia (Eritrea, Ogaden, and Oromia, Afar), Mali (Tuaregs), Niger (Tuaregs), Nigeria (Biafra, Niger Delta), Senegal (Casamance), Somalia (Somaliland) and Sudan (South Sudan)'(McNamee 2012: 14).

Despite the current rise in secessionist conflicts on the African continent, only two cases have resulted in the formation of new states (ibid), namely Eritrea and South Sudan(Vhumbunu 2018: 134-159). 'Eritrea became a separate nation in 1993 after a protracted war with Ethiopia and South Sudan won independence from Sudan in 2011'(McNamee 2012:14 Ekeke & Lubisi 2019: 6). Somaliland, on the other hand, 'has been a de facto autonomous state since 1991, when it declared independence unilaterally following the collapse of the Siad Barre regime, which plunged Somalia into chaos'(Hoch & Rudincová 2015: 37-49; Arieff 2008: 50). Given the low success rate of insurgencies involving ethno-linguistic groups or ethnically homogeneous regions seeking to secede from their 'parent' states in post-colonial Africa, Eritrea and South Sudan's experiences are extraordinary. The few successful cases of secession in Africa 'can be attributed to the Organization of African Union (OAU) and its successor, the African Union (AU), as well as the international community's preference for maintaining the status quo'(Troco 2018: 20).

According to Konings and Nyamnjoh (2019),Cameroon provides an interesting secession case because it is one of the few countries in Sub-Saharan Africa to have experienced two colonial administrations at the same time (French and British) and because the Southern Cameroonian diaspora is playing a significant role in the self-determination conflict (Konings and Nyamnjoh 2019; Erk 2014). Since November 2016, this Central African country has been embroiled in a separatist conflict in which the two English-speaking regions (formerly known as British Southern Cameroon) have sought independence from the majority French-speaking regions to form a new state known as Ambazonia(Kondu et al 2022). This demand for self-determination may be regarded as an emerging issue, but it is in fact not new(Anyefru 2010; Atangcho 2008).The present quest and demand for the creation of a state of Ambazonia has been conceptualized by scholars as the anglophone problem(Agwanda et al 2020; also see Konings & Nyamnoh 2019). In addition to being a significant barrier to the Republic of Cameroon's attempts to achieve national cohesion and unity, this issue has also led to the resurgence of discussions regarding federalism and secession (Akum 2009). According to Konings and Nyamnjoh (2019), the problem can be traced way back to 1961 when the political leaders of the two Cameroons with conflicting colonial legacies -- one French and the other British -- agreed to come together and establish a federal state in which the two territories would have equal status. As opposed to what was expected, this did not result in equal status for both parties, much less the preservation of their distinct cultural heritage and identities. Instead, it became a transitory phase for the complete integration of the anglophone regions into a highly centralised unitary state (Konings 1999).

It all started in 1972 when then President of Cameroon, Ahmadu Ahidjo, abolished the 1961 Federal Constitution in favour of a unitary state(Awasom 2020). This change was followed by President Paul Biya's replacement in 1984 of the name 'United Republic of Cameroon' with 'La République du Cameroun', the same name that francophone Cameroon had before federation talks in Foumban (Amin & Takougang 2018). These changes, combined with extreme centralisation, created an anglophone consciousness of exclusion, exploitation, and 'assimilation' by the francophone-dominated state (Konings 1999). The situation deteriorated in 2016 when the government used excessive force to quell peaceful protests by lawyers and teachers, followed by SCACUF declaring the restoration of Southern Cameroons' (Ambazonia's) independence in October 2017(Robert 2021).

At the forefront of this Ambazonian dream of statehood is the English-speaking Cameroonian diaspora whose role has been very instrumental in leading and sustaining the conflict (Jules Roger 2018:1). Yet the role of its diaspora in the conflict, especially secessionism, seems to be under-studied (Erk 2014). It is therefore puzzling that, despite

the Cameroonian government and international community's widespread recognition of the role of the diaspora in the Ambazonian quest for statehood, this aspect of the struggle remains under-examined (Orock 2021). Some studies on the topic have focused on the grievances of the anglophones, others explain the anglophone problem and, to a lesser extent, the involvement of the diaspora, but an in-depth interrogation of diaspora mobilisation is still lacking (ibid). A major study by Jules Roger has focused on diaspora and the role of the internet, and 'interrogates the hypothesis that the sustainability of the anglophone separatist claims relies on important support from Cameroonians in the diaspora via social media' (Jules Roger 2018:11). According to this hypothesis, diaspora has contributed to strengthening anglophone identity and maintaining mobilisation among anglophone Cameroonians on the ground around the idea of an independent Ambazonia.

This calls for an in-depth investigation into the role of the diaspora, focusing on the origins, drivers, contributions, strategies and challenges in the quest for self-determination. Many 'diaspora-based organisations are currently fighting for the independence of Ambazonia, for example, the Ambazonia Interim Government (AIG), the Ambazonia Governing Council, the Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC), the Southern Cameroon Youth League and Movement for the Independence Restoration of the Southern Cameroons (MoRISC), and the Southern Cameroon Congress of People (SCCOP). These diaspora movements are mainly based in the United States, South Africa, Canada, Belgium, Germany, and the United Kingdom'(Jules Roger 2018:10-11; Orock 2021:1). The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of the anglophone diaspora in Southern Cameroons' quest for self-determination. The aim was achieved by looking at the historical origins of this diasporan involvement in the Southern Cameroon quest for sovereign statehood, the driving factors of diaspora involvement, their contribution or role in the quest for self-determination, the strategies employed to gain international sympathy, and support and challenges encountered in the course of this complex and lengthy crusade. Lastly, it reaches some analytical conclusions in the context of postcolonial theory as well as the added notions of democratic accountability and legitimacy and utilises these to develop a set of recommendations to all the parties involved in the conflict.

1.1 Problem statement

Secession was previously thought to be a rare occurrence in postcolonial Africa (Bereketeab 2012), and the idea was strongly opposed by independent African states and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), now the African Union (AU), to protect the territorial integrity of member states (Troco 2018). The AU adopted a restrictive view of self-determination which stands on the sanctity of colonially inherited borders at independence (Bereketeab 2012; also see Anyangwe 2018). However, secessionist demands have been on

the rise since the late 1960s following African political liberalisation (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 2019). Of all these claims, only Eritrea and South Sudan achieved independence in 1993 and 2011 respectively, culminating in the official reconfiguration of the continent's political landscape after several years of lengthy national liberation struggles (Bereketeab, 2012).

Recently, some academics have made an effort to explain why Africa has such a significant deficiency in separatist movements, and to pinpoint the internal and external variables that have contributed to their success or failure (Engebert & Hummel 2005; also see Lewis and Widmeir 2022). Surprisingly, they have not paid much attention to the Cameroonian secessionist movement (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019), and the role of the anglophone diaspora in the secessionist movement has also been overlooked. The seemingly overlook of this aspect of the conflict is a problem because the effort of the government to address or suppress the protest is being thwarted due to the support of the militias in Cameroon by anglophones Cameroonians abroad leading to prolonged suffering for the inhabitants of the two anglophones regions. Furthermore, even though its obvious the support of the diaspora in the Southern Cameroons quest for self-determination is not new, there appear to limited historically materials in the literature on the origins of such contribution, and how that contribution has evolved over the years leading to the escalating crisis in 2016 why has the government ignored their voices all this years and what changed in 2016 leading to escalations in the conflict. This study seeks to investigate and fill that gap in the literature by exploring the role of the anglophone diaspora in the Southern Cameroonian quest for self-determination. Focusing on previous scholarship by Orock (2021) and Jules Roger(2018) on diaspora mobilisation and secessionist conflict, this study provides an in-depth understanding of the Southern Cameroons as a case study by investigating the origins or emergence and the evolving trajectory of the role of anglophone diaspora mobilisation or involvement, the drivers or motivations for involvement in the conflict, the contributions and strategies that have been used in the global campaign for Ambazonia, and the challenges faced in achieving international recognition for the independence of the latter state. The research also demonstrates that secessionist conflicts can transcend the borders of nation-states.

1.2 Rationale for this study

Civil war and secessionist scholars are becoming increasingly interested in the relationship between diaspora mobilisation and secessionist conflicts (Koinova 2011, 2014). Over the years,the connection between diaspora mobilisation and separatist conflicts is piqueing the interest of civil war and secessionist experts(Koinova 2011, 2014; Wayland 2004). Most believe domestic explanations are insufficient to explain the onset, duration, and end of civil

wars (Sambanis 2002). The ‘increasing speed of globalisation has multiplied opportunities for diasporas to establish viable links to their homelands through the internet, global media, and low-cost transport’(Ibid:1). Since the 1990s, studies have shown that ‘international actors such as kin states, refugees, distant and regional powers and international organisations influence the course and outcomes of domestic conflicts, particularly secessionism’(Koinova 2011:1). The terrorist attack on New York and Washington on 11 September 2001, and subsequent attacks in other major western cities, have transformed world politics(ibid). Those attacks focused attention on the role of foreign residents in terrorist activities and boosted the security agenda in respect of diaspora communities (ibid). Conflict scholars have also become preoccupied with the detrimental impact of diasporas on domestic conflicts by radicalising them from abroad(Koinova 2013; Collier and Hoeffler 2002). Empirical evidence shows that diasporas created by conflicts in their homelands, such as the Albanian, Armenian, Irish, Tamil, Palestinian, Somalia and Eritrea diasporas, have helped to perpetuate conflict(Adamson 2019; Pirkkalainen & Adbile 2009). They have done this by maintaining networks and institutions involved in the conflict, raising funds, taking up arms, and joining local armed movements from abroad(Shain & Barth 2003; Shain 2002; Koinova 2018). However, they have also been engaged in peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction(Smith & Stares 2007; Orjuela 2008, 2018; Brinkerhoff 2008, 2016). Social media's growing significance has made it possible for diasporas to participate in politics both online and offline(Brinkerhoff 2009; Moss 2016).

As noted earlier, in the case of Cameroon, anglophone diasporas are playing a major role in perpetuating conflicts at home(Orock 2021). The Cameroonian government regards this mobilisation from the diaspora as a major challenge to its efforts to suppress the protests in anglophone regions Government officials have repeatedly stated that diasporans in Belgium, Canada, South Africa, Nigeria, the UK, Germany, and the US are playing a leading role in promoting violent conflict. On 17 February 2021, 61 members of Cameroon's National Assembly wrote a letter to the US Congress, partly to complain about the role of the anglophone diaspora in the conflicts(ibid).

Scholars have focused on the correlation between diaspora mobilisation and homeland conflict, especially secessionism, but the role of the Cameroonian anglophone diaspora in the Ambazonia conflict remains under-researched. This study has focuses on diaspora mobilisation and the role of the internet(Jules Roger 2018). Unlike the study by Jules Roger that also researched the role of the diaspora and the internet, this study looks at the genealogy and drivers of diaspora mobilisation, the activities of members of the anglophone diaspora, the strategies used by them, and the challenges they face in their advocacy for international recognition.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to add to the literature on secessionism and the role of diaspora mobilisation. It also generates a practical scholarly proposal that could be used by Cameroonian national and local policymakers to address the external sponsors of the conflict to engage in dialogue and restoration of sustainable peace in the restive regions. It does so through a historical prism, showcasing the importance of historical scholarship in understanding the genealogy of diaspora advocacy. The study uncovers origins or emergence and the evolving trajectory of the diaspora role in the conflict, revealing the colonial connection or roots of the conflict revealing that former colonialists have a responsibility to resolve this conflict by bring both conflict parties to the dialogue and negotiation table. by investigating the factors that motivate diaspora involvement in the quest for self-determination. The study also uncovers grievances by investigating the factors or drivers that motivate diaspora involvement in the quest for self-determination. These factors shed light on the causes of the conflict and aid in better understanding of the conflict. The study can also serve as a framework for dialogue between the government of Cameroon and the diaspora. Finally, recommendations are given that may benefit other countries facing similar conflicts and help to serve as a blueprint for peaceful negotiations.

1.3 Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to investigate the role of the anglophone diaspora in the Southern Cameroonian quest for self-determination, and to explore the implications for theorists as well as practitioners or role players in the ongoing Cameroonian crisis. More specifically, its objectives are to:

- To trace the origins of the involvement of the Anglophone diaspora in the Southern Cameroonian quest for independence.
- To evaluate the drivers of the diasporan involvement in the struggle for the liberation of Southern Cameroons.
- To examine the strategies employed by the diaspora to advance the campaign for the secession of Southern Cameroons.
- To establish the contributions by the diaspora to the campaign for achieving Amazonian independence.
- To identify and assess the challenges encountered by the anglophone diaspora in the course of its activities.

- Develop analytical conclusions from the foregoing, of interest to practitioners as well as theorists.

- Develop recommendations to all role players in the Southern Cameroonian conflict.

1.4 Research questions

- What are the **origins** of the diaspora's involvement in the quest for self-determination of the Southern Cameroons?

- What are the main **drivers** of the diaspora's involvement in the quest for self-determination of the Southern Cameroons?

- What are the main **strategies** employed by the anglophone diaspora to pursue the independence of Southern Cameroons?

- What are the **contributions** of the anglophone diaspora to the broader campaign for the self-determination of Southern Cameroons?

- What are the **challenges** encountered by these diaspora movements in the quest for the realisation of an 'Ambazonian' state?

- What **analytical conclusions** can be drawn from the foregoing? In what way does this study add to the literature on conflict in Africa and the parameters for its resolution?

1.5 Organisation of work

This study is organised into ten chapters. Chapter One (the current chapter) sets out the background to the study as well as its rationale, aim and objectives, the research questions, and the organization of work.

Chapter Two presents the results of a literature review. It presents a conceptualisation of self-determination and secession; it elaborates on the two types of self-determination, namely internal and external self-determination, the correlation between self-determination and territorial integrity; secession and African's stance on secession, and the drivers of secessionists' conflict comprising institutional factors and the failure of the post-colonial state. It proceeds with the case of diaspora movements and secessionism around the world and narrows it down to Africa's example of diaspora involvement in conflicts such as those in Eritrea and South Sudan. Finally, it presents a historical account of Southern Cameroons by examining the nature of the anglophone problem in Cameroon, the origins of the anglophone problem, the political development of British Southern Cameroons under the

Nigerian federation, the reunification of British Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon, the francophone predominance in anglophone Cameroon, President Ahidjo's termination of the federal union between Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon, President Biya's transition from the United Republic of Cameroon to the Republic of Cameroon, and the anger that came with these changes. The chapter also explores the introduction of multi-party politics in Cameroon and the intensification of anglophone agitations for federalism and complete separation from the Republic of Cameroon**.** Lastly, it examines the 2016–2017 lawyers' and teachers' peaceful protests, the Ambazonian statehood declaration, and how the diaspora has taken over leadership of the struggle from then until the present. The chapter ends with a conclusion of the main arguments.

Chapter Three, titled 'The making of the nation', sets out in greater detail the historical background leading to the formation or establishment of the present state of Cameroon and how this history has culminated in the anglophone struggle for self-determination. This comprises an elaboration on various perspectives on the nature of the anglophone problem, the German colony of Kamerun, League of Nations mandates and UN trusteeship, the political Evolution in British Southern Cameroons up to Nigeria's independence, the reunification of British Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon, Francophones predominance in public spaces in anglophone Cameroon, Ahidjo's termination of the federal union and the development of anglophone nationalism, Paul Biya, the change from the United Republic of Cameroon to La Republique du Cameroun, and the resurrection of autonomist sentiments in Southern Cameroon. The introduction of multipartyism and the intensification of anglophone agitations for federalism and later complete separation from the Republic of Cameroon leading to the 2016–2017 lawyers' and teachers' protests and the declaration of Ambazonian statehood

Chapter Four deals with the research methodology, introduces the qualitative research paradigm, explains the research design, research site and method of data collection which include key informant interviews, online interviews due to covid restrictions, participant observations and the use of national archives in Buea. The chapter concludes with a data analysis, considerations of reliability and validity of the data, ethical concerns regarding clearance from the University of the Witwatersrand, informed consent, voluntary participation, the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, and the avoidance of plagiarism in all materials used in the study.

Chapter Five explores the origins or the emergence and evolving trajectory of the involvement of the anglophone diaspora in the Southern Cameroonian quest for self-determination. The chapter starts with an introduction to the key argument in the chapter

and explains the trends and drivers of migration from Cameroon to other countries, especially western countries, for better opportunities and safe havens from political persecution. The origins and involvement of the anglophone diaspora is explored starting from the 1950s through the activities of the National Union of Kamerun Student body. The grievances that caused Southern Cameroon to join French Cameroon instead of Nigeria are highlighted and attributed to the underdevelopment of the Southern Cameroons, then an appendage to Nigeria's eastern region, Igbo domination, and factors like cultural affinities, historical linkages and the quest for self-determination.

This chapter also examines the reunification process by looking at the Foumban conference agreement, its operationalisation and how the Foumban constitutional agreement stands as the faulty foundation responsible for the present-day Southern Cameroonian self-determination conflict. The formation of the anglophone diaspora and its evolving role is categorised into three historical periods which are: pre-independence 1950-1961 and the activities of the national Union of Kamerun Students; post-independence beginning with the Southern Cameroons annexation; and political agitation from the Nigerian diaspora and the formation of the US and UK diaspora (1970-1980). Furthermore, the post-independence diaspora formations and their contributions continued with the emergence of President Paul Biya in (1980s -1990) culminating in increasing anglophone disenfranchisement, the formation of the Social Democratic Front party, the 'All Anglophones Conference 1 and 2', the rise of anglophone pressure groups (1990-2000s), and the 1999 Restoration of Independence Declaration by Justice Ebong Alowbede. The Ambazonia period which deals with the build-up in the diaspora from 2016 to the current anglophone conflict in which the involvement of the diaspora has become more significant (2016-2022) are highlighted. The chapter ends with a presentation of the key arguments in the conclusion.

Chapter Six discusses the drivers of the involvement of the anglophone diaspora in the Southern Cameroonian quest for self-determination. According to the analysis of the data gained from interviews, documentary analysis of secondary sources, archival sources and meetings attended during participant observations, there are numerous grievances which stand out as the motivations for anglophone diaspora involvement. The first is what anglophones refer to as incomplete decolonisation. Anglophone Cameroonians question the legality of the 1961 UN-organised referendum that saw the Southern Cameroons' reunification with French Cameroon. This argument hinges on the complaint that the UN Resolution 1608, which they claimed to have granted full independence to Southern Cameroons but was not implemented. However, the resolution only acknowledged the results of the February 11, 1961, plebiscite, leading to Northern Cameroons' integration with Nigeria and Southern Cameroons' reunification with the Republic of Cameroon. Anglophones also

argue that they were not given the option of full independence during the 1961 UN plebiscite, and that the two Cameroons never entered into a formal union treaty. Another factor highlighted by anglophones is that the francophone regime's centralisation of power left anglophones excluded in the union with French Cameroon. Claims of co-optation of anglophone elites was also voiced as a contributing factor that necessitated diaspora involvement in the struggle. Cameroon's regime authoritarianism is another catalyst – referring to the Cameroonian regime's violent suppression of the protests organised by the unions of anglophone lawyers and teachers in 2016. In addition, anglophone diaspora members complain of a prolonged history of human rights abuses by the Cameroonian government and are seeking secession on the grounds of remedial right. Anglophones in the diaspora are blaming the British colonial government for conspiring with France to deny the Southern Cameroons sovereign statehood. They preferred British southern Cameroonian integration with Nigeria. Other factors for anglophone involvement are the underdevelopment of anglophone regions, socio-economic marginalisation and gross inequalities. Anglophones in the diaspora complain of collective experiences of being stereotyped, branded or profiled with derogatory names like 'Anglo fools', 'enemies in the house', 'Biafrans', 'two cubes of sugar', 'ants' and ''cockroaches. Anglophones declare that the resilience of anglophones at home in resisting oppression, motivates them to support the struggle and redeem their homeland. The growing Southern Cameroon or Ambazonian consciousness is another motivating factor.

It should also be noted that the anglophone call for independence, as well as the current declaration of an independent Ambazonian state, has a lengthy history. As the struggle for an independent Southern Cameroons has evolved over the years, so too has the growing consciousness of this envisaged statehood in the minds of anglophones at home and abroad. This has led to the radicalisation of many young people who are now in the bush fighting for the freedom of Ambazonia. The failure of the SDF party, created with the intention of saving Southern Cameroons, plus the loss of the 1992 election demonstrated to anglophones that no English-speaking Southern Cameroonian will ever be president in Cameroon, so they are now seeking separate statehood. By and large, the French neo-colonial and imperialist tendencies in Cameroon angers Ambazonians. They want France to stop exploiting their natural resources. Ultimately, the Cameroonian government's dismissive attitude towards anglophone demands has made the latter believe that fighting for their independence is the best way to have their aspirations fulfilled.

Chapter Seven scrutinises the contributions of the anglophone diaspora to the quest for Southern Cameroonian independence. This includes its leadership role and contributions through the education of the Southern Cameroonians about their true history. It also

contributes through jurisprudence or public interest litigation, funding the struggle, providing humanitarian assistance, engaging foreign governments and international organisations for diplomatic push, and lobbying the international community to pressure Yaoundé's regime to seek dialogue and negotiation.

Chapter Eight explores the strategies used by the diaspora for the recognition of Ambazonia. These include the formation of a government abroad to lead the struggle, a unilateral declaration of independence by diaspora leaders, the establishment of the Southern Cameroons Broadcasting Corporation in South Africa, social media propaganda, non-violence, enforcing Operation Ghost Towns (which involve shut-downs on Mondays – more of which later), self-defence through various diaspora-funded militias, economic sabotage that has crippled CDC and Pamol PLC, the formation of an alliance with the Biafra secessionist movement in Nigeria, and the use of women activism or Takumbeng.

Chapter Nine investigates the challenges encountered in the course of the campaign to achieve sovereign statehood for Ambazonia. Firstly, diaspora-funded militias lack the capabilities to win a war against well-trained and well-equipped government forces. The self-defence groups have also lost some of their key leaders. Furthermore, key diaspora leaders like Ayuk Tabe Julius and his cabinet were arrested in Nigeria and sent to a Cameroon jail where they are now facing life imprisonment, and Ambazonia lacks the funds needed to fight a prolonged war with the government of Cameroon that has taxpayer money at its disposal. There is also infighting within the caretaker government, which is discouraging many supporters, plus a Cameroonian counter-Ambazonian effort. Until today Ambazonia has not been recognised by any member of the United Nations Security Council. Within the movement there is a commonality of undemocratic culture and secrecy, prejudices towards the views of other factions, dissent within the liberation movement and a drive to create a one-party state by the diaspora-led Interim Government (IG). The movement also suffers from an endemic lack of collective action, problems caused by anglophone political elites and blackleg-ism or infiltrators within diaspora nationalist movements. Ambazonian restoration activists in the US are being sued for their alleged roles in the conflicts and in the **a**nglophone diaspora there are divergences over the most appropriate resolution options. Lastly, greed, exploitation, criminality and economic opportunism have surfaced during the conflict.

Chapter Ten offers a summary of the findings, sone analytical conclusions, as well as recommendations.

2 Literature review: Conceptual and Theoretical Context

2.1 Self-determination and secession

These two concepts and their status in international law have been playing a central role in the political events surrounding Cameroon and its complex relationship with the two English speaking regions of Northwest and Southwest historically known as the Southern Cameroons(Ambazonia) for decades, as well as this study. The concept of self-determination is as old as the concept of statehood itself(Klabbers 2004). Initially applied conservatively to issues such as decolonisation, and as a justification for the break-up of multi-ethnic states, the notion of 'self-determination' is now also applied to the rights of indigenous people(Okeke & Obidimma 2022; Batistich 1992). The quintessential definition of self-determination is the right claimed by a 'people' to control their own destiny(Peang-Meth 2001; Emerson 1971). It denotes the legal right of a group of people to govern themselves and to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural futures (Olayode 2010). Among the earliest known historical examples of self-determination are the American and French revolutions(Connor 1973). Crucially, the US Declaration of Independence(4 July 1776) stated that governments derived their just powers from the consent of the governed, and that whenever any form of government became destructive, the people had the right to alter or abolish it(Carroll 1999).

The idea of self-determination was further developed during the French Revolution when its leaders promoted the idea of one nation, one state, and the belief that nations ought to have control over their territories(Keitner 2000; Throntveit 2011). Woodrow Wilson was among the first to contribute to this theory(Nawaz 1965: 82). Although he did not clearly define this principle, he subscribed to the belief that people should only be governed with their consent (Throntveit 2011). During World War One, Wilson, then president of the US, promoted the principle of self-determination as shown in the Fourteen Points (1918), one of the fundamental features of a series of treaties concluded under the auspices of the League of Nations (McWhinney 2007; Knock 2019).

2.1.1 Types of self-determination

In the case of Southern Cameroons, self-determination is obviously a vital issue. Ultimately, the issue is whether the former British Southern Cameroons has the right to secede or not, and whether this has been pronounced on by the UN or any other relevant international institution.

Self-determination has two dimensions, namely internal and external self-determination. Internal self-determination refers to the right of the inhabitants of a given territory to govern

themselves (Wehmeyer & Bolding 2001; Valadez 2018). This includes the right to exercise cultural, linguistic, religious, or political autonomy in a territory within a bigger state, such as Quebec in Canada and Catalonia in Spain (Sterio 2018, 2010: 137). Both Quebec and Catalonia exercise a certain level of autonomy within their mother states (Gade 2003).

External self-determination denotes the right of a self-identified group of people to separate from a mother or existing state and set up a new independent state (Emerson 1971). Over the years, the right to self-determination has been used to justify the secession of a people from its existing mother state under certain circumstances (Sterio 2012). These include situations where people are oppressed, or where the government of the mother state does not legitimately represent their interests.

External self-determination is relevant to colonised people, in situations of occupation, and in situations of severe oppression and human rights abuses (including war crimes, genocide, or crimes against humanity) (ibid). An example is the Republic of Kosovo, which declared independence and seceded from Serbia in 2008 (Borgen 2008). Kosovo's secession came after years of oppression and the killing of an estimated 12,000 civilians in the 1998–1999 conflicts (Warbrick 2008).

The right to self-determination was also used to justify the 2011 secession of South Sudan from Sudan following peaceful negotiations and a public referendum, and with the consent of Sudan, after years of civil war and violence (De Vries & Schomerus 2017). Since then, South Sudan has been recognised by most states and has become a member of the United Nations.[1] In other cases, where people seeking self-determination are not subjected to colonialisation, occupation or oppression (including massive human rights violations), such as in Quebec, Catalonia, and Scotland, international law appears to be neutral (Ekeke & Lubisi 2019; Moore 2005: 271). Instead, the quest for self-determination is left to domestic laws and political negotiations between the mother state and those people seeking the right to self-determination (ibid). However, secession that does not result from an act of aggression or the violation of a fundamental rule of international law is regarded as illegitimate (Christakis 2015).

The International Court of Justice (ICT) explicitly acknowledged this in its 2010 advisory opinion about Kosovo (Ekeke & Lubisi 2019). It stated that there were no applicable prohibitions on declarations of independence in general international law, and emphasised that the illegality associated with declarations of independence stemmed not from their

1 Following its declaration of independence, South Sudan has been recognised by most states and has become a member of the UN. Also see McNamee 2012.

unilateral nature as such, but from the fact that they were, or would have been, associated with the unlawful use of force or other egregious violations of general international law norms of a peremptory nature (Christakis 2011).

2.1.2 Self-determination and territorial integrity

The relationship between the right to self-determination and territorial integrity is controversial (Castellino 2007). The principle of territorial integrity is vital in achieving international security and maintaining stability among states (Gudeleviciute 2005). Article 1 of the UN Charter (1945) includes the maintenance of international peace and security as one of the organisation's foundational goals. The principle of territorial integrity is based on the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of a state (Okolo 2015). The importance of the territorial integrity of an existing state is reaffirmed in paragraph six of the UN Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, and the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the UN Charter (Fierstein 2008: 417; Houben 1967).

The Declaration also recognises that self-determination can legitimately disrupt an existing state's territory in extreme instances of oppression or colonisation (Summers 2014). This is a reference to secession, which results in changes in the borders of the existing state in order to create a new sovereign entity. (Internal self-determination does not threaten the territorial integrity of states, as it involves a demand for autonomy or greater autonomy within an existing state).

Although territorial integrity is fundamental to the existence of a state, the right of every human being to choose his or her destiny is fundamental to every human (Gudeleviciute 2005). This implies that in accordance with international law, people have the right to choose respect for their right to self-determination over territorial integrity, especially if they are subjected to severe oppression. which may result in their extinction as a people. States can only maintain their territorial integrity if they uphold the principle of equal rights and people's self-determination, without which separatist aspirations emerge among those who feel repressed or mistreated (Daes 1993; Shelton 2011).

This is supported by the UN Declaration on Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States which states that:

> 'Nothing shall be construed as authorising or encouraging any action which would dismember or impair, totally or in part, the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent states conducting themselves in compliance with the principle of equal

> rights and self-determination of peoples – and thus representing the whole people belonging to the territory without distinction as to race, creed or colour'(UNGA Resolution 2625: 1970).

In terms of this statement, a sovereign state's territorial integrity and political unity are sacred, except when it behaves in a way that violates the principles of equal rights and peoples' rights to self-determination, because its government does not represent all of its citizens equally(Gudeleviciute 2005). As a result, attempts to claim secession depend on representations by the people (ibid). Without regard to race, religion, or colour, the government of a state must represent every individual living on its soil without discrimination, which may result in secessionist sentiments(Whitby 2000). This implies internal democracy and the participation of all citizens in the democratic process, with no group being excluded(Fraser 2014).

This does not mean that secession and and/or external interventions are justifiable in all non-democratic countries or in any dictatorship, since human rights violations occur in almost all countries. However, persistent and extreme violations of human rights in almost any setting can be regarded as potential justifications for either secession or breaches of sovereignty.

2.2 Conceptualisation of secession

Following the fall of the Soviet Union, the idea of secession gained popularity on a global scale(Englebert & Hummel 2005; Bereketeab 2012). According to Doyle (2010:1), the definition of secession is still contested among scholars. In political discourse, the term simply refers to separate state formation (ibid). Etymologically, the word comes from the Latin word 'secede', made of two root words 'se' meaning apart and 'cedere', meaning to go (Pavković & Radan (eds), 2007: 4). Secession takes place when relations with an existing state are severed. Geldenhuys (2014) defines secession as the creation of a new state by the use or threat of force without the consent of the existing sovereign. He also states that secession is the formal withdrawal from an established, internationally recognised state by a constituent unit to create a new state(2011).

Kohen(2006) supports the above definition by claiming that secession is the act of separating a portion of a state's territory and population in order to form a new, independent state. Pavković and Radan(2011: 1) echo this and define secession as 'a process of withdrawing a territory and its inhabitants from an existing state and creating a new state on that area'. Glen Anderson(2012: 343) posits that 'secession is the withdrawal of territory (colonial or non-colonial) from part of an existing state to create a new state' and adds that

all instances of state creation are brought on by decolonisation. The majority of former colonies in Africa and Asia would be seen as secessions under this more inclusive definition.

Geldenhuys (2014) considers secession to be the use or threat of force by secessionists in opposition to the parent state. In this view, only a few situations, such as Bangladesh and recently established states like Eritrea and South Sudan, qualify to be classified as secessionist. This view limits secession to states created outside of a colonial setting, with Geldenhuys emphasising the importance of recognition by other governments as a requirement for statehood (ibid). Regarding this, Kohen (2006) claims that there are two types of definitions for secession: restrictive and broad. While restrictive definitions of secession only refer to procedures of separating non-colonial territories from internationally recognised sovereign nations in order to create new independent states, broad ideas of secession take into account all situations of state creation, including through decolonisation processes (Dugard 2013; Ker-Lindsay 2012).

This study is guided by Lemay-Hebert (2009), who defines secession as the political withdrawal from an established sovereign state backed by the legal consent of the state that loses territory as well as international recognition. The political and legal implications of this are that, in the absence of such consent and recognition, separate statehood is not feasible. A good example is the situation faced by Somaliland (Bereketeab 2012). On 18 May 1991, the Republic of Somaliland declared independence from Somalia during its collapse as a state, and has been a *de facto* state for 32 years. However, even though it has a clearly demarcated territory (at least on paper), a permanent population and a legitimate government, Somaliland is still not internationally recognised (Hoehne 2022: 280).

This lack of international recognition has rendered its secession unsuccessful; like nationalism, successful secession generally requires both internal and external recognition. As noted previously, there are different theories about and explanations of the circumstances that allow succession under international law. For example, Buchanan's 'remedial right to secession' proposes that secession should be permitted only as a remedy against undue occupation, exploitation, threat of extermination, a last resort for ending oppression and threat of cultural extinction'(Buchanan 1991:4). However, in Nielsen's theory secession can only be allowed in liberal democratic societies. He argues that 'our thinking about nationalism and secession should be significantly different when we talk about liberal societies and when we talk about nations of the former Soviet Union, the former Yugoslavia, or much of Africa and the Indian subcontinent, where the nationalisms in question are what Carol Prager aptly calls 'barbarous nationalisms'(Nielsen: 1998:254; Ekeke & Lubisi.

2019:3). However, even liberal democracies – including the US -- have resulted from secessions (Ekeke & Lubisi 2019; Antić 2007).

Horowitz (2003) is another opponent of secession. He believes that secession should only be permitted in decolonisation situations where all major players concur on the dissolution of a nation, often through international action. However, he failed to establish the conditions necessary for taking international action. But his argument that there is no reason to refuse the dissolution of a country once all parties agree to it through a consensus-based process is one that is simply impossible to ignore(ibid). A good example of such an agreement is Czechoslovakia (Young 1994). Another example where secession was achieved without too many casualties is Serbia and Montenegro (Hayden 2013). In the latter instance, the two parties consented to split up if 55% of voters supported Montenegro's secession, provided that at least 50% of voters participated in the referendum(Stephens 2015). According to Horowitz(2003), the argument that secession should be prohibited when the central government opposes it, even if the majority of the populace votes in favour of it, is problematic because it fosters instability by encouraging violent conflict that results in the loss of life and property. This should be the point where international action is required to resolve the situation, because the international community could recognise a secession bid by a federating unit and put pressure on the central government to consent (ibid).

One notable legal ruling that supports the doctrine of remedial secession is the Supreme Court of Canada's 1998 ruling in the case of Quebec (Vidmar 2021; Stribopoulos 2005: 1). The court stated that 'although there is no right, under the Constitution or at international law, to unilateral secession, the possibility of an unconstitutional declaration of secession leading to a de facto secession is not ruled out' (Crawford 1999: 85; Nanda 2000: 305). The eventual triumph of such a secession would rely on the international community's acknowledgement or recognition, which would have probably evaluated the legality and legitimacy of the secession in light of various variables, particularly Quebec's and Canada's actions(ibid). In actuality, the Canadian Supreme Court rendered this decision(ibid). The court's ruling that "the other clear case where a right to external self-determination accrues is where a people is subject to alien subjugation, domination, or exploitation outside a colonial context" should be taken into consideration when interpreting references to "among other factors" that may justify a secession(Ekeke & Lubisi 2019: 4). Numerous nations who recognised Kosovo's independence from Serbia invoked the doctrine of remedial secession (Bolton & Visoka 2010; also see Asatiani 2013). Following the conclusion of the Russia-Georgia war, the Russian Federation recognised the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia on the grounds of the concept remedial secession(Asatiani 2013). Remedial right was equally invoked to explain South Sunda's breakaway from Sudan, with Sudan agreeing

to the breakup, following decades of civil conflict and violence; leading to a peaceful negotiation and a public referendum(Ekeke & Lubisi 2019). Since then, South Sudan has gained international recognition and the membership of the United Nations. Thus, the right to self-determination is frequently invoked to justify secessionist claims.

2.3 Secession in Africa

Africa has experienced fewer secessionist conflicts than most other world regions (Engelbert 2013; Englebert & Hummel 2005). Apart from the exceptional cases of Eritrea and South Sudan, African states seems to have maintained their borders(McNamee 2012). The relative scarcity of secessionist conflicts in Africa is puzzling, for various reasons (Ba 2013; LeVan 2010). First, the heterogeneity of African societies provides fertile ground for secessionist conflicts (Engelbert & Hummel 2005). Secondly, African states maps are unfortunately, a construct of the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885, drawn by colonialists who as of that time had no understanding its ethnic, political, or geographic differences (Ekeke & Lubisi 2019; also see Uzoigwe 1984). States were formed by combining several ethnic and linguistic groupings, many of which, like the Ashanti, Yoruba, Buganda, and Igbos, had existed as separate entities prior to the advent of the colonists(Meredith 2011).

Furthermore, the governments of many African states find it difficult to fulfil their obligations(Colier & Hoeffler 1999; Englebert & Hummel 2005). This means that African states have a poor record of delivering basic services to their citizens who are mostly young people (ibid). Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler (1999) posit a negative relationship between schooling and the ability of nationalist leaders to mobilise populations and convince them to 'buy into' the rhetoric that drives secessionist movements (also see EngLeBert & Hummel 2004). In their view, less educated citizens are more likely to embrace manufactured nationalist sentiments, and less educated young males are more likely to be recruited into secessionist movements for lack of better lifestyle alternatives, thereby reducing the opportunity costs of violence(ibid).

According to Collier and Hoeffler(2006), wars are more likely to be separatist where the male population has a low percentage of secondary education. This chimes with Horowitz's claim (2003) that low-skilled groups are unable to compete and are more likely to seek protectionist advantages through secession (also see Horowitz 1981). Third, these nations have vast natural resources reserves that could sustain separatist movements(Béné et al 2009). Natural resources, particularly oil and other mineral products, appears to be an important, if somewhat ambiguous, factor in separatist conflicts (Englebert & Hummel 2005). Oil appears to be especially prevalent in secessionist civil wars (Karl 2007; also see Englebert & Ron 2004). Ross (2004) cites several case studies that link oil and other

minerals to separatist conflicts such as Cabinda in Angola, Katanga in Congo, and South Sudan.

Additionally, politics in Africa frequently amount to winner-takes-all situations because states are sometimes captured by ethnic groups that exercise dominance over others, essentially excluding them from state benefits and sometimes even making them 'targets of persecution' (De Smedt 2009; also see Branch & Cheeseman 2009). Given Africa's propensity for other violent wars, it is puzzling that these dominated communities do not resort to secession (Ekeke & Lubisi 2019).

As noted previously, not all African borders have remained unchanged since the end of colonialism. Two nations have broken away from union: South Sudan in 2011 and Eritrea in 1991. After a protracted conflict, Eritrea separated from Ethiopia as a result of an attempt by the latter's central government to limit the independence of the Eritrean judiciary (ibid; also see Cities & Asmara 2005). It failed to represent the interests of the people of Eritrea in this regard, prompting Eritreans to assert their right to self-determination (ibid). South Sudan's secession has cost at least 1.5 million lives and displaced more than 4 million people (Peets 2017). Although Eritrea and South Sudan are the only African countries to have successfully seceded and gained international recognition since the end of colonialism, there have been numerous unsuccessful secession bids. Somaliland, for example, has been a de facto autonomous state since 199(Arieff 2008: 60). It is not internationally recognised despite the fact that it has a functioning political system, government and police force, as well as its own currency. Furthermore, on 11 July 1960, the mineral-rich Congolese province of Katanga declared its independence from Congo-Léopoldville, led by Moise Tshombe. The Katangese state did not enjoy widespread support, and following a UN military intervention it was reintegrated with the rest of the country(Ekeke & Lubisi 2019).

Similarly, in 1967, Biafra in south eastern Nigeria captured the world's attention when its leader, the late Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, declared independence and subjected his people to a painful war with the Nigerian government, which ended in their defeat(Heerten & Moses 2014). However, Biafran secessionism has recently reawakened, championed by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB).

2.4 Drivers of secessionist conflicts

This section focuses on the factors that drive regional political elites or populations to seek secession. Several different sets of variables are commonly associated with separatism (Siroky & Cuffe 2015).

2.4.1 Non-institutional factors

These are structural variables such as a country's history, age, geographical features, population size and composition (Sandu 2014). Generally speaking, a nation is more susceptible to disintegration when it is younger because it has not yet gone through the difficulties of nation-building and national integration, which typically result in demands for self-determination from minorities or other groups that feel excluded oppressed from the country(Englebert & Hummel 2005; Butt 2017). Furthermore, potential or would-be separatists may find more favourable terrain in nations having two or more distinct land masses (like Pakistan before Bangladesh's secession). The probability of a nation disintegrating is higher in a country with a very large population size (ibid). Finally, the more culturally diverse a country's population, the more likely it is that they will seek separate paths to self-determination. This latter argument has several variants, but they all rely on the fundamental concepts of social heterogeneity and polarisation (Beran 2005). The legacy of inherited colonial borders is commonly used to justify views on cultural heterogeneity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013, 2018; Ouguergouz & Tehindrazanarivelo 2006).

2.4.1.1 The debate about colonial borders

Some authors argue that it is not practically viable to evaluate the dilemma of any state in Africa without referring to the artificial and arbitrary nature of many of its borders (ibid). According to Herbst (1989:693), "boundaries in Africa do not correspond with reasonable demographic, ethnographic or physical delimitations.'' Since being drawn by European colonial powers at the Berlin Conference in 1884, the majority of African borders have stayed the same—despite being artificial and arbitrary (Troco 2014:17).

According to Njoku (2010:339), there are two major schools of thought about borders in postcolonial Africa. The first believes that "post-colonial states should be adjusted to create homogeneous communities that can live in peace, while the second group supports the inviolability of inherited colonial borders, as agreed upon by African leaders at the OAU summit in Cairo in 1964.''(Njoku 2010:339; Keller 2007:1). Some scholars, including Engelbert et al., Hughes, Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Mhlanga, advocate the 'decolonisation' of African borders(Englebert et al 2002; also see Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018). Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Mhlanga, for example, argue that "while artificial state borders are not unique to Africa, their arbitrariness nevertheless has an impact on issues of nation-building and identity politics.'(Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Mhlanga 2013:1). The rather haphazard colonial demarcations merged disparate groups into single polities, which have tended to encourage instability as they fight one another or dominance and control(Ikome 2012: 16).

Artificial borders have also resulted in the regionalisation of instability and conflict, producing chaos and even anarchy in some areas such as the Mano River in West Africa, the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa (ibid). The consequence of border-engineered identity conflicts within states is weakened state capacities to govern in some areas, leading to the brutal use of force. which causes more social instability and feelings of exclusion. It also encourages irredentism, thereby undermining integration and nation-building objectives. In short, it has been practically impossible to achieve viable stability and enduring peace and security in and among many African states. By the late 1990s, the majority of Africa's states have experienced some form of boundary-related conflict (Mukisa 1997). These conflicts centre on questions of trans-boundary minorities, trans-boundary resources, unclear frontiers, and contestation or difficulties in implementing existing colonial and post-colonial boundary agreements(Nordquist 2010).

Although some of the conflicts have been promptly resolved through bilateral negotiations or third-party facilitation (Côte d'Ivoire–Liberia 1960/1961, Mali–Mauritania 1960/1963 and Dahomey–Bissau–Niger 1963/1965), others have been protracted, for example Ethiopia–Somalia (1950 to 1978 and beyond) and Cameroon–Nigeria (1963 to 2002) (Ikome 2012: 16). While subregional and regional mediation efforts have proved helpful in resolving some of these conflicts, others have been resolved by referring them to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) (ibid). These include the Guinea Bissau–Senegal border conflict that was ended by an ICJ ruling in 1992, the Tunisia–Libya boundary dispute that received an ICJ ruling in 1994, the Libya–Chad claims over the Auzou Stripe, brought to closure by an ICJ verdict in 1994, and the Cameroon–Nigeria border conflict that was settled by a ICJ verdict in 2002 (ibid).

Engelbert et al (2002:1903) argued that there exists sufficient facts to support the claims that Africa has paid a substantial price for refusing to challenge some of the arbitrary borders it inherited from colonialism. Specifically, "it has paid the price for failing to decolonise its borders in terms of interstate disputes, civil wars, political instability and secessionist conflicts" (ibid:1118). Nevertheless, advocates of the sanctity of African borders, as upheld by the OAU and AU, often criticise this view. The idea of the sanctity of colonial boundaries dates back to the founding charter of the OAU in 1963 in which member states pledged 'respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each state'(Griffiths 1986:213). This decision was reiterated at the OAU summit in Cairo in 1964, when African presidents noted that boundary issues comprises a 'grave and permanent' source of discordancy, and all member nations agreeing to uphold borders at national independence(Troco, 2014:28, Foucher 2020, Griffiths 1986:213).

Herbst (1989) argues that most African borders have remained unchanged since independence because they continue to serve the political needs of present-day African leaders.

It is common cause that colonial borders in Africa separated major ethnic groups into different colonial entities. Whether intentional or not, this served the interests of colonial powers as it weakened the ethnic identity or solidarity of inhabitants, thereby making it easier to retain social control. This formed part of the general colonial strategy of divide and rule. However, echoing Herbst, Musau(2009) argues that post-independence political elites have also used or exploited these divisions for political means.

The cultural heterogeneity of many contemporary African states is a legacy of colonially inherited borders. Secessionist movements(typically cultural minorities) frequently assert that it is hard for them to live up to their own ideals because of cultural disparities with the rest of the population(Wimmer 1997; Ramutsindela 1999). These debates typically arise from language, ethnicity, or religion (Kapil 1966).

Designed without consideration for cultural distinctiveness, debates hold that colonial boundaries, confine extremely distinct population groups into a state, leading to less harmony between socio-cultural groups within the state(Dobler 2019).According to Calhoun(1993),particularised solidarities are strongest where colonial rule is organised along ethnic lines. Ethnic moral responsibilities can then serve as a foundation for strong intragroup bonds while impeding the formation of citizenship or nationhood(Malešević 2015: 85-99). From the explanations advanced above, both scholarly arguments and separatists assertions seem to be suggesting that socio-cultural homogeneity would facilitate coexistence in a single state(Dobler 2019).

However, Iain Walker's study(2007) of the Comorian Islands shows that although cultural homogeneity is a strong advantage, there are exceptions. Among the four Comorian islands, the study found significant sociocultural commonalities. Religion, kinship ties, language, social organization, customs that define traditional society, and even cuisine do not exhibit substantial variations(Dobler 2019). They would, Walker argues,

> '…form an ideal basis for the development of national consciousness but they are systematically denied by the Comorians, as the only unit conferring meaning to them is a state perceived as foreign and empty. The nation is not rejected due to cultural differences, but cultural differences are overemphasised out of an unwillingness to engage with the state'(Walker 2007:167).

Walker's claim that national belonging is not a natural byproduct of cultural uniformity can be applied broadly. There could be a wide range of cultural and identity disparities in any particular circumstance(ibid). If an established state provides a form of identity, this could lead to one possible set of social boundaries becoming privileged, cultural content can be connected to and eventually used as evidence of national unity(Barth 2010; also see Habermas 1990). In an entirely different political context, boundaries established in a totally different way can make more sense to the parties. Many parallels in the Comorian case are not Comorian. While some are shared with Madagascar, others with the Swahili coast. There are those who place the island on one end of a sliding scale with varying patterns in the region(Dobler 2019).

Without a state, separatist movements typically overstate internal homogeneity, emphasis privilege disparities with other groups, and reinterpret cultural contents. Separatist movements usually over-emphasise cultural and privileged differences (how deprived they are when compared with other regions) between themselves and other regions of the state to galvanise endorsement for their cause. By doing this, they want to present a story that justifies their own political arrangement, and should they become a state, the new structure may be able to improve the conditions for the perpetuation of a certain identity(ibid).

In summary, people do not become secessionist because they are too diverse, and based only on the Comorian example, people are not choosing to secede because of cultural differences; rather, political motives are the driving force behind secessionist attitudes. (Dobler 2019:168; Matsunaga & Yamauchi 2004; also see Rotberg 2010). Culture is significant after all but after the fact above. Culture contributes and may connect political concepts to personal identity. But the compelling essentialist thesis at the core of secessionism is that, ‘If we only had our own state, we could organise public life in coherence with who we are’(ibid:168).

While the most frequently cited reason for secessionist movements is cultural diversity, contemporary research has also highlighted the significance of economic and other material variables, such as the distribution and level of per capita income, human capital stocks, and the availability of natural resources(Gehring & Schneider 2020; also see Collier & Hoeffler 2006). Arguments about the economy are frequently linked to secessionist claims(Casertano 2012; Dobler 2019). Certain resource rich regions or wealthier areas believe they can thrive independently. For example, separatists in the Cabinda in Angola, Niger Delta in Nigeria and anglophone regions in Cameroon oppose the transfer of oil profits produced within their borders to the capital located far away (Ross 2004). On the other hand, impoverished areas, feel excluded or unfairly treated by the central government. For example, the Northern parts

of Mali and Namibia's Caprivi region, believe that the centres treat them unjustly (Dobler 2019). In some cases such as the Niger Delta, secessionists sentiments are fuelled by both resource endowment and a perception of poor treatment (Omotola 2006; also see Obi 2014). Separatists' leaders often demand for a larger or more equitable portion of the existing wealth of their regions (Buchanan & Levinson 2003; also see Sorens 2005). In order for their argument to be persuasive, they must also demonstrate that the new state would be economically viable on its own. Resource endowment aids in this, much as a deep-sea harbour or transportation hub aids in bringing in money for the proposed state (Dobler 2019:18). Therefore, the presence of natural resources, particularly oil and other mineral products, seems to have a significant role in separatist disputes(Englebert & Hummel 2005).

The presence oil appears to be especially prevalent in separatist civil conflicts. Michael Ross(2004) cites numerous examples that connect secessionists civil wars to oil and other minerals in places like South Sudan, Katanga in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Cabinda in Angola. Ross (2004) draws a comparison between natural resources that require foreign investments for their extraction and those that require little to no foreign investment, like alluvial diamond mining(ibid). He contends that the former increases the chance of secession since residents can only draw in investment if their region is acknowledged as a sovereign state. In the second case, people might be content to support a local warlord rather than pursue complete independence. These differences make it a daunting or challenging task to evaluate the anticipated effect of non-oil natural resources on separatism. Resources that require more infrastructure and investment, like oil, could encourage secession, whereas resources like diamonds might encourage warlords who are not separatist(ibid).

2.4.2 The failures of the postcolonial state or institutional setting

Some academics emphasised poor governance as the primary cause of African separatist movements. (Ndulo 2013; also see Bamfo 2012). Ylonen (2013:131) posits that groups confront the state as a result of the dynamics of marginalisation. This view is supported by Ndulo (2013), who contends that "failure of governance drives minority groups to think they have no voice in running the affairs of the state." This dissatisfaction frequently results in mobilisation under the guise of ethnic or territorial identity, with the assumption that rights of the group would be sufficiently safeguarded in a territory under self-government(Katz 1995:138). Similar to this, Bamfo(2012:37) argues that policy and ideological divides between the central government and a region or ethnic group may cause separatist sentiments to arise, which may or may not result in a secessionist conflict.

In summary, Ylonen(2013) states that in order to comprehend calls for self-determination, it is helpful to consider them within the framework of state marginalisation. This is

especially true for African states that have experienced colonialism in the past and have persisted in being extremely exclusive, as well as those that face difficulties stemming from a lack of legitimacy among certain segments of the populace. Dobler(2019) suggests that rather than emanating from cultural unity, a sense of national belonging comes from the usefulness of a state's institutions. Certain states, like the Comoros, are culturally homogeneous but have seen major separatist movements; other states though are culturally diverse but have not witnessed secession(ibid). Secession is also about the state and the functionality of the institution not just the culture. To understand secession, consider the role of the state's institutions in public life. For example, the first distinguishing feature of Comorian postcolonial statehood appears to be a mix of autocracy and instability, and coups have deposed more governments than elections(ibid). Once in charge, the majority of national and island leaders have clung to power via dishonest or illegal tactics until the next presidential candidate staged his own coup and the cycle continued as the latter criticised the previous administration for being despotic and pledged improvements(Young 2012). State institutions have undoubtedly become weaker as a result of instability, irregular regime changes and dictatorial self-centeredness, which has also harmed the public's perception of the state(Goldsmith 2001).

Ethnic diasporas may fuel separatist sentiment since they have a propensity to amplify ideals of ethnic purity, perpetuate grievances, lend irredentist support, and give money to regional groups(Englebert & Hummel 2005). Secessionist conflict actors like Sri Lanka's Tamil Tigers and actors in Somaliland, Eritrea, and South Sudan have all benefited from diasporic support(Shain & Sherman 1998). These diaspora actors are mainly presented as conflict facilitators. In the next paragraphs, the study looks at the role and contribution of various diasporan actors in secessionist conflict.

2.5 Diaspora movements and secessionism

The way nation-states, borders, identities, and conflicts have been conceived of in the post-cold war era is drastically different from the system that dominated much of the twentieth century(Clark 2001). One of the manifestations of increasing globalisation/transnationalism is the rapid movement of people across borders(Keitner 2002). Approximately 258 million people live outside their birth countries and this number does not include subsequent generations (Harris et al 2019). This migration of people is accompanied by an increased flow of ideas and communication, and a significant consequence is the rising influence of diaspora groups(Parham 2004; Sinclair & Cunningham 2000). The idea of diaspora is becoming more widely recognised with studies concentrating on circumstances and reasons a group may refer to itself as a diaspora or be called as such by others, irrespective of not necessarily fitting into academic definitions(Faist 2010; Anthias 1998). In order to obtain

political and material resources in their new country or state of birth, migrant groups may pretend to be a diaspora(Vertovec 2004). In order to fully realise the developmental potential of so-called diasporas, a number of sending and receiving nations, as well as institutions like the International Organisation of Migration (IOM), have undoubtedly developed social, political, and economic initiatives. The European Union (EU), for example, encourages diasporic entities to collaborate with it on particular co-development projects, realising that immigrants may be able to invest in businesses and infrastructure in their countries of origin if they send significant amounts of remittances there(De Haas 2012). These diaspora organisations, in turn, receive EU grants and gain social and political recognition in the EU and their home countries (ibid). The African Union (AU) also seeks to exploit the resources of the African diaspora, which includes all people of African heritage living outside of Africa(Edozie 2012). Similarly, the African Union has developed a broad definition that encourages African-descent individuals to develop pan-African commitments and investment strategies rather than a strong nationalist or ethnic stance (Weinar 2010; Walters 1997). International actors are working harder than ever to organise isolated migrant populations and their descendants (referred to as diasporas by these states and organisations) to implement global socioeconomic development policies (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2012a; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al 2012b). Many states are putting up extra-territorial voting systems so that their diasporas can take part in elections and feel more connected to and responsible for what happens in the motherland(Williams 2019; Ukwekwe 2018).

Diasporas are also seen as potential risks to peace and security Brinkerhoff(2011). Since the early 2000s, political scientists and experts in international relations have been investigating how a diaspora's bond with their home country is established and sustained over time and space, as well as how political elites 'have been mobilising diaspora' to be either 'peacemakers or peace-wreckers(Smith & Stares 2007). Whereas historical ideal diasporas are considered to be valid victim diasporas, numerous scholars and policymakers linked certain current diasporic groups with illegal violent attempts to re-establish control over their countries of origin(Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2012). The word ‘diaspora’ comes from the ancient Greek διασπορά which means scattering or dispersion in its literal sense(ibid). Although the Greek term initially referred to both the dispersion of people and the vast scattering of seeds, it is currently mainly employed in scholarly and popular debates to refer to peoples that have been forcibly displaced. According to Bauböck and Faist(2010), the concept risks losing explanatory power as it is applied to all migrant populations (also see Cohen 2022). In order to distinguish diasporic communities from non-diasporic migratory populations, scholars have emphasised a number of features(Sanfran 1991). Cohen(2022) lists a few traits that diasporas in the contemporary world have in common. The first is that

people who are part of the diaspora (and/or their ancestors) have been dispersed from their ancestral country. This dispersal may be voluntary (resulting from the desire to find work,maximise commerce, or colonise new territories and peoples) or involuntary (caused by forceful relocation).

In this context, Cohen list five diasporic ‘ideal’ types, namely victim diasporas (including , labor diasporas (like Indian indentured labourers); trade diasporas (including Lebanese and Chinese diasporas); imperial diasporas (like the British); and de-territorialised or cultural diasporas (Caribbean peoples and Roma) (ibid). Second, diaspora groups have a shared collective memory of their home country; this memory is critical since it is progressively transmitted to their offspring and other diaspora members in different hosting situations. The diasporans' assertions of alienation from the majority of people living in their host setting constitute the third common element. This claim may reflect or establish the foundation for the maintenance of a strong bond with the idealised homeland. As a result of idealising the ancestral homeland they may come up with political initiatives to return to that native homeland. Cohen's classification broadens the scope of Safran's(1991) earlier recommendations, which ideally revolve around two main points: first, the diaspora's focus on preserving and propagating a collective memory or myth of the original homeland; and second, the degree to which diasporas idealise, relate to, and attempt to restore the ancestral homeland(Shain 2007).

The quest for the restoration is motivated by a psychological attachment to the homeland, which could lead to the diaspora supporting violence in the ancestral land(Koinova 2011). A diaspora is not just a collection of immigrants from various time periods, but it restricted to those who consciously claim or assert their heritage.

The phrase is equally restricted to ethno-national groups, residing outside of territories contiguous to their country of origin, referred by Benedict Anderson(1998) as long-distance nationalists. The growing importance of the term diaspora has piqued the interest of scholars studying civil wars and secessionism in understanding the relationship between diasporan mobilisation and secessionist conflicts. Domestic-level explanations, according to Koinova (2011), do not adequately explain the onset, duration, and termination of civil wars. Studies in the 1990s started to observe that international actors such as kinstates, refugees, distant and regional powers, and international organisations influence the course and outcomes of secessionism(Koinova 2011, 2010; also see King 2018). Extensive empirical evidence shows that conflict-generated diasporas like the Albanian, Armenian, Irish, Tamil, and Palestinian ones have helped to perpetuate conflicts(ibid). A large number of civil war scholars include diasporas as external non-state actors in intrastate conflicts in their models

(Adamson 2013; Brinkerhoff 2009). Other scholars approach diaspora mobilisation from the perspective of transnational social movements, attempting to explain the conditions and causal mechanisms that lead to mobilisation. Some case study authors(Albanian, Croatian, Ethiopian, Irish, and Tamil) have documented diaspora engagement in internal conflicts (Koinova & Karabegović 2017). Diasporas send remittances and humanitarian aid, recruit fighters, lobby homeland governments and international organisations, disseminate propaganda, stage demonstrations, and access criminal network resources(Byman et al 2001; also see Hockenos 2018). Collier and Hoeffler propose a positive relationship between the proportion of natives living in the US and the likelihood of conflict escalation in their home countries.

They contend that migrant funding can fuel conflicts, and that diasporas can play a major role in reigniting wars after they after the wars have ended(Collier et al 2008). By sending large remittances to individual role players as or to welfare organisations close to insurgent or terrorist groups, diasporans often contribute to the escalation of conflicts rather than their peaceful resolution(Baser & Halperin 2019; Koinova 2011).

Cochrane(2007) highlights the fact that when diasporas are mentioned in the context of violent conflicts, the focus frequently tends to be on their tendency to fund continuation of warfare and a propensity to destabilise negotiations and peace building efforts. Existing studies focus on the activities of militant and hard-liner diaspora groups such as the Irish, Tamil, Sikh and Kurdish, and Eritrean diasporas(Baser & Swain 2008).The Irish community in the US is a leading example of diasporan involvement in homeland conflicts, and has been intensively studied(Féron & Lefort 2019).

There is growing evidence that, during the violent 1980s and 1990s, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) received significant financial support from the Irish diaspora (Horst 2004). Cochrane (2007) contends that Irish Americans were instrumental in the provisional IRA's commitment in 2005 to end its paramilitary campaign. According to Ganiel (2016), the Irish diaspora changed from publicly backing armed conflict to supporting peacebuilding efforts, as the objectives of influential civil society organisations gradually evolved from a united Ireland to a fair and effective peace process. According to Cochrane (2007), this coincided with the Irish American community's transformation from an immigrant/refugee community to an integrated, affluent, and well-connected segment of American society. As the Irish diaspora absorbed more fully into American society, they grew less concerned about what was happening in Northern Ireland(Mariani et al 2018). The demographic decline of the Irish diaspora brought on by lower migration rates, Irish Americans' growing distaste for violence,and the increased expenses associated with supporting political organisations

overseas in the wake of 9/11 all played a role in their reduced involvement in the Northern Ireland conflict(Ibid)

According to Binet (2016), the sudden increase in strength of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) during the summer of 1998 can be attributed in part to the spectacular fundraising efforts of the Albanian diaspora in the West. Furthermore, a significant number of Kosovar Albanians from the diaspora returned to Kosovo in the late 1990s to directly participate in the conflict(Demmers 2002).

Another observable group is the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora. Most of the Tamils in the diaspora perceive the guerrilla group known as Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) as an entity that represents hope and aspiration for all Sri Lankan Tamils(Baser et al 2008). The Tamil diaspora was therefore a decisive factor in the evolution of the conflict and the activities of the LTTE. It first contributed to the escalation of violence, by financially sustaining the main Tamil armed group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (Orjuela 2008). Described as the economic backbone of the militant campaign, the Tamil diaspora built a well-organised global network of offices and cells covering at least 40 countries through which they were able to channel funds on a very large scale to support the activities of LTTE (Joshi 1996; Fair 2005). It has been estimated that the LTTE had an annual income close to US$100 million, of which the diaspora contributed at least US$60 million a year (Gunaratna 2003). A large number of voluntary remittances from diaspora members thus reached the coffers of the LTTE, and their worldwide network also relied on force and intimidation to gather donations collected like tax(Orjuela 2008). In addition to its financial involvement, the Tamil diaspora was responsible for important political contributions that influenced the evolution of the conflict in Sri Lanka(Wayland 2004). It notably developed lobbying and publicity efforts directed at host countries' governments as well as civil societies, to mobilise international support and seek political sympathy for its cause(Pande 2017).

At the end of the nineties, the host countries of the main migrants (following the US in 1997) designated the LTTE a foreign terrorist organisation(Whitaker 1998). Following September 11, suspicions about funds channeled by the Tamil diaspora grew even stronger (Craven 2022). This reduced the LTTE's ability to raise revenue from the diaspora(Fair 2007) and reduced the willingness of members of the diaspora to be associated with a terrorist organisation which opened up space for individuals and organisations to advocate for nonviolent conflict resolution and power-sharing settlements. The Tamil diaspora eventually started to push for peace from the beginning of the 2000s and provided important competence in the peace process(Orjuela 2008). By and large, via substantial remittances, Tamil organisations and individuals helped the Tamil people who needed assistance in the

north-eastern Sri Lanka and other groups affiliated with the separatist movement(Zunzer 2004).

Another significant diaspora group that played a pivotal role in a separatist war is the Croat diaspora movement(Demmers 2007). This group heavily intervened in the independence war and provided strong support and financial aid to the Tudjman's Croatian Democratic Union which led to secession from the former Yugoslavia and the transition to a market-led economy(Pop 2008). Most contributions from the diaspora were used to support political operations of the opposition during the escalating phase of the conflict(1987–1991), with which the diaspora shared a desire to overthrow the communist regime and take significant strides toward independence(Mariani et al 2018). Through a donation of 4 million dollars, the diaspora funded most of the 1990 election campaign won by the HDZ(Brown 2013). Following this victory, 12 seats out of 127 in the parliament were reserved for diaspora representatives, and diaspora members were elevated to positions of significance in the new government(Bartulac-Blanc 2007). After the declaration of independence of Croatia in June 1991, the focus of the diaspora shifted toward the country's defence(Hockenos 2003).

According to Hockenos, during the hot conflict stage between 1991 and 1995, millions of dollars flowed from the diaspora to the HDZ). The diaspora essentially bankrolled HDZ's first election campaign in 1990 with an estimated 1.5-2 million US dollars (Kavish 2014). Similar to the Tamil case, the financial participation of the members of the Croatian diaspora was almost mandatory(Varadarajan 2010). Finally, Hockenos (2003) highlights the fact that many diaspora resources were used for campaigning in the host countries, lobbying the host governments for recognition of the new state, and seeking support from the international community. The Kurdish diaspora in Europe also substantially contributed to conflicts in the homeland by providing financial support to rebel groups(Baser & Swain 2008). The Kurdish diaspora raised large sums of money in Europe to financially support the violent activities in Turkey and most of these contributions appeared to have been voluntary (Bruinessen 1998).

Eritrean migrants played an active role from abroad in their homeland struggles. From the beginning of the 1960s, the diaspora-maintained links with the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and financially supported its struggle for independence(Bernal 2006), and its involvement did not cease after independence. From 1991, the Eritrean state notably asked the diaspora to contribute two per cent of their monthly income to the Eritrean government (Poole 2013). This contribution was not compulsory but qualitative surveys show that most Eritreans living abroad Eritrean consider it a duty(Mariani et al 2018). The diaspora also played a direct political role after independence and was largely involved in the process of

drafting the constitution, which was ratified in 1997. Not only financial support and remittances, but also recruitment of guerrillas to fight in the struggle for the homeland, is a regular phenomenon in diasporan groups(Baser & Swain 2008). Examples on this front are many and that is why, in conflict situations, diasporas are often seen as part of the problem not part of the solution(Demmers 2007).

Conversely, a growing corpus of studies reveals diasporas to be essential drivers of social, political, and cultural change in a less hostile and more beneficial manner(Baser & Swain 2008). Authors such as Cochrane(2007) emphasise the fact that although the capacity of diasporan groups to contribute to violence in their countries of origin and their reluctance to accept the political pragmatism required for peace processes are acknowledged by researchers and practitioners, insufficient attention has been given to their more positive contributions. There is sufficient proof that diaspora groups play a major role in advancing peace in their home countries(Horst 2008a, b). Pirkkalainen and Abdile(2009) highlight the contributions of the diaspora toward peace and reconstruction in post-conflict periods.

As a World Bank report claims, diasporas have taken part in efforts to resolve conflict and support peace-building projects, particularly in Eritrea and Sri Lanka, with remittances (Hoehne 1011). As was already indicated, diaspora groups have been both moderately and completely successful in supporting conflict resolution processes and they have also been actively involved in post-war reconstruction initiatives. There is growing awareness that diasporas are contributing significantly to achieving political compromise and peaceful conflict resolution in their home countries by means of lobbying governments, especially those of host countries and international organisations, and supporting the process of transition and reconstruction(Hall & Swain 2007). In Sudan, diaspora groups support several private radio stations, which are dedicated to transmitting programmes about prospects for peace(Haider 2014).

Diasporas often play a role as a clear third level between international and local peacemaking, thereby building bridges between their homes and host societies. They have worked as agents of peace to help mobilise the Sudanese population for the challenges that needed to be addressed in its post-conflict period. Similarly,following US military intervention in 2001–2002, diaspora groups in Afghanistan took on prominent political responsibilities to facilitate a peaceful transfer of power(Baser & Swain 2008; Baser 2012). Diaspora residents were crucial in mediation talks amongst different tribal factions for the establishment of the post-Taliban administration in Afghanistan (ibid). The example of Somalia is also notable since remittances are extremely important economically, and a large

portion of the expertise and funding needed to maintain continuing peace efforts come from immigrants' communities in abroad(Western nations).(Koser 2003; Koser et al 2004).

As is evident in the literature above, the concept of diaspora has much to offer for analysis and research. Diasporas exert radical influences on spirals of conflict at two distinct points: first, when serious human rights breaches take place within their country of origin and secondly, when government crackdowns on local moderate elites' activities cause them to lose faith in their capacity to carry out secessionist goals. Numerous studies have been conducted on the importance of diaspora remittances, their influence, and their role in fomenting conflicts back home.

However, the contribution of the diaspora in the Cameroonian anglophone self-determination struggle with emphasis on the emergence and evolution of its involvement, the drivers or motivations for their involvement, in-depth presentation of their activities/roles, their modus operandi or strategies and their challenges, are still under-researched. Significant studies on the Cameroonian anglophone conflict that focused on the role of its diaspora concentrated on explaining why separatist claims re-emerged in 2016 after being shut down for about 20 years (Jules Roger 2018). It illustrates how, in spite of the Paul Biya government's incredibly consolidated control, anglophone separatist aspirations were sustained over time. This study makes the case that 'the anglophone crisis in Cameroon is not just an identity dispute between Francophone and Anglophone citizens of the country, but also a conflict rooted in institutional and historical grievances, political rivalry, and regional politics including Nigeria, a bordering state'(ibid:4).

The study confirmed the theory that the persistence of Anglophone separatist claims depends on the critical support of Cameroonians living abroad through the use of social media and The diaspora has helped to strengthen the Anglophone identity and keep Anglophone Cameroonians on the home front mobilised around the concept of an independence Republic of Ambazonian. This mobilisation has mostly taken place online, particularly on social media, through the dissemination of hate speech and misinformation on social media sites like Facebook. Anglophone separatist movements have resurfaced as disorganised, dispersed groups of armed individuals who do not always collaborate, despite this significant virtual mobilisation(Jules Roger 2018:4). The division among anglophones is making the negotiations with the Cameroonian government more challenging. By and large, the study also examined how this mobilisation was been perceived by foreign media by doing a content analysis of its coverage by the BBC and Jeune Afrique. That is, whether the media presented the mobilisation as justifiable or dangerous. The study revealed that the

reporting was unbiased and tended to focus primarily on the government's response to the mobilization(Ibid:79).

Similar work on the topic is a policy insight by Orock that explores the background to the anglophone conflict and their prospects for peace(Orock 2021). The study argues that anglophone grievances are historical and rooted in the colonial history of British Southern Cameroons, and also institutional with regard to failures of the post-colonial state. The study argues that apart from historical linkages to the conflict, the present conflict is fuelled by the Cameroon government's authoritarianism manifested through the francophone dominated long-term disregard of anglophone complaints of neglect and marginalisation over more than 60 years (ibid). Furthermore, the paper emphasises that the immediate catalyst of the war has to do with the government's violent crackdown on protests by the anglophone teachers and lawyers trade unions in late 2016(Orock 2021).

The studies presented above reveal a gap in the literature in terms of a coherent historical account on the emergence and evolving role of the anglophone diaspora in the Southern Cameroons' quest for self-determination over the years. The literature also does not examine the drivers or factors which motivate diaspora involvement in the struggle. Though many scholars have written in general about anglophone grievances which have led to the quest for self-determination, no study seems to focus on the specific grievances of the anglophone diaspora, their contribution over the years, strategies or modus operandi and the challenges they facing to explain their support in the present conflict. This study builds on previous scholarships to further explore the role of the diaspora in the anglophone self-determination conflict. While other studies highlight key elements in its role, this study through key informant interviews and a review of the literature from the 1950s, provides a greater in-depth contribution to the experiences of the Southern Cameroons. The study also reveals the modus operandi employed by the diaspora and scrutinises the challenges faced by anglophone nationalists in the diaspora.

2.6 Theoretical framework

This study utilises three theories to frame and structure its enquiry, namely Postcolonial theory, Long-distance Nationalism, and Deprivation Theory.

A review of the existing literature on diaspora mobilisation and conflict aids the understanding that in the contemporary world, group identities are no longer spatially or territorially bounded. This means people can influence events in their countries of origin or homelands from abroad(Demmers 2002). In fact, people often support, produce or cling to territorially based identities even though they no longer live in the territory. The internet

enables diasporans to actively involve themselves in violent conflicts at great distances from their homelands, and can influence conflicts by sending money, arms, and opinions (Brinkerhoff 2011). Postcolonial theory, long-distance nationalism and the theory of deprivation are used to frame this study.

2.6.1 Postcolonial theory

Postcolonial theory emphasises the lasting effects of colonialism on both the colonised and the coloniser(Heng 2018; Moraña et al 2008). It responds to colonialism and the complicated power dynamics that occur both during and after the colonial experience (Childs & Williams 2012; Ahluwalia 2012). Postcolonial theory can thus be seen as exploring the effects of imperialism on society, the individual, and the academic disciplines that study them (Loomba 2002). This includes the view that most African conflicts are path-dependent manifestations of their colonial histories(Achankeng 2013). Studies show that numerous conflicts in Africa are a natural consequence of Africa's colonial past(Okoyo 1977; Duala-M'bedy 1984: 10). Okoyo(1977), for example, posits that 'political instability is rooted in the very structure of society and, for most new countries, in their colonial past', and adds that Africa's post-colonial present can be said to have been fashioned by its colonial past. Similarly, Cohen(1995) asserts that the sources and consequences of Africa's internal conflicts have their roots in colonialism, the subsequent processes of de-colonisation and state formation, and the ensuing crises of nation-building.

According to Cohen, the colonial state was fraught with contradictions, and the modern African state was created by colonial powers out of ethnic and regional diversities and rendered conflictual by gross inequities in power relations and the uneven distribution of national wealth and development opportunities. In other words, a foundation was created for many of the conflicts experienced in the post-independence era. Duala-M'Bedy(1984) supports this view and asserts that the problems experienced by modern African states are largely based on their colonial past. Cohen(1995) also argues that. In many cases, the contradictions of colonial states were passed on to independent states through a flawed process of de-colonisation. Inter alia, he argues that 'conflict, recurring instability and bad governance in Zaire, Rwanda, and Burundi can be traced back to the hasty and unprepared granting of independence by Belgium in 1960' (ibid), and that the major wars in Angola and Mozambique emanated from the panicky decolonisation process administered by a revolutionary and chaotic Portugal in 1974-5 (ibid). He also traces the war in Sudan to the way in which the Anglo-Egyptian administration brought the North and South together but kept them apart under a separatist policy for most of the condominium rule, and then left them in a centralised unitary state without constitutional guarantees for the disadvantaged South.

Similarly, the roots of many current conflicts in Africa, especially in Western Sahara and British Southern Cameroons, can be traced back to colonialism and the decolonisation process(Achankeng 2013). This being the case, any thinking which regards the colonial factor as irrelevant is misplaced. The need for a colonial analysis remains pertinent because the workings of colonial culture are still with us and post-coloniality is highly engaged with colonialism (Thomas 1994). In the case of British Southern Cameroons, for example, the UK failed to bring the territory in its trust to statehood in accordance with the UN Trusteeship Agreement(Achankeng 2013). Instead, it lobbied the UN to hastily lump together British Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon without any constitutional guarantees for the former, which was far smaller and also disadvantaged(ibid).

Cohen's assertion about the flawed process of decolonisation has major implications for understanding the Southern Cameroons conflict and attempts to resolve such conflicts on the continent. If the causes and consequences of the conflicts have their roots in colonialism, the processes of de-colonisation and state formation and the ensuing crisis of nation-building, any attempt to resolve those conflicts must also transcend the concepts of 'new institutions that will increase participation, legitimacy, and redistribution' plus 'good governance' recipes to also address other problems(Cohen 1993). The colonial connection to the conflict necessitates the intervention of an active anglophone diaspora to complete the decolonisation process(Nkwi 2021).

2.6.2 Long-distance nationalism

This study is also guided by the ideas of long-distance nationalism and transnational nation-state formation(Schiller et al 2005; Demmers 2002). This is a form of politics in which ancestral identities are made central by diverse sets of actors including emigrants of different classes, political refugees, leaders of homeland governments and intellectuals(Schiller 2004; 2017). Long-distance nationalism 'resembles conventional localised nationalism as an ideology that links people to territory'(Schiller & Fouron 2001).It differs from conventional nationalism in that it refers to a transnational field of social relations between those who migrated and those who stayed behind(Waldinger 2013).

Long-distance nationalism binds immigrants, their descendants, and those who have remained in their homelands into a single transborder citizenry. Citizens residing in the territorial homeland view emigrants and their descendants as part of the nation, whatever other legal citizenship the émigrés may have adopted(Sobral 2018). Immigrants remain attached to those who stayed, sharing a sense of 'peoplehood' based not only on culture and history, but also on a continued commitment to the nation-state(ibid). They remain highly interested in national politics, and try to intervene in local affairs. Indeed, long-distance

nationalism or diaspora nationalism is not only related to homeland nationalism in ideological terms; in several cases, diasporas have played a historical role in nationalist projects of state-nation building, such as in Ireland, Israel, Armenia, Slovenia, Croatia, Sril Lanka, Eritrea and South Sudan(Dieckhoff 2017).

One of the first scholars to follow Benedict Anderson in analysing long-distance nationalism was José Sobral, who highlighted the relations between this type of nationalism and globalisation(Sobral 2018). He argues that long-distance nationalism is still nationalism, but is profoundly adapted to the conditions of a modern global system(ibid). In fact, ethno-nationalism and globalisation need to be seen as complementary rather than contradictory processes(Demmers 2002) and are closely embedded in the building blocks of globalisation. Today's current mass dispersals of migrants and the availability of rapid communication, including mobile telephones, internet, satellite television and electronic money transfers, facilitate efforts to organise social movements around homeland politics from afar (Schiller et al 2005).

Indeed, a short definition of long-distance nationalism is the binding together of 'immigrants, their descendants, and those who have remained in their homeland into a single transborder citizenry'(Diekhoff 2017: 271). National borders are not thought to delimit membership in the nation (Schiller et al 2005). The members of the nation may live anywhere around the globe and even hold nationalities in other countries yet still lay claims to the ancestral homeland(Fitzgerald 2006). Histories of nation-state building projects in disparate countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America contain accounts of the role political exiles play in the struggle to build nationalist movements while settled abroad (Wimmer & Schiller 2002).

In the first half of the 20th century, scholars used the term 'home country nationalism' to describe the continuing political participation of 19th and early 20th century immigrants to the US in nation-state building in their homelands(Skrbiš 2017). Several researchers reflect that immigrants often leave home with only very local or regional identities and dialects and learn to identify with their ancestral lands only after they had settled in the US(Schiller et al 2005). In these instances, there is a close connection between political movements in the homeland and emigrants who have settled abroad. For instance, during World War I, many migrants living in the US travelled to Europe to fight for their homelands(Kamruzzaman 2017). In 1912 to 1913, the Pan-Hellenic Union sent 42 000 Greek Americans to fight for Greece, and in 1914 Serbian Americans left to fight for Austria-Hungary and struggle for Serb independence(Soumakis 2022).

In the early 20th century, the governments of Germany, Hungary and Italy used their consulates abroad to sustain long-distance nationalism among their compatriots(Schiller et al 2005; Skrbiš 2017). This type of transnational politics has not only occurred in the US. Japanese and Italian migrants to Brazil have also maintained political identification with and connection to their homelands(Tsuda 2003). The Irish in England contributed to political movements centred on the Independence of Ireland(Tymoczko 2000), and intellectuals who have studied and lived abroad from colonised countries of origin including India, Kenya, Vietnam and the Philippines, have built movements for national independence and formed new national ideologies outside the borders of their homeland from locations in England, France, and Spain(Schiller et al 2005; Cohen & Fischer 2019). Therefore, long-distance nationalists are engaged in some form of political projects oriented specifically towards the territory they designate as homeland(Demmers 2002). Some members of a diaspora may be or may become long-distance nationalists, and take action to obtain, defend, or support political actions in specific territories designated as home(Schiller et al 2005; Schiller & Fouron 2001). Actions taken by long-distance nationalists on behalf of their reputed ancestral homes may include voting, demonstrating, lobbying, contributing money, creating works of art, fighting, killing, and dying(Schiller & Fouron 2001). The relationships between long-distance nationalists and their homeland governments vary greatly.

Long-distance nationalists adopt four different political stances towards their homelands, namely anti-colonialism, separatism, regime change, and participation (Schiller et al 2005). While one can distinguish these four different stances, one form may change into another over time(Martin 2014). All four stances have inspired nationalist movements among persons settled in various states over generations or even centuries; persons who may even hold citizenship in their adopted countries of residency. Assuming long-distance nationalism means that one continues to consider another territory as one's homeland (Schiller et al 2005).

The anti-colonial struggles of the 19th and 20th centuries generated long-distance nationalism (Wise 2004). These struggles were often started or organised by intellectuals and leaders who went abroad for employment or education and organised them from afar (Kamruzzaman 2017). In the process, they appealed to larger dispersed populations, urging them to identify with a homeland nation and act on its behalf. Long-distance homeland nationalists envisioned their ancestral territories as modern nations and initiated political movements to liberate them from colonial rule(Schiller et al 2005; Wimmer & Schiller 2002). During his 24 years spent in South Africa, Mahatma Gandhi became a long-distance nationalist and encouraged Indians settled in South Africa to continue to identify with India

(Schiller et al 2005). Sun Yat-sen, head of the Kuomintang Party, which spearheaded the republican revolution in China, had an overseas background, sought financial and political support from overseas Chinese, and did much of the organising from abroad (Adamson 2002).

Separatist movements that strive to establish autonomy within an existing state or succeed from an established state to institute a new government with its own territory, provide a second example of long-distance nationalism(Caspersen 2013). Among the political actors who contributed to the break-up of Yugoslavia, were people who defined themselves as Croats, Serbs, and Bosnians living abroad in locations as distant as Australia, Canada, and the US(Schiller et al 2005). Long-distance nationalists living in these locations also contributed to the division of Czechoslovakia into the Czech Republic and Slovakia and to continuing efforts to establish an independent Kosovo(Stubbs 1999). People identifying themselves as Eritrean but living in Europe and the US successfully organised a military and political campaign to obtain independence from Ethiopia(Woldemikael 1991). They even established an elaborate self-imposed tax structure to support the armed struggle and establish state structures. These political activists were able to draw global attention to the violent suppression of the struggle against the Indonesian occupation. The applicability of this theory to the Southern Cameroonian conflict cannot be overemphasised. Long-distance nationalists are spearheading the conflict from their hideouts abroad. They exhibit leadership, send remittances to families back home, fund self-defence groups, apply diplomacy, contribute to humanitarian aid, provide expert assistance and generate social media propaganda.

2.6.3 Deprivation theory

Diaspora movements are part of larger social movements(Palmer 2000; Rosenfeld 2010; Underhill 2019). Theories of social movements are therefore applicable to the involvement of diaspora movements in homeland conflicts (ibid). In the following section, this study looks at deprivation theory and how it can be applied to understanding the role of diaspora movements in Southern Cameroons' quest for self-determination. According to the proponents of deprivation theory, some social movements are born when certain people or certain groups of people in a society feel that they are deprived of a specific good, service, or resource(ibid). Within the deprivation theory camp, there were two branches, namely absolute deprivation and relative deprivation(Pettigrew 2015). The proponents of absolute deprivation treat the grievances of the affected group in isolation from the group's position in society(Palmer 2000; Rosenfeld 2010; Underhill 2019). Proponents of relative deprivation, on the other hand, regard a group to be in a disadvantaged position vis-à-vis another group in the same society(ibid). A group may be said to be relatively deprived when

a comparison is made between its situation and that of another identifiable group, and it is shown to be at a disadvantage(Agbiboa 2013; Birrell 1972).

Schulman and Petryna (2009) state that the concept of relative deprivation is based on the acknowledged tendency of people to evaluate their own situation through comparisons with others with whom they identify. Gurr(2015) refers to relative deprivation as 'the tension that develops from a discrepancy between the "ought" and the "is" of collective value satisfaction, and this disposes men to violence'(also see Saleh 2013). Relative deprivation is the difference between what people want and their value expectations, and between what they get and their capacity to accrue value capabilities(Gurr, 2015). In other words, a vast gap exists between what individuals or a group within a state desire or expect and what they possess when compared with other groups within the state. As measured by the average perceived difference between value expectations and value capabilities, the relative deprivation varies significantly in intensity(Gaskell & Smith 1984). People are thus prone to revolt when they lose faith on archiving their desires from the society and seriousness of their dissatisfaction and frustration is connected to the severity of inflation and depression. (ibid). The higher the degree of frustration, the greater the political instability. In short,

> '…the intensification of relative deprivation regarding political participation, prosperity, collective/communal values, and societal status can lead to a 'decline in ideational coherence' which consequently leads to a breakdown in the social order and to violence' (Saleh 2013).

This is the inability of the government to fulfil the expectations which it's citizens considered themselves to be deserving, leading eventually to disorientation amongst the citizenry and dissatisfaction towards the state(ibid). Societal circumstances that raise the intensity of expectations without raising capabilities cause discontent to grow more intensely(Gurr 2015; Saleh 2013). This widens the divide between the state and the disadvantaged group, and the wider that divide, the more the intensity and magnitude of violence. Deprivation theory, seemingly, provides a suitable explanation for the birth of some social movements. It also correlates with the events in Southern Cameroons where the anglophone community feels disenfranchised and marginalised by the Republic of Cameroon.

3 The making of a nation: the formation of the Cameroon Republic, and events leading to the anglophone crisis in Cameroon

Cameroon's anglophone region comprises two of the nation's ten regions, namely the Northwest and Southwest. It spans across 16 364 square kilometres of the country's total area of 475 442 square kilometres and is home to about 8.5 million of Cameroon's 24 million people(Awasom 2020:3). It is the cornerstone of the country's economy, particularly in light of its endowments in the commercial, agricultural, and petroleum sectors. The bulk of Cameroon's oil reserves, which make up one-twelfth of the country's GDP, are found off the shores of the anglophone regions (Awasom 2020; Ollong 2021; Neba 2022). At the same time, these two regions are at the centre of the instability of the Cameroonian state (Lekunze & Page 2023).

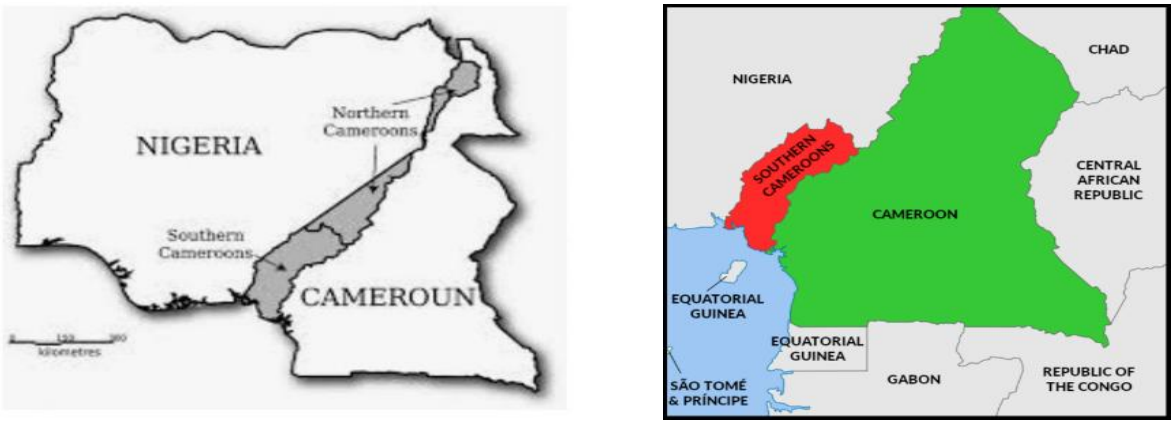


Figure 1: Map of Southern Cameroons as part of Nigeria and part of Cameroon

Source: Voices of Ambazonia.

3.1.1 Perspectives on the nature of the anglophone problem

Since 2016 the Cameroonian government has been engaged in a conflict with separatist fighters in the country's anglophone regions over what scholars term the anglophone problem(Awasom 2020; Konings & Nyamnjoh 1997; Kouega 2018). The state's efforts to promote national unity and integration have suffered greatly because of this age-old issue (ibid). Over the years, there have been numerous views on what constitutes the anglophone problem in Cameroon. This ranges from denying its existence through classifying it as a minority linguistic problem of marginalisation to an issue of flawed or incomplete UN decolonisation and a denial of the sovereign statehood for Southern Cameroons(Nyamnjoh 1999;Anyangwe 2010; Ayim 2010; Konings & Nyamjoh 2019; Agwanda et al 2020,

Awasom, 2020). First, the francophone intellectual class and some politicians contend that anglophones in Cameroon face no unique challenges (Awasom 2020). They maintain that the two English speaking regions of the state are facing similar issues as the other eight regions of the country, and that – notwithstanding claims of marginalisation and underdevelopment -- they are comparable to all other regions in Cameroon. They even assert that the English-speaking regions are given special preference and are not in worse shape than the other parts of Cameroon (Anyefru 2020). According to Awasom (2020), the state media has effectively utilised this stance to persuade the armed forces and a large number of French speakers that English speakers have no valid problems. The state uses this viewpoint to rally security forces and the vast majority of francophones against anglophones, portraying the latter as 'senseless political agitators' and 'troublemakers' who need severe punishment in order to make them come to terms with the state (ibid).

Other scholars present the anglophone problem as a 'linguistic minority problem' – of feeling assimilated by the dominant francophone culture (Agwanda et al 2020). Scholars in this category argue that without antagonism between French and English language speakers, everything would be fine, and there would be no conflict in Southern Cameroons(Jules Rogers 2022). They believe the conflict stems from the country's colonial history, notably its separation into two UN trust areas administered by the French and British, and the heritage of two languages that came with it(ibid).

In some francophone regions which host large communities of anglophones -- such as Douala and Yaoundé -- French is often the only language used to access vital public services. In Limbe, Buea and Bamenda, French is imposed on anglophones through both court and school systems. Feeling alienated, anglophones are annoyed by the double standards of the government whose official claim is that Cameroon is a bilingual country. This situation has been exacerbated by the appointment of non-English speaking judges and teachers to preside over common law courts and schools in Anglophone areas. Mbembe (1958) contends that the anglophone problem is not a language problem but stems from the authoritarian nature of the post-colonial state, and that anglophone Cameroonians cannot define themselves in terms of Anglo-Saxon cultural yardsticks (or the 'British way of life) because they are not British(Mbembe 1958). This implies that he places the anglophone problem in the context of the failures of postcolonial governance(ibid).

The anglophone issue has also been explained in terms of marginalisation or social exclusion(Fonchingong 2005; Chereji & Lohkoko 2012). Konings and Nyamjoh(1997) raise several social, economic and political factors thought to have given rise to anglophone nationalism. Fochingong(2005) agrees with claims about the marginalisation of

anglophones, proven by their poor representation in decision-making organs, the exploitation of natural resources in British Southern Cameroons without any benefits accruing to the local population, and the branding of anglophones as foreigners. He also notes that the marginalisation of anglophones was preceded by a process of assimilation, characterised by a strong desire on the part of the country's francophone-dominated administration to francophonise the anglophones as well as the institutions they had inherited from the British administration. Alienated anglophones are indignant about that they regard as second-class status in their own homeland. Moreover, Anglophone Cameroonians have long complained about the almost total domination of public life by francophone Cameroonians, who use their power and positions to marginalise anglophone regions in allocating resources for economic development(Orock 2022).

Other scholars argue that the anglophone problem is a problem of flawed decolonisation, notably the failure to uphold the statehood of inhabitants of the former British Southern Cameroons(Ayim 2010; also see Ashukem 2022; Maxwell 2020).

They recall that decolonisation led to the merger of French Cameroon and British Southern Cameroon in the Federal Republic of Cameroon in the form of two federated states, namely East Cameroon and West Cameroon respectively(ibid). While this started out as a federation, the administrations of both Ahmadou Ahidjo (1960–1982) and Paul Biya(1982) have been marked by the centralisation of political power. This has happened at the expense of the federal principles embedded in the 1961 Foumban reunification agreement, giving credence to the notion of a gradual erosion of anglophone institutions and their replacement by francophone ones(Awasom 2020).

According to Wanki et al(2002), the loss of statehood of West Cameroon as a distinct political community, defined by its inherited Anglo-Saxon distinctiveness of language, education, law and public administration, is at the core of the problem from which other grievances radiate. British Southern Cameroons (anglophone Cameroon) was a territory with internationally recognised and demarcated boundaries before the union with francophone Cameroon(Anyangwe 2010; also see Achankeng 2015: 11). It was self-governing with functioning democratic institutions which were illegally dismantled after the 1961 unification, thereby setting in motion a series of protests, the destruction of the anglophone nation, and its re-colonisation by the Republic of Cameroon.

3.1.2 The German colony of Kamerun, League of Nations mandates and UN trusteeship

Germany first began to establish commercial roots in Cameroon in 1868, and in 1884 the German empire claimed the territory as the colony of Kamerun. Following the German defeat in World War One, Kamerun became a League of Nations mandate territory and was split into two unequal territories, namely French Cameroon and British Cameroon(Fombad 2016; Kouega 2007). The former comprised one fifth of Cameroon, and the latter four-fifths (Clout 1996). In 1946, these League of Nations mandates were converted into United Nations Trusteeships, and independence became a pressing issue(Awasom 2020).

The two Cameroons were distinct entities under French and English administration, with clearly defined borders. These two colonial powers adopted divergent approaches to administering the territories under their control. France integrated the economy of Cameroon with its own, invested in infrastructure, and trained skilled workers. By contrast, the British chose to administer British Cameroons as an integral part of Nigeria, and further partitioned it into two parts, namely British Northern Cameroons and British Southern Cameroons(Konings & Nyamnjoh 1997).

According to Article 76(b) of the UN Charter, these territories were meant to evolve towards self-government and independence (ibid). In line with this, in January 1960, France granted French Cameroon its independence in the form of the Republic of Cameroon(Takougang 2018; also see Ndille 2016).

Britain hoped to integrate both territories under its control with Nigeria, which itself became independent on October 1960, but this did not work out as British officials had planned (Awasom 2020). In February 1961, a UN plebiscite was held in British Cameroons in which inhabitants were asked whether they wanted to join the Federation of Nigeria or the Republic of Cameroon. The option of full independence was not on the ballot, having been opposed by Andrew Cohen, the British representative to the UN Trusteeship Council, as well as African delegations.

British Northern Cameroons (which was largely Muslim) opted to join Nigeria, and became Sardauna Province, part of the Northern Region of Nigeria. By contrast, British Southern Cameroons (which was largely Christian) voted to join the Republic of Cameroon as one of two federal states, retaining the institutions it had inherited under British rule(ibid).

3.1.3 Political Evolution in British Southern Cameroons up to Nigeria's independence

The political evolution of British Cameroons after World War Two was a direct function of political developments in British Nigeria, from where it was administered(Akanji 2021;

Fanso 2009). Various constitutions were adopted which resulted in the establishment of various regional governments in British Southern Cameroons within the Nigerian federation (Odegowi 2011; Awa 2021). The first constitution was the Richards Constitution, which was introduced in 1946 and supported Nigeria's tripartite division. This essentially established the principle of regionalism,, with Nigeria divided into northern, western, and eastern regions, while British Southern Cameroons were incorporated into Nigeria's eastern region(Ajayi 2022; also see Budi 2019: 201).

The Macpherson Constitution, which superseded the Richards Constitution in 1951, introduced a federal system with a separation of powers between national and regional governments (Osezua 2021). Despite the fact that British Southern Cameroonians were represented in the Eastern Regional House in Enugu, as well as in the House of Representatives and Senate in Lagos, they yearned for a distinct political identity due to their status as a United Nations Trust Territory(Awasom 2020).

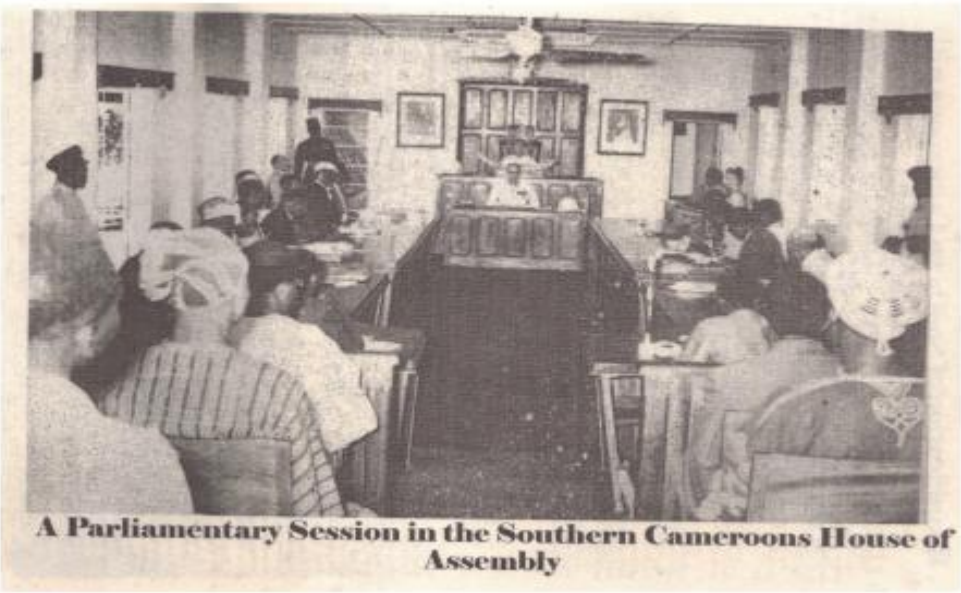
As a result, in 1954, British Southern Cameroons was made a fourth region of the Nigeria Federation under the Lyttelton Constitution, with E.M.L. Endeley as leader of government business (a title that was changed to premier at the London constitutional conference of 1958) (Takougang 2019). Elections were held in 1959 after Endeley's term in office had ended, and an opposition candidate, John Ngu Foncha of the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP), won and assumed the position of premier of British Southern Cameroons (Awasom 1998). Self-governing institutions were established, including a government led by the premier, a bicameral parliament made up of a house of chiefs and a house of assembly, an official opposition in the lower house, a judiciary presided over by the Chief Justice, a civil service, and a police force (ibid).

On 1 October 1960, Nigeria gained its independence, while British Southern Cameroons was still planning its future as a distinct territory(Achankeng 2012). By then it had attained a measure of self-government although it was still under British colonial control(Ayim 2010). The separation from Nigeria resulted in the adoption of the Southern Cameroons Constitution Order in Council, which went into effect immediately. Therefore, from 1 October 1960 to 30 September 1961, it was a self-governing territory responsible for all internal affairs except defence and foreign affairs, over which Britain retained jurisdiction (Awasom 2020).

Figure 2: Southern Cameroons pioneer leaders Endeley, Foncha, Jua and Muna

Source: Tatah Mentan.

Figure 3: A session in the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly



Source: SCAPO Online.

3.1.4 The reunification of British Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon

The unification of British Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon is regarded as the beginning of the anglophone problem. According to Awasom(2020), many things went wrong during the reunification that were never rectified. First, it led to the numerical domination of anglophones by the francophone majority, which controlled every element of life in the former British territory(Willis 2020). The anglophones also felt that they were disadvantages by the absence of the rule of law(Ashukem 2022).

The Republic of Cameroon was a federation, supported by a Federal Constitution (Achankeng 2015), and Southern Cameroons had its own government apparatus constituting a prime minister, a bicameral legislature, courts, ministries or departments, a police force and a public service (ibid). West and East Cameroon were meant to be equal partners, and given all the mutually negotiated constitutional safeguards, West Cameroon did not expect to be assimilated by its majority francophone partner (ibid). However, these were steadily eroded, and the francophone regime set out to wipe out the political identity of the anglophones(Ayim 2010).

Figure 4: J.O. Field, Southern Cameroons Commissioner and Head of the Executive Council, inspects a Guard of Honour in Bueua; The Prime Minister of Southern Cameroons and Head of Government, John Ngu Foncha, inspects a guard of honour at an official function in Bueua

Southern Cameroons Commissioner and Head of the Executive Council, Mr J.O. Field inspecting Guard of Honour in Buea

The Prime Minister of Southern Cameroons and Head of Government, Hon. J.N Foncha inspecting Guard of Honour in Buea

Source: SCAPO Online.

3.1.5 Francophone predominance in public spaces in anglophone Cameroon

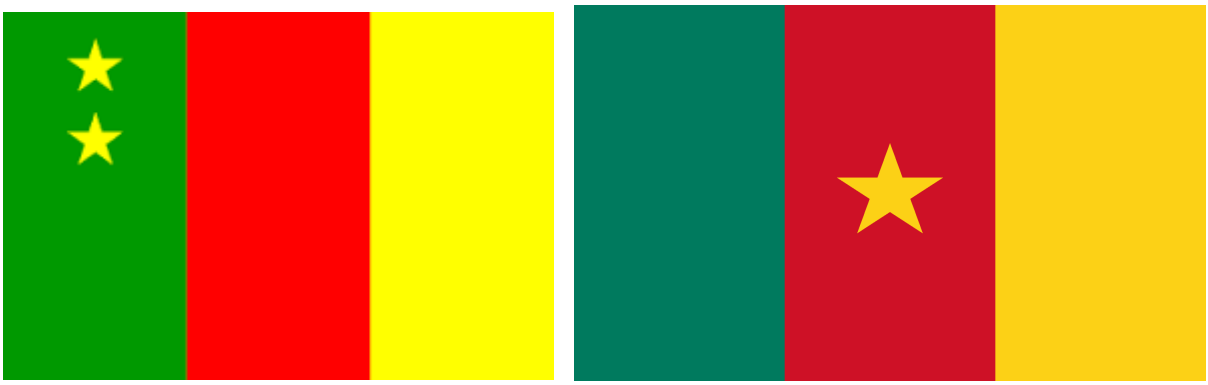
Francophone government officials were positioned in all spheres of life in the anglophone territory(Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003), and French became the dominant language of instruction despite the fact that the vast majority of anglophones did not understand it (Ndi 2014). By 1965, some of the residual powers which the West Cameroon government had sought to retain had been taken over by the federal government(Chem-Langhëë 1995; Ndi 2016). In addition, repression began with the implementation of random police and military checks in anglophone Cameroon(Anyefru 2008). This was something Cameroonian anglophones were completely unfamiliar with(Awasom 2020). As a result, many anglophone Cameroonians came to associate francophones with military oppression, fostering a spirit of anglophone rebellion (ibid).

Their frustration with the francophone Cameroon union was expressed in the *Cameroon Times* and *Cameroon Outlook* newspapers through the writings of a prominent anglophone scholar, Bernard Fonlon, who cautioned the leaders of the day that anglophone cultural and linguistic specificities should be protected by law (Awasom 2020). As a result, the leaders of anglophone Cameroon began to contemplate leaving the union that had robbed them of autonomy (Konings & Nyamjoh 2003). Among others, Augustine Ngom Jua, the prime minister of West Cameroon (from 1965 to 1968, is said to have seriously considered breaking away from the so-called federation and unilaterally declaring West Cameroon's independence (Awasom 2020). Arms were imported for this purpose through the Victoria seaport, but French security services foiled the attempt by seizing the ammunition (ibid).

3.2 Ahidjo’s termination of the federal union and the development of anglophone nationalism

While anglophones were debating how to best achieve greater autonomy inside the repressive federal state, Ahidjo devised yet another plan to abolish the federal system (ibid). This was thought to be motivated by the notion that there were large petroleum deposits in West Cameroon which would allow the anglophones to follow in the footsteps of Biafra and attempt to secede (Lon 2017). However, on 6 May 1972, Ahidjo surprised the anglophone public by announcing in the national assembly that he intended to transform the federal republic into a unitary state, provided the electorate supported this idea in a referendum (Konings 1999; Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003). The planned referendum violated Article 47 of the Federal Constitution which stipulated that any changes to the federal structure had to be approved by the parliaments of West and East Cameroon (Awasom 2020).

Figure 5: From two stars to one: Flags of the Federal Republic of Cameroon (left) and the United Republic of Cameroon (right).



Source: Fru Awasom (2020):

By then, multiparty politics had been abolished, and the single-party system worked in favour of Ahidjo's vision of a unitary state, which was accepted by majority vote, eliminating all hope for an independent anglophone Cameroon (Jua & Konings 2004): A total of 3 236 280 people registered nationwide to vote in the referendum. A total of 3 177 846 people voted in favour of the unitary state, 176 people opposed it, 1,612 votes were ruled invalid, and 56 646 people abstained (Fon et al 2022). Anglophone activists argued that the referendum should not have been held nationwide but rather in West Cameroon, which stood to lose the most, and that a free and transparent referendum could not be held in the context of a repressive one-party dispensation (Awasom 2020).

The resultant unitary constitution of 1972 designated English and French as official languages but stated that in the event of a conflict of interpretation of the constitution, the French version would prevail (ibid). It also stated that no procedure for amending the constitution would be accepted if this would undermine the republican character, unity, or territorial integrity of the state or the democratic principles by which the republic was governed (ibid). In essence, this meant that a return to federalism would be unconstitutional. To the anglophones, this signalled the complete assimilation of their regions and the erosion of their political autonomy.

The anglophone political elites challenged the unitary state within the framework of the single party, the Cameroon National Union (CNU) (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003). Dr Bernard Fonlon publicly criticised the creation of the unitary state as lacking a legal foundation during the CNU Congress in 1972 (Awasom 2020), and Foncha and Jua privately wrote to Ahidjo, stating that it would suffocate anglophone specificities (ibid). However, the authoritarian nature of the Ahidjo era coupled with the reality of a one-party state forced anglophone agitation against the unitary state underground (Takougang 2003:

187). Those few who attempted to protest were arrested and imprisoned Mukong 2009). The Unitary Constitution, which abolished the federated states of West East Cameroon and established an administrative order consistent with the unitary philosophy of governance, went into effect on 2 June 1972 (Konings 1999). Under decree No 72-349 of 24 July 1972, the United Republic of Cameroon was divided into seven provinces: two from the former West Cameroon and the remaining five from East Cameroon (Awasom 2020). Two stars on the green-red-yellow flag were the only remainders of the former federal states (ibid). According to Awasom (2020), the anglophones, who had never considered ceding their political autonomy, regarded this as a blatant provocation.

3.2.1 Paul Biya, the change from the United Republic of Cameroon to La Republique du Cameroun, and the resurrection of autonomist sentiments in Southern Cameroon

On 4 November 1982, after 22 years in office, Ahidjo resigned, ostensibly for health reasons, and was succeeded by Prime Minister Paul Biya (Takougang 2004), who pledged to create a more open society (Fondong 2022; Konde 2015). In response, anglophones sent numerous petitions urging a return to the federal structure of the 1960s (Awasom 2020). However, he quickly showed that he favoured even greater centralisation than his predecessor by introducing a national integration programme (Konings 2012; Fonchingong 2010). In August 1983, he split the anglophone region into Northwest and Southwest Provinces (Ngala 2020), and in February 1984 he changed the name of the country from the United Republic of Cameroon to the Republic of Cameroon (Fonchingong 2013: 224), arguing that the transition from a federal republic to a united republic and then a republic reflected progress towards resolving a problem caused by colonisation (Awasom 2020). The two stars on the national flag were replaced by one star, reflecting the total assimilation of anglophone Cameroon (ibid).

These changes provoked a reaction from prominent anglophones. Notably, the pioneer president of Cameroon's Bar Association, Fongum Gorji-Dinka, declared that Biya had effectively resurrected the francophone republic of 1960 without any of its institutions, which opened the path to its separation from francophone Cameroon (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019; Ashukem 2022).

Specifically, Gorji-Dinka claimed that the law [No 84-001 of 4/2/84] failed to state that the institutions of the United Republic of Cameroon were to be retained as institutions of the Republic of Cameroon, either by design or by default (Awasom 2020). As a result, the republic lacked a legal government, legislature, and other administrative institutions because it had not yet established its own (ibid). This also meant that Biya was neither the

president of the United Republic which had been abolished, nor of the newly revived Republic of Cameroon.

He also argued that the name Republique du Cameroun (Republic of Cameroon) constituted a return to francophone Cameroon which had achieved independence on 1 January 1960, and the exclusion of anglophone Cameroon, which had reunited with francophone Cameroun on 1 October 1961 (Awasom 2020). This mean that Biya's law legalised the separation of francophone Cameroon from anglophone Cameroon, making him a secessionist. As a result, Gorji-Dinka declared the restoration of the statehood of Southern Cameroons and asked the UN to intervene to ensure the peaceful separation of the two Cameroons (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003).

3.2.2 Multipartyism and the intensification of anglophone agitations for federalism and complete separation from the Republic of Cameroon

Gorji-Dinka's actions prompted the emergence of numerous pressure groups that questioned the legitimacy of the amendment to the Unitary Constitution of 1972 in the 1990s (Awasom 2008, 2020). When multiparty politics were reinstated in the 1990s Anglophones grabbed the chance to voice their desire for autonomy (Krieger 2008). The formation of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) by anglophone Cameroonians in the anglophone town of Bamenda and its subsequent inability to win the presidency in 1992 added to anglophone dissatisfaction and solidified their sense of exclusion from the Cameroon republic (Atanga 2011). The tensions that followed the 1992 elections and Cameroon's new multiparty system made it necessary for anglophones to think about revising the 1972 unitary constitution (Awasom 2020; Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003). In in 1993, in preparation for a constitutional review, anglophones held an All-Anglophone Conference (AAC1) in Buea, the historic capital of the former British Southern Cameroons, calling for a return to federalism (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019; Fonchingong 2013: 224). Biya ignored the anglophones, which prompted them to call a second All Anglophone Conference (AAC2) in 1994 in Bamenda, with some of the participants calling for a two-state federal system or secession in case Biya refused to address their grievances.

Following AAC2, several anglophone pressure groups were established, with the Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC) and its youth wing the Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL) being the most well-known (Awasom 2020; Orock 2021). Their main objectives were to secure greater autonomy for anglophone Cameroon in a federal state (Mehler 2014; Konings & Nyamnjoh 1997). However, since the Biya administration regarded the SCNC as a 'secessionist group' and 'federalism' as 'secession', the SCNC became more extreme and began to demand complete secession (Jua & Konings 2004).

They then undertook further diplomatic initiatives at the UN, the African Court of Banjul, and the Commonwealth which worked to conscientise these organisations about the anglophone problem (Awasom 2020). The Biya regime's refusal to consider anglophone demands for autonomy prompted the renowned anglophone statesmen, Muna and Foncha, to launch a diplomatic offensive at the UN to demand independence for Southern Cameroons (Achankeng 2012; Achu 2018). However, the SDF later rejected the idea of secession and advocated a return to a two-state or four-state federal system (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003).

In 1999, anglophone dissatisfaction with the failure to regain autonomy came to the surface when Justice Alobwede took control of the Buea provincial radio station and unilaterally declared the establishment of an independent anglophone Cameroon (Awasom 2020). While he was rapidly arrested and imprisoned, the issue lingered, was exacerbated by the Biya regime's assimilation policies which had a negative impact on the legal and education sectors in anglophone Cameroon (Jua & Konings 2004). The repressive response to peaceful protests by lawyers and teachers sparked the 2016 protests which culminated in the unilateral declaration of independence of British Southern Cameroons (Ambazonia) by the leadership of the anglophone diaspora in 2017.

3.2.3 The 2016–2017 lawyers' and teachers' protests and the declaration of Ambazonian statehood

The current crisis in anglophone Cameroon is directly related to the Biya regime's dismissive attitude toward anglophone demands (Azane 2021; Anyangwe 2008). Since 1990, successive francophone ministers of justice have appointed francophone judges in the anglophone Northwest and Southwest Provinces where the English common law system is used. Anglophone common law lawyers could no longer bear the frustration of dealing with these decisions (Awasom 2020). The francophone judges could not speak or understand English, and they regarded it as unjust to administer justice in French to people who did not understand the language (ibid). On 9 May 2015, common law lawyers met in Bamenda and sent a memorandum to President Paul Biya, pleading with him to address the country's bilingual, bi-cultural and bi-juridical problems (ibid). They asked him to reconsider the identity of Southern Cameroons, citing the systematic watering down of common law practice in anglophone Cameroon by francophone civil law judges posted to work in anglophone courts (Amin & Takougang 2018). The lawyers proposed a return to a federal system as a suitable way of protecting anglophone values and specificities, For a year, the Biya government did not respond to the anglophone lawyers' letter (Amin 2021).

On 13 February 2016, the lawyers held a second conference in Buea, and issued a second declaration reiterating their initial demands, but the government still failed to respond (Pommerolle & Heungoup 2017). Next, on 6 October 2016, the presidents of the common law lawyers' trade unions in the anglophone regions met in Bamenda declaring a four-day 'sit-down strike from all court actions' between 11` to 14 October (Okereke 2018). The lawyers claimed the driving force behind their strike was President Biya's indifference for their correspondences and demands. Even at that, the strike was ineffective(ibid). The lawyers subsequently made the decision to hold a nonviolent demonstration on November 8, but the gendarmes(paramilitary force in Cameroon) forcibly dispersed them, stripping them of their robes and wigs in an attempt at public humiliation. Consequently, the lawyers' strike was extended indefinitely (Oxford Analytica 2021).

A solidarity sit-in strike by English speaking teachers known as "the 'All Anglophone Teachers' Strike' started on November 21. Legal trade unions for English-speaking educators planned the strike to express their outrage over the abuses that have been perpetrated in the English-speaking educational sub-system over the past thirty years(Forcha 2021). They expressed dissatisfaction about francophone teachers being placed in anglophone schools despite their inability to speak English fluently(ibid), and the Anglo-Saxon universities institutions of Bamenda and Buea were swamped with Francophone educators(Awasom 2020). According to the teachers, all attempts to persuade the government to resolve these had fallen on deaf ears. The peaceful protest escalated into violence when the police fired shots on the demonstrators, wounding and killing many(Orock,2021).

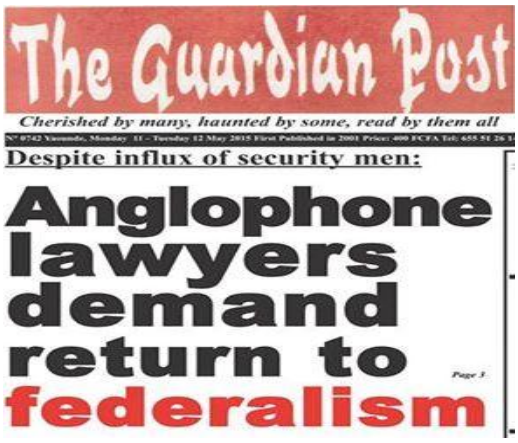
Anglophones then resolved to speak to the government with one voice by forming the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC) (Amin 2021). The barrister Nkongho Felix Agbor-Balla was voted president, and Dr Fontem Neba as secretary general (ibid). The consortium attempted to engage in dialogue with the government, but the continued brutality by state's armed forces against the English-speaking people as well as the government's refusal to consider a federal option as the solution to the problem compelled them to call for 'ghost towns' (in which daily activities were routinely shut down) as a form of protest (Robert 2020).

This distressed the government, and on 17 January 2017 Rene Emmanuel Sadi, Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation, issued a decree prohibiting the consortium from entering into any dialogue (ibid). Agbor-Balla and Neba were arrested on the same day, and the discussions process with the government was truncated by the clampdown by law enforcement and the military on dissidents and the media(Awasom 2020). Meanwhile,

shortly before Agbor-Balla Nkongho's arrest, the consortium assigned leadership roles to English speaking activists in Europe and the US far from the reach of Biya's repressive regime (Nganji & Cockburn 2020). The government continued to arrest anglophone leaders and blocked access to the Internet in Anglophone zones for nearly three months(Orock 2021). A military tribunal charged the detained consortium leaders with a number of crimes, including terrorism, which is punishable by death(Ibid). This made the people more radical and rekindled the Southern Cameroonian region's aspiration for complete independence(Awasom 2020).

Following months of protests and demands for all detainees to be freed,Francois Lonseny Fall, special envoy and head of the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNROCA), visited the maximum-security prison in Yaoundé and spoke with consortium leaders who were detained there (Orock,2020). In August 2018, President Biya authorised the release of a handful of detainees but refrained from negotiations with the anglophones leaders concerning the independence of Southern Cameroons(Amin & Takougang 2018). In September 2017, the refusal of the Biya regime to consider full anglophone autonomy sparked mass protests in which an estimated 500 000 people participated (Pommerolle & Heungoup 2017).

Figure 6: Anglophone lawyers demand a return to federalism


The Guardian Post

Cherished by many, haunted by some, read by them all

Despite influx of security men:

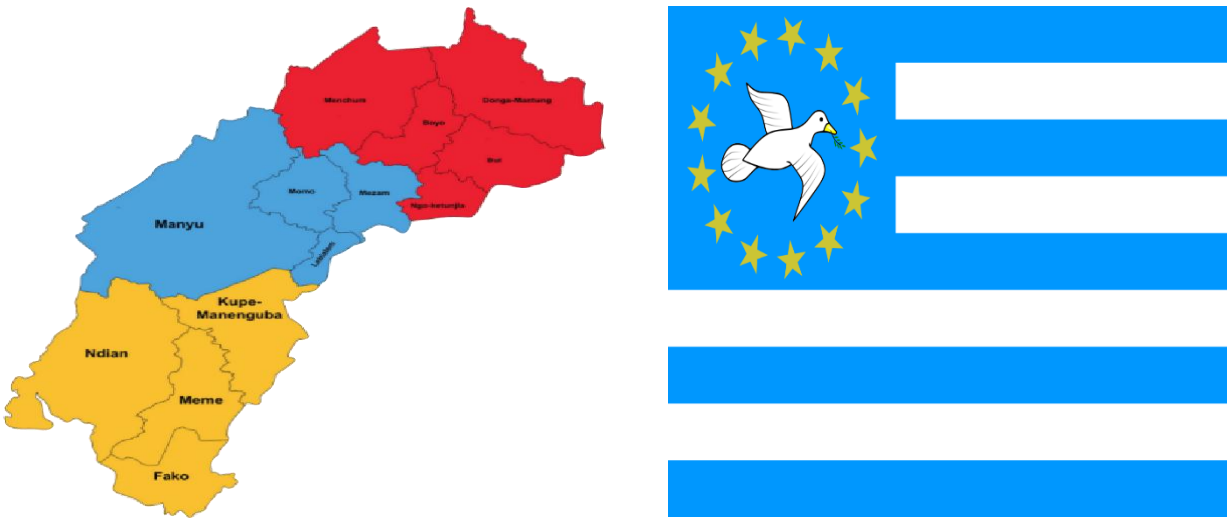
Anglophone lawyers demand return to federalism

Source: George Ngwane

Government security forces repressed the protests, killing and wounding protestors, and arresting many more. As a result, anglophones felt it was time to leave the francophone union (Sunjo 2020). On October 1, 2017, the restoration of an independent Southern Cameroonian state was unilaterally declared by anglophones in the diaspora who had taken on leadership positions in the anglophone liberation movement from abroad(Fon et al 2022). They referred to the new independent nation as "Ambazonia, established an interim

government, and adopted an anthem, flag, and a constitution(Awasom 2020). The appellation Ambazonia emanate from Ambas Bay, the local name for the bay at the mouth of the Wouri River (Ekah 2020; Keke 2020). Fon Gorji Dinka came up with the name Ambazonia in 1984 as part of a campaign to restore the alleged lost autonomy of the English-speaking regions and to safeguard the Anglo-Saxon heritage and institutions of those regions (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019).The unilateral proclamation of Ambazonia's independence by the diaspora leadership transformed the method of addressing the question of anglophone autonomy in Cameroon from 'the force of argument' that had been used by the SCNC leadership since the 1990s to 'the argument of force', endorsed by the diaspora-led government after 2017. This also mark the beginning of the recognition of the significant role of Anglophone Cameroonian diaspora in the Southern Cameroons self-determination struggle.

Figure 7: The map and flag of the Federal Republic of Ambazonia



Source: Interim Government of Ambazonia (online).

4 Research methodology

4.1 Introduction

This study investigates the role of the anglophone diaspora in the Southern Cameroons (Ambazonia) quest for self-determination. As such, it constitutes a case study of the involvement of diasporas in post-colonial independence struggles in Africa.

Case studies play a major role in research methodology (Yin 2000, 2009). A case study is an empirical investigation that analyses a phenomenon in its real-life environment using multiple sources of information (Noor 2008). A case study is concerned with *how* and *why* things happen, allowing for the investigation of contextual realities and differences between what was planned and what actually took place (Gorichanaz 2017; Algozzine & Hancock 2017). This method offers a systematic and in-depth way of gathering and analysing data about an event or process and presenting the findings (ibid). Inter alia, the researcher acquires a deeper understanding of research difficulties he or she might have encountered, and what would require greater attention in the future. Researchers from a wide range of fields utilise case study methodology to investigate or characterise an object or event, build upon ideas, generate new theories, contest or challenge theories, explain situations, and give a foundation for applying solutions to situations (Krusenvik 2016). The advantages of the case study method include its ability to be applied to real-life human situations, and its public accessibility through written reports(Dooley 2002: 335-4).

Against this background, this chapter discusses the methodology used for this study, including the research design, data collection techniques, methods for data analysis, and the procedures applied to ensure validity and reliability.

4.2 Research design

Given the subject matter, qualitative research was deemed the most appropriate for this study. This comprised archival and desktop research, in-depth interviews, and participant observation. This approach enabled a flexible engagement between the researcher and members of Ambazonian independence organisations (Pierce 2008). Through the use of qualitative research methods, academics can examine study subjects in their natural environments and explain or interpret occurrences by considering the meanings that individuals assign to them. Hence, a combination of phenomenological and ethnographic research designs was used in the study (Luders 2004). Ethnography implies spending a significant amount of time in the selected target area, in this case Ambazonian diaspora organisations, to observe what occurs, listen to what is said, and to ask questions. This participation can be overt or covert (Smith & High 2017) as long as the researcher gathers

as much of the information that is available to shed light on the problems under investigation. As noted by Weigert (2016):

> … the observational field of the social scientist social reality has a specific meaning and reference structure for the human beings living, acting, and thinking within it. By a series of common sense constructs they have preselected and pre-interpreted this world which they experience as the reality of their daily lives.

The researcher participated in meetings, the celebration of Ambazonia Independence Day, and protest marches at foreign embassies and international and domestic human rights organisations in South Africa. Some of these meetings were aimed at developing engagement strategies with international and human rights organisations like the UN, the AU, the Pan African Parliament, foreign embassies and political parties, and to raise their awareness about events in Southern Cameroons.

Other meetings involved briefings on current issues in the struggle, fundraising campaigns for refugee assistance, aid to internally displaced people, and how to put pressure on the Cameroonian government to call a ceasefire and start negotiations. The researcher also attended numerous online briefing, seminars and conferences on the conflict in Cameroon. During these meetings, presentations were made about the conflict, its causes, the international responses, and responses to protests by the Cameroonian security forces. Concerns were raised about their lack of respect for human rights. Issues raised also included internal issues within the diaspora movement affecting the struggle, such as the fragmentations among the 'Amba boys' (more of which later), and concerns about corruption within the interim government of Ambazonia (IG).

4.3 Research site

Data was collected from selected members of anglophone organisations in numerous South African centres, namely Johannesburg, Cape Town, Pretoria, Potchefstroom, East London, Alice and Polokwane. These cities and towns, especially Johannesburg, Cape Town and Pretoria, host large Southern Cameroonian communities and serve as headquarters for the leadership and representatives of selected Ambazonian organisations (Orock 2021). Furthermore, Southern Cameroonian communities in these cities have been in the forefront of Ambazonian activism. The researcher gained access to the leaders of the organisations through intermediaries. Due to Covid-19 lockdown restrictions, and the wide dispersion of other key leaders of the anglophone movement, the researcher also conducted online interviews with respondents in the US, Canada, UK, Nigeria, Buea, Yaoundé, Douala, Bamenda and Mamfe.

4.4 Methods of data collection

Both primary and secondary research were utilised. Primary research comprised key informant interviews and participant observation, while secondary sources comprised books, journal articles, internet sources, newspaper articles, archival material, and a wide variety of material available on the internet.

4.4.1 Oral interviews or key informant interviews

Eighty structured and unstructured oral interviews were conducted with leaders and representatives of Ambazonian movements and diasporan organisations, as well as other role players and analysts familiar with the Southern Cameroonian independence campaign.

Interviews are a traditional method used by social scientists to obtain information about events or processes from participants and other role players (Corti & Fielding 2016; Corti et al 2016). It forms part of an ethnographic approach, which is particularly useful in situations where official records either do not exist or are difficult to access (Lailey 2021; Scales et al 2011). Where official records do exist, these are used to build a framework of knowledge about the subject in question and to formulate questionnaires. Semi-structured or open-ended questions allow respondents to provide comprehensive and detailed answers (Blee & Taylor 2002). Comparatively, only controlled and structured responses within specific parameters are permitted in quantitative questionnaires(Arthur et al 2019).

Interviews formed a major component of the research for this study. They were semi-structured and open-ended and gave the researcher an opportunity to ask further questions and listen to the participants. This approach ensured that the opinions and experiences of the interviewees were effectively captured. At all times, the researcher allowed the respondents to tell their stories and relate their experiences in detail.

The researcher used an interview guide comprising a basic set of predetermined questions to direct the discussions but did prevent respondents from providing additional information. The interviewees included leaders of frontline Ambazonian independence organisations in the diaspora, activists, researchers, journalists, retired government officials and other members of civil society involved in peace-building in Cameroon.

Age, education and position in these organisations played a key role in selecting the respondents. Education is important as it indicates a degree of familiarity with the Southern Cameroons independence struggle, the contemporary diaspora structures, and their roles in the quest for an Ambazonian state. The respondents were selected from organisations like the Ambazonia Interim Government (AIG), the Ambazonia Governing Council (AGC), The

Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC), The Southern Cameroon Youth League, MoRISC, SCCOP and the Anglophone Civil Society Consortium.

Respondents were selected on the basis of their organisational roles (presidents, vice-presidents, administrative officers, communication officers, and so on). Selections were affected by practical consideration, notably access. Interviews were also conducted with leaders or representatives of organisations that champion alternative views to that of the Ambazonian movement, such as federalism and decentralisation.

My respondents spoke fluent English. None of the respondents dictated which other persons should be interviewed and had no influence on the outcomes of the study. Due to the Covid-19 lockdowns and restrictions, some interviews were conducted online.

Some government officials turned down requests for interviews. To compensate for this, the researcher studied their previous interviews with the media, as well as other public statements.

Table 1: Diaspora-led organisations advocating the self-determination of Southern Cameroons

Organisation	Leader	Country of residence
South Africa Ambazonia Community	Bridget Etah	South Africa
Southern Cameroons (Ambazonia) Community Ghana	Emmanuel Ketcha	Ghana
The Ambazonia International Policy Commission (AIPC)	Yuven Yerima	Germany
The Diaspora Ambazonia Community (DAC)	Alem Alemanji	USA
The Interim Government (IG)	Dabney Yerima	Netherlands
The Southern Cameroons Ambazonia Activists Front (SCAAF)	Ashu Kingsley	USA
The Southern Cameroons Congress of the People (SCCOP)	Atam Milan	South Africa
The Southern Cameroons Civil Society Consortium	John Mbah Akuro	USA
The Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC),	- Acting Chair, Agbor Pritzo	France
Ambazonia Governing Council (AGovC)	Dr Ayaba Cho Lucas	Norway
Movement for the Independence Restoration of the Southern Cameroons (MoRISC)	Boh Herbert	USA
African People's Liberation Movement (APLM/SOCADEF)	Dr Ebezer Akwanga	USA
Ambazonia People's Rights Advocacy Group (APRAG))	Ngong Emmanue	Hong Kong
The Southern Cameroons European Women (SCEW)	Thecla Mbunwe	Belgium.
The Southern Cameroons Women's League (SCWL)	Irene Alobwede	UK
Southern Cameroons People's Organisation (SCAPO)	Mr Augustine Ndangam	UK

4.4.2 Online interviews

As noted previously, largely due to Covid-19 restrictions as well as the wide dispersal of respondents, online interviews played a major role in the study. Computers have long been profitably employed by quantitative social researchers, but new information and communications technologies (ICT) have opened new opportunities for qualitative researchers as well (Flick 2018). Specifically, desktop research and, more recently, online interviews and meetings (known as computer-mediated communications or CMCs), have transformed social research, notably the initial acquisition of data. These interviews follow the same basic methods and conform to the same principles as previous forms of qualitative research (Salmons 2011: 1).

However, when direct interaction between a researcher and respondents occur through CMC, the technology becomes more than a simple transactional medium (ibid). The human qualities of a direct interview are experienced differently, since the technology delimits the form of the communication in both subtle and obvious ways (Mealer & Jones 2014). Some ICTs allow for a full range of visual and verbal exchanges (|Rudi et al 2015). Other, such as video conferencing, allow for interviews that closely resemble the natural back-and forth of face-to-face communication, including verbal and nonverbal signals (O'Kane & Hargie 20017).

Online interviews, or e-interviews, refer to interviews conducted via CMC (Archibald et al 2019). This contrasts with secondary Internet or desktop research, which involves researching existing documents or information online (ibid). As in the case of face-to-face interviews, online interviews are meant to be conducted in accordance with ethical research guidelines. The identity of respondents need to be verified, and they need to provide their consent to being interviewed (Eltorki 2013).

In this context, key interviews were conducted online via Zoom, Skype and Microsoft Teams. This assisted the researcher to interview leaders who lived in distant countries as well as those who did not have the time to meet him for face-to-face interviews. The interviewees were informed about the ethical requirements, and consent forms were signed before the interviews were carried out. The sessions were recorded and transcribed to inform the analysis.

Table 2: Total number of interviews conducted for the study

Categories	Number Interviewed Per Category
Leaders and Representatives of Frontline Ambazonian independence organisations in the diaspora	15
Activists	10
Journalists	10
Researchers on Cameroon	15
Retired Government Officials	10
Members of CSOs working on Peace in Cameroon	10
Francophone Members of the Diaspora	10

4.4.3 Participant observation

As noted previously, the interviews were supplemented by participant observation. The methodology known as the "participatory approach" makes the case for the viability, importance, and value of including research partners in the course of producing knowledge (Darby 2017).

In this study, a participatory approach allowed respondents to participate in the research process and allowed the researcher to observe activities out by selected organisations, such as protest marches, conferences and other forms of activism – particularly in Johannesbureg, South Africa, This allowed the researcher to immerse himself in these organisations and gain first-hand experiences of their activities and processes, which helped him to the identify problems anc challenges and to interpret the data.

The researcher also visited some diasporan leaders in South Africa and followed their atcivities. One of the limitations of participant observation is that researchers are sometimes not easily accepted in the communities they intend to research. This may be affected by appearance, ethnicity, age, gender and class (ibid), which is common in dealing with traditional leadership settings or cultural communities (Kaya 2014). Another limitation of participant observation is that, in order to immerse him- or herself in an unfamiliar culture, the researcher needs to become a full-time member of the community in question (Moeran 2009). Among other things, this sometimes means researchers must change their way of life to fit with the community they wish to study. However, in this instance the researcher was familiar with the culture and way of life of members of the Cameroonian diaspora (Payne & Payne 2004).

Table 3: Events observed in the course of the study (online and in person)

Events Observed	Place and Date of Events
V.P Yerima Visits to South Africa	Polokwane, Limpopo, May 27, 2023.
V.P Yerima Visit to South Africa	Johannesburg, Gauteng South Africa Communist Party (SACP) 15 December 2019
V.P Dabney Yerima's Visit to South Africa	Pretoria, May 25, 2022, The EFF'S Africa Day event.
CIC Dr Cho Ayaba of the Ambazonian Governing Council (AGovC)	Johannesburg, Gauteng, September 27 2019
Southern Cameroons Ambazonia Consortium United Front (SCACUF-SA) Ambazonia Independence Celebration Event	Johannesburg, Gauteng, Pieter Roos Park to Constitution Hill, 1st October 2017
CIC Dr Chu Ayaba visit to South Africa	Cape Town, West Cape, 2018
Prof P L O Lumumba US Visit	Town Hall meeting in Atlanta GA USA. October 2018 (online)
All Ambazonia Consultative Council Conference(AACC)	Washington DC August 19, 2018(online)
The Southern Cameroons People's Conference (SCPC)	Toronto, Canada from October 5th to October 8th, 2023(online).
All-Ambazonia Activists' Conference(AAAC)	Aarschot, Brussels, April 29th, 2023,(online)
John Mbah Akuro Perspective	SCBC TV(online)
Southern Cameroons Peoples Conference	Ontario Canada, October 5th, 2023(online)
Southern Cameroons Town Hall (52)	–8 January 2022
Coalition for Dialogue and Negotiations (CDN) Roundtable - Toronto Declaration	Toronto Canada, 5th December 2021, SCBC(online)
Amba Perspective	SCBC(online)
The World Most Neglected Conflict: Cameroon	April 19th, 2021, SCBC(Online)
VP Dabney Yerima Interview	March 6th, 2021, SABC(online)
The Eric Tataw Show	Every Saturday on SCBC,2020(online)
Barrister Mbinkar Caroline presentation at the Centre for Dialogue and Negotiation seminar on the topic: Resolving Armed Conflicts for Self-Determination in Africa	November 24th, 2020, UK(online)
Dr Roxana Willis talk at the Centre for Dialogue and Negotiation on the topic: The Role of International NGOs in Armed Conflicts in Africa: Perspectives on human rights and humanitarian response.	1st of November 2020 Oxford University UK(online)
ABC TV Interview with Mr. Augustine Ndangam, SCAPO Chairman	Jul 5, 2019, ABCTV(Online)

4.4.4 The national archive in Buea

The researcher made use of archival material in the National Archives Buea (NAB) in the south western part of Cameroon. Hair et al stipulate that 'secondary sources refer to the use of historical data structures of variables previously collected and assembled for some research problem or opportunity other than the current situation (Hair et al 2008). The NAB was established in 1959 by two British anthropologists, Edwin and Shirley Ardener (Orosz

1974: 153-5). The archive building in Buea holds more than 20 000 files that are not stored under the best of conditions because of humidity and destructive rodents such as rats (Nkwi 2021). Some are covered in fungi, and others are soaked in water leaking through the poorly maintained roof. The files contain mostly intelligence and other annual reports by British colonial administrators such as divisional and subdivisional officers (DOs and SDOs) to either the colonial office in London, the League of Nations or the UN Organisation (ibid). These files deal with issues such as Christianity, community development, education, land and boundary disputes, labour and mobility from 1918 to 1961 (ibid). The researcher consulted files on UN missions, League of Nations reports, and political activities in British Southern Cameroons between 1945 and 1961.

According to security personnel at the archive, in in early 2016 all the important files containing the history of the erstwhile British Southern Cameroon were removed and taken to Yaoundé, the political capital. This seems to reflect a desire by French Cameroon to expunge the history of the erstwhile British Cameroon. Moreover, the NAB seems to have been deliberately neglected by the Ministry of Culture.

The researcher was able to assess most of the files prior to their removal. All the files pertaining to German colonial Cameroon (1884-1916) and British Southern Cameroons (1916-61) are available in the UK National Archives in London, the archival unit of the Museum of Ethnography in Berlin, Germany, and also in Enugu, Nigeria, since British Southern Cameroon was once governed as an appendage of the eastern region of Nigeria, with Enugu as the capital.

Figure 8: The National Archives in Bue, showing damaged files

Source: Walter Gam Nkwi.

4.4.5 Other secondary resources

The researcher also consulted other secondary sources online. These included articles in peer-reviewed journals, books, and book chapters, as well as online and print media. Print media include *The Guardian Post, The Post, The Voice, Quest and Echoes, Cameroon Tribune, Le Quotidien, Diapason, The National Telegraph,*. Online media include Mimi Mefo Info, Cameroon News Agency, Cameroon Intelligence Report, Cameroon Concord, National Telegraph and Bareta News.

4.5 Data analysis

Primary and secondary data were qualitatively analysed. According to Sarantakos (2017), this involves making sense of information gathered from research and bringing out meaning from the data. Recorded interviews were transcribed and coded into themes, and participant observation notes were typed out and the content analysed. In content analysis, the researcher classifies key ideas in written communications such as reports or articles in a standardised way (Bailey 2008), which enables him or her to draw inferences from the information (Andersen & Sandberg 2020; also see Bengtsson 2016). Classifying texts and words into content categories is a central feature of content analysis (Andersen & Sandberg 2020; Bengtsson 2016). In line with this, information obtained from key informants and participant observations were placed into thematic categories, corresponding to the research questions.

4.6 Reliability and validity of data

Research validity is described as the degree to which a research study, especially the research instruments used, measure what they are intended to measure (Kimberlin & Winterstein 2008). There are two main types of validity, namely internal and external (Johnson 1997; Roe & Just 2009). Internal validity refers to the validity of the measurement itself, and external validity refers to the ability to generalise the findings. Both are very important in analysing the appropriateness, meaningfulness and usefulness of a research study (Onwuegbuzie 2000). The different research instruments and sources of information in this study, namely key informant interviews, document analysis and participant observations, were cross-referenced to ensure that the data was valid and consistent, and the instruments were reliable. The researcher heeded the following maxim by Rahman et al (1991): 'Do not monopolise your knowledge nor impose arrogantly your techniques, but respect and combine your skills with the knowledge of the researched or grass roots communities, taking them as full partners and co-researchers.' They also caution researchers not to trust elitist versions of history and science which respond to dominant interests but to be receptive to counter-narratives, and to try to recapture them. In response to this notion,

francophones, government officials and others who differ from Ambazonian leaders were also interviewed. Rahman et al (1991) also advise:

> Do not depend solely on your culture to interpret facts, but recover local values, traits, beliefs, and arts for action by and with the research organisations … Do not impose your own ponderous scientific style for communicating results but diffuse and share what you have learned together with the people, in a manner that is wholly understandable and even literary and pleasant, for science should not be necessarily a mystery nor a monopoly of experts and intellectuals.

4.7 Ethical considerations

A major ethical consideration in social research is to ensure that no one is harmed because of the research activities (Barone & Eisner 2012). In support of this view, De Vos et al (2011) state that research should be based on mutual trust, acceptance and cooperation plus accepted conventions and expectations between the parties involved. The fact that human beings are objects of study in the social sciences presents the researcher with unique ethical problems (Cole & Knowles 2008). Ethical issues are pervasive and complex, since data can be obtained at the expense of human subjects (Schulman & Petryna 2009; Smythe & Murray 2000). Ethical considerations were observed throughout this study, and clearance was obtained on 27 January 2021, from the Wits Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), Protocol Number H20/09/09.

4.8 Informed consent and voluntary participation

The consent of all the respondents was obtained before conducting the interviews. Where applicable, the researcher obtained permission from relevant leaders of Ambazonian organisations to conduct interviews with their representatives. The respondents were informed that their participation in the study was entirely voluntary. The researcher obtained approval from the participants to record the interviews and conversations, which him to focus on the interviewees and their responses. The researcher still took down notes about key issues raised during the interviews. Questions pertaining to the interviews were listed on the informed consent sheet that each interviewee was asked to sign. All ethical protocols of the University of the Witwatersrand were duly observed.

4.9 Anonymity and confidentiality of participants

To protect the participants, their identities were protected, and pseudonyms were used.

4.10 Guarding against plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious offence as it involves the use of someone else's work or ideas without due acknowledgement, and hence constitutes theft of intellectual property. To avoid plagiarism, all authors whose work and ideas are used in this study are duly acknowledged in the form of in-text citations and a list of references.

5 The origins of the anglophone diaspora's involvement in the campaign for Southern Cameroonian self-determination (1950s-2022)

5.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the origins of the involvement of the anglophone diaspora in the Southern Cameroonian quest for self-determination. This has a long and complex history. It can be traced back to the activities of the National Union of Kamerun Students in the 1950s to the present Ambazonia Restoration Movement, and from a non-violent campaign by the NUKS, SCNC and other anglophone pressure groups to the current violence in the Northwest and Southwest Regions. Over the years, Anglophones living abroad have played a major role in advocating the right to self-determination of Southern Cameroons. Due to the absence of a propaganda channel like satellite television this role has not been visible to the majority of the public. However, with the advent of the internet and social media, this role has become very visible, and difficult for the Cameroonian government to control.

5.2 The drivers of migration from Cameroon

Due to its dispersed nature, and the resultant lack of uniform and reliable statistics, the extent of the Cameroonian diaspora is difficult to determine. Some migrants, especially those in neighbouring African countries, are undocumented. Statistics are available for the diaspora in most Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, as well as some non-OECD countries. Many diasporans have no official documents or residence permits (Nkongho 2019). Nevertheless, Kindzeka (2022) has estimated that some five million Cameroonians out of a population of some 28 million live outside the country. According to the Cameroonian government, the biggest concentration in a single country is two million in Nigeria, and there are also large communities in Belgium, France, Germany, the UK and the US (ibid). This represents a huge increase over the 200 000 people (2.2 per cent of the total population of 19,406,100) cited in the 2010 Cameroon population census as living and working overseas (Nkongho 2019).

A significant percentage of Cameroonians living abroad are highly educated. They include scientists, engineers, researchers, teachers, medical practitioners, writers, lawyers, artists, and more. The Cameroonian diaspora is frequently organised along host country and ethnic lines(Assogba 2004). The drivers of migration range from the government-driven partnerships with western countries in the 1960s which encouraged Cameroonians to go abroad for training and to return with new skills, to the brain drain in the 1879s that saw many educated and highly skilled Cameroonians leave their home country for better paying

jobs in Europe and the US (Wang 2013). The repressive political atmosphere that restricted freedom of speech and free political association prompted many opposition politicians and human rights activists to seek political asylum in Europe and the US (Haas 2012). Cameroonians also left their homeland in the early 1980s because of a sharp decline in the cost of agricultural commodities which made up the backbone of the economy, leading to an economic crisis (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2004).

In 1994, Cameroon was subjected to structural adjustment programmes by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), which resulted in the devaluation of its currency, the franc CFA, and a 70 per cent pay cut for civil servants (Konings 2012). This prompted many civil servants to abandon their jobs in Cameroon and relocate to Europe or the US. Businesspeople and university graduates also left for Europe and North America in search of better opportunities and living conditions.

Cameroonian migrants in the 21st century are mostly students who travel to the west to further their studies (Nkongho 2019; Schmelz 2011). This trend has been exacerbated by poor domestic educational facilities, especially in the natural sciences (Alpes 2014).

Other Cameroonians travel abroad for family reunions. Family reunification on a kin basis is a new factor driving Cameroonian migration to Europe, America and Asia. A family member leaves Cameroon, either legally or illegally, to settle abroad, and when he or she is financially viable, other members of the family join him or her (ibid). Cameroonians can also obtain an American Green Card through the US Diversity Lottery Program, which allows them to live and work in the US and eventually become citizens. This ushers in a new era of family reunification (ibid). This new migratory paradigm has enabled many Cameroonians to settle abroad and has also enabled them to assist their families and extended families at home through remittances. These settlers include migrants from the anglophone regions of Cameroon who are spearheading the independence struggle. Others are descendants of migrants who left Cameroon many years ago.

5.3 Factions within the anglophone diaspora

As confirmed by this study, the anglophone diaspora is divided into factions. Some advocate outright secession, or what is referred to as the restoration of independence, accompanied by a division of assets similar to what happened in Czechoslovakia (Patrick, interview, 2020). This group is also known as the independentists. The second group advocate a two-state federation with two prime ministers and two government legislatures, as it was before unification in 1972. The third group supports a federation, with ten autonomous states with elected governors and state assemblies, and a central federal government. Lately, the

Cameroonian government has been talking about decentralisation. A fourth pro-government anglophone group strongly favours this option.

Lastly, there is a group which supports the status quo, denies the existence of an anglophone problem, and uses ethnicity and the Northwest-Southwest divide to frustrate the efforts of those pushing for independence (ibid). These factions have emerged from criticism of the alleged incompetence, corruption and misappropriation of funds by the Interim Government (IG), led by Dr Sako, as well as a lack of appropriate policy options for the administration of the struggle from abroad and their impact on people back home, as well as disagreement over the 'ghost town' campaigns (Maxwell 2020).

It should be noted that anglophones have never supported a single option or proposal for resolving their quest for greater self-determination. In the 1960s, anglophones were divided over the most appropriate option for British Southern Cameroons. Some preferred integration with the federation of Nigeria, some favoured reunification with French Cameroon, and some supported sovereign statehood and integration with Nigeria or reunification with French Cameroon (Anyangwe 2008). The last-named option was not offered in the plebiscite of 1961, leading to victory for those who preferred reunifying with French Cameroon – to the surprise of the British colonial administration, which would have preferred them to remain an autonomous state within the Nigerian Federation (Awasom 2020).

The factionalism within the Ambazonian movement has diminished prospects for more constructive relations with the Cameroonian government, allowing the latter to claim that it does not know who to talk to (Atabong 2023). The Swiss peace initiative of 2021 was partially derailed by problems surrounding the selection of participants and the extent of their mandates (DW 2021). In September 2019. in an effort to resolve this problem, the Sako IG faction brought together some nationalist groups in an Ambazonia Coalition Team, meant to serve as a joint platform for negotiation. However, the Sisiku IG alliance refused to participate (Beseng et al 2023).

The leadership battles in the movement have produced polycentric structures, as well as multiple policy directions (Ketzmerick 2023). This points to poor coordination between the diaspora leadership and their militias in Cameroon. This creates a disconnect, and with no physical authority on the ground to mobilise its following and coalesce its policies in a common direction towards peace, negotiations become challenging (ibid).

The existence of these factions show that Ambazonians are not a monolithic group, and that they are not afraid to disagree with and criticise one another on issues relating to the

liberation struggle. According to some analysts, this is the greatest strength of the Ambazonian campaign, namely that the right of dissent has taken root and can serve as a foundation for a vibrant future democratic society in the future (Akoh 2020). Fears were raised when supporters of the IG demanded that everyone should be in the same camp – an idea that resonated with the call for one-party states in many post-liberation African countries (ibid: 9).

5.4 The involvement of the anglophone diaspora in the Southern Cameroons struggle for autonomy

5.4.1 The role of the National Union of Kamerun Students (1950s-1960s)

The involvement of the Anglophone diaspora in the quest for self-determination started modestly with the activities of anglophone youths from the then British colonial territory known as British Southern Cameroons, through a student organisation known as the National Union of Kamerun Students (NUKS).

According to a foremost anglophone scholar and a veteran of the Southern Cameroons struggle for independence:

> *'The Southern Cameroons diaspora has always played a leading role in the quest for self-determination. This dates back to 1950s, and has been facilitated by four main factors. Firstly, the diaspora has been out of the despotic reach of the Cameroun government both in the eras of Ahidjo and Biya. Secondly, by virtue of their freedom, members of the diaspora can speak out from their host nations on issues that may not be debated at home. Furthermore, members of the diaspora are intellectually better equipped as most of them went out as students. As a result, they better understood the anglophone problem, and were better placed to advocate self-determination than those within who lacked this exposure. Lastly, they have deeper pockets than their home counterparts, which has allowed them to facilitate the struggle. All these factors have helped them to drive the self-determination campaign. I can say that the genesis of the role of the Anglophone diaspora in this campaign can traced back to the activities of the National Union of Kamerun Students' (NUKS) (Enock, interview, 2020).*

Youth organisation in anglophone Cameroon started with the introduction of the Boy Scouts movement in 1924. In the process, a school headmaster, P.M. Kale, emerged as a political activist (Ewumbue-Monono 2009). In fact, it was during a Scouts jamboree in Lagos that Kale met most of the Nigerian politicians and activists who, in 1939, played a role in the formation of the Cameroon Youth League (CYL) – the first real national movement in the territory (ibid). More politically motivated youth organisations emerged, namely the Bakweri Youth Association (BYA) led by Fred Mbwaye; the Bamenda Youth Association

(BYA) led by J.A Fominyen; and the National Union of Kamerun Students (NUKS), which provided the basis for aggregation into political parties (ibid).

In the 1950s and 1960s, most of the Southern Cameroonian diaspora consisted of young people studying abroad, and NUKS was formed by Southern Cameroonian students in London in the UK and Ibadan in Nigeria (Enock, interview, 2020). They were politically aware and very radical, due to exposure to Pan Africanism and the African independence movement led by Kwame Nkrumah. NUKS first became active in the decolonisation period, before the UN-organised plebiscite in British Cameroon in 1961 (ibid). At this time, Britain administered Southern Cameroons as an integral part of the Nigerian Federation.

In line with its Charter, the UN decided to terminate the French and British mandates, and grant those territories their independence as well. Given Nigeria's approaching independence in 1960, the population of the British trust territory had to decide on its own political future. NUKS started pushing for the independence of Southern Cameroons, among others in petitions to the UN, but later became divided because of disagreements about the exact mechanics of independence.

It soon became evident that many Southern Cameroonians wanted Southern Cameroons to achieve full independence (Jua & Konings 2004; Konings 2005). Others supported reunification with French Cameroon (Takougang 2019; Konings & Nyamnjoh 1997). A Southern Cameroonian academic in South Africa explains:

> *'Proponents of independence by reunification with East Cameroon were inspired by the dream to recreate the old German Kamerun. The logic was that French Cameroon and British Cameroon should achieve independence on the same day, thereby re-establishing the former German Kamerun' (Pius, interview, 2020).*

According to another interviewee, the students were influenced by the Union of the Peoples of Cameroon (Union des Populations du Cameroun, or UPC), in French Camerou (Enock, interview, 2020). This group included prominent figures like Albert Mukong, Fongum Gorji-Dinka, Nzo Ekangaki and Nde Ntoumaza (Ngoh 2001). Known as the Ibadan group, they had influence over John Ngu Foncha, which led to him succumbing to the idea of reunification with East Cameroon or French Cameroon (ibid).

> *'The opposing group supported gaining independence by joining Nigeria, based on the idea of a similar colonial history and other cultural linkages. This was bolstered by the British claims that an independent Southern Cameroon would not be economically viable. This group was made up of Motombi Woleta and Ndeleley' (Enock, interview, 2020).*

> *'Others like Peter Moyongomo Kale and Chief Nyenty Eta advocated that Southern Cameroons should gain independence separately from Nigeria or French Cameroon' (Pius, interview, 2020).*

The last faction supported the sovereign statehood of Southern Cameroons. In fact, it opposed the idea of joining either French Cameroon or Nigeria. Their wish was not honoured, mainly because of internal divisions among the anglophone political elite which prevented them from rallying behind the views of the majority of people in the territory.

More importantly, the UN refused, with the complicity of the British, to present the option of an independent Southern Cameroon to voters in the plebiscite of 11 February 1961 (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019). The UK and UN objections against full independence was based on the argument that such a country would not be economically viable, given that its economy relied almost entirely on bananas (Dicklitch 2011).

Furthermore, they believed the formation of another tiny state would be politically undesirable as it would contribute to the 'balkanisation' of Africa, and provide fertile ground for the spread of communism (Nkwi 2021; also see Awasom 2000). Being deprived of their first preference, Southern Cameroonians were given the choice of joining an independent Nigeria or reuniting with an already independent francophone Cameroon. In the end, they chose the latter option.

The option of full independence was not on the ballot, having been opposed by Andrew Cohen, the UK representative to the UN Trusteeship Council, as well as African and anti-colonial delegations, notably E. M. L. Endeley, who favoured independence by joining Nigeria, and John Ngu Foncha, who favoured independence by joining francophone Cameroon (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003: 15).

In Northern Cameroons, which has a predominantly Muslim population, a majority of 60 per cent voted in favour of joining Nigeria, while in Southern Cameroons, with a predominantly Christian population, 70.5 per cent voted in favour of joining Cameroon. On 1 June 1961, Northern Cameroon officially became Sardauna Province, a part of the Northern Region of Nigeria, whilst on 1 October 1961, Southern Cameroons became West Cameroon, one of two federal states of the Federal Republic of Cameroon (Nohlen et al 1999: 177). The results of the referendum are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Results of the 1961 referendum on the future of British Cameroons

Choice	Northern Cameroons		Southern Cameroons	
	Votes	%	Votes	%
Independence by joining Cameroon	97,659	40.0	233,571	70.5
Independence by joining Nigeria	146,296	60.0	97,741	29.5
Invalid/blank votes		–		–
Total	243,955	100	331,312	100
Registered voters/turnout	292,985		349,652	

Source: Dieter Nohlen, Michael Krennerich, & Bernhard Thibaut. Elections in Africa: A data handbook (1999), p. 177.

The decision by the Foncha-led team to reunify with French Cameroon was said to be partly prompted by a desire to avoid Igbo domination, which was a serious problem in the Southern Cameroons during British colonial rule (Takougang 2019; Budi 2019). Pius, a Southern Cameroonian scholar in South Africa, put this as follows:

> *'In those days we thought that our vote in favour of reunification was more of a rejection of continuous ties with Nigeria, which had proved to be harmful to Southern Cameroonian development due to domination from Igbo traders than a vote for union with Francophone Cameroon, a territory with a different cultural heritage. After the federation was formed, the National Union of Kamerun Students continued advocating for free speech and human rights as enjoyed under the British colonial administration, and given that violations of human rights through arbitrary arrests were rampant under Ahidjo-led French Cameroun' (Pius, interview, 2020).*

Consequently, Ahidjo banned the group and came up with the crime of subversion to neutralise their activities. On 19 March 1962, soon after unification on 1 October 1961, the Cameroonian government introduced strict restraints on freedom of expression and association, and authorised the security forces to arrest and imprison dissenters (Enock, interview, 2020). The offence of subversion or rebellion made it a crime to criticise the government. This is why, barely five months after reunification in 1961, Fongum Gorji-Dinka, Albert Mukong and others who criticised the erosion of anglophone identity in Cameroon were classified as enemies of the state (ibid). From 1961 to 1972 and beyond, the Federal Republic of Cameroon was characterised by political repression under the

presidency of Ahidjo, who did not tolerate any form of opposition to his authority (Ndi 2014).

5.4.2 The annexation of Southern Cameroons, political agitation in the Nigerian diaspora, and the emergence of the US and UK diaspora (1970-80)

In 1959, the newly elected president of French Cameroon, Ahmadou Ahidjo, sought to allay anglophone fears of losing their Anglo-Saxon cultural heritage in a union with French-speaking Cameroon by declaring: 'We do not wish to bring the weight of our population to bear on our British brothers. We are not annexationists' (Atanga 2011: 1) However, things started changing from the 1970s, just a few years after the 1961 plebiscite, as expressed by Enock, a Southern Cameroonian activist and academic in South Africa:

> *'This 1970s-1980s is punctuated by the fact that French Cameroon annexed British Southern Cameroons. The people of Southern Cameroons saw their autonomy taken away from them due to the abolition of the federal system and the introduction of a centralized system by Ahidjo'.*

As noted previously, the conflict in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon stems from Cameroon's tripartite colonial history, particularly its partitioning between the French and British after the World War I (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019). While about 80 per cent of the former German colony was placed under a French mandate, 20 per cent was entrusted to the British. This period lasted from 1916 to 1960 and provided the historical, political and spatial basis for the construction of francophone and anglophone identities (ibid). While French Cameroon was administered as a distinct unit, southern and northern British Cameroons were administered as part of the eastern region of Nigeria (Pelican 2022).

In 1961, after 45 years under British colonial administration as an appendage of Nigeria, a UN referendum was held in British Southern Cameroons to determine its political future. As noted previously, voters were not given a chance to vote for total independence, but only to vote for joining either Nigeria or French Cameroon. To the surprise of the British, a majority voted in favour of joining francophone Cameroon.

Scholars have advanced numerous reasons why voters chose to join francophone Cameroon as opposed to Nigeria (Adig 2017). These may be summarised as push and pull factors. The first push factor was the slow development of the British Southern Cameroons while administered as part of Nigeria. Given that Britain acquire the Southern Cameroons as a war trophy or spoil of war, the British colonial administration treated the territory as a liability and a burden (Amaazee 1996), and decided, for administrative convenience, to administer it as an appendage of its colony of Nigeria.

This caused a great deal of frustration among inhabitants, as it retarded the territory's socio-economic development (Anyangwe 2009). This was particularly evident by the time of reunification in 1961, when levels of socio-economic development between the Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon were highly unequal (Nfi 2014). East or French Cameroon had some small industries, a better road network, a few kilometres of railway, and more educational facilities (Atanga 2011: 3). The Southern Cameroons lagged in terms of roads and communications, education, health, industrial development, and other infrastructure. A lack of formal employment further contributed to poverty.

Figure 9: The colonial border of Southern Cameroons. It also shows the deplorable state of roads in the territory.

Amaazee (2016) confirms that the British regarded the Southern Cameroons as a liability. low. Deliberate development aid only started after World War Two, and even then it was peripheral compared to aid given to Nigeria. Moreover, the UK made no attempt in encourage the inflow of private capital. As a result, the Southern Cameroons remained a producer of primary products for export(Amaazee 2016). This British neglect exasperated Southern Cameroonians to the point where they referred to the territory as a 'colony within a colony'(DeLancey et al 2019). This triggered the desire for greater autonomy and ultimately for self-determination.

Southern Cameroonians were also frustrated by the growing presence of Nigerians, especially Igbos Igbo ethnic group, Southern Cameroonians became victims of Igbo domination which led to them being treated as underdogs in their own territory (Amaazee 2000: 11). The Igbo are an ethnic group of some 30 million people largely based in the south east of Nigeria. During the British mandate period, they started arriving in large numbers in Southern Cameroons(Ogomegbunam 2020). The number of Igbos in the towns and villages

of the Southern Cameroons became alarming; according to the 1953 census, there were more than 838000 Nigerians in Cameroon, of which 258 000 were Igbos(Aka 2002: 165, Adig 2017).

Given their high levels of education and business and other skills, the Igbos quickly dominated every sphere of life, among others as traders, skilled workers and bureaucrats (BBC Sounds 2019). They were also associated with corrupt practices and criminality, and committed numerous atrocities in the Southern Cameroons (Ogomegbunam 2020).

For instance, on 13 February 1961, Premier John Ngu Foncha was informed that 54 Cameroonians had been convicted of offences involving the illegal possession of firearms. Among those convicted were 17 Igbos and 27 French Cameroonians. These figures did not take account of the large quantities of arms and ammunition recovered from duerrilla camps near the eastern frontier. These developments worsened the deep-seated antipathy towards the Igbo felt by the majority of Southern Cameroonians (Nfi 2011: 57), which gradually developed into a nationalist demand for regional autonomy and later for total independence (Amaazee 2 000: 11).

At the time of the referendum, Southern Cameroonians were also influenced by their historical ties and cultural affinities with some communities in French Cameroon, and voted for reunification in order to recreate German Cameroon(Takougang 2019). Given that the two territories had experienced different colonial administrations and culture for a period of 45 years, this view was misguided -- the more so because of the French colonial policy of assimilation which was aimed at turning francophone Cameroonians into French citizens.

Nationalist sentiments in the Southern Cameroons was more anti-Igbo and anti-Nigerian than anti-British. Nigeria was associated with the Igbo, and consequently the French-speaking Cameroonians seemed less of an immediate threat. Moreover, voters did not fully understand the implications of the centralising and assimilative style of government characteristic of the French(Arrey 2006).

5.4.3 The 1961 Foumban Conference: A faulty start to reunification

After the 1961 plebiscite, a constitutional conference was held in Foumban on 17-21 July 1961. Its purpose was to negotiate the terms of reunification with French Cameroon, and to create a legal structure for a reunified Cameroon. The conference brought together political leaders and traditional rulers from the two Cameroons, including President Ahmadou Ahidjo, president of the newly independent French Cameroon, and the prime minister of Southern Cameroons, John Ngu Foncha. The conference proposed the revision of French Cameroon's constitution as a framework for the envisaged union of the two territories. The

revised constitution was later adopted by the assemblies of both Cameroons and was promulgated on 1 September 1961. One month later, on 1 October 1961, Cameroonians celebrated the birth of the Federal Republic of Cameroon.

Figure 10: Deliberations at the 1961 Foumban conference, and Prime Minister Foncha greeting delegates

Source:SCAPO Online.

Anglophone nationalists are said to have gone to Foumban unprepared, in the belief that it would simply be a consultative conference. By contrast, having consulted French constitutional law experts, the francophone politicians came prepared with a draft constitution on which the British Southern Cameroonians were invited to comment. When Ahidjo asked them to do so, this came as a surprise to the Southern Cameroonian delegation, which voiced its concerns about the sudden presentation of a draft constitution. They had come to Foumban thinking that both delegations would jointly negotiate the terms of a constitution for a future Cameroon(Anyangwe 2014b). Besides this, some anglophone delegates like Mbile, Endeley and Njua complained about the contents, and the time frame available for comments, Mbile stated:

> 'We have the feeling that we have wasted our time coming to Foumban for the draft to be tabled in this fashion for our observations in this way. This is in total contradiction to our expectations; instead of a draft of a federal constitution, we are being requested to make observations on a draft highly centralised constitution with unlimited powers'(Mbile 2011: 89).

According to Mbile, it was clear that the draft constitution would grant the president virtually unlimited powers. Referring to the limited time frame, Endeley warned: 'Too much haste would have far-reaching consequences for the people of the Cameroons' (quoted in

Achangkeng 2015: 7). Njua stated: 'I have never seen people expected to write a constitution in two days' (ibid: 109).

The Southern Cameroonian delegation asked for three more weeks to study the draft constitution – without success. Article 1 of the constitution stated:

> 'With effect from the 1st of October 1961, the Federal Republic of Cameroon shall be constituted from the territory of the Republic of Cameroon, hereafter to be styled East Cameroon, and the territory of the Southern Cameroons, formerly under British trusteeship, hereafter to be styled West Cameroon'(Constitution of the Federal Republic of Cameroon,1961:1).

According to Anyangwe (2014: 210), Pierre Messmer, the last French High Commissioner in Cameroon and a confidente of Ahidjo, hinted later that he and others knew at the time that the proposed federal constitution was a 'sham', meant to conceal the ultimate goal of annexing the former British Southern Cameroons. / Pierre Messmer, the last French high commissioner in Cameroon and a close confidante of Ahmadou Ahidjo, said they knew at the time that the so-called federal constitution was a 'sham' which was 'safe' for appearances and annexation of the Southern Cameroons (Achankeng 2015: 11).**

Secondly, Article 47 (1) of the proposed constitution stated: 'No bill to amend the Constitution may be introduced if it tends to impair the unity and integrity of the Federation.' Southern Cameroonians contend that Ahidjo contravened this provision when, in 1972, he called a referendum and established the United Republic of Cameroon.

Following the referendum, Ahidjo declared that the vast majority of French Cameroonians and Southern Cameroonians had voted in favour of replacing the federal system with a unitary one. French Cameroon was divided into five provinces and English Cameroon was divided into two, to be called the Northwest and Southwest Provinces of the United Republic of Cameroon.

Anglophone critics say the move to a unitary state was aimed at suppressing any 'secessionist' tendencies prompted by the way in which the federation was administered. Among others, he argued that maintaining four houses of assembly was too expensive, and absorbed too much of the meagre national budget at the expense of economic development.

They also say that, especially following the discovery of a large oil deposit in Ndian, Ahidjo had no intention of developing the Southern Cameroons, but his sole objective was to absorb its natural resources into francophone Cameroon.

The anglophone political elite had hoped that forming a federation with French Cameroon would protect their territory's minority status and cultural heritage. However, it emerged that the francophone political elite preferred a centralised unitary state deemed suitable for national unity, integration and economic development(Anyefru 2010). Therefore, at the Foumban constitutional talks in July 1961, the francophone elite were only prepared to accept a centralised federation as a stepping stone to a unitary state, as this would require relatively few changes to the 1960 constitution(Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019).

In 1972, Ahidjo abrogated the federal arrangement with Proclamation DF 72-270 of February 6, 1972, which abolished all federal legislative, judicial and administrative institutions and removed all guarantees that protected the rights of Southern Cameroonians (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003). Many critics regarded this as a violation of Article 47 of the Federal Constitution, which prohibited any action that threatened the existence of the federation.

The May 1972 referendum was open to all the people of La Republique du Cameroun, and the dissenting voices of Southern Cameroonians, rejecting the centralised United Republic of Cameroon, were therefore dwarfed by the majority of La Republique. Many Southern Cameroonians regard 20 May, the Cameroon's National Day, as the day when they lost their freedom (Marcel 2007). Southern Cameroons lost most of the limited autonomy it had enjoyed before as part of the Nigerian federation(Fonchingong 2013: 224; Keke 2020).

This attracted resistance from British Southern Cameroonians like the prominent banker Albert Samba Nwana. Following persecution by the Ahidjo regime, he later went into exile in Nigeria from where he continued to mobilise Southern Cameroonians to resist the annexation of their homeland(Enock, interview, 2020).

In the meantime, the African Scholarship Program of American Universities (ASPAU 1961–1975) and the African graduate scholarship programme for postgraduate studies (AFGRAD 1963–1997) made it possible for West Cameroonians to study in the US and UK. This expanded the Southern Cameroonian diaspora, and most of these students joined the growing diasporan protests against events in their motherland (ibid).

Besides those in Nigeria and the UK, a diaspora also developed in the US, when anglophone students decided to stay on, due to their frustrations about the 1972 annexation and in search of a better life (ibid). The diaspora in all three countries included a growing number of professors, doctors, engineers, lawyers, and other professionals, who began to write about the annexation of West Cameroon with the goal of bringing this to the attention of the international community (ibid). Although many Southern Cameroonians at home still did

not see the events of 1972 as an annexation of their territory, the influence and activism of people like Albert Mukong and Fongum Gorji-Dinka in the 1980s served to motivate people in the diaspora.

5.4.4 The emergence of President Paul Biya and the anglophone diaspora (1980s - 1990)

In 1982, Paul Biya succeeded Ahmadou Ahidjo as president, and signalled that he would preserve the anglophone cultural heritage and institutions (ibid). His ascent to power and apparent liberalism helped to pacify southern Cameroonians. However, it soon emerged that he was one of the architects of the 1972 annexation plan and centralised system of government, amounting to the complete assimilation of Southern Cameroons (Amadou 2020). As an interviewee stated:

> *'Paul Biya deceived us, he said much when he visited Buea and even spoke in English. In Bamenda, he labelled the town his second home, assuring us that though he was a Beti/Bulu, he was a president of all Cameroonians' (Valery, interview, 2020).*

Less than a year into Biya's presidency, the minister of national education, René Ze Nguele, announced plans to merge the anglophone educational system into the French system (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003), and in 1984 Biya changed the name of the country from the United Republic of Cameroon to the Republic of Cameroon -- the name of the francophone section of the country when it became independent in 1960, without any anglophone leaders being consulted or given any advance warning (Fanso 1999).

The Anglophone leaders Albert Moukon and Fon Gorji-Dinka informed Biya that changing the name of the country in this way invalidated the Foumban Constitutional Agreement (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003). Gorji-Dinka appealed to the Cameroonian army to take over, arguing that the name change was illegal and a humiliating provocation that would trigger the destruction of the country (Doho 2020). He also argued that by resurrecting the defunct La Republique du Cameroun, Biya had effectively proclaimed the secession of francophone Cameroon from the anglophone Cameroon (Gorji-Dinka 1985). Along with Bernard Fonlon and Carlson Anyangwe, Gorji-Dinka authored *The New Social Order* which claimed that the English-speaking regions of Cameroons had the right to secede from Cameroon, and form the Republic of Ambazonia (Amin 2021; Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003).

Although Gorji-Dinka's pronouncement received minimal support, his activism revived a dormant sense of Southern Cameroonian identity, which soon spread among Cameroonians in the diaspora (Valery, interview, 2020). The message in *The New Social Order* resonated with the Southern Cameroonian diaspora in the UK, the US and Nigeria, who supported the

claim that West Cameroon was betrayed and colonised(ibid). This prompted them to start writing articles on the history of the territory, and send letters to world leaders, the UN and human rights and humanitarian organisations, which helped to raise international awareness of events in Cameroon(Canada 2014). This was followed by the release of many classified documents about British Southern Cameroons from the British archives.

Gorji-Dinka was arrested in May 1985 and was detained until February 1986 (Elong 2012; Abels 2012). After his release, he was placed under house arrest in his native Widikum. He then escaped to Nigeria, moved to the US, and then to the UK, where he continued his activist role in the diaspora (Anyangwe 2008; DeLancey et al 2019). While in the US, he was joined by Albert Mukong and Prof Siga Asanga, who took the message contained in the *New Social Order* to Southern Cameroonians in various parts of the country, while the Cameroonian embassy closely monitored their activities (Konings 2004).

In December 1990, Cameroon's ambassador in the US, Paul Pondi, filed a report about the *New Social Order* to Biya (Ndongo Nlate 2022). It summarised the arguments canvassed in the book, which Pondi dismissed as 'childish and amusing' (ibid). In this time, the diaspora played a largely peaceful role, focusing on raising awareness of the situation in the Southern Cameroons, and conscientising the international community.

5.4.5 Increasing anglophone disenfranchisement, the formation of the SDF and the role of the diaspora

During the first ten years of Buya's presidency, key anglophone economic organisations such as the Cameroon Bank, Power-cam, the West Cameroon Marketing Board and the Limbe Deep Seaport were either forced out of business through excessive centralisation or closed down entirely. Anglophones were relegated to inferior positions in national governing processes and underrepresented in ministerial as well as senior and middle-ranking positions (Konings 2005). As a result, many Southern Cameroonians began to believe that they were being exposed to a policy of assimilation aimed at eroding their identity (Awasom 2008).

> *'At this point, some of us anglophone elites started meeting in secret to decide on ways to restore the autonomy of Southern Cameroons now considered lost to Yaoundé. Following the advice of some diplomats, a political party was to be created in the Anglophone regions and through it gain political power which was intended to be deployed to restore the independence of Southern Cameroons' (Enock, interview, 2020).*

In 1990, anglophone leaders in the Southern Cameroon, including Ni John Fru Ndi, Carlson Ayangwe and Albert Mukong, formed a new political party, the Social Democratic Front

(SDF), hoping to win power and introduce reforms in a restored Cameroonian federation (Fonchingong 2013: 224). According to its official history, the party developed out of a study group created in November 1989 at the initiative of John Fru Ndi to sensitise national and international opinion about the marginalisation of Cameroon's English-speaking minority. Members of the study group decided to transform it into a political party during a meeting at John Fru Ndi's home in Bamenda on 17 February 1990. Apparently, they were urged to do so by foreign diplomats who felt the group would be more effective as a political party (Dibussi Tande 2015).

The SDF was intended to be the flag-bearer for the rights of the Southern Cameroons (Ambe Shu 1999). Its leader, John Fru Ndi, was very popular in urban communities (Konings 2005). An interviewee commented as follows:

> *'With the SDF now seen as the flagship bearer of Anglophone liberation, Anglophone Cameroonians in the diaspora, especially in the US, UK and South Africa, poured financial support into the party's coffers to sponsor its restorationist agenda' (Enock, interview, 2020).*

Another interviewee disclosed:

> *'I was a member of the SDF young, we tried to protect Ni John. He abandoned our initial plan of fighting for our people. He has nothing now to tell us about freedom' (Valery, interview, 2020).*

Creating a political party was regarded as the best option because anglophones did not have the training or equipment needed to fight a war against the francophone regime (Lon 2019). The idea was to advocate a multiparty system, rise to power through the ballot box, and then declare that anglophones were unhappy with the current dispensation, which could lead to a national disaster (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019). As an interviewee noted:

> *'It was a way of getting to power so as to have the leeway to renegotiate the terms of the reunification agreement' (Enock, interview, 2020).*

The SDF helped to turn the anglophone regions into a hotbed of resistance, leading to fierce confrontations with the regime in power, especially during the 1991-2 'ghost town' campaign (Konings 2005).

In the ensuing presidential elections in 1992, Fru Ndi received 86.3 per cent and 51.6 per cent of the votes in the Northwest and Southwest provinces respectively. Despite this, Biya was declared the winner, sparking off violent protests by SDF supporters throughout the northwest region (Eyoh 1998). This meant the anglophone strategy of reform through peaceful political means had failed (Takougang 2003; Gros 1995).

Although the SDF and Fru Ndi made a huge contribution to anglophone consciousness and activism, the party increasingly presented itself later as a national rather than an anglophone party(Halle 2014). This was reflected in its growing membership in francophone Cameroon, notably among the Bamileke, who are closely related to the ethnic groups in the Northwest province and were inclined to see the SDF as a springboard to political power. This caused Fru Ndi to ask that party leaders should not just consider the suffering of anglophones, but also that of people in other regions of the country(Socpa 2002).

Fru Ndi did not support the secession of Anglophone Cameroon and was even kidnapped and by militants in 2019, and part of his house was burnt down. They were angered by what they saw as his betrayal for not supporting their demand for an independent state of Ambazonia(BBC 2023). Instead, he campaigned for a multiparty democracy and equal rights for all Cameroonians, including the English-speaking minority, in a federal, unified Cameroon. He also favoured the economic tactics known as "ghost towns", when large parts of the country went on strike, as well as street protests. Among others, he is credited with forcing Biya to accept a transition from one-party to a multiparty electoral system (ibid).

The SDF also had an Ambazonian faction, led by its second vice-chairman, Dr Ngeka Luma. Fru Ndi engineered a call for Luma to resign from the party, but Luma challenged them to sack him and lose the entire Ambazonian SDF which controlled all but two of Ambazonia's municipalities (Republic of Ambazonia n.d.) This infuriated some anglophones who decided to abandon the SDF and create other pressure groups. Anglophone interests thus came to be represented and defended by these associations and pressure groups created by the anglophone elite in the aftermath of the transition to multiparty democracy in December 1990 (ibid). The newly created anglophone movements together with some in the diaspora were able to place the anglophone problem on the national and international agenda (Konings 2005).

5.4.6 All Anglophone Conferences 1 and 2, the rise of anglophone movements and the role of the diaspora (1990-2000s)

In April 1993, the First All Anglophone Conference (AAC I) took place in Buea, the former capital of West Cameroon (Anyefru 2008). It turned out to be a landmark in the history of anglophone Cameroon, bringing together more than 5 000 members of the anglophone elite (Mokham 2016; Anyedru 2010). According to Konings and Nyamnjoh (2019), some leading members of the ‘old guard’ or ‘Foumban generation’, like John Ngu Foncha and Solomon Tandeng Muna, the Anglophone architects of reunification, expressed their satisfaction with the meeting and apologised for their shortcomings in representing anglophone interests, especially during the federation era, and handed over the baton to a

new generation of leaders. The Buea Declaration, issued after this historic meeting, listed the many anglophone grievances about Francophone domination, assimilation and exploitation, and called for the return to a two-state federation (Jua & Konings 2004).

The Second All Anglophone Conference (AAC II) was held in Bamenda between 29 April and 1 May 1994, and produced a proposal known as the Bamenda Proclamation (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019). It stated that should the central government persist in its refusal to engage in meaningful constitutional talks, or fail to engage in such talks within a reasonable time, the anglophone leadership would proclaim a revival of the independence and sovereignty of the anglophone territory and take all measures necessary to secure, defend and preserve its independence, sovereignty and integrity (Konings 2005; Agwanda et al 2020). The name of Southern Cameroons was reintroduced to demonstrate that 'our struggles are neither of an essentially linguistic character nor in defence of an alien colonial culture, but are aimed at the restoration of the autonomy of the former Southern Cameroons which has been annexed by the Republic of Cameroon' (Konings 2005; Agwanda et al 2020).

The government responded by arresting and incarcerating leaders who had participated in the AAC. Others escaped arrest and went into exile. The former included Justice Ebong Alobwede and Ebenezer Akwanga, and the latter included Ambassador Fossung and Dr Lucas Chu Ayaba.

The ACC was later renamed the Southern Cameroons Peoples Conference (SCPC), and still later the Southern Cameroon People's Organisation (SCAPO), with the Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC) as the executive governing body (Keke 2020; Halle 2014). A sense of euphoria spread through anglophone Cameroon when a SCNC delegation returned from a mission to the UN in 1995 (Jua & Konings 2004). During rallies attended by huge crowds in several anglophone towns, the delegation displayed a large UN flag, claiming it had received this from the UN to show that the Southern Cameroons was still a UN Trust Territory, and that achieving independence was only a matter of time (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019). Although such claims are of course not valid as the United Nations cannot endorse such activities in the Southern Cameroons till date.

On 28 May 1995, younger members of the SCNC formed the Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL) in Buea (Konings 2005). SCYL members saw the formation of an independent Southern Cameroonian state as the only avenue to a better future for themselves and the anglophone population (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019). They preferred to die fighting rather than continuing to submitg to the fate imposed on the Southern Cameroons by La République du Cameroun (ibid). They vowed to 'revive, defend, protect, and preserve the

independence and sovereignty of the once nation, the Southern Cameroons' and to serve as the militant youth wing of the SCNC (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019).

Soon after its formation, the SCYL began to express its discontent with the anglophone movements' loss of momentum. It criticised Henry Fossung SCNC leadership for its sluggish stance towards the Southern Cameroons' independence (ibid). These claims hinged on the SCNC's failure to mobilise the English-speaking regions in the face of growing state repression and its persistent advocacy of dialogue with the francophone-dominated government (Nantang & Konings 2004).

SCYL activists considered that using violence was their only option to make their concerns known to the Biya regime(ibid). As a result, they shifted grounds from the SCNC's decades long slogan "the force of argument" to "the argument of force," signifying their intention to use armed conflict to bring about the independence of the Southern Cameroons(ibid). While getting ready for attacks in both English-speaking provinces, the SCYL was unintentionally forced to deal with the arrest of its leader, Ebenezer Akwanga, after some of its members failed to steal explosives from the Razel Company in Jakiri, Northwest Province, on the night of March 23–24, 1997(Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003). The SCYL retaliated by targeting a few military and civil establishments in the Northwest Province between March 27 and March 31, 1997, culminating to the killing of three gendarmes and seven unidentifiable individuals (Konings 2005).

The Cameroon Tribune, a state-owned newspaper, stated that about five hundred individuals had received training to facilitate the secession of the Anglophone Cameroon. Government forces ruthlessly suppressed any attempt at armed resistance, killing, arresting and torturing suspected fighters, and forcing more to go into exile (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003). Using this as an opportunity, the government clamped down on the SDF and the SCNC, accusing both groups of being behind the rebellion.. Many of these activists went into exile and are now fighting from the diaspora (ibid).

5.4.7 The 1999 Restoration of Independence Declaration and the growing role of the diaspora

By late 1990s and early 2000s, the diaspora had increased significantly, with the biggest diasporan communities in the US, UK, other European countries, Nigeria and South Africa. The SCNC was operating under difficult circumstances within Cameroon, and many members went into exile. Their main goal was to keep the campaign alive. Justice Frederick Alobwede Ebong's declaration of independence in 1999 was prompted by this(Enock, interview, 2020).

On December 30, 1999,the Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV) station in Buea was taken over by Ebong, a SCNC activist with strong ties to the SCYL, and he declared the restoration of the independence of the former British Southern Cameroons(Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019). The declaration was followed by the nomination of a provisional government, with the national anthem, flag, and coat of arms came next(ibid). SCYL hardliners like Dr Ayaba Chu escaped to Germany, and Ebenezer escaped first to Nigeria and finally to the US(Tanjong 2014). Ebenizer Akwanga sent letters to the British prime minister Tony Blair to argue the case of the people of the Southern Cameroons(Bongkorog 2020).

Fon Gorji Dinka, now in the diaspora, tried to revive the dialogue between Ambazonian activists and the US government (Republic of Amazonia n.d.) Congressman Tim Penny became involved and captured the attention of Secretary of State Madeline Albright, who wrote to the International Court of Justice case lodged by Gorji Dinka (ibid). In 2000, Gorji-Dinka spent six months in Nigeria, and met three times with the Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo about the Southern Cameroonian case (ibid). Obasanjo allegedly authorised his Attorney General to deal with the situation, which did not yield any results (ibid).

In this time, the SCYL leadership in the diaspora became aware of the value of the internet and started using it to raise awareness of the anglophone cause in the Cameroon and internationally. This foiled the attempts of the Cameroonian government to censor information and conceal its often-violent suppression of SCNC and SCYL activities (Jua & Konings 2004). In May 2002, the SCYL and SCNC-North America launched Operation Stamp Your Identity which was a magnificent campaign to remind Anglophones of their identity(Ibid).

Thousands of bumper stickers advocating for a return to the 1961 federal republic were produced in the United States and shipped to Anglophone regions. They were symbolically flagged throughout Anglophone urban centres on May 20, 2002, the day Cameroon commemorated its 30th anniversary as a unitary state(Konings 2005:180). On the 1 of October 2002, while Southern Cameroonians were commemorating their Independence Day, the SCYL Secretary-General, Lucas Cho Ayaba, who was living in exile in Germany, took over the Cameroonian embassy in Bonn with other supporters and members of the organisation and raised the Southern Cameroonian flag atop the structure(Ibid). SCYL was considered the most threatening Anglophone advocacy group by the Cameroonian government, as such, it became the prime target of both established pro-government youth militia and the law enforcement agencies(Nantang & Konings 2004). After being driven

underground by intense repression in Cameroon and realising they lacked the skills, equipment, and training to oppose a well-trained and equipped Cameroonian army, the SCYL turned to less aggressive tactics to defend the right of Anglophones to self-determination(Konings, 2005 :179). The SCYL leadership took a separatist stance, attempting to create an independent state of Southern Cameroons by diplomatic warfare, "sensitisation" of the local populace, and peaceful talks with the government(Nantang & Konings 2004). Later, the exiled SCYL leadership in the diaspora turned to the internet to further their cause of anglophone emancipation from abroad, and subsequently, members of the organisation founded new organisations to carry on with the same work(Ibid).

In 2001, following three successive mass demonstrations at the Cameroonian and British embassies in Washington DC, a meeting of the Ambazonia's Peoples Emancipation Council (APEC) took place in the US (Republic of Ambazonia n.d.) Its purpose was to establish a united front of all the organisations and factions involved in the Cameroonian secessionist campaign and to garner external support for a submission to the Cameroon High Court, aimed at compelling Paul Biya's government to withdraw from Ambazonia (ibid).

In 2002, SCAPO petitioned the Federal High Court in Abuja, for an order mandating the Federal Republic of Nigeria's government to uphold its commitments under the African Charter of Human and Peoples Rights and bring the issue of the right of self-determination of the people of the former British Southern Cameroons before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the UN General Assembly and prosecuting it to it final end(Ndahinda 2016; Achankeng 2012). Following a heated debate on the legality of a case filed by a foreign group (SCAPO), Justice Rosaline Ukeje ultimately determined that the case was admissible and proceeded to hear the case's merits. On March 5, 2002, she issued a historic ruling, compelling the Federal Republic of Nigeria to file a case with the ICJ(Ayim 2010).

In 2003, a petition against La République du Cameroun was filed before the Africa Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights by Dr. Kevin Ngwang Gumne and others, acting on their behalf as well as that of the SCNC, SCAPO, and Southern Cameroons(Tanjong 2014). According to the complaint, La République du Cameroun violated the collective and individual rights of hundreds of Southern Cameroonian people. Prof. Carlson Anyangwe served as the complainants' principal counsel(ibid).This serve as a testament to a long list of legal steps taken by anglophone members of the diaspora prior to 2016 uprising leading to the present conflict.

On 20 May 2007, some SCNC activists in the UK led a protest in front of the office of the British prime minister at 10 Downing Street, London. The leader of SCNC's Northampton

branch and coordinator of the demonstration, Daniel Galabe, enjoined all Southern Cameroonians not to give up the struggle for self-determination:

> 'Let the agents of La République du Cameroun in the UK carry the message to Mr. Biya that no amount of arrest, physical and psychological torture, ill-treatment and killing will stop us. I pray for the intervention of the international community and God to guide us in the quest for freedom, justice, and equality via a sovereign independence. I pray to God to hasten the restoration of our fatherland, Southern Cameroons, otherwise known as West Cameroon' (Walter & Ejang 2007: 1).

The chairperson of SCNC-UK, George Ekontang, who handed a petition to a staff member at 10 Downing Street in the absence of the British premier, Tony Blair, also said that 'Southern Cameroons would be free. He pleaded with the international community to support the legitimate struggle of the Southern Cameroons and called on Southern Cameroonians to redouble their efforts to restore its statehood and sovereign independence. He pleaded with Britain to help restore the independence of the Southern Cameroons' (ibid:2).

Figure 11: Southern Cameroonians protest outside a New York Hotel housing President Biya.

Source: Cameroon Intelligence Report.

Figure 12: Members of the SCNC based in the UK stage a demonstration in front of the British Prime Minister's office at 10 Downing Street, London, 20 May 2007

Source: Walter Wilson Nana & Olive Ejang Tebug Ngoh.

5.5 The Unrepresented National and Peoples Organisation (UNPO) and the anglophone diaspora

From birth, the SCNC has made it a primary objective to resolve the anglophone self-determination question through diplomatic means. The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation (UNPO) in The Hague is one international organisation that has contributed to the internationalisation of the Anglophone cause. Following an application by the SCNC, Southern Cameroons was granted membership status of the UNPO in December 2004. The UNPO comprises nations, peoples and minorities working to promote and defend their identities, culture, human rights and environments (Van Der Pol 2010). Its members include minorities, occupied countries, indigenous peoples, and autonomous governments that work to uphold their human and cultural rights, preserve their natural surroundings, and resolve conflicts peacefully. Under the UNPO, they are required to respect the rights of all nations and peoples to self-determination, to oppose tyranny, to defend universally recognised human rights norms, to encourage nonviolence and oppose terrorism, and to safeguard the environment in their country(Anyefru 2010).

In the course of lobbying for Southern Cameroons entrance into UNPO, SCNC leaders contended that Southern Cameroons was headed towards complete independence by 1960, but they were only given the choice to join Nigeria or French Cameroon(Mehler 2014) and while the two states forming the Republic of Cameroon were meant to enjoy equal status, this resulted in French Cameroon effectively annexing the Southern Cameroons(Awasom 2020). This alleged annexation of the Southern Cameroons by French Cameroon became

the basis for which the Southern Cameroons UNPO membership application was approved in 2004 (Anyefru 2010). By this UNPO platform, Southern Cameroonian activists have had the opportunity to inform other UN organs about the plight of their people in Cameroon (ibid).

In 2006, a group within the SCNC once more proclaimed the liberation Ambazonia from the diaspora, but there were serious divisions within the movement (Robert 2020). These divisions were allegedly engineered by the government of Cameroon, which had infiltrated the organisation as well as others. The SCNC, whose leaders are predominantly in the diaspora, suffered most from the government's covert counteroffensive (Halle 2014; Konings 2004). Most members of other groups, for example SCAPO, SCARM, and SCYL, had been members of the SCNC (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019; Elong 2012).

In April 2007, a conference was held Dallas, Texas, in the US, where delegates from the UK, Africa, Europe and the US established a Way Forward Network in order to coordinate their efforts to advance the Southern Cameroonian campaign. The network, a consensus-based network of committees, was made up of the Ambazonian Liberation Party/Ambazonia Peoples' Emancipation Council (ALIP/APEC); the SCNC; SCAPO; the Southern Cameroons Restoration Movement (SCARM) and the SCYL. They committed themselves to working together to realise the territory's right to self-determination, while maintaining their various group identities (ibid).

5.5.1 The current anglophone conflict and the involvement of the diaspora (2016-2022)

Following the arrest and incarceration of the CACSC leadership, anglophone activists in the diaspora took over as leaders of the struggle (Okereke 2018) substituting the initial demand for a return to a two-state federation to complete independence for Ambazonia (ibid). Multiple organisations have arisen, campaigning for anglophone nationalism within Cameroon and internationally to achieve Ambazonia independence (Enyeji 2021, Okereke 2018). Notable among these organizations are "the CACSC, SCAPO, the Southern Cameroons South Africa Forum (SCSAF), the Movement for the Restoration of Independence of Southern Cameroon (MoRISC), the SCNC, the Republic of Ambazonia (RoA), the Ambazonia Governing Council (AGC) and the SCYL (Ketzmerick 2023). Other organisations pushing for Anglophone nationalism dreams have arisen in Europe and the United States. This in itself calls for a thorough investigation into their activities and prospect for success.

Figure 13: Anglophone diaspora protest in Washington D.C.

Source: Legideon News Now.

The Southern Cameroons Ambazonia Consortium United Front (SCACUF), chaired by Sisiku Julius Ayuktabe, became the umbrella organisation for some of these advocacy groups (Nkwain 2022). The state's extreme reaction to the concerns of the anglophone people tended to further radicalise the demonstrators, whose demands switched from representation in a federal state to the establishment of an independent Ambazonia(Jules Roger 2018). On 1 October 2017, the conflict escalated when militant secessionists in the diaspora under SCACUF declared the restoration of an independent Ambazonia(Tata & Sama 2021). Scores of people were killed, and hundreds arrested in a subsequent crackdown by government forces(Okereke 2018). SCACUF transformed itself into an Interim government and established the Southern Cameroon Broadcasting Corporation (SCBC), to preserve anglophone dreams by means of propaganda. This propaganda from the diaspora, coupled with domestic repression by government security forces, helped to radicalise more anglophones, especially youths, and persuaded them to join the fight for the restoration of Ambazonian independence(Orock 2021). The diasporan activists also made extensive use of the internet, including social media. In response, the government blocked access to the internet days in the anglophone regions for a period of 90 days (ibid). However, the synergy between the diaspora and forces on the home front has kept the Ambazonian campaign going for the past five years.

Figure 14: US-based Ambazonia separatist leaders protest in Washington DC.

Source: David Atangana for Mimi Mefo Info.

5.5.2 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to trace the origins of the involvement of the anglophone diaspora in the Southern Cameroons quest for self-determination. It began by examining the migration of Cameroonians to the west and other parts of the world, and the factors that drove their migration in various periods. These migrants and their descendants form what is known as the anglophone diaspora. The involvement of the anglophone diaspora in the self-determination campaign was classified into four periods. The first was the 1950s-1960s and was epitomised by the activities of the National Union of Kamerun Students, which began to consider which forms of decolonisation would provide the emerging Southern Cameroons and its anglophone cultural identity with the best possible future.

The second period was the annexation period, in the 1970s and 1980s. This was when Southern Cameroons realised they were losing most of the limited autonomy they had previously enjoyed before as part of the Nigerian federation. This so-called annexation provoked a political response from the Nigerian diaspora and spurred the emergence of the US and UK diasporas. This period is also the era of President Ahidjo's political leadership of Cameroon, and his contribution to the anglophone problem. It ended with Ahidjo's surprise resignation and the emergence of Paul Biya as president. This culminated in the third period of the 1980s and 1990s, which featured Biya's contribution to the anglophone crisis and the growing role of the anglophone diaspora. As the longest serving leader of the country, Biya has played a major role in the conflict in Cameroon. Most of the policies that

have provoked ad adverse anglophone response have been introduced during his presidency. His era has been marked by the effective disenfranchisement of anglophones, a dismissive attitude, and authoritarian responses to their complaints. This culminated in the formation of the SDF as a means of gaining political power and salvaging the lost autonomy of Southern Cameroon.

The two All Anglophone Conferences held in Buea and Bamenda in 1993 and 1994 were expected to find a way of presenting anglophone grievances to Biya and his government and pressure him into addressing those demands. This effort did not bear fruit, leading to the formation of many diasporan pressure groups fighting for autonomy and independence. Among others, this led to the admission of the Southern Cameroons to the UNPO through the SCNC. The fourth period started in 2016 and has continued up to the present. In this period, the anglophone diaspora has made its most significant contribution to the Southern Cameroonian quest to self-determination.

In sum, this chapter has traced the developing role of the anglophone diaspora in the Southern Cameroonian quest for independence over six decades. During this period, the diasporan movements have steadily raised international awareness of the Ambazonian campaign, especially via the internet and social media.

6 Drivers of anglophone diasporan involvement in the Southern Cameroonian quest for self-determination

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter examined the origins of the anglophone diaspora, and its evolution from a position of non-violence to the violent and volatile situation of the present day. This chapter looks at the main factors that have driven its involvement in the Southern Cameroonian quest for self-determination, and how these have impacted on or influenced its strategies.

6.2 A flawed or incomplete decolonisation

According to members of the diaspora, the most important driver of their involvement in the conflict is what they term 'incomplete decolonisation', or what Orock terms the 'coloniality' of their union with French Cameroon. Anglophone nationalists in the diaspora are questioning the UN-imposed plebiscite of 11 February 1961 which led to the reunification of the two Cameroons (Orock 2021). A respondent confirms this as follows:

> *'We are fighting against the illegal occupation of our territory by la Republique. Colonialism is a crime against humanity -- we want our territory [to be] completely decolonized' (Mathew, interview, 2020).*

The legality of the reunification discourse has generated controversy in Cameroon since the 1990s, and the arguments hinge on the degree of commitment of anglophone and francophone Cameroonians to its realisation (Ayim 2000). The illegality argument holds that the reunification was not supported by an anglophone majority, which means that it was imposed on Southern Cameroons. In support of this argument, Awasom (2000) points out that, whether on purpose or not, only a portion of the reunification history is usually recounted. He also contends that:

> *'Reunification was essentially a Francophone affair, from its inception to its ultimate imposition upon reluctant Anglophones by the United Nations in 1961, forming the bilingual republic of Cameroon. Anglophones were reluctant due to their different historical experiences from the Francophones and their desire to attain sovereignty first'(Awasom 2000:1).*

This argument is rooted in the colonial history of the territory now known as the anglophone regions of Cameroon or Ambazonia. In 1884, during the 'scramble for Africa', German colonisers arrived in the territory east of the Mongo River (present-day Cameroon) and colonised it by signing treaties with coastal chiefs (Monteh 2018). By 1887, the Germans

had moved inland to the west of the Mongo River to the present-day Southern Cameroons and extended their territorial influence by signing more treaties with local chiefs (Kouega 2007). The newly acquired territory became known as Neukamerun.

Kamerun remained under German rule until 1914 due to their defeat in World War I (Dze-Ngwa 2015). Following the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, the western part of German Kamerun was given to Britain and the eastern part went to France as mandated territories under the League of Nations (Nfobin & Minang 2014). To ensure administrative convenience, Britain divided her own share of the territory into two parts, called British Northern and Southern Cameroons (Nfi 2014). Britain governed both these territories as part of Nigeria. Nigeria got her independence from Britain in 1960, but autonomous Southern and Northern Cameroons remained primarily on their own of course with mild British supervisor via indirect rule while waiting to join Nigeria or French Cameroon in a plebiscite. During this time, British Southern Cameroons operated as a full fledge independent or sovereign state because as of the 1958 London constitutional conference, the British Southern Cameroons were elevated to full autonomy as a region within the Nigerian Federation, and E.M.L Endeley, formerly known as the "Leader of Government Business," became Premier (Awasom 2020:7). When Premier E.M.L. Endeley's term expired in 1959, elections were held, and the opposition party Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP), led by Mr. John Ngu Foncha, won, and J. N. Foncha became Premier of the British Southern Cameroons, while ENL Endeley, the outgoing Premier, became the opposition leader in parliament(Ibid). Furthermore, as an autonomous region within the Nigerian Federation, Southern Cameroons has well established self-government institution such as a government led by the Premier, a bicameral parliament comprising of a House of Assembly and a House of Chiefs, an Official Opposition in parliament, a judiciary led by a Chief Justice, a civil service, and a police force all were made available through Nigeria's federal constitution (Awasom 1998:163, 2020:7; Atemnkeng 2014: 61).

So by the 1st of October 1960 when Nigeria achieved her independence and the Southern Cameroons separated from her, the Southern Cameroons has attained a full measure of self-government as a territory, fully responsible for her internal affairs except for defense and foreign affairs which Britain retained jurisdiction over(Awasom 2020). The question therefore is why was the territory not granted full sovereignty at that very moment like Nigeria and other territories under British colonial administration? As from 1 October 1960 up to 30 September 1961, Southern Cameroons operated as a state having separated from Nigeria who became independent on 1st October 1960 and the separation prompted the British to enact the Southern Cameroons Constitution Order in Council which went into effect immediately what stopped the British colonial administration from granting the

territory sovereign statehood at that same period? So anglophone nationalism activists abroad complained that this was a denial of Southern Cameroons sovereign statehood (Ndangam 2020). This flawed or incomplete decolonisation argument can be sum into three main argument which are: the non-implementation of UN Resolution 1608, the denial of the full Independence Option or the absence of a third plebiscite question and no union treaty between Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon.

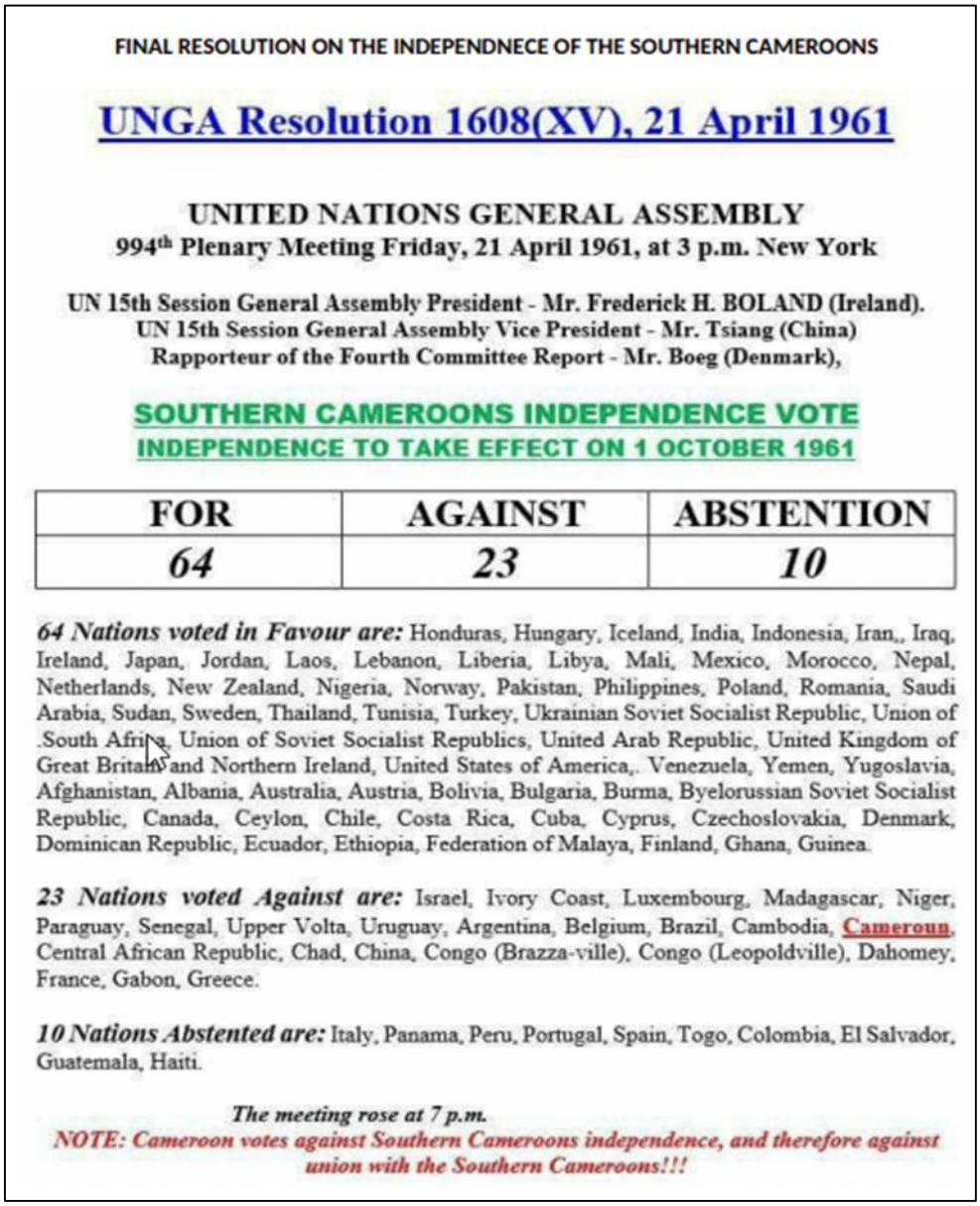
6.2.1 The plebiscites and UN Resolution 1608

After World War Two, the UN transformed all colonial and mandated territories into trust territories under a Trusteeship Council and required the colonial powers to prepare those colonised peoples for self-rule (Marcus 2002: 99; Ndi 2016). Nigeria and French Cameroun duly became independent in 1960. The two British territories of Southern and Northern Cameroons were not yet independent and were still autonomous states within the Nigerian federation (Fanso 1999).

On February 11, 1961, plebiscites were held in Northern and Southern Cameroons 'to ascertain the wishes of the inhabitants … concerning their future'. Northern Cameroonians voted to join Nigeria, and Southern Cameroonians voted to join the Republic of Cameroun. As a result, on 21 April 1961, the UN General Assembly voted (in Resolution 1608) to endorse that Northern Cameroons should join the Federation of Nigeria on 1 June 1961, and that Southern Cameroons should join the Republic of Cameroun on 1 October 1961. The vote was 64 in favour and 23 against, with 10 abstentions. Notably, the votes against included the Republic of Cameroun as well as France (Ngang 2021; Nkongho 2022). (Their motive for voting against the resolution is unclear. Perhaps this was because francophone Cameroon harboured the dream of uniting with Northern British Cameroon as well and opposed its inclusion in Nigeria).

Be that as it may, Anglophone nationalist gatherings such as the All-Anglophone Conference (AAC I) of 1993, which produced the Buea Declaration, and the AAC II of 1994, which produced the Bamenda Declaration, condemned the UN decision on the grounds that it should have granted full independence to British Southern Cameroons in accordance with the UN Article 1608 instead adhering to the 11 February 1961 plebiscite result which led to the Southern Cameroons joining the French Cameroon Republic (Awasom 1998; Fossung 2004).

Figure 15: UNGA Resolution 1608 of 21 April 1961



FINAL RESOLUTION ON THE INDEPENDNECE OF THE SOUTHERN CAMEROONS

UNGA Resolution 1608(XV), 21 April 1961

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
994th Plenary Meeting Friday, 21 April 1961, at 3 p.m. New York

UN 15th Session General Assembly President - Mr. Frederick H. BOLAND (Ireland).
UN 15th Session General Assembly Vice President - Mr. Tsiang (China)
Rapporteur of the Fourth Committee Report - Mr. Boeg (Denmark),

SOUTHERN CAMEROONS INDEPENDENCE VOTE
INDEPENDENCE TO TAKE EFFECT ON 1 OCTOBER 1961

FOR	AGAINST	ABSTENTION
64	*23*	*10*

64 Nations voted in Favour are: Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran,, Iraq, Ireland, Japan, Jordan, Laos, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Sweden, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of South Africa, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Arab Republic, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America,. Venezuela, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Albania, Australia, Austria, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Burma, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Canada, Ceylon, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Federation of Malaya, Finland, Ghana, Guinea.

23 Nations voted Against are: Israel, Ivory Coast, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Niger, Paraguay, Senegal, Upper Volta, Uruguay, Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Cambodia, Cameroun, Central African Republic, Chad, China, Congo (Brazza-ville), Congo (Leopoldville), Dahomey, France, Gabon, Greece.

10 Nations Abstented are: Italy, Panama, Peru, Portugal, Spain, Togo, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti.

The meeting rose at 7 p.m.
NOTE: Cameroon votes against Southern Cameroons independence, and therefore against union with the Southern Cameroons!!!

Source: SCAPO Online.

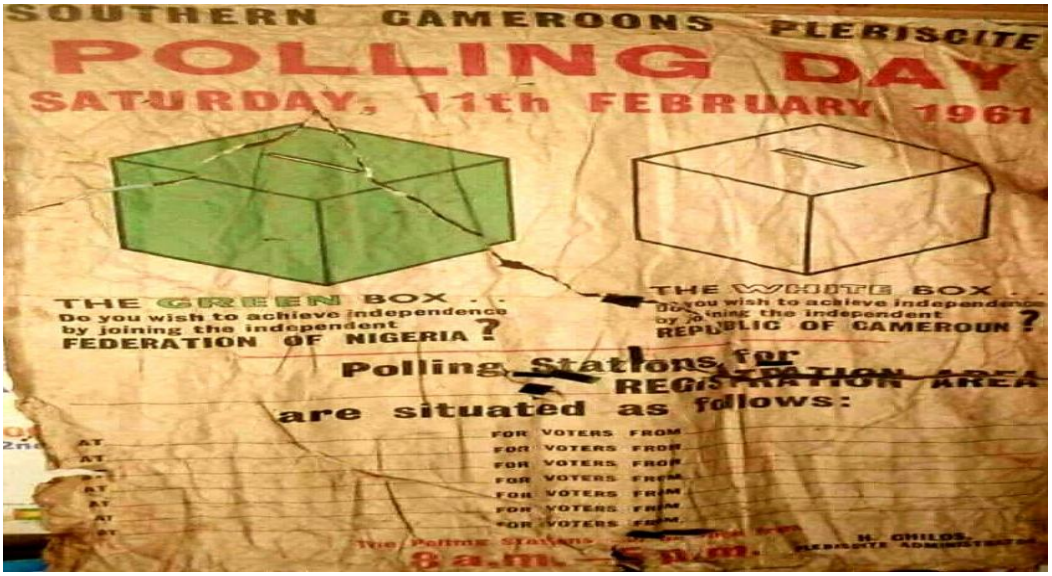
Apart from the non-implementation of UN resolution 1608 which anglophone members of the diaspora and other nationalists leader argued was supposed to have been implemented and its non-implementation robbed the Southern Cameroons of her full independence, anglophone diaspora equally claimed the preferred plebiscite question that could have given Southern Cameroonians the option of full independence was not included among the plebiscite questions (Ayim 2010).

Anglophone nationalist leaders in the diaspora argued that the voters in Southern Cameroons were only presented with the options of joining Nigeria or the Republic of Cameroun, and not with a third option of full independence(Funteh 2015; Afungang 2020). It is believed that a 3rd option that could have allowed the people of Southern Cameroons to vote for full independence was rejected by the UN based on a complaint made by the out-going British colonial administration and the 1959 Phillipson Report that the territory was not economically viable and cannot sustain itself as an independent state (Jua and Konings 2004; Fonchingong 2013). As a result, they argued that the UN decision contravened the provisions in the UN Charter on trust territories and was therefore invalid. However, the resolution 1608 only acknowledged the results of the February 11, 1961, plebiscite, leading to Northern Cameroons' integration with Nigeria and Southern Cameroons' reunification with the Republic of Cameroon. Claiming the resolution granted full independence to the Southern Cameroons is misrepresents of historical facts and aligns with the distortions often promoted by anglophone activists abroad. Furthermore, the argument that anglophones were not given the option of full independence during the plebisciteis a contradiction, since the resolution could not have granted an option that was never on the ballot.

Figure 16: Notice of plebiscite in British Southern Cameroons, 11 February 1961

Source: Debussi Tande

Figure 17: Notice of polling stations for the plebiscite in British Southern Cameroons, 11 February 1961



Source: Debussi Tande

This remains a major driver of and justification of the Southern Cameroonian demand for indiepende. As a prominent diasporan has put it:

> *'Till today, I still don't understand why the third option was not included in the plebiscite questions. The option that would have allowed our people to choose their freedom wasn't included. We feel cheated, and we will keep fighting until that is corrected' (Philip, interview, 2023).*

6.2.2 Decisions at the Mamfe conference

Diasporans also point to the fact that the omission of the third option ran counter to the decisions or recommendations of the Mamfe conference held on 10-11 August 1959 According to Afungang (2020), 67 per cent of Southern Cameroonian leaders voted that the plebiscite questions should be integration with Nigeria or independence, against 33 per cent for integration with Nigeria or reunification with the Republic of Cameroon (Afungang 2020). Among others, according to the colonial records, Chief Achirimbi, a local representative, stated:

> 'We believe on two points during the conference in Bamenda in which Dr. Endeley and Foncha were present. I was the chairman of the conference. We rejected Dr. Endeley because he wanted to take us to Nigeria. If Mr. Foncha tries to take us to the French

> Cameroon, we shall also run away from him. To me, the French Cameroon is fire and Nigeria is water. Sir, I support secession without reunification'(Kale 1967; Chem-Langhee 2004).

This report also shows that delegates favoured complete independence. AAC I also declared the UN's regarded of the Mamfe decision as illegitimate and a 'gross transgression of the people's rights' (Afungang 2020).

6.2.3 The Foumban conference

The Foumban constitutional assembly opened with a big surprise for anglophone delegates: President Ahidjo presented them with an already prepared constitution. Instead of negotiating the terms of a future Federal United Republic of Cameroon constitution from scratch with Ahidjo's team in Foumban, anglophone representatives were simply invited and asked to make comments on Ahidjo draft document(Achankeng 2015:7). The British Southern Cameroons delegation was astonished by President Ahidjo's request, which weakened their trust and confidence in the entire process of the constitutional conference. The Southern Cameroonian delegates' contributions were reflected in the proposed revisions to the text that was initially offered to them. Delegates departed the three-day conference under the notion that more conferences would be called to continue drafting the constitution, but this did not materialise(Ibid). Mbile later noted: Namoso Mbile, one of the delegates on the British Southern Cameroons' side said,

'*We have the feeling that we have wasted our time coming to Foumban for the draft to be tabled in this fashion for our observations in this way. This is in total contradiction to our expectations; instead of a draft of a federal constitution, we are being requested to make observations on a draft highly centralized constitution with unlimited powers*'(Mbile, 2011:89).

Ahidjo and Foncha agreed on the Constitution for the New Federal Republic in Yaoundé in August 1961, subject to adoption by the two states' Houses of Assembly. In the end, the West Cameroon House of Assembly never ratified the constitution (Enonchong 2020:40). Regardless, on October 1, 1961, the Federal Republic of Cameroon was born (Mufor 2011).

Nationalists have equally challenged the validity of the decision at the Foumban conference of 1961 (Ayim 2010). Mbile's words after reading Ahidjo's draft constitution make it plain that the French Cameroon Republic was primarily concerned with their highly centralised federation, which was considered as a temporary step towards a unitary state (Anyangwe, 2014a). Surprisingly, Pierre Messmer, a former French high commissioner in Yaoundé, disclosed that he and others were aware at the time that the so-called federal constitution only allowed for "a fake federalism." For every reason, this was "safe in design, for the anticipated annexation of the Southern Cameroons" (Anyangwe, 2014b:210). It is also true

that the British Southern Cameroons continue to resist the takeover and colonial occupation of its territory by French Cameroon (Anyangwe, 2014a; Litumbe, 2014; Nfor, 2013).

By and large, anglophone nationalists in the diaspora are contending the fact that there exist no union treaty been French Cameroon and the Southern Cameroons. They contends that Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon did not sign a union treaty (a binding document in international law(Ayim 2010:200)). They also argue that, in line with Article 102(1) of the UN Charter, the governments of the two territories should have held a post-plebiscite conference to agree on a federal constitution which should have been ratified and registered at the UN Secretariat (Nkwi 2020).

Ayim argues that such a treaty would have required the following steps:

- 'negotiations mandated by international law (UN Resolutions 1352, 1608, 1514 (XV) and a meeting between the Southern Cameroons Prime Minister and French Cameroons president, overseen by both the British government, the French government, and the UN.
- the drafting and ratification of a 'Treaty of Union' by the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly and Republic of Cameroun's parliament was required.
- The leaders of both countries should have signed a 'Treaty of Union'(Ayim 2010:199).

However, none of these steps were followed, thus invalidating the legal basis of the union (Ayim 2010). While this claim that the West Cameroon House of Assembly never ratified the Federal Constitution before the Federal Republic of Cameroon was declared on October 1, 1961 appears in some sources, was the ratification legally required to endorse the union? Given that the Federal Constitution created the West Cameroon House of Assembly, how could the assembly reject the very document that legitimized its existence and is there a union treaty between Nigeria and the Nothern Cameroons? There existence no such treaty between Nigeria and Northern Camerroons. If there is not such document between Nigeria and northern Cameroon, why is it required for Southern Cameroon and the French Cameroons.

Furthermore, some respondents disagreed with this line of argument, arguing that the UN-supervised plebiscite was an official process of decolonisation and that the Southern Cameroonians should move on from the past, since neither the UN nor Britain are ready to talk about their colonial history. As one respondent put it:

> *'Anglophones cannot keep blaming the UK and the UN. The plebiscite was a United Nations supervised process of decolonisation; how can they say it was incomplete? It may not satisfy everyone, but the UK and the UK have moved on from the past' (Paul, interview, 2021).*

Britain, for example, has maintained that it simply accepted the results of the UN-supervised plebiscite of 11 February 1961, as the basis for turning over authority to the French Cameroun Republic. Anglophone nationalists in the diaspora, on the other hand, say that the UN-supervised plebiscite on February 11, 1961, constituted a declaration of intent, and that it was the implementation of the Post-Plebiscite Resolution 1608(XV) of April 21, 1961, that would have sealed the intent. As the recent Brexit vote demonstrated, a referendum is a declaration of intent that must be ratified by Parliament which legally represents the will of the country(Ayim 2018:22). The situation in Southern Cameroons was different, as the referendum results were not approved by the Southern Cameroons Parliament. Even after Foumban, the referendum on February 11, 1961, was never endorsed by the Government of Southern Cameroons, nor was the Bill promulgated by the Commissioner for Cameroons, who was the Acting Head of State. He quickly left the Southern Cameroons after handing over power to President Ahidjo of French Cameroun on September 30, 1961, just one day before October 1(Ibid:24).

6.3 The Francophone regime's centralisation of power and the involvement of the diaspora

Anglophone diaspora leaders also point to the abolition of the federal system and the establishment of a centralised system as a major factor driving the campaign for independence. One respondent stated:

> *'This fake union started with a federation or federal system, that was meant to respect both of our cultural identities while in it; along the line la republique with no regards for the constitution started pushing beyond the boundary allowed by the constitution entered at Foumban, why did they abolish the federal system? For years we begged them to go back to federalism. Now we want only restoration of our independence' (Elvis, interview, 2021).*

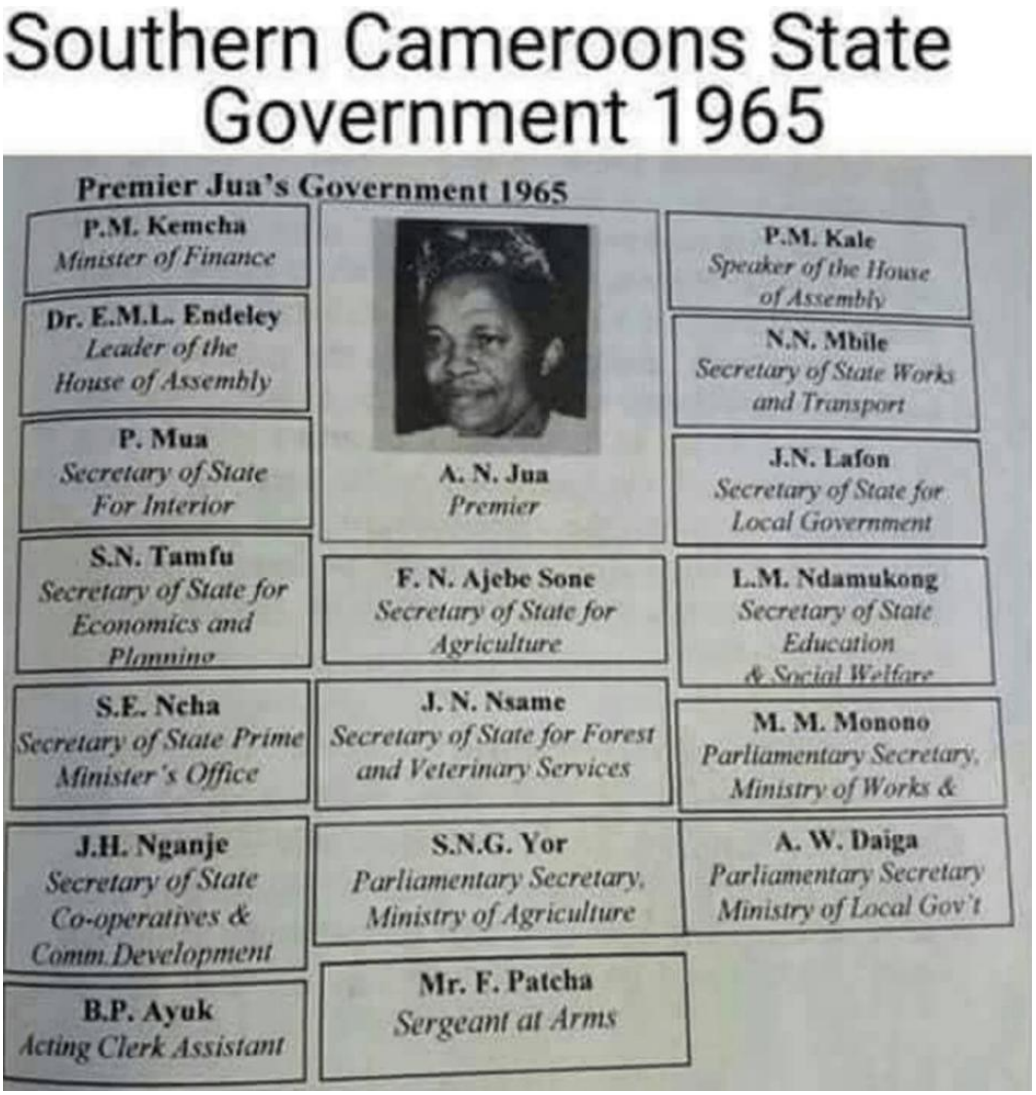
Ostensibly, both Western and Eastern Cameroon (the former British Southern Cameroons and French Cameroun) were meant to enjoy equal rights in a two-state federation. However, from the outset, Ahidjo and the Anglophone elite had divergent views of the purpose of the federation (Ayim 2010). While the anglophone elite, led by John Foncha, prime minster and vice-president of Cameroon, saw the federation as a permanent fixture through which anglophones would maintain their unique identity, Ahidjo and the francophone elite saw it as a transitory form of state that would be replaced with a unitary state, enabling the full integration of the anglophone population and achievement of the ideal of national unity, which as greatly needed for nation-building and national development (Konings &

Nyamnjoh 2003). These different understandings of the purpose of the federal system went a long towards influencing future events in the reunified Cameroon and to sow the seeds for the present conflict (ibid).

President Ahidjo and his government worked from the outset to weaken the federal structure and undermine the autonomy and identity of Anglophone West Cameroon (Konings and Nyamnjoh 2003:16),). For instance, the government never established a revenue-generating mechanism for West Cameroon, which meant it was financially reliant on the federal government (Ndi 2014). According to the Foumban accord, 'public resources were supposed to flow to the national treasury in Yaoundé and redistributed to the two constituent states, with the explicit aim that this would be formalised by a revenue allocation agreement. But Ahidjo, despite pressure from Foncha, refused to sign such an agreement and retained discretionary power over all public resources, which were allocated according to annual non-binding applications from Buea to Yaoundé'(ICG 2010:9).

In October 1961, Ahidjo established six provinces, of which West Cameroon (English Cameroon) was only one, and then treated the latter identically like the other five provinces of East Cameroon (French Cameroon, governing them with no concession to federal principles. (Ibid:9). There were frequent disputes between elected Anglophone officials and federal administrators dispatched from Yaoundé (Konings 2001). These tensions were especially apparent in relation to security forces and petty abuses of power by francophone gendarmes who were all subject to federal authority, and they continue to be a source of animosity in anglophone Cameroon today (Vakunta 2012).

Figure 18: Southern Cameroons government under Prime Minister A.N. Jua, 1965



Source: SCAPO Online.

By the early 1970s, Ahidjo had succeeded in incorporating all political forces into his orbit of power. Now in charge of every sphere of political life, he started to implenent the complete integration and assimilation of anglophones (Takougang 2019). First, in 1972, the federal state was transformed into a unitary one in which the presidency would have even greater powers (Chereji & Lohkoko 2012). In a nationwide referendum held in May 1972, an overwhelming majority voted in favour of a unitary state and the transofmration of the two federated states into ten regions, with governors appointed by the president (Stark 1976; Konings 1999). However, the referendum was fraught with irregularities, especially in West Cameroon (Ambanasom 2010). Though the abolition of federalism was supported by the

majority of francophone Cameroonians, anglophones saw this as an effort to increase the power of the francophone government, and a major threat to Anglophone identity (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019). While some co-opted members of the anglophone elite supported the change, most of the anglophone population saw it as a violation of the agreement reached at Foumban (ibid).

Nevertheless, Cameroon became a unitary state in 1972, and its name was changed from Federal Republic of Cameroon to United Republic of Cameroon (DeLancey et al. 2019). The posts of prime minister of West and East Cameroon, as well as a federal vice-president, were abolished simultaneously. The end effect was one of Africa's most centralised regimes (Stark1976).

A rapid turnover of ministers, except for enduring loyalists like Moussa Yaya and Sadou Daoudou, hindered any potential opponents of the francophone elite from gaining a foothold in the system. Crucial ministries and agencies, notably all state intelligence agencies, were placed under control of the head of state, while the remaining departments of the executive and legislature were gradually neutralised(ICG 2010:13). The president was given extensive powers over appointment across the developing public service, as well as complete control over all state financial resources, which he maintains to this day. These were employed to incentivise allegiance and penalise independent thought. One of the outcomes was the establishment of a bureaucratic state(ibid). As political views and aspirations became subject to scrutiny or self-censorship, and in the situation of increasing state employment, Cameroon's political elites became more familiar or accustomed to technocratic bureaucracy. State government officials, like as prefects, became the actual holders of power(ibid).

Anglophones were excluded from decision-making processes, even though they occupied some ministerial posts as well as the vice presidency. The oppressive nature of the Ahidjo regime and the closed political space during one-party rule largely prevented the anglophone population from expressing their anger. However, with the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that this laid the foundation for later protests during the rule of Ahidjo’s successor and Cameroon’s current president, Paul Biya (ibid).

Biya succeeded Ahmadou Ahidjo In 1982 in a peaceful transfer of power and signalled that he would preserve anglophone cultural heritage and institutions (Amin et al 2021). However, it soon became clear that he would follow in the footsteps of his predecessor (ibid). When. in 1984i, he changed the name of the country from United Republic of Cameroon to the Republic of Cameroon, it came as a surprise to anglophone leaders, who were not consulted (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003). Anglophones also had to travel to

Yaoundé to gain access to important official documents like passports and to process their retirement benefits, often under deplorable conditions (Bongmba 2006).

The anglophone diaspora's discontent has manifested itself on two levels. On the one hand, they contend that Yaoundé has failed to comply with the 1961 Foumban accord and its principles for an 'equal federation'. Many people expected federalism would promote mutual respect for both cultures and result in a union of truly equal parts. These expectations were crushed by Ahidjo's extreme centralisation following reunification, which led some anglophones to regard Yaoundé as an occupying power, particularly since the abolition of federalism in 1972. Some Anglophones have long abandoned their hopes for a completely equal union, but they continue to expect the central government to recognise their historical and cultural differences.

These discontents are not so much fuelled by the mistakes of the 1960s than by the contemporary shortcomings of a highly centralised state in dealing with minority groups. The dismantling of the federation and the establishment of a unitary state served to corroborate the comments of the then French President, Georges Pompidou, who said that the federation was a 'charade', and that Southern Cameroons was a 'small gift' from the Queen of England to France(Konings 2005). As argued by Crawford (1997), unilaterally abolishing such a federation without the consent of one of the parties is synonymous with secession. He argues that this should have resulted in the return to independence of both constituent states. He also argues that this change contravened the federal constitution and amounted to creeping annexation or re-colonisation (ibid). This step prepared the ground for the political mobilisation in southern Cameroons following the reintroduction of multiparty politics in Cameroon in the 1990s, resulting in growing calls for secession by members of the anglophone diaspora.

6.4 The co-optation of anglophone elites and the involvement of the diaspora

The ‘co-optation of anglophone elites into the francophone ‘hegemonic alliance’ prevented the former from openly organising themselves in defence of their interests prior to political liberalisation in the early 1990s’(Halle 2014:11;Atang 2011:14;Jua & Konings 2004:2). This remains a major issue, with one respondent stating:

> *‘Our elites who are supposed to speak for our people and defend our interest are silent. Some of them have denied the existence of Anglophone problem all because they are dining with the regime in place. For us, fighting for Ambazonia is a calling, it is our gift to our people and the next generation’ (Frank, interview, 2023).*

Anglophone diasporans believe that significant sections of the Southern Cameroonian elite have been co-opted by the regime by means of political office and civil service appointments in order to ‘sing the song of one Cameroon.’ Elite co-optation is an old tactic employed by African neo-patrimonial countries to subdue opposition and re-establish consensus to uphold the status quo(Omeje 2008; Andreasson 2010). Co-optation-based inclusion policies require deft management and rely on the ruler's capacity to create and preserve a careful balance among diverse groups of players, some of whom may organise resistance or even acts of violence to increase the reward for their political loyalty(Mehler 2021). African political regimes use ‘elite co-optation to appease, break down, silence, or weaken prominent pressure groups by luring vocal and influential members of these groups into the ruling circle with promises of strategic appointments, government contracts, power-sharing agreements, and other tangible benefits intended to incorporate them into the state patronage network’ (Omeje 2008:78). According to this scholar, at the heart of co-optation is expediency, regime survival and occasionally betrayal. Bringing opposition members into the regime’s network makes them look bad to their supporters (ibid).

Francophone ‘academics and politicians frequently disregard anglophone nationalism as nothing more than the attempts of a few frustrated anglophone elites who were denied a seat at the table during political liberalisation’(Jua and Konings 2004:2; Sindjoun 1995: 114)). However, the absorption of some members of the anglophone elite into the hegemonic ruling alliance has effectively prevented them from defending the interests of the anglophone people. According to southern Cameroonian nationalists, the diaspora community consequently had to intervene from abroad as the only voice of conscience for oppressed anglophones in Cameroon’.

The co-optation of Southern Cameroonians started with reunification in the 1960s. As noted previously, power was increasingly centralised in the hands of President Ahidjo, and he developed a political system based on the co-optation of elites(Morse 2021). Advancement in politics and the economy was totally dependent on favours from Ahidjo, and political life became remunerated with tokens of allegiance to the ruling party(Dicklitch 2002: 152).

A thriving economy in the 1960s provided funding for Ahidjo's co-optation scheme (Takougang 2019). Economic expansion fuelled by agricultural exports made it possible for a hierarchical clientelist system to give certain opposition subclasses and formations adequate incentives to maintain the system's relative stability. In the ‘planned liberal economy’, community-level engagement created the impression of national economic development and aligned the interests of many, including anglophones, with the stability of Ahidjo's administration(ibid).

Even though the economy began to deteriorate in the 1970s, Ahidjo's dominance was already well-established, and profits from newly discovered oil helped to conceal issues in agriculture, causing the political effects of the economic downturn some time to materialise (ibid). Ahidjo used the co-optation of prominent figures such as Solomon Muna to absorb anglophones in the highly centralised state established in the 1970s (ICG 2010). The role of Ni John Fru Ndi, founder of the main opposition party, the SDF, also comes into play. Anglophone nationalists claim that the initial reason for the formation of the SDF was to pursue full self-determination, but that Ndi had eventually been co-opted by the Biya regime and used to thwart the Ambazonian dream. The clientelist regime was later sustained by an advanced security apparatus.

From 1982, Biya maintained the use of co-optation to subjugate actual and potential opposition, especially through his CPDM party(Halle 2014), created to maintain patrimonial rule and a virtual one-party state. It has allowed him to stay in power, despite elections held on a regular basis. Both domestic and foreign observers have consistently criticised the elections as rigged(Samah et al 2022). Biya used patronage to secure the loyalty of individuals as well as regions, providing plum ministry jobs to new coalition members and maintaining an alliance between his southern-based tribe and the northern Muslims(Dicklitch 2002:165). In order to split the anglophone opposition, Biya has exploited favouritism and important appointments. In 1997, Biya appointed Peter Mafany Musonge, a member of the anglophone elite in the Southwest region, as prime minister to replace Simon Achidi Achu, a member of the anglophone elite from the Northwest region. The appointment deepened the divide between the Southwest and Northwest Provinces and strengthened the allegiance of Southwest anglophones to the CPDM(Ibid).

The ‘state-centred process of elite formation has also sustained the cleavages between regional factions of the anglophone elites’(Eyoh 1998:46 &259, Dicklitch 2002:166). By using clientelism, Biya has been able to maintain control over a nation with a wide range of ethnicities. To win over his supporters, he has massively redistributed state resources (ICG 2010). The influence of the ‘politics of the belly’ or co-optation is so extreme that respected member of the anglophone political elite, Minister Atanga Nji Paul, has denied the existence of an anglophone problem (ibid). Benjamine Itoe, a well-known anglophone nationalist, is also said to have been bought by the Biya regime through an offer to become deputy chief justice of the Supreme Court and president of the court’s administrative branch (Fonchingong 2013: 224).

Anglophone traditional leaders like chiefs and Fons are also said to have been co-opted by the Biya regime, following the introduction of a multiparty system (Jua 1995). For instance,

during the one-party era, Biya supported legislation that forbade chiefs from being involved in national politics. However, following the advent of multiparty democracy, the Fon of Mankon, an anglophone traditional leader,, was coerced into becoming the first vice-president of Biya's party, the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM). Additionally, the Fons of Bali and Bafut simultaneously became alternate members of the CPDM's central committee. In March 1991, Fon Tatang Robert of Batcham, a member of the National Union for Democracy and Progress (NUDP), an opposition party, was made a member of parliament, and became well-known for embracing the CPDM. Following this, a number of chiefs began to side with the state in cases of conflict with civil society. This strategy originated from Biya's conviction that courting the chiefs would lead to their subjects voting for the CPDM (ibid).

Traditional rulers thus became involved in national politics, mostly against their own political interests, but in fear of disobeying the regime. This has created a vicious and unending circle of co-optation where the chiefs or Fon are lured into a clientelist network for political benefits and opportunities, even against the wishes of their people. This is said to be another facdtor that compelled the diaspora movemenet to take on the responsibility of defending the rights of southern Cameroonians. By contrast, a retired government official said:

> *'We are doing what the system demands of us. Those in America and abroad can say we are dining with the regime, but do you build by destroying? We are in the 21st century where enlightenment is key to change. Let us work together and change our country through established process of democracy and peace' (Pa Francis, interview, 2021).*

6.5 Cameroun's regime authoritarianism and diaspora involvement in the conflict

Another driver of the involvement of the anglophone diaspora in the conflict was the Cameroonian regime's violent suppression of protests organised by the unions of anglophone lawyers and teachers in 2016(Orock 2021). As a diasporan stated:

> *'It is too much what the government has been doing to our people through its army of occupation and brutal police offices. Whenever Anglophones protest, they are shot and killed, and we cannot complain without beatings, arrest, imprisonment or killing. We live in fear, and now we are tired of this imprisonment' (Elvis, interview, 2021).*

Over the years, the central government has often resorted to repression in dealing with demands for changes to the form of the state (Orock 2021). The leaders of the anglophone movement are routinely harassed by the security forces, and this worsened following the proclamation of independence by the Southern Cameroons National Council in 2017

(Konings & Nyamnjoh 2004). The heavy-handed clampdown during the 1993 anti-smuggling campaign, for instance, was a decisive factor for many members of the anglophone elite who had still been undecided about whether or not to support the federation (Konings 2005).

In 2016, when teachers and lawyers took to the streets to protest against the seeming assimilation of the Anglo-Saxon educational and judicial subsystems, security forces responded brutally, killing some protestors, wounding and injuring many more, and arresting hundreds of people(Ani et al 2018). The beating and arrest of lawyers and teachers were followed by the banning of the Anglophone Civil Society Consortium and the Southern Cameroon National Council(Musah 2022).

Amin(2021) argues that the banning of the CASCC was a serious misstep as its members were deemed to be moderate and diplomatic voices who were seeking to articulate the interests of anglophones and to establish common ground with the government in an effort to find a solution(Amin 2021). The arrest of moderate anglophones who were ready to negotiate with the government emboldened extremists and attracted the attention of the diaspora, which led to a demand for full independence(ibid).

Thus the arrest and detention of CASCC leaders led to the formation of the Southern Cameroon Consortium United Front which, in 2017, proclaimed the independence of Southern Cameroons from abroad for the third time(Okereke 2018). When the Interim Government called on people inside Southern Cameroons to march in celebration of their independence, security forces also responded with brutality. In the main cities of Buea, Bamenda, Kumba and Mamfe, live ammunition was used against protesters, killing some and wounding many others, and hundreds of people were arrested(ibid). Unarmed protestors were gunned down, while those arrested – including union leaders and student activists -- were allegedly maltreated in prison. The government also enforced a 90-day internet blackout in the two anglophone regions(Orock 2021).

Figure 19: Protesting Anglophone lawyers forced to sit on the ground by the Cameroonian State Police

Source: SCAPO Online.

At the peak of the unrest in mid-December 2016, Joseph Wirba, a Northwest Region SDF member of parliament, denounced the actions of government officials who behaved 'like an army of occupiers' in anglophone Cameroon, including the killings, arrests, and torture of protestors and the rape of young girls by government troops(Orock 2022:7; Tembon 2018:7 Nkwi 2018:139). He contrasted this with the climate in West Cameroon between 1961 and 1972 when people believed in 'freedom' as a basic virtue. Wirba was then hounded by government troops and fled first to Nigeria and then to Europe(Ibid).

According to Wirba, distaste for the nation's authoritarian government, which is predominately francophone, is one of the primary drivers of anglophone separatism(ibid).

All Cameroonians have, in fact, suffered from maltreatment at the hands of the state, initially under Ahidjo in 1982 and then again under Biya(Willis et al 2020). Fearing accusations of being sympathetic to separatists, members of the security forces in anglophone regions are perpetually on edge, and deal with protestors in very violent ways.

This has created a horrifying legacy of human rights violations and killings of dissidents and protesters(ibid).

Finally, anglophone Cameroonians in the diaspora recognised that their fight for independence would only be effective if led by it was led by people beyond the reach of government repression. A leader associated with the Ambazonian interim government (IG) remarked

> *'To survive under this repression, we understand that our restoration struggle must be led from outside the country, far from the genocidal security apparatus; If not, the leadership is constantly threatened with imprisonment or assassination. We have witnessed this already with the abduction and imprisonment of the Nera 10' (Evans, interview, 2020).*

6.6 Allegations of a prolonged history of human rights violations in anglophone Cameroon and diaspora involvement

There are many debates and controversies about the right to secession in international law (Klabbers 2006). However, According to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), while population have no 'primary' right to secede, secession may be endorsed when a state commits crimes against a territorially concentrated minority(Day 2012; Novotný 2019). This places existing case law in respect of secession firmly in the camp of remedial rights. As seen in both Kosovo and South Sudan, secession became the option of last resort for the international community once it was clear that the states of Serbia and Sudan had committed serious crimes. Wittingly or not, international community has created a legal norm around the concept of self-determination that endorses secession as an answer to rights violations (ibid). In line with this, Anglophones in the diaspora have cited the violation of human rights as a major driver of their campaign for self-determination:

> *'Our people have been dehumanised for far too long. Thousands of our people have been killed, and others arrested and locked up in concentration camps in La Republique. Our activism is against the genocide that is going on in Ambazonia'(Kelvin, interview, 2021).*

> *'Ambazonia activists have been doing a lot, especially in the UK, by speaking to people, picketing, and protesting publicly. They are also meeting lawmakers and anyone else who cares to listen, and they have been using the theme of genocide to pass their message'(Rose, interview, 2022).*

> *'There are cases of human rights violations in Ambazonia, and they are using that to present their case for secession. But saying that what is happening in Ambazonia is genocide is disrespect to the victims of what happened in Rwanda'(Green, interview, 2023).*

The responses above point to concerns about human rights abuses as a major driving factor for the anglophone diaspora weighing in on the conflict at home. In African countries, respect for human rights is the exception rather than the rule. Some African leaders ‘claim cultural relativism justifies denying women their human rights; others contend that individual liberties and human rights must be suppressed in order to preserve peace and promote economic development for all’(Dicklitch 2002:152). Others, however, contend that advocating for rights related to minority languages and cultures only serves to fuel separatist and sectarianism(ibid). Regardless of the conditions, individual Africans' rights and liberties have frequently been sacrificed on the altar of culture, economic growth, political stability, and national unity(ibid).

Human rights are rights that one has simply by virtue of being human. These rights apply ‘to everyone, everywhere, and under all circumstances, human dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all people are essential for freedom and justice’(Donnelly 1984: 400). Any society that upholds human rights would include these essential values in addition to the civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights outlined in the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (Dicklitch 2002).

Cameroon is no exception – indeed, it has always fallen behind expectation in respect of its human rights record(Mohan & Holland 2001). Its recent history has been accompanied by allegations of serious breaches of civil and political rights, as well as social, economic and cultural rights(Willis et al 2019). Despite the fact that torture has been criminalised, distressing reports of the widespread use of torture are supported by images of cuts and bruises from machetes and whips on imprisoned individuals. Complaints about overcrowded prison cells with insufficient hygienic and medical amenities, as well as a lack of food, are also on this list(Ebai 2019). Many people accused of crimes in the anglophone regions have been transferred to prisons in Yaoundé or Douala and tried in francophone areas. Journalists have been imprisoned, harassed, and sometimes tortured and killed, while some newspapers as well as private radio and television stations have been outlawed (Agwanda et al 2020).

Public leaders have acknowledged the need to instil a human rights culture among the public as well as law enforcement agencies, but little has changed. There is no independent authority to investigate allegations of transgressions by members of the security forces. In practice, there is minimal oversight of the police or gendarmes, which means that human rights breaches occur unchecked(UNHR 2021).

Recent investigations by Amnesty International and the Oxford Investigative Team into the anglophone crisis have revealed widespread human rights violations and abuses in anglophone Cameroon prior to the 2016 uprising(Cho & Agbor 2022). Some of these cases have been presented to UN human rights officials(Chiatoh 2019). One prominent early case was that of Albert Mukong, a writer, journalist, and opponent of the country's one-party system(Willis et al 2009). In 1988, he was arrested after a BBC interview in which he criticised the Cameroonian government and president. He was subjected to what he described as cruel and inhuman treatment during his detention, namely being held in a small cell without sanitary facilities or access to food until friends and family located him. He was released in May 1989. In 1990, he held a meeting to discuss ways of introducing multiparty democracy in Cameroon(Ngwana 1985). He was re-arrested, subjected to intimidation and mental torture, and convicted of inflaming international and national opinion.

In 1991, his case was presented to the UN Human Rights Commission(UNHRC). The Cameroonian government denied Mukong's allegations, declaring that its actions were necessary to safeguard national unity as allowed under Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights(Mukong 1989, 2009). The HRC rejected this defence, arguing that protecting and strengthening national unity could not be achieved by muzzling advocacy for multi-party democracy and human rights(Mukong 1985). It found that the government of Cameroon had violated Mukong's right to freedom of expression, among others.

Another prominent case is that of Dr Ebenezer Derek Mbongo Akwanga. Arrested in 1997 alongside dozens of other Southern Cameroonian activists, he was tried and sentenced by a military tribunal to 20 years in prison for subversion and terrorism(Tanjong 2014). During this time, he was tortured and maltreated until he managed to escape to Nigeria in 2003. He later moved to the US.

In 2007, the London-based human rights organisation Redress lodged a petition on Ebenezer's behalf with the UN Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) for multiple breaches of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), including torture, over the period 1997 to 2003(Bongkorog 2020). In a unanimous decision announced on 22 March 2011, UNHRC upheld the petition, and ordered the Cameroonian government to pay reparations. However, by the time of writing, it had still failed to do so (REDRESS n.d.)(Chiatoh 2019).

In 2002, Fongum Gorji-Dinka, who had gone into exile in the UK, lodged a complaint with the UN Human Rights Committee, claiming that he had been the victim of numerous violations of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights by the State of

Cameroon(Willis et al 2019). In 2005, the Committee found that his rights to liberty, security, and freedom from arbitrary arrest and/or detention had been violated, and that he was entitled to effective remedy, including compensation and an assurance of the enjoyment of his civil and political rights. It also found that the Cameroonian state was obliged to take measures to prevent similar violations in the future(Ibid). Mr. Dinka is credited with coining the term "Ambazonia," in opposition to President Paul Biya's symbolic changes to Cameroon's official name and flag, which are seen as a restoration or respect to the former Frenc Cameroon Republic prior to unification. Dinka is still a staunch Ambazonia restoration advocate while in exile in the UK(Anyefru 2009).

An earlier instance of human rights violation relating to the anglophone struggle is the case of Justice Ebong, a well-known anglophone judge who was involved in the declaration of the restoration of Southern Cameroons' independence on Radio Buea on December 31, 1999. He was consequently sent to Yaoundé and detained in solitary confinement without formal charges being brought against him, even though his alleged crime had occurred in the Southwest(Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019).

In May 2000, law enforcement official made many indiscriminately arrested many anglophones to retrieve a gun. Angry citizens are reported to have seized the gun following a situation when gendarmes broke into homes, assaulted the occupants whom they assumed to be planning to boycott the 20 May celebrations (reunification celebrations) as advocated by the SCNC(Dicklitch 2002). In the Southwest and Northwest Regions, police also apprehended people they believed to be sympathisers with the anglophone secessionists. For instance, police in Kumba, Southwest Region, detained over a hundred people in a number of bars and clubs on suspicion of being SCNC members(ibid).

Figure 20: Southern Cameroons protesting outside President Biya's hotel in New York

Source: SCAPO Online.

In 2009, seven elderly members of the SCNC were arrested and detained. On 14 March, police stormed the SCNC office on Cow Street in Nkwen after an order from Bamenda Public Security(Willis et al 2002). According to the police, the accused were organising an unlawful meeting with the intention of sending armed rebels to Yaoundé to disrupt the Pope's visit to Cameroon. The accused spent six days in jail after being subjected to a rigorous interrogation. The accusations against them were ultimately dropped because there was insufficient evidence to support the allegations of sabotage(Ibid).

There have been allegations of grave human rights breaches by both separatist and state military officials since 2016(Beseng et al 2023). Armed separatist groups have been charged with killing supposed informants, or "blacklegs," abducting and extorting citizens, abusing educators and students for defying school boycotts, and more(Hendricks & Kiven 2020). It has been claimed that soldiers have committed extrajudicial executions, arbitrary detentions, kidnappings, torture, and burning down houses, schools, and medical facilities(CHRDA 2021, 2022). The World Bank has reported that state's security forces in Cameroon are responsible for causing at least ten times as many civilian deaths as separatist armed groups (Willis et al 2019; World Bank 2021).

Figure 21: Alleged arson by government soldiers in Southern Cameroons

Source: ABC Amba TV.

The zenith of all these atrocities is the Ngarbuh massacre of February 14, 2020 , that took place at Ngarbuh village in the Northwest Region resulting in the deaths of 21 residents, including 13 children.(Musah 2021). On April 20, 2020, the government ultimately acknowledged that Cameroonian soldiers had been involved, after first denying it (Robert 2020). Four civilians were put to death by soldiers in Bangem, Southwest Region, two days later.

According to Musah (2021), government forces committed human rights violations against anglophone Cameroonians even before the start of the conflict in 2016, thereby eliciting increased sympathy from supporters of independence, and damaging the government's international image. In fact, anglophone activists in the diaspora have used the slogan 'Stop Genocide in Southern Cameroon' to draw attention to those atrocities(Willis et al 2020).

Figure 22: Children wounded in the Ngarbuh massacre

Source: Guardian Post.

The Cameroonian state has done little to adopt corrective measures, such as equal and effective access to justice, effective and timely recompense for harm suffered, as well as reparations(ibid). Instead, the government has repeatedly refused to engage with national and international judicial authorities, indicating a pattern of acting above the rule of law by rejecting international human rights rulings while maintaining impunity in Cameroon's anglophone regions(Beseng et al 2023). This historic disregard for the rule of law has played a major role in mobilising the anglophone diaspora, which claims a remedial right to secession.

6.7 The British colonial government's alleged double standards and the involvement of the diaspora

During the decolonisation period, the British government is alleged to have opposed, for what is seen as self-serving economic reasons, sovereign statehood for Southern Cameroons, in direct contravention of the UN Charter and norms of self-determination and then hurriedly withdrew from the territory (Anyangwe 2010; Lenshie et al 2016). Records from the US and British governments archives attest to the fact that Britain supported Southern Cameroons' integration with Nigeria and never desired the region to be

independent. (ibid). In an interview, a prominent leader of the Ambazonia restoration movement said:

> *'British negligence is the reason we are where we are today. For some reason that remains unclear, the British colonial administration decided to cede Ambazonia to the French Republic of Cameroon instead of supporting its full independence. This is a crime that has cost many lives in Southern Cameroon' (Stephens, interview, 2020).*

6.7.1 Administering Southern Cameroon as an appendage of the Nigerian Federation

From the outset, the UN was responsible for the decolonisation of its trust territories (ibid). Thus Article 76b of the UN Charter states that trusteeship entails the responsibility to 'promote the political, economic, social, and educational advancement of the inhabitants of its trust territories, their progressive development towards self-government or independence as may be appropriate to the particular circumstances of each territory and its peoples, and the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned as may be provided by the terms of each trusteeship agreement'(Nkwi 2020:285;Gardinier 1963). This provided legal grounds for Southern Cameroonian nationalists to criticise steps taken by the British colonial authority on autonomy for the territory, and to claim the legitimacy for the secessionist struggle.

First, it gave them the grounds to criticise the British government over its decision to govern British Southern Cameroons as an appendage of the Eastern region of Nigeria (ibid). According to Njung (2019), the decision of the British colonial administrators to govern Southern Cameroons as an appendage of Nigeria was the genesis of the anglophone problem, especially since it retarded economic development in the territory (Anyfru 2010). The difficulties encountered by Cameroonians in the new system in Nigeria contributed greatly to the underdevelopment of British Southern Cameroons between 1916 and 1961.

Njung argues that development in the area was slow because the British considered their mandated territory as a kind of liability (ibid). It was only after World War Two that Southern Cameroons received deliberate development aid from Britain, and even then it was limited compared to allocations to Nigeria. Moreover, the UK made no attempt to encourage the inflow of private sector investment(Nkwi 2020). As a result, Southern Cameroons remained a producer of primary products only, and remained backward in terms of industrial and infrastructural development(Anyefru 2010).

The administration of Southern Cameroons as an appendage of the Eastern Region of Nigeria also led to an influx of Nigerians into Southern Cameroons in all spheres of life, with the most domineering Nigerian indigenous group being the enterprising Igbos

(Konings 2005). Their mass immigration into British Southern Cameroons resulted in them occupying key jobs in the civil service as well as trade and commerce, which rendered the territory ‘a colony of a colony’(Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003). This had severe consequences that are still being felt today. A lack of gainful employment for the indigenous people of the territory contributed to poverty. Distrust and animosity developed towards Nigerians, especially towards the profiteering Igbo traders. The result was that fear of Igbo domination caused Cameroonian nationalism to be directed not only against the UK but also against Nigeria, which was seen as the real colonial power in the territory(Nkwi 2020).

6.7.2 Constitutional developments and Southern Cameroon’s search for autonomy

British colonial administration implemented several constitutions in Nigeria that had an immediate impact British Southern Cameroons, namely the Richards, Macpherson and Lyttleton Constitutions. Enacted in 1946, the Richards Constitution divided Nigeria into three administrative Regions Namely, the Northern, Western, and Eastern Regions, each with a regional government. The British Southern Cameroons as of this time was part of the Eastern Regional Assembly with two seats(Nkwi 2020:288). Southern Cameroons was part of the Eastern Region and was given two seats in the Eastern Regional House of Assembly at Enugu and the then British Commissioner proposed Chief J. Manga Williams and Fon Vincent S. Galega II to represent British Southern Cameroons in this regional House of Assembly for a renewable three-year term(Ngoh 2001). In 1948, Sir John Stuart Macpherson became governor of Nigeria, and gave in to nationalist pressures in Southern Cameroons to review the constitution. Interestingly, the British seemed determined to thoroughly canvas public opinion about the type of government which African communities desired(NAB 1952). This ushered in a period of constitutional debates for Nigerians and Cameroonians.

The constitutional discourse in the Southern Cameroons emphasised the necessity of making Southern Cameroons an autonomous Region as the only means of addressing the territory's developmental challenges(Nkwi 2020). The Cameroons Youth League (CYL), an umbrella advocacy organisation consisting of Cameroonian intellectual class, pushed for an amendment of the Richards Constitution in the direction of regional autonomy on claims of British neglect of Southern Cameroons and Nigerian dominance over the Cameroon people of the territory(Va/a 1933).

6.7.3 Claims of false reports of the financial or economic unviability of the Southern Cameroons and the denial of the territory’s sovereign statehood

The desire for autonomy expressed by Southern Cameroonian nationalists did not augur well for the British policy of integration with the Nigerian Federation. Eventually, it

prompted the British Colonial Office to initiate strategies to frustrate these ambitions (Mjeuma 1995). As a result, the colonial office appointed economic experts to conduct feasibility studies of whether, if the territory were to become autonomous, it would be economically viable. Sir Louis Chick was appointed to head a commission of inquiry and make recommendations which would inform the decision of the colonial office about the demands for autonomy (ibid). In the words of Prof Victor Julius Ngoh,

> '… as far as the Chick Fiscal Commission Report of 1954 was concerned, the terms of reference of the Commission were to find if Southern Cameroons could be viable financially/economically to 'pay its way without financial assistance from other parts of Nigeria, assuming that none of its revenues were henceforth shared with Northern Cameroons or with any other part of Nigeria'(Ngoh 2020: 175).

The commission concluded that the territory 'would not… be financially stable without external assistance'(Report of Fiscal Commissioner 1953:27). This implies that the Southern Cameroons regional government would not have been financially viable without external assistance. In good years it might have paid its way with a slender margin, but in lean years it would have shown a deficit and would have had no reserves to fall back on if, over a longer period, the deficits exceeded the surpluses(Nkwi 2020). As a result, the territory was rather granted 'quasi-regional' status, with a Southern Cameroon house of assembly. This implies that Southern Cameroons was made semi-autonomous, with a government which became known as the Buea government(Akiba 2020).

In 1951, Oliver Lyttleton was appointed as British Secretary of State for the Colonies (Stockwell 1984). He assured the leaders of Southern Cameroons that the British government would consider granting regional status to the Cameroons(Nkwi 2020). Elections were to be held to determine whether Southern Cameroon should become a separate region within the Nigerian federation. The Kamerun National Congress (KNC), the first indigenous party, led by Emmanuel Endeley, was already in existence, and campaigned for Southern Cameroons to be given regional status(ibid). The elections were held on 26 October 1953. The KNC won a landslide victory by capturing 12 out of 13 seats in Southern Cameroons with S.E. Ncha from Mamfe winning a lone seat as an independent candidate (Konings 1999; Ndi 2014). This suggested that Southern Cameroons should be given regional status. However, Lyttleton stated that a fiscal commission would be set up to investigate the economic viability of Southern Cameroons(NAB 1953).

At the same time, Lyttleton honoured the outcome of the polls by announcing that Southern Cameroons would cease to be part of the Eastern Region(Awasom 1998) and would be

declared an autonomous region. However, due to the state of its economy, it would remain part of the federation of Nigeria(Nkwi 2020).

Besides the Fiscal Report, two other reports on the economic situation of British Southern Cameroons were prepared. These were the Phillipson Report of 1959 and the Kenneth Berril Report of 1960(Richardson 1999). The Phillipson Report studied the economic viability of the Southern Cameroons as an independent state and advised against a customs barrier between an independent Southern Cameroons and Nigeria. It concluded that revenues mostly from agriculture in Southern Cameroons might just enable it to maintain and even modestly expand its current services(Bongkorog 2020; Chem-Langhëë 2004). However, it concluded that granting independence to Southern Cameroon would be unwise because existing revenues would just suffice to enable it to maintain a precarious hand-to-mouth existence'(NAB 1960).

Berril was commissioned in December 1959 and submitted his report in 1960. Unlike the Chick and Phillipson reports, he was charged with carrying out a survey of the territory. The conclusions did not differ markedly from those of the previous reports (Phillipson 1959). It highlighted the economic necessity of a better road network in the Southern Cameroons. In a letter to J.O. Field, the Commissioner of Cameroon, Berril stated that 'the most important form of communication in the territory is the road, and that every commentator in the territory stressed the importance of roads as key to its future'(Nkwi 2020:293;NAB 1960).

According to Ayangwe(2010), the conclusions reached by Chick, Anderson, Beril and Phillipson were not coincidental, because Britain had always wanted Southern Cameroon to remain part of an independent Nigerian federation. This meant that feasibility studies were a charade, or smokescreen, aimed at reinforcing a predetermined outcome of preference on the part of the colonial authorities. This was evident in 1946 when Sir Lennox Boyd, Secretary of State for the Colonies, stated that the 'Golden Key of the Bank of England would not be given to British Cameroon if she decided to join the Cameroon Republic', and that 'many of the best friends of the Cameroons do not foresee a destiny more likely to promote her happiness and prosperity than continued association with Nigeria'(Boyd 1946).

On 11 October 1960, Sir Andrew Cohen, the UK representative to the UN Trusteeship Council, wrote to the British Secretary of State about the British position regarding the independence of Southern Cameroons(Bongkorog 2020). Among other things, he affirmed that the British colonial authorities remained strongly opposed to a separate Southern Cameroonian state, and that if Cameroonian political parties took action to create a sovereign state, this would put them in an embarrassing situation. With the backing of

moderate Afro-Asians and others, they have always maintained that complete independence would result in a completely unviable state(British Government 1960: 104; Ndi 1999). The underlying attitude of British officials was further revealed when Sir John Marten of the Colonial Office bluntly declared:

> 'What would worry me is if a sequel to the Southern Cameroons try for independence was that the Northern Cameroons went the same way. That would really, I think upset our relationship with Nigeria which we must, at all costs, avoid'(Perth 1946).

The 1954 British colonial administration Annual Report on the Trust Territory of British Cameroons to the UN is entirely at odds with the findings obtained by the fiscal commissioners. After accounting for exports, the total number of tax-paying citizens, and other aspects, it was determined that Southern Cameroons contributed almost 84% of the GDP of the Trust Territories(Ngoh 2001; Eckert 2003). As of 1959, considering weather-related impairments in the agricultural sector, Southern Cameroons would have been profitable by more than £1 million (Ngoh 1999). The key to the prosperity of Southern Cameroons was the Cameroons Development Corporation (CDC), a vast agricultural complex that the British acquired from the Germans in 1916(Ngoh 2020). The Cameroons Development Corporation is a firm that generated hundreds of thousands of tonnes of bananas, rubber, cocoa, peppers, palm oil, and palm kernels. In 1954, it provided jobs for over 42,000 people in Southern Cameroons exclusively(ibid). Again, contrary to false British perceptions of a doomed economic future for Southern Cameroons, crude oil and natural gas deposits were found in the region in 1970, and French Cameroon started exploiting and exporting oil and gas in 1977(Konings 2012). By 1993, Bisengo reported that this output had fluctuated between 60 000 and 100 000 barrels a day. Since 1977, French Cameroon has continued to most of its foreign revenue from the extraction of oil from Southern Cameroons (ibid). Therefore, analysts believe an independent Southern Cameroon would definitely have been economically viable.

6.7.4 British integration aspirations for Southern Cameroons with Nigeria were against the advice of experts

The British efforts to force Southern Cameroons to integrate with Nigeria against its express wishes went against the advice of experts(Anyangwe 2009; Achankeng 2012). At the 896th UN General Assembly meeting in 1954, possibly drawing on the unstable experience of plural societies, the US Ambassador to the UN Clement J. Zabloiski cautioned that the outcome of forcing British Southern Cameroons to make a hasty political decision on its future would be disastrous consequences on its political future(ibid). Similar worries were expressed by Krishna Mennon, the Indian ambassador to the UN, who remarked that his

delegation could not see any reason why the Southern Cameroons could not become independent on the same day as the Northern Cameroons and Nigeria. Also, in a debate in the House of Commons, a British member of parliament said it would be very difficult to unite British and French Cameroon, because they had completely different cultures and different political systems(ibid).

Figure 23: The former chairman of the US House Foreign Affairs Committee, Clement J Zablock

"The United States congratulates the people of the **Southern Cameroons** for their accession to auto-determination as it constitutes the will of the population who wants to run its affairs democratically..."

[On the idea of unification].."The results of a hurried choice **imposed** on the population of the Trust Territory would be catastrophic for their political future".

Clement J. Zablocki(D.WI), USA
Fmr Chairman of House Foreign Affairs Committee
Speaking at the 896th UN General Assembly meeting of 6th Aug 1959

Source: SCAPO Online.

By compelling British Southern Cameroons to achieve 'independence by joining', the UK and US were in effect ignoring the warnings and arguments of theorists about the incompatibility of multinational states. According to Achankeng(2012), Britain's manipulations were geared towards forcing Southern Cameroons to vote in favour of integration with Nigeria, and when they voted the other way, Britain struck a deal with French Cameroon which enabled the latter to reap the benefits, while Southern Cameroonians were killed and maimed on a daily basis using funds generated from Southern Cameroonian oil and natural gas resources(ibid).

6.7.5 The withdrawal of the British Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) and its consequences

Even after Cameroon gained its independence in 1961, the UK kept up its diplomatic connections with the country. Both commerce and military collaborations have been part of this relationship. The British government has maintained a long-standing presence in Cameroon via its organisation Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO), funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID)(Willis et al 2019, 2020; VSO n.d.).

Cameroon was among the first countries to receive British professional volunteers under VSO in 1958(Willis et al 2019). Over the years, the UK government has supported thousands of volunteers including physicians, teachers, attorneys, politicians, and civil workers to work in Cameroon(ibid). According to Willis et al(2019), the VSO decided to leave Cameroon in 2014 after 56 years of activity – particularly in the anglophone and far northern regions. This choice was made because Cameroon was designated a middle-income country, and the VSO wanted to concentrate its development efforts on nations that were more disadvantaged(Willis et al 2020).

According to Kumase(2018), even though Cameroon is classified as a middle-income country, income is not evenly distributed. There is evidence of severe poverty in the extreme north and in predominantly anglophone minority occupied communities. This state of underdevelopment is probably due to the previously noted underinvestment in the British colonial era, as well as the subsequent marginalisation of anglophone regions(Anyefru 2010). The 'withdrawal of long-term British support provided by the VSO in Cameroon might have exacerbated the marginalisation of anglophone Cameroon and exposed an already marginalised population to further state encroachment on their rights'(Willis et al, 2019:13). They also claim that since VSO has left Cameroon, violent conflicts have broken out in both the far northern and anglophone regions. Although the causes of these conflicts are complicated and multidimensional, it is possible that the loss of long-term institutional and relationship support has had some influence. It could also be argued that extensive and

prolonged developmental participation by the British in Cameroon has also engendered a responsibility to address the egregious human rights breaches in the region(Ibid).

6.8 The underdevelopment of anglophone regions, socio-economic marginalisation, gross inequality, and the involvement of the diaspora

Underdevelopment, socio-economic inequality, and marginalisation in the anglophone regions have been highlighted as factors driving the involvement of the anglophone diaspora in the quest for an independent Ambazonia. As noted by a respondent:

> *'We are fighting this war due to the outrageous and prolonged disadvantages that our people (the anglophone communities) have been battling against, even before the conflict began. It is too much, the imbalance and inequality between Ambazonia and la republique, especially in the distribution of the national cake, is very glaring for all to see' (Devine, interview, 2020).*

> *'The level of underdevelopment in Southern Cameroons is extreme. Though we contribute the most to Cameroon's Gross National Product, our roads are in the most deplorable state, levels of unemployment are high, and revenue for our resources are not even used in our local council. Oil is taken from Ndian, but taxes for it are paid in Douala' (Andrew, interview, 2021).*

Inequality can be holistically understood by looking at unrest in places like Europe, the Americas, Asia, and the Middle East (Willis et al 2019). The war in Cameroon anglophone communities can be categorised as part of a global class struggle over access to limited resources and opportunities (Willis et al 2020; Feldt et al 2020). Widespread differences in how the world's resources are distributed are widely known, and experts have issued dire cautions about the risks associated with growing inequality (Klugman 2011*;* Shapiro 2017). Present exploitative economic systems lead to concentrations of wealth in the hands of a few. In the absence of structural interventions to redistribute resources, this inevitably leads to economic and social instability(Willis et al 2020).

The ongoing war in Cameroon and the crucial role played by the anglophone diaspora can be viewed as part of a larger picture of increasing inequality, precarity, and discontent (Piketty & Saez 1998; Sharpe 1998). Power disparities and structural inequality are another level at which the conflict can be examined. Limited possibilities and resources are available, and a political elite controls the majority of the wealth, leaving behind significant segments of the general public(Goldman 1998; Sharpe 1998). According to OECD data, 55% of Cameroon's impoverished population resides in rural areas, and the country is placed 151st on the 2018 Human Development Index. An estimated 48% of the population lives below the poverty line. Large parts of anglophone Cameroon are rural and are among the

poorest and most underdeveloped regions in Cameroon(Klugman 2011*;* Shapiro 2017). Despite the country's wealth in natural resources, including oil, timber, and plantations, as well as its high population literacy rate, there is still a significant amount of youth emigration, rural-urban movement, and unemployment(ibid).

Strict taxation laws and policies have discouraged many businesses organization from opening up enterprises in these regions, while the branch offices or headquarters of most national and international corporations engaged in the extraction of resources in the anglophone regions are stationed in French Cameroon (ibid). Exploitation taxes or benefits are paid to the municipalities hosting the head offices of those companies are located instead of the local government area where the resources are being extracted(Afungang 2020). For example, oil exports from Southern Cameroon brought in over US$45 billion in revenue between 1978 and 2015, or roughly 30% of the country's total revenues. Ironically, oil royalties are given to the city council of Douala, the nation's commercial centre and a port city on the Wouri River estuary. Douala is approximately 120 kilometres from the coast and the Fako division, where the oil wells are situated(ibid).

The state argument is that, because the oil companies are based in Douala, and oil exports proceed from there, this gives Douala greater rights to the royalties than area where the oil is extracted. As a result of this approach, the communities in the oil-rich division remain very poor, lacking in basic amenities such as roads and water(Afungang 2020). Moreover, according to the World Bank(2012), less than 300 kilometres of the more than 7 000 kilometres of tarred roads built in Cameroon from 1980 to 2010 were in Southern Cameroons. This is despite the fact that the petroleum extracted in Southern Cameroons is rich in bitumen, which is used for tarring roads(Ibid).

World Bank statistics for the period from 1965 to 2015 also show that Cameroon had an average budget of US$1.18 billion, with a minimum of US$0.11 billion in 1965 and a maximum of US$3.32 billion in 2015. Oil from the Southern Cameroons alone contributed more than 50 per cent to national revenue, to which revenue from timber, bananas, cocoa, coffee, palm oil, pawpaw and rubber, also major Cameroonian export products, should be added(ibid). Yet infrastructure in this part of the country remains poor.

On 21 November 2016, Mancho Bibixy, a radio station newscaster in the anglophone Cameroonian city of Bamenda, stood in an open casket at a crowded crossroads and decried the city’s poor rate of economic and structural development, claiming he was willing to die in protest against the social and economic marginalisation of anglophone people in Cameroon(Robert 2020). This sparked the so-called ‘coffin revolution’ against attempts by

the francophone central government to impose the use of French on anglophones the former British southern Cameroons.

Respondents confirmed that underdevelopment in anglophone regions were a major driving force of their support for and the subsequent escalation of the conflict:

> *'Since the Germans left, this part of the country has seen little or no progress in terms of development and infrastructure. British colonialism did not help the situation, especially as they have to administer us as an appendage of British Nigeria. In my opinion, us joining the Cameroon Republic was the worst decision, due to the discrimination and the stagnation we have experienced over the years. Added to this is the exploitation of our resources, and the expropriation of our land by francophone administrators and politicians'(Albert, interview, 2021).*

Moreover, the poor economic situations in these regions have caused inhabitants to depend even more on remittances from the diaspora. In 2020, a study by team of researchers from Oxford University confirmed the existence of gross inequalities between anglophone and francophone regions(Willis et al 2020). Misallocation of anglophone resources was highlighted as a major point of contention between anglophones and the regime, both at home and abroad (ibid). Several interviewees also drew attention to the lack of tarred roads in the anglophone regions, which they regard as a serious hindrance to economic development.

> *'We don't have good roads, but they are always telling lies about the ring road, with the president promising he was going to personally supervise its construction. Where is the ring road? Sometimes our people go for prolonged periods with no access to electricity and clean running water' (Ben, interview, 2021).*

Interviewees expressed their desire for their communities to be free to harness sustainable alternate sources of energy, like hydroelectricity from nearby waterfalls.. However, the current governance structure hinders social innovation, and the government would rather allocate resources to existing infrastructure in francophone regions than new forms of sustainable energy in the anglophone regions.

Despite having substantially larger populations, Cameroon's Public Investment Budget for 2017 reveals that the two anglophone regions—the Northwest and Southwest—were grossly insufficiently funded, receiving a total of US$153 million as opposed to US$225 million for the francophone Southern Region (Cameroon Data Portal 2017). Nonetheless, Willis et al. (2020) note that these differences might be explained by nepotism rather than overt prejudice against anglophone populations, given that Paul Biya, the current president, was born and raised in the South region. This shows that resource allocation is not done in

proportion to the region's population and needs but its influenced by nepotism, tribalism, party lines and overt favouritism seeking to please powerful elites in government. The most powerful political elites allocate more for themselves even if their region of origin is significantly small and have needs requiring limited funding.

6.9 The diaspora's participation and the collective experiences of stereotype by anglophones in Cameroon

Living with persistent discrimination has also been a catalyst for diasporan support of the conflict. Indeed, this is largely what has motivated the protests by anglophone lawyers, teachers and other civilians, which intensified the conflict in turn, and sparked the involvement of members of the anglophone diaspora. Many diasporans stated that, were it not for the gross inequalities between the anglophone and francophone regions, and the discrimination against anglophones, they would still be living in Cameroon and not abroad (Ekoma, interview, 2021).

Besides economic marginalisation, social and political discrimination has steadily increased since the dissolution of the federation in 1972(Ngah 2019; Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003). In the 1980s and 1990s, anglophone Cameroonians were derisively referred to as 'Biafrans' (an ethnic group in Nigeria), and since then also as 'Anglo-fools' or 'Les Bamenda', meaning foolish people from Bamenda, a town in Southern Cameroons(Afungang 2020). Francophones widely believe that anglophones are less intelligent than they are, and 'foolish' to have placed their trust in Cameroon during the Foumban constitutional conference which brought the two Cameroons together(Jua & Konings 2004).

Through the use of provocative language and stereotypes, francophones provoke and anger anglophones, making them conscious of their distinctiveness which has aided in anglophones seeing themselves differently from francophones in Cameroon. According to Konings and Nyamnjoh (2003), anglophone exclusion in Cameroon is based on the widespread belief that they have posed a threat to the regime and its nation-building project, particularly challenging the era of political liberalisation – which still applies today.

For example, Emah Basile, a former mayor of Yaoundé, used to refer to anglophones as 'enemies in the house' (ibid). Additionally, Mbombo Njoya, a former minister of territorial administration and former Sultan of Foumban, once said of Anglophones, 'they should either voluntarily go across our borders or be chased away.' A sense of being distinct has tended to elevate collective anglophone consciousness in everyday life and to foster support for the activities of anglophone autonomist movements(ibid).

Authors cite numerous examples of why anglophones feel they are being stereotyped and provoked by francophones. For instance, at TV interview titled '*Carte Sur Tabl*e', Prof Messanga Nyamding, a well-known francophone intellectual and former member of the ruling CPDM party, said that, based on the results of entrance examinations for schools like IRIC, ENAM and EMIA, anglophones were not as 'intellectually sound' as people from other regions(Musah 2018), simply implying francophone regions. It was only through the magnanimity of President Paul Biya that some were admitted into these schools, in consideration of regional balance.

Attitudes like these from supposed leaders of a bilingual Cameroon cause anglophones to feel undermined and like strangers (ibid). 'Even anglophones who speak French fluently and have lived in francophone Cameroon for a long time are frequently reminded of their distinctness'(Jua & Konings 2004 :13). A young, well-educated anglophone woman has described her dissatisfaction with the situation as follows:

> 'No matter how bilingual you are, if you enter an office and demand something in French, because of your accent, the messenger may announce your arrival simply as 'une Anglo' or respond in a manner to mock you. You know that stereotypes are a normal part of life in Cameroon and the world over. But the constant reminder to an Anglophone that you are different creates the impression that we are second-class citizens. That is what irritates Anglophone elites' (Eyoh 1998 : 263 ; Jua & Konings 2004 :13).

Imagine 'the exasperation of older and less educated anglophones in dealing with a bureaucracy that is primarily French, and state officials who are so unwelcoming to the people they are supposed to serve'(ibid : 263).

Ultimately, the use of insulting comparisons such as 'two cubes of sugar in a basin of water', 'dogs', 'cockroaches that need to be exterminated', and -- in some extreme cases – referring to all those calling for a rethinking of the form of state as 'terrorists' has contributed to further polarisation and radicalisation of anglophones. The use of inflammatory rhetoric has radicalised anglophones and made them more anxious to prove that the basin of water has not melted the two cubes of sugar(Willis et al 2020). This implies that the Southern Cameroons have been able, through the fortitude of untrained and poorly equipped Ambazonian restoration forces, to resist the whole of Cameroon and its military power.

Constant confrontations with domineering francophone state officials and authoritarian law enforcement officers and organisations in anglophone as well as Francophone regions, create concerns about the identity and consciousness of Anglophones on a daily basis(Jua & Konings 2004:14). According to Mbembe (2001), francophone prefects and sub-prefects assigned to anglophone Cameroon often act like 'chefs de terre'(commanders in chief) or

members of commandos, treating the anglophone population more like subjects than citizens, much like during colonial times. Anglophones found themselves relegated to the status of colonial subjects than citizens of Cameroon due to the harsh and repressive behaviour of insensitive francophone state officials running the showing in Anglophone Cameroon(Ibid).

6.10 The resilience of the anglophone people and the restoration forces on the home front or ground zero

Southern Cameroonian separatists commonly point to the resilience of Southern Cameroonians, both at home and abroad, as a major factor in the struggle for independence.

As argued by Ayim, the 1961 reunification paved the way for the Southern Cameroons to be recolonised by French Cameroon rather than decolonised as required by international law (Ayim 2010:200). As in "the case of Eritrea and the Western Sahara, this was another situation of black-on-black colonisation" (Anyangwe 2015: 29). Colonial domination and oppression have therefore been a reality for Southern Cameroonians for the past 57 years (Achankeng 2015). Interviewees commented on this as follows:

> *'We Ambazonians have been resilient in resisting colonial domination for almost half a century. For the past five years of the recent escalations, the resilience of Anglophone populations at home has contributed enormously to inspiring us, especially those of us in the diaspora to come up with strategic leadership plans and commitment to bolster self-defence efforts and encourage diplomatic and advocacy offensive in the diaspora to restore our stolen independence' (Patrick, interview, 2022).*

> *'We, the people of the Southern Cameroon (Ambazonia), call on all the nations of the world that believe in the UN Charter on decolonization and self-determination to support the efforts and resilience of Ambazonians to uphold their inalienable right to self-determination and independence' (Suh, interview, 2022).*

> *'The resilience of our people has been seen in their ability to hold on for the past 57 years of oppression and injustice from the Cameroonian regime where French Cameroun has treated Southern Cameroons as if it had been conquered. Our boys, mothers, fathers and crusaders in refugee camps in Nigeria have been fighting the oppressive regime relentlessly for five years' (Isaac, Interview, 2022).*

According to Willis et al(2019:16, 51), Southern Cameroonian human rights activists have demonstrated great resilience in the course of decades of struggle for independence. Ambazonian nationalists like Fon Gorji-Dinka, founder of the Republic Ambazonia; Albert Mukong, a prisoner of conscience; Dr Kevin Ngwang Gumne, leader of SCAPO; and the elderly Mola Njoh Litumbe have all dreamt of seeing an independent Ambazonian state in

their lifetime(ibid). Resilience has also been demonstrated by leaders of the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) like Ambassador Henry Fossung, Dr Martin Luma, Dr Nfor N. Nform, Chief Ayamba and Justice Frederick Ebong (Ayim 2010), as well as the architects of the All-Anglophone Conference (AAC), Barrister Elad Ekontang, Prof. Carlson Anyangwe and Dr Simon Munzu, who called for a return to the sovereign state of Southern Cameroons between 1993 and 1994 (Halle 2014). Their calls resulted in numerous arrests and incarcerations, and many advocates of independence fleeing into exile(Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003).

Furthermore, every year from 2016 onwards, millions of anglophones have turned out on 1 October to celebrate the declaration of Ambazonian independence (Awasom 2020). According to an interviewee:

> *'On 1 October 2017, our blue and white flag of Ambazonia flew all over Ambazonia territory and abroad. No one was left behind as those that did not have the flag used anything with blue and white to celebrate Independence Day. This shows resilience and determination on the part of the people back home in this struggle which has gone a long way to inspire those in the diaspora to support their resolve'(Fabrice, interview, 2022).*

Resistance forces on the ground have also shown great tenacity by taking up sticks, catapults, and dane guns to fight a well-equipped government army. According to a former spokesman for the ADF and a diasporan activist, the restoration forces have pledged to continue fighting despite concessions by the central government:

'It is clear that the concessions made so far by the government are not enough to deter them from their fight for freedom. We will not accept an olive branch from someone whose troops are still in our territory. We will intensify our struggle with guns and bullets'(Ngala 2019).

A government official interviewed for this study responded as follows:

> *'This is the kind of rhetoric that is motivating young boys in the Northwest and Southwest who from the beginning of this conflict have been poorly equipped yet are fighting to realize Amabazonia's independence. This is the incendiary language that is radicalizing our youths and sending them in harm's way. We are calling on these diaspora sponsors of the youths in Cameroon to desist from such activities' (Cornelius, interview, 2022).*

A member of the militia narrated the circumstances that led to him joining the Ambazonian separatist forces: the Cameroonian army had destroyed his village and killed his three brothers. He was a farmer and an electrician but became one of hundreds of anglophone men fighting with hunting rifles and magic amulets against the US- and French-trained Cameroonian army to win independence for Ambazonia (ibid). Another soldier also stated

that unfairness had driven him to take up arms and that he was willing to sacrifice his life in the fight.

The leader of the Ambazonia Governing Council, Dr Cho Ayaba, confirmed that the Ambazonian defence forces had many active soldiers with more than 20 camps spread across anglophone Cameroon, but that they were poorly equipped, wore flip-flops rather than boots, and carried dane guns and hunting rifles made in Nigeria at the beginning of the conflict in 2017(ibid). This is no match for the assault weapons carried by the soldiers of the Cameroonian army who are trained and equipped by France and the US to fight the Islamist extremist group Boko Haram in the far north of Cameroon.

According to one of the ADF soldiers, daily life was difficult. There was barely enough space to sleep on the floors of bush huts in villages. There was not enough food, and the river water they drank was silted. The Cameroonian army had destroyed their villages, sending whole families fleeing into the bush. In some of these communities, the military had set up bases as a deterrent to Ambazonian forces, making it even harder for locals who were now refugees in Nigeria to go back to tend to their farms and other activities(Ngala 2020).

Despite these hardships, members of the restoration forces continue to fight and hope for a state to call their own. A prominent SCOOP leader in South Africa had the following to say:

> *'Our people have shown strength and resilience, and we cannot abandon them until we get to Buea. Our goal remains the same, namely independence in our lifetime'(Ata, interview, 2022).*

6.11 Growing Anglophone consciousness of envisaged statehood

The anglophone call for independence as well as the declaration of an independent state of Ambazonia has a long history. As the struggle evolved over the years, so too has a growing consciousness of envisaged statehood in the minds of anglophones at home and abroad (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019). According to the members of the diaspora interviewed for this study, this growing consciousness has contributed significantly to the role of the diaspora in the quest for self-determination. As expressed by Sam, a 67-year-old Ambazonia activist based in Abuja, Nigeria, inequality, and other events have created Ambazonian-ness in the minds of anglophones. He words were captured thus:

> *'The growing consciousness of anglophone identity and the expectation for an independent state created by structural inequality and the ill-treatment of anglophones by francophones in Cameroon is very glaring for all to see. For the past five years our drive to have the international community acknowledge and support our plight is palpable. Today the*

Ambazonia restoration anthem, the flag, our leaders, history, code of arm are all well known. All of these in addition with the presence of Biya military of occupation and our gallant restoration forces has helped to create what I call the growing Ambazonia consciousness. This is helping our people to push for our own state wherever they are'(Sam, interview 2022).

The longing for complete independence was the most popular alternative in Southern Cameroons prior to reunification, but the local population was never given the opportunity to vote on it in the 1961 plebiscite (Ngala 2020). Again, in the middle of the 1980s, the anglophone sentiment for secession reappeared when Fon Gorj-Dinka first pushed for the immediate creation of an independent anglophone state(Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003). During the political liberalisation in the early 1990s, anglophone groups repeated this call, but unlike the period prior to reunification, fresh pursuit of an independent state was initially a minority option, with the majority of anglophone movements aiming for return to a federal state(Jua & Konings 2004). As in the case of Czechoslovakia in 1992, the leadership of the anglophone movements did not start pushing for the separation of anglophone Cameroon from French Cameroon until the Biya government declined to engage in federal option negotiations(ibid).

A Czechoslovakia-type peaceful separation was intended to be accompanied by an equitable distribution of assets and obligations as well as the formation of various cross-border confidence-building institutions(Konings & Nyamnjoh 2000). At that point, the majority leaders of the anglophone movements acknowledged that this course of action presented the best long-term opportunity for peace, as any attempts to engage in democratic and institutional reforms at a later date in an effort to maintain international appearances and appease the anglophone population would only serve to delay the inevitable and increase the anguish of anglophones(Anyangwe 2015; Jua & Koning 2004).

This is exactly what is happening in Ambazonia today as the region has been in conflict for the past six years (ibid). Where there is no possibility for the harmonious integration of territorial entities in dysfunctional and severely divided nation-states, a rising number of researchers see secession as the best alternative(Sandbrook 2000; Ghai & Regan 2006). Eritrea seceded from Ethiopia in 1994, assuaging those who worried that the secession of an African country would open a Pandora's box of violence and divisions within African continent (Bereketeab 2015:1, 2012:2). The positive outcome of some of the Ambazonian leadership's international representations, the massive diaspora mobilisation, and the creation of the SCBC in South Africa have boosted anglophone nationalist sentiments, leading to the declaration of independence by the leadership of the diaspora(Orock 2021:12).

The challenge has been whether there would be sufficient international support for the anglophone call to create Ambazonia because, according to Konings and Nyamnjoh (2019), the 'majority of the Anglophone elite want a kind of federation' Although they supported the SCNC position for strategic reasons, SCNC officials and anglophone nationalists like the late John Ngu Foncha and Solomon Tandeng Muna, who were anglophone architects of reunification, never gave up on their federalist goal(ibid). The francophone elite and the international community are unlikely to support the anglophone the pursuit for an independent Southern Cameroons state, considering that most of them clearly favour a decentralised unitary state and are eager to keep control of anglophone Cameroon's abundant natural resources, particularly the substantial oil wealth(ibid).

Orock(2012) claims that the majority of the anglophone elite are hesitant to join the restoration of independence, at least openly, because they are afraid of the unknown, and many Southern Cameroonians are unwilling to risk losing the public service jobs which keep them and their families alive. Initiatives for international recognition seem to have a slim chance of success, and international organisations continue to preserve the territorial integrity of member states and to oppose further fragmentations(ibid). During his visit to Cameroon in 2000, the then UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan, made it clear to the anglophone movements the anglophone issue should be resolved by dialogue and reconciliation rather than secession.

6.12 The failure of the SDF and the involvement of the diaspora in the quest for self-determination

Another significant driving factor in the anglophone diaspora's involvement in mass mobilisation and global activism is its frustration with the failures of the foremost opposition party in the anglophone region, namely the Social Democratic Front (SDF). Interviewees commented as follows:

> *'Many of us fighting for the restoration of Ambazonia were in the SDF Party in Cameroon. I was at the formative years of the party and served the chairman of the party at a personal level. In my opinion, the party has contributed immensely to democracy in Cameroon, but regarding its contribution to the statehood aspirations of Ambazonians, it failed to follow the plan'(Chris, interview, 2021).*

> *'We are frustrated with the SDF because it has not openly defended the interests of the Anglophones. The party's leadership changed its stance from a supposed flag-bearer of Anglophone interests and the achievement of independence for British Southern Cameroons to a national party that is now drowning and fading rapidly' (Ben, interview, 2021).*

Even though Biya's government intensified its repression amid a worsening political and economic crisis, the anglophone community did not openly begin to organise in support of their interests until the early 1990s, when political reform (especially multipartyism or liberalisation) took place(Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019:10). Anglophone elites started meeting in secret to decide on ways to restore the autonomy of the Southern Cameroons, which they now considered lost to Yaoundé and on the advice of some diplomats, they decided to form a political party that could work to achieve independence by accumulating int3rnal political power(ibid). The SDF was subsequently created and launched in Bamenda on 29 May 1990, with six people losing their lives to a government crackdown. John Fru Ndi was its chairman and was well-liked by everyone, especially the urban population, for his boldness and populist leadership style(Nyamnjoh et al 2012). The party turned into a major force opposing the ruling regime(Konings 2004).

However, when Fru Ndi lost the 1992 presidential election against Biya, anglophones realised they had no place in Cameroon and that the strategy of obtaining independence through political means had failed(Mehler 2014). Despite the fact that the SDF and Fru Ndi made significant contributions to anglophone consciousness and action. The party increasingly presented itself as a national rather than anglophone party, as evidenced by its growing membership in francophone Cameroon, particularly among the neighboring Bamileke, who were closely related to ethnic groups in Northwest Province and saw the SDF as a springboard to political power(Socpa 2006), Furious, a few party leaders who were Anglophones left the SDF to form organisations and pressure organisations in order to pursue their cause of self-determination(Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003). Following the introduction of political freedom in 1990, pressure groups were established and reinvigorated by the anglophone elite, who started to champion anglophone interests above everything else (ibid). A few of them, including the Fon Gorji-Dinka Ambazonian Movement and the Free West Cameroon Movement (FWCM), openly supported secession. The recently formed movements brought the English-speaking issue to the attention of both national and global policymakers(Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019).

The SDF still seems to be maintaining its stance of favouring a federal Cameroon, which conflicts with the views of the proponents of Ambazonia in the diaspora who prefer separate statehood (Nyamnjoh et al 2012). Anglophones, especially in the diaspora, regard the SDF stance as a betrayal of their trust, considering the sacrifices they have made for the party. At its formation, the SDF was the hope of the anglophones,, and many used to interpret the acronym SDF in pidgin or broken English to mean ‘suffer don’ finish’ (the suffering is over).

At present, the average anglophone is angry with the SDF because although it received national and international solidarity and support, it has failed to support the liberation war (ibid). However, besides the SDF sending petitions and organising demonstrations in support of the lawyers' and teachers' strike in Buea and Bamenda, the heroic speech of one of its former MPs, Joseph Wirba, who took the Cameroon parliament by surprise and vehemently spoke against state brutality, I commendable(Orock 2021). In his speech, Wirba recalled a private conversation he had with Professor Jacques Fame Ndongo about the frustrations of anglophones in which Ndongo arrogantly commented that anglophones were like cubes of sugar in a basin of water, meaning they were insignificant in the broader Cameroon (ibid). After this speech, Wirba was received with fanfare in his constituency in Jakiri, Bui Division, and two other places before going into hiding. He resurfaced again in parliament and made a last speech before going into exile. Wirba will be remembered for quoting Thomas Jefferson who said that when injustice becomes law, resistance becomes a duty(Tembon 2018: 7 Musah 2021:32).

By contrast, during a television interview in 2022, the SDF national vice-president and member of parliament for Wouri, Osih Joshua Nambangi, called on the US to arrest and extradite leaders of the Ambazonian movement(Isong 2022). In 2021, he joined 61 members of parliament of the ruling CPDM in signing a letter to the US Congress demanding the repatriation of Ambazonian leaders who were sponsoring armed groups in the restive Northwest and Southwest Regions(ibid).

This stance provoked a heavy backlash from other party members, and Ambazonian leaders declared him to be a wanted person. A senior Southern Cameroonian academic commented:

> *'This man is not only dumb; he is a simpleton and a stark illiterate to think for one moment that his despotic and terrorist French Cameroun state can simply send a so-called arrest warrant to America or any other state requiring the Cameroun regime's political opponents to be handed over to that regime for assassination. He is the prototype of a big fool'(ibid).*

According to analysts, the anglophone problem made the SDF visible but buried it as well, because it was unable to follow the winds of change in the aspirations of the people of the Southern Cameroons(Henry 2012). Its top leadership had detached itself from the pain and suffering of the people of the Southern Cameroons and made it more difficult to resolve the conflict. Additionally, They argue that the SDF has prolonged the agony of the people through its cooperation with the Biya regime rather than taking an outright stand for the freedom of the anglophones(Fonchingong 2013: 224).

6.13 French neo-colonialist Influence in Cameroon and the involvement of the anglophone diaspora in the conflict

'We want France to leave Ambazonia, we are no longer going to endure their neo-colonial oppression perpetrated by La Republique in our land'(Smith, interview, 2021).

'France, through its colonial control over the Republic of Cameroon, has exploited our resources without corresponding effort to develop the territory. We are tired of this oppression and exploitation'(Kingsley, interview, 2022).

Ambazonians abroad cite the persistence of French neocolonialism in Cameroon as a major cause of their involvement in the conflict for self-determination(Faye 2006). Many years after independence, France retains a dominant presence in Africa, especially in 'francophone' Africa(Yates 2018). In many francophones African countries, the perceived evidence of French neocolonialism is manifested by a French military presence, pro-French economic policies, the domination of French multinationals, the prevalence of colonial currencies (CFA francs or Françafrique) and France's pernicious alliance with unpopular ruling elites(Endong 2022). From the 1940s to the present, Françafrique has remained a pivotal reminder of French economic control over francophone African countries, and France's continuous military presence in numerous francophone countries (through the creation of military bases in Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Chad, and Djibouti just to name a few) has given many observers the impression that France has no intention of leaving its colonies (Cheeseman & Bertrand 2019; Le Vine 2004). French political, economic, and military domination in its former African colonies has triggered the emergence of various underground and overt nationalist movements focused on French-bashing and anti-French agitations(Oxford Analytica 2022).

In 2022, Mali's ruling junta announced that it was breaking off its defence accords with its former colonial ruler, France, citing 'flagrant violations' of its national sovereignty by French troops in the territory (Mapua Bambissa 2016). For many years, France had been Mali's staunchest ally in its fight against militant groups responsible for the killing of thousands of people and driving hundreds of thousands from their homes(Thomas 2014). However, in 2022, French forces withdrew after the country's military government renounced Mali's core military agreements with France. France began its military operations in the Sahel in 2013, helping Mali, its former colony, to stamp out a revolt in the north. But the rebels regrouped to attack the volatile centre of the country, initiating a full rebellion that the elected President Ibrahim Bubacar Keita was unable to halt(Venter 2022). In August 2020, protests against Keita culminated in a coup by disgruntled colonels in the Malian army – a move that was followed by a second military takeover in May 2021. From that point on, relations with France went steadily downhill, propelled by the military's

resistance to setting an early date to restore civilian rule and by Bamako's allegations that France was inciting regional neighbours to take a hard line against its military rule(News24 2022). Apart from this, the French did not like the fact that Mali's military created closer ties with Moscow, bringing in 'military instructors' which France and its allies condemned as mercenaries hired from the pro-Kremlin Wagner group. In January of the same year, the French ambassador to Bamako was expelled, and within a month France announced the pull-out of its troops from Mali plus those of the French-led Takuba force (ibid). Thousands of anti-French demonstrators poured into the streets of the Malian capital, Bamako, to cheer the expulsion of the French ambassador. The celebration was marked by people waving Russian flags and burning cardboard cut-outs of French President Emmanuel Macron(Al Jazeera 2022).

In 2019, protesters stormed the French embassy in Lagos, Nigeria, accusing President Emmanuel Macron of supporting terrorism(Omotuyi & Omotuyi 2020). The group of protesters, mainly war veterans, was led to the French consulate by the civil society organisation Africa Liberation Vanguard (ALV). In a letter jointly signed by the chairman and publicity secretary, the ALV accused France of meddling in Nigeria's affairs and of covertly funding the Boko Haram terrorist group. The African Liberation Movement gave French authorities a 21-day ultimatum to stop undermining Nigeria(*Vanguard News* 2019).

This is the situation of Cameroon's separatist movement in the diaspora. The Ambazonian Prisoners of Conscience Support Council has clearly expressed its opposition to French neo-colonialism, which it says is visible on many fronts, including the maintenance of colonial trade patterns with France(Endong 2022). Though Cameroon is generally open to international trade, France has remained its principal trading partner(Mpenya et al 2016). In 2009, France was Cameroon's primary trading partner with a commercial exchange of about 860 million Euros which included 597 million of imports from France and 263 million of export to France (a negative trading balance)(Haag 2012).

Moreover, like other French-speaking African countries, Cameroon has continued to use the colonial currency (CFA Franc) introduced by France during its pre-independence period, which has enabled France to continue exerting financial control over Cameroon(Endong 2020). Not only is the currency guaranteed by France, but Cameroon is also obliged to deposit more than 50 per cent of its foreign earnings into an operational account in the French Treasury. This colonial string ensures a huge outflow of capital which could have been used for Cameroon's socio-economic development rather than enriching its neo-colonial master(ibid).

Figure 24: Ambazonian Vice-President Dabney Yerima in collaboration with the EFF during a demonstration in South Africa against French neocolonial influence

Source: Cameroon Intelligence Report.

Cameroonian presidents have openly declared their loyalty or allegiance to France. Cameroon's first president, Ahmadou Ahidjo, declared his loyalty to France by saying that Cameroon could never conceive of having partners other than France, and that Cameroonians would not forget the accomplishments of France which they had learnt to understand and appreciate(Takoungang & Krieger 1998: 88; Takougang 2019). In a press interview in France in 1999, President Biya said he could not disagree with the opinions of President Francois Mitterrand, and that he was the best student of France (Centre d'Etudes d'Afrique Noire 1999).

Cameroon's presidents have not only been good students of France but also its protégés, and as such they have generally been perceived as stooges by critics and opposition activists. Additionally, many consider Cameroonian presidents to be France's choices(Endong 2020). For instance, a popular rumour was spread in the 1990s that France had manipulated the 1992 presidential elections to ensure Biya's victory and to hinder the election of an anglophone(Chimtom 2018; Endong 2020). Thus Archbishop Christian Tumi stated:

> *'Everybody knows that Fru Ndi won the election in 1992. It was Mitterrand, and I am citing something French President François Mitterrand said to Biya: 'Jamais un anglophone à Etoudi' (never should an Anglophone be allowed in Etoudi)' (ibid: 121).*

Tumi has highlighted France's interference in the political affairs of Cameroon as a major cause of the anglophone crisis, and believes French neo-colonialism is responsible for its present economic condition:

> *'What is creating the whole problem is the presence of France in Cameroon. Whereas the English people left, whereas they packed their boxes and everything and went away, Cameroon is controlled by France, and that's the problem'(Endong 2020).*

In tandem with Ambazonian concerns, on 22 February 2020, the French president Emmanuel Macron made a statement about the conflict in the Southern Cameroons and the detention of Kamto on a video that went viral on social media. In the video, he claimed that he had put sustained pressure on Paul Biya and compelled him to liberate the opposition leader, Maurice Kamto, who had been jailed in connection with post-election protests (CRUX 2020). In his words:

> 'I pressured Paul Biya and asked him to address the Anglophone crisis and issues pertaining to his political opponents. I told Biya, we must not meet in Lyon if Kamto is not released. He (Kamto) was freed because we put pressure. And now, the situation is deteriorating again. I will call President Biya next week. We shall mount maximum pressure on him for him to put an end to this situation. I am fully aware and concerned about incidents of violence in Cameroon. These incidents of violence are unacceptable. I am doing my best' (Endong 2020: 124).

These remarks are a direct indication that the president of Cameroon is a stooge of France. In an interview conducted by Crux, one of the participants had this to say:

> *'France has no lessons to give Cameroon, and Macron must apologize for insinuating that our president is his stooge. President Biya does not need Macron or any foreign leader to tell him what to do' (CRUX 2023).*

Another interviewee, Father Roman Kisi from Missaje in Cameroon's Northwest Region, told *Crux* that Macron's statements were condescending and showed a continuing colonial attitude towards Cameroon:

> *'My interpretation of Macron's statement is that he is responsible for all the chaos in Cameroon because if he has ordered Kamto's release and is now pressuring President Biya to release other political prisoners, it means that African leaders like Paul Biya are stooges. It was a very negative statement'(ibid: 1).*

The priest then criticised France's role in Africa, accusing Cameroon's former colonial master of exploiting the continent's resources and leaving behind a trail of poverty and want. Referring to the neo-colonial influence of France over Cameroon, and the spill-over effect

on the Southern Cameroonian conflict, anglophone activists in the diaspora have accused France of being responsible for the abduction of Ambazonian leaders in Abuja, Nigeria (Carsten & McAllister 2023). The acting president of the Interim Government, Sako Ikome, has blamed France for the arrest of Sisiku Ayuktabe and others(Africanews 2023). Chris Anu, the former communications secretary of the IG, accused France of having a hand in the arrest of Ayuktabe and other officials in Nigeria(Okakwu 2018). As a gateway to the Gulf of Guinea, France also perceives the independence of the Southern Cameroons as a serious threat to its strategic economic interest and an affront to its France-Afrique slave policies(ibid).

In South Africa, Ambazonian leaders have joined economic freedom fighters to protest against French imperialism and neo-colonial activities in the Southern Cameroons. In his speech during a protest, Yerima, the vice-president of the Ambazonia Restoration Movement in the diaspora, expressed concern over France's role in the Ambazonian conflict for self-determination:

> *'It is a new day, and like the EFF, a new crop of Ambazonian activists, the never again generation are standing up against French imperialism and defending our neighbourhoods one block at a time in the senseless war declared on us by the neo-colonial regime of Cameroon sponsored by France. We demand that France leave Ambazonia, because we have never had any ties of any kind with France. Ambazonia is not part of the French sphere of influence in Africa. We demand that France ends its assistance to French Cameroon in that country's colonisation of Ambazonia and that country's war of genocide in Ambazonia' (Federal Republic of Ambazonia 2022).*

Moderate Ambazonians think that Ambazonia advocates should desist from their anti-France rhetoric and strive to make France an ally in their quest for self-determination, because France is a permanent member of the UN Security Council and can pose a serious challenge to Ambazonia with its veto power.

Figure 25: Members of the EFF and Ambazonian supporters protest against French neocolonialism in Africa

Source: Africanews

6.14 The Cameroon government's dismissive response to anglophone grievances and the involvement of the diaspora

Ambazonian activists interviewed for this study expressed their grievances as follows:

> *'We have never been taken seriously by Cameroon. Whenever anglophone try to raise their concerns about their subservient status in Cameroon, they were given a cold shoulder' (Emmanuel, interview, 2021).*

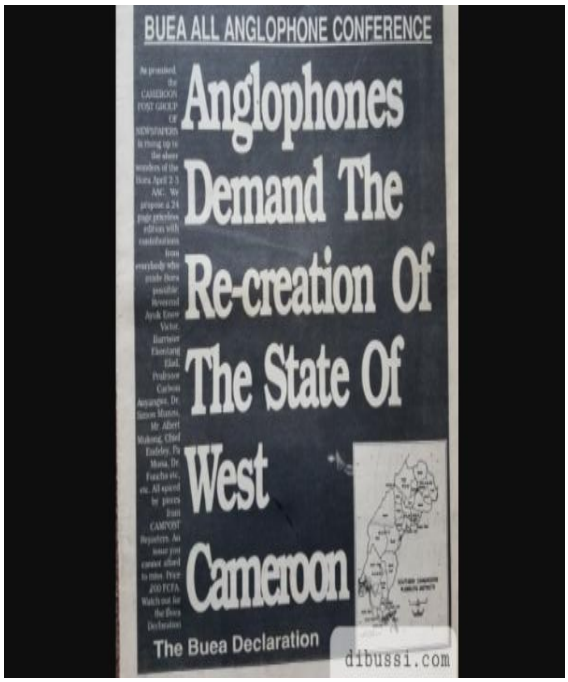
> *'The Cameroon government is responsible for the present restoration of Ambazonia movement because they never responded favourably to our demands. If they had at all, the respond is always late, and many times after the loss of many Anglophones lives. From the creation of the SDF party, through SCNC protests and campaigns and riots by students at the University of Buea to the declaration of Ambazonian independence, we have lost many lives without Cameroon responding to our demands for autonomy'(Ernest, interview, 2022).*

Anglophone attempts to enter into dialogue with the Cameroon government have run into a stone wall, and the central government has consistently refused to make credible concessions to the demands of anglophone nationalist leaders(Orock 2021). Some of the steps taken by anglophone nationalists to have the government address their grievances are outlined below.

In March 1993, more than 5 000 anglophones gathered in Buea for the All-Anglophone Conference(AAC I) in order to formulate a common perspective on constitutional

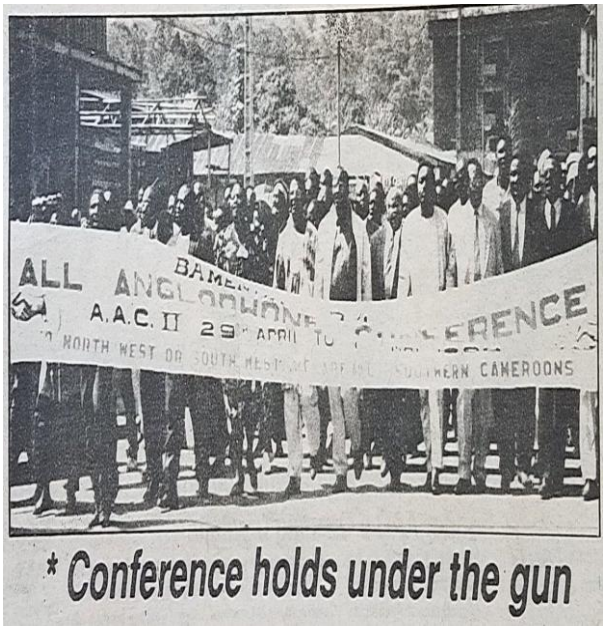
amendments and to explore a variety the other issues concerning their welfare(Anyefru 2021). The Buea Declaration, which highlighted problems stemming from francophone supremacy of the unitary state and called for a return to federal state structure, was handed to the Cameroonian government, but received no attention(Konings & Nyamnjoh 1997). The government received a draft constitution from the Anglophone standing committee, which the AAC had established in May 1993. This document would have given the two federated states significant political, financial and budgetary autonomy(Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019). The members of the committee recommended a normal separation of powers between the executive, legislature and judiciary, a senate for each federated state, and a rotating presidency for the federal republic(Konings & Nyamnjoh 1997). The government rejected this constitutional proposal at the meeting of the technical committee on constitutional matters because of Cameroon's bicultural identity(Anyefru 2010; Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003). The anglophone delegation at the deliberation walked out of the consultation to express their displeasure.

Figure 26: Poster about the All Anglophone Conference of 1993



Source: Amba TV

Figure 27: The Bamenda All Anglophone Conference, 1994



Source: Dibussi Tande

The 1994 Bamenda Conference or All-Anglophone Conference II (AAC II) examined the anglophone standing committee's fruitless attempts to negotiate a return to a federal state with the government(Doh 2014). The Bamenda Proclamation which followed the conference stated that anglophone leaders should first seek and secure constitutional talks between anglophone and francophone Cameroon on the basis of the federal draft constitution submitted by the anglophone standing committee in May 1993(Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003). In accordance with this proclamation, anglophones were dedicated to restoring the federation of the two nations so that Cameroon could remain one nation while honouring the unique colonial identities of the two Cameroons(Anyefru 2010).

The proposed federal constitution was even translated into French, but the government did not adequately reply to the petitions. This prompted the anglophone leaders to take a 'zero option', implying that they were no longer willing to engage in dialogue with a government that had never responded to correspondence, resolutions, petitions, proposals and suggestions,, or addressed constitutional reform since 3 April 1993(Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019). Many government officials made public proclamations to the effect that there was no anglophone problem in Cameroon, and that it just consisted of a few people trying to destabilise the country(ICG 2017). More recently, the Cameroon government has now acknowledged the existence of a problem around anglophone identity and representation but claims it can be solved in-house(ibid). However, of addressing the demands of the

anglophone community, it has utilised divide-and-rule tactics with significant success over the years, pitting anglophones against each other(Anyefru 2004). The current government has leveraged its allies within the anglophone community to refute allegations of anglophone marginalisation(Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019). These allies talk about 'self-marginalisation' and encourage their fellow anglophones to declare themselves full Cameroonian citizens with the same rights and responsibilities as the francophones (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003).

The government has actively restricted anglophone efforts to commemorate 1 October – the day on which anglophones claim they gained independence from Britain(ibid). Anglophone nationalists contend that French Cameroonians commemorate 1 January every year, which is the day they gained independence from France, and military service personnel are presented with medals of honour. On 1 October, however, the same soldiers are dispatched to persecute Southern Cameroonians and prevent them from celebrating their independence. Therefore, they argue that the government is distorting history by celebrating 1 January and repressing 1 October, saying that 1 January is the day both Cameroons gained independence (ibid). Since 1993, October 1 celebrations organised by various anglophone movements have frequently been violently disrupted by security forces because the government suspects anglophones of using these occasions to declare their independence(ibid).

Instead of addressing anglophone grievances, the government uses the legal system to criminalise anglophone nationalist movement leaders as a way of combating their dreams of independence. For instance, the government claims that the Southern Cameroons National Council, an organisation seeking sovereignty for the Southern Cameroons, is not only unlawful but also a terrorist organisation(Jua & Konings 2004). According to Konings and Nyamnjo (2004), there was a wave of terrorist assaults in six towns in the Northwest Province in 1997 when unidentified gunmen shot and killed a gendarme officer on duty in Jakiri, Kumbo. In response to the unexplained outbreak of violence, the government enforced a dusk-to-dawn curfew across the province, and the rural populace was subjected to brutal treatment by security personnel with SCNC activists and protestors arrested, tortured, and imprisoned(Anyefru 2010; Menyoli 2021). According to Dion Ngute, Cameroon's current prime minister, who was then the minister delegate at the Ministry of External Affairs in charge of relations with the Commonwealth, the SCNC is an illegitimate entity, which is why the government cannot dialogue with it(ibid).

To operate legitimately in Cameroon, civil society organisations have to notify the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation of its presence by filing for authorisation –which the SCNC failed to do. This was in violation of both Cameroon's state law and the

African Charter (ibid). The anglophone leaders' position is that, as a nationalist organisation, the SCNC does not require state authorisation in order to function(Anyefru 2008). They also argue that Kofi Annan's visit to Cameroon in 2001, during which he urged the government to enter into dialogue with the SCNC, amounted to a recognition of the latter's status as a legitimate nationalist movement(ibid).

However, the government has consistently equated the quest for a federation with secession and treated those involved as terrorists and enemies of the state(ibid). According to the government, discussions about the form of the state is taboo, and regime apologists have consistently stated that Cameroon is one state and indivisible(ICG 2017). Members of the anglophone diaspora have vowed that the conflict would not end without the form of the state being addressed, and that if the form of state could change from federal to unitary without anglophone permission, it can also change from unitary back to federal or full independence. However, the government has refused, among other demands, to release anglophone leaders arrested in Nigeria and has dismissed Swiss and Canadian mediation efforts, even after previous concessions towards the peace initiative, to end the conflict (ibid). According to Ambazonian activists abroad, there is credible proof that the Cameroonian government lacks the political will to follow through with its commitment to peace and has stalled efforts to end the war in the Southern Cameroons.

6.15 Conclusion

For decades, Cameroonians have embarked on waves of migration to seek better opportunities abroad. This migration has been driven by many factors, ranging from economic to social and political ones. Among the general Cameroonian migrants are a group of anglophones who, together with their descendants, now make up what is termed the anglophone diaspora, and are actively involved in fighting for the self-determination of the Southern Cameroons. This chapter has shown that the diasporan quest for self-determination is driven by a range of factors, including flawed decolonisation.

Anglophone nationalists in the diaspora argue that the UN-imposed plebiscite of 11 February 1961 which led to the reunification of the two Cameroons amounted to a violation of UN Resolution 1608, which reflected a decision to grant independence to the Southern Cameroons. Specifically, they point out that voters were only given the choice of joining either Nigeria or French Cameroon and were not presented with a third option of full independence for British (Southern) Cameroon. They also argue that the union of the two Cameroons was not legalised by a proper treaty.

Diasporans also complain about the francophone regime's centralisation of power that exclude anglophones from important political positions, the co-optation of anglophone elites, Cameroon's regime authoritarianism, the prolonged history of human rights violations in anglophone Cameroon, the British colonial administration's double standards relating to the envisaged future of anglophone Cameroon, the underdevelopment of anglophones regions, socio-economic marginalisation, gross inequality, and the collective experiences of stereotyping by anglophones in Cameroon. Despite all of this, they say that the anglophone people have remained resilient and maintained a growing Southern Cameroons or Ambazonian consciousness, which continue to fuel the quest for self-determination.

7 Contributions of the anglophone diaspora to the Southern Cameroonian quest for independence

7.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the contributions of the anglophone diaspora to the Southern Cameroonian quest for independence. Information from interviews conducted with members of the diaspora was triangulated with the existing literature on the ongoing struggle for Ambazonian statehood. For the past five years, the anglophone diasporan community has staged protest marches in major cities around the world, including Lagos, Abuja, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Washington, London, Berlin and Geneva(Orock 2021). They have used social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, and written letters to the UN, the AU, the Commonwealth, and many other foreign and international organisations(Akoh 2020). Their role in the ongoing struggle is described in greater detail below.

7.1.1 Leadership role of the diaspora in the Southern Cameroonian liberation struggle

An important contribution of the anglophone diaspora to the Southern Cameroonian quest for self-determination is providing it with leadership. The leaders who live abroad are in charge of the international advocacy of Ambazonian independence. While they come from different socio-economic and political backgrounds, they are all motivated by the same goal, namely, to achieve greater or total independence for Southern Cameroons. Discussions with these leaders highlighted their role as primary drivers or architects of the movement, and managers of its processes for advancing Ambazonian independence. Some stated:

> *'Our roles in the present conflict as members of the diaspora are very diverse. Firstly, we are providing leadership to lead the struggle from abroad. We coordinate the struggle from our bases abroad'(Stephen, interview, 2021).*

> *'I am a frontline leader in the struggle. My major role with other Amba die-hard leaders is creating a leadership structure to properly coordinate the struggle. This is to keep the struggle alive and prevent it from losing momentum'(Lucas, interview, 2021).*

> *'There are numerous contributions we are offering as diaspora. The most important for me is leadership. We have created many organizations to lead our restoration movement from the USA and other continents around the world. Overseas leadership is critical for us because of the repressive regime in Cameroon. The Anglophone diaspora is providing leadership for the struggle'(Samuel, interview, 2021).*

The effectiveness of a nationalist movement is heavily influenced by its leadership. Leaders must be competent and devoted to and consumed with the struggle. It must be an obsession

that seizes them, which they cultivate, and which they must communicate to their people (Fonchingong 2013; George 1965).

According to Fonchingong(2013), the long-standing absence of such leaders has been a tremendous setback in the anglophone quest for self-determination, especially given that the founding leadership was not fully committed to the cause. Specifically, by 1996, all four early leaders had abandoned the struggle(ibid). Benjamin Itoe, a former minister of justice, abandoned the cause in 1993 ahead of ACC1 in order to gain the goodwill of the central government, which then made him president of the administrative branch of the Supreme Court(ibid).

Shortly after AAC2, two more Anglophone leaders, Simon Munzu and Carlson Anyangwe, left to work in Rwanda and Zambia respectively. Their decisions to withdraw from the struggle were probably caused by the realisation that greater devotion and sacrifice were required than they were willing to offer(ibid). When the barrister Sam Ekontang Elad travelled to the US in 1996, it became clear that he too had abandoned the cause. With Elad gone, the SCNC leadership was divided between Henry Fosung and Ndoki Mukete, neither of whom proved to be competent leaders. As a result, the anglophone struggle was postponed for several years(ibid).

While this withdrawal of previous leaders was a real setback to the Southern Cameroonian cause, it was by no means the only one. The repressive nature of the Yaoundé administration, particularly in the 1970s and 1990s, backed by highly sophisticated security forces with no regard for human rights, was an enormous obstacle to the independence campaign. The restrictive political climate in Cameroon also contributed to leaders abandoning domestic campaigns in favour of supporting it from abroad.

Pioneering leaders like Fongum Gorji-Dinka, Albert Moukong, Justice Ebong Alobwede, Chief Ayamba, Ebenezer Akwanga, Ayaba Cho Lucas and other SCNC activists experienced extreme persecution in the form of arrest, incarceration, maltreatment and even torture(Robert 2020; Achankeng 2015). The central government was also determined to co-opt all anglophone leaders who could be bought to reduce or eliminate potential threats to the system.

All of this created an unfavourable situation for local leaders. As a result, in order to avoid attempted persecution or attempts at co-optation, they fled Cameroon. The local leadership void created by these difficulties culminated in the current situation, in which the anglophone diaspora is leading the campaign from abroad. Anglophones in the diaspora are filling the leadership gap by spearheading Ambazonian advocacy and mobilisation efforts

out of the reach of Biya's oppressive regime. They command all the major groups, initiate, and fund and distribute propaganda, and lobby foreign governments and international organisations (Orock 2021).

7.1.1.1 From the Anglophone Civil Society Consortium to the Southern Cameroons Ambazonia Consortium United Front (SCACUF)

As noted earlier, the current leadership role of the diaspora started in the wake of the teachers' and lawyers' protests in 2016. The strike took place under the auspices of the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium, led by the barrister Agbor Balla Nkongho, with Dr Fontem Neba as secretary general. When they were arrested, and the organisation was banned, the anglophone diaspora assumed control of the struggle (DeLancey et al 2019).

The individuals living abroad who were chosen to lead the struggle were Mark Bareta and Tapang Ivo, based in Belgium and the US respectively(Jeter 2023). Initially, they advocated the release of those arrested in connection with the strike, and the restoration of a two-state federation. However, following the relentless repression of unarmed protestors by the state security agency, they started to call for an independent state(Okereke 2018). Thus the suppression of legitimate concerns and the non-violent request for a return to federalism led to calls for the English-speaking areas to secede from Cameroon.

In 2017, separatist organisations, mostly based abroad, and referring to themselves as the 'frontline organisations', held a series of four conclaves in Nigeria which played a major role in consolidating the independence campaign.

The **first conclave**, held from 23 to 26 February 2017, resulted in the formation of the Southern Cameroons Ambazonia Consortium United Front (SCACUF), described by Aka (2024) as an umbrella organisation which brought together 'all the key actors and organisations involved in the campaign for southern Cameroonian independence'. While the first conclave was organised by the Southern Cameroons South Africa Forum, the remaining three were convened by SCACUF.

The **second conclave** was held in Lagos from 6 to 9 April 2017. According to a media release issued by SCACUF on 9 April, all the 'frontline liberation movements' had committed themselves to a united front and reaffirmed their plans to organise the elections of an interim prime minister, who would form a fully-fledged Interim Government (SCACUF 2017).

The conclave set up a secretariat for the umbrella organisation and elected Wilfred Tassang to the position of Secretary General. It also elected a Leadership Council to serve as the supervisory authority of the SCACUF Secretariat.

The release went on to say that Southern Cameroonian leaders had reiterated their commitment to pursue the restoration of the independence of southern Cameroons through legal and non-violent means. It also directed a range of demands in respect of the independence of Southern Cameroons/|Ambazonia at the AU and UN.

The structure of the envisaged interim government of Ambazonia was defined at the **third conclave**, held in July 2017. It consisted of a Governing Council; an Executive Council; a legislature; a judiciary; a secretariat with five arms or divisions; and eight government departments. The legislature would be made up of representatives from various countries in which SCACUF was based, allocated proportionally in terms of population size. It would comprise 16 seats, with each seat comprising two individuals. These seats were allocated to the US (6), SA (3), Canada (3), Germany (2), the UK (2) and the rest (1) (ibid).

Besides these bodies, the governing structure included an Ethics Commission; the Southern Cameroons Broadcasting Commission (SCBC); and the Southern Cameroons Public Affairs Committee (SCAPAC), which would serve as the Treasury (ibid). More details appear in Figures 28 and 29.

The governing council was made up of the heads of all SCACUF's member organisations, and Sisiku Julius Ayuk Tabe was nominated as chairman. It is important to note that he continued to favour a non-violent approach, in line with the assertion that SCACUF ought to use 'the force of argument rather than the argument of force', thereby emphasising the position of the SCNC in the 1990s.

Figure 28: The structure of the Interim Government as defined at the third conclave

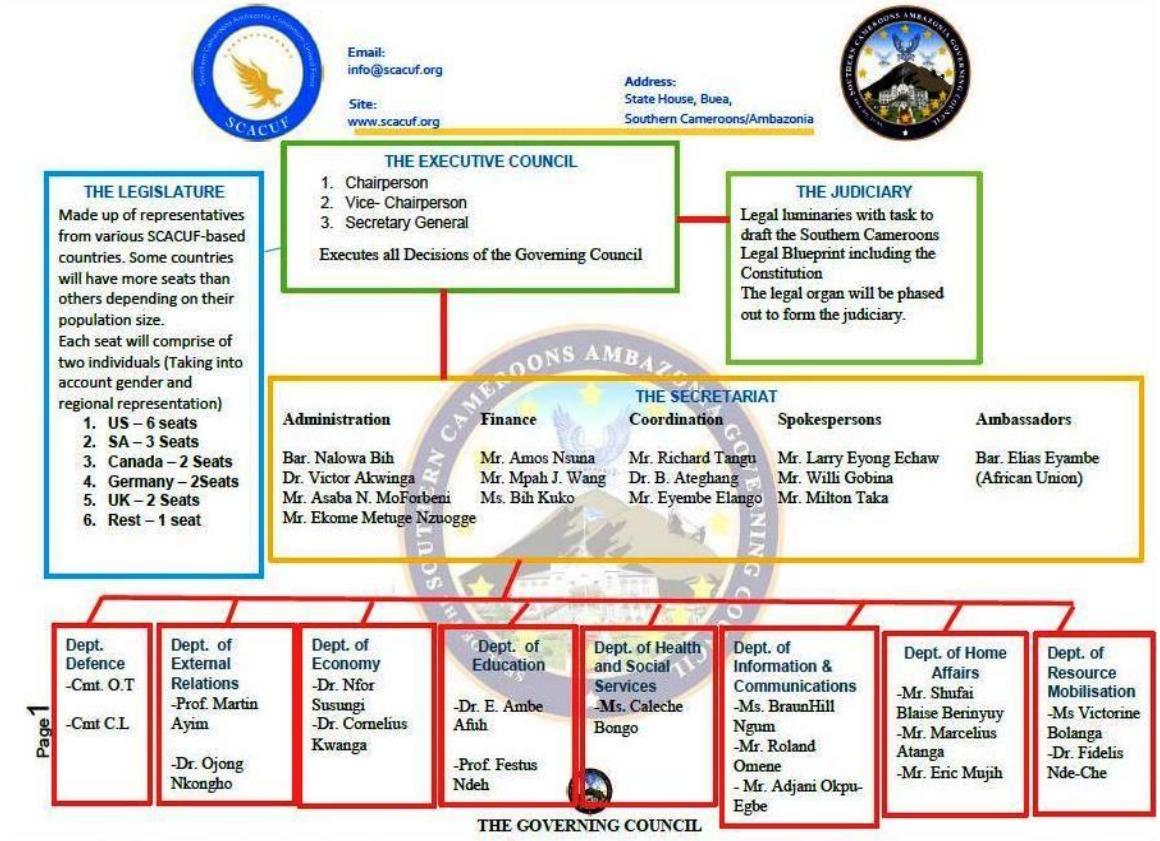
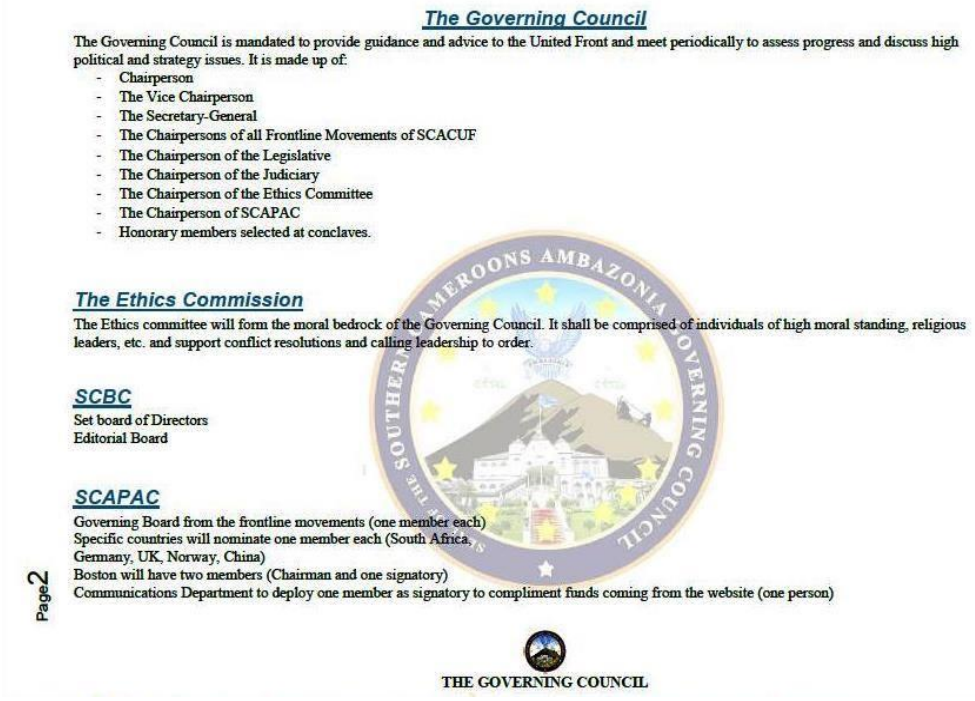


Figure 29: The transformation of SCACUF into the Interim Government (IG)



On 1 October 2017, the SCACUF leader, Sisiku Julius Ayuk Tabe, **proclaimed Ambazonia's independence**, with himself as president and SCACUF translating itself into the Interim Government of Ambazonia(Ngouo 2020).

Major organisations which did not form part of the IG included 'the Ambazonia Governing Council of Lucas Cho Ayaba, the African People Liberation Movement of Dr Ebenezer Akwanga, and the Movement for the Restoration of the Independence of Southern Cameroons of Boh Herbert'(Effiom 2021:1).

During the **fourth conclave**, held on 28– 31 October 2017, the SACUF governing council was converted into an Interim Government. Its chair, Sisiku Julius Ayuk Tabe, assumed the role of interim president of the Federal Republic of Ambazonia(Ibid)

The following excerpt from the statement made by SCACUF representatives that established the IG, outlines the structural modifications that took place when SCACUF became an IG:

'Now therefore, we, members of the Governing Council and Delegates of Southern Cameroons Ambazonia United Front (SCACUF) meeting in conclave from 28 to 31 October 2017, announce the formation of an Interim Government, led by Sisiku Julius Ayuk Tabe as Interim President. We:

- 'Call on the President to constitute a cabinet comprising of the Vice President and seven Government Departments, namely Defence and Homeland Security; Finance and Economy; Education; Health and Social Services; Foreign Affairs; Home Affairs; and Communication & Information Technology;

- 'Establish a Restoration Council comprising of the 11 members of the current Governing Council plus four individuals, one per region: Africa, America, Asia/Middle East and Europe;

- 'Establish an Ethics Commission consisting of seven members;

- 'Give SCBC the autonomy to be self-sustaining and to be run by an independent board;

- 'End the function of SCAPAC as the central treasury of the Federal Republic of Ambazonia, and to create one national treasury in Ambazonia and regional and country treasuries in the Diaspora' (Cameroon Intelligence Report 2017:1).

Figure 30: Current Cabinet of the interim Government of Ambazonia

Source: Academic-accelerator.com 2018

In the process, the functions of some institutions were changed, and some were eliminated. The Governing Council was renamed the Restoration Council. This new council was made up of the 11 members of the previous governing council plus four individuals each representing the following regions: America, Asia/Middle East, Europe and Africa (ibid). Together with the ethics commission, the Restoration Council served as both the IG's formal legislative body and its checks and balances mechanism. The ethics committee was replaced

by the seven-member ethics commission, which was meant to preserve the Ambazonia revolution's moral core and serve as a dispute resolution mechanism(ibid).

SCAPAC was abolished and replaced with a single national treasury plus regional and national treasuries throughout the diaspora. SCACUF's eight departments were replaced by a cabinet consisting of seven members and a vice president, appointed by the interim president(Cameroon Intelligence Report online).

As noted previously, several major organisations, such as the Movement for the Restoration of the Independence of the Southern Cameroons(MoRICS), the Ambazonia Governing Council (AGC), and the Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL) were left out when SCACUF was formed(Effiom 2021). These organisations participated in the first conclave but were excluded thereafter. According to Crawford et al, this was orchestrated by divisions within SCACUF over the preferable approach to the restoration of independence. Some members, like Ayaba Cho Lucas, the head of the Ambazonia Governing Council (AGC), preferred an armed struggle, while the Governing Council, headed by Ayuk Tabe, opted for civil disobedience and diplomacy or non-violence(Crawford et al 2022). Consequently, some of these organisations have questioned the legitimacy of the IG, claiming that there are tensions over the exclusion of reliable leaders.

In response, Ambazonian leaders argued that the legitimacy of the IG derived from all the liberation movements that took part in the fourth conclave and the formation of the IG (ibid). Since all the liberation movements representing the aspirations of the majority of the people of the Southern Cameroons unanimously decided on setting up the IG and electing Sisiku as interim president, its legitimacy was derived from the Ambazonia people. Thus the Proclamation of Independence states:

> 'Now, therefore, we the freedom movements united in a common front: representing the overwhelming majority of the people of the Southern Cameroons in the present circumstances, assembled in conclave of our joint revolutionary national liberation movements, bound by honour and pursuant to the implied mandate given to us by the people of the Southern Cameroons whose will is supreme, having held mutual consultations, and in order to provide in some degree for the exigencies of the Southern Cameroons in this alarming period that has lasted for too long …'(Proclamation of the Restoration of Independence 2017: 13).

Therefore, the Proclamation claims that the organisations which participated in the fourth conclave represented the majority of the people of the Southern Cameroons.

The IG has introduced elections as a means of selecting its leaders and government to demonstrate the legitimacy of its leadership(Federal Republic of Ambazonia 2022).

Ayuk Tabe was not elected as the first head of the IG and was appointed as interim president. Following his arrest in Nigeria on 4 February 2018, Samuel Ikome Sako was elected as acting interim president by an electoral college consisting of representatives from the diaspora and the surviving members of Tabe's cabinet(Federal Republic of Ambazonia 2022). Since then, in terms of holding elections to select its leader, the IG has sought to prove that it is genuinely democratic.

Thus the official website of the Federal Republic of Ambazonia states:

> 'Ambazonia is a constitutional democracy featuring an independent judiciary and a three-tiered government. The Constitution defines the national, county, and local levels of government as distinct, interdependent, and related entities, each with legislative and executive authority within their respective domains. All Ambazonian citizens have the chance to engage in national affairs, including the election of their leaders'(Federal Republic of Ambazonia 2022:1).

Ambazonian county and national interim elections are held every three years. Voting is open to all Ambazonian LGA chairs or representatives who have made the required financial contributions. According to the Ambazonian constitution, the Election Commission of Ambazonia (ECA), established under the Electoral Commission Act, 2022(Act 1 of 2022), is in charge of overseeing all national elections and referendums in all three branches of government(Federal Republic of Ambazonia online).

Initially, members of the Restoration Council were elected in constituencies, and the majority party in the council formed a government. In 2002, the election of the Restoration Council was changed to a proportional representation system. Before the election, every political party provides a list of candidates arranged in numerical order of choice. Restoration Council seats are allocated based on the total number of votes cast for parties contesting the election.

Accordingly, a party with 10 per cent of the total votes will receive 10 per cent of the seats, and the top 20 candidates on a party list are elected as MPs if the party wins 20 seats (ibid). Presidential candidates must secure a simple majority of more than 50 per cent of the vote cast at the federal level to be elected president(Ambazonia Electoral Bil 2022). When there is no clear winner, the top two candidates will compete in a run-off election on the fourth day following the election. In the event of a tie, the LGA should continue to vote until a

clear winner is determined. Election take place from 3 to 6 p.m. Amba time via video-enabled Zoom.

According to the Ambazonian government website, the Restoration Council ‘serves as guardian of the people's needs and interests’. It assumes the role of legislature and has the authority to ‘hold everyone accountable for carrying out any decision that serves the interests of the Ambazonian people’. Ambazonians, both in countries of the diaspora and locally, participate in the elections of their leaders through their representatives in the Restoration Council, local government and counties. The creation of local government areas allows the people at home to participate covertly, allowing the IG to have local representatives at home in the Southern Cameroons(ibid).

7.1.1.2 IG leaders and the leadership crisis

In 2017, Sisiku Ayuk Tabe rose to become the leader of the anglophone movement(ibid). He was first appointed as chairman of SCACUF during the second conclave held in Nigeria on 10-13 July 2017, and then chosen as the interim president of the Federal Republic of Ambazonia on 31 October 2017(ibid). According to the Ambazonian government website, people widely embraced his engaging leadership style. ‘During the past five years, he has come to represent the struggle and is revered as a great nationalist leader by the people of the Southern Cameroons. Because of his contribution to and sacrifices in the fight for Ambazonian independence, he has been compared to leaders like Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King’(ibid).

However, Ayuk Tabe’s rise to prominence presented a problem for the Cameroonian government, which is said to have been complicit in his planned arrest in Nigeria and covert transfer to Cameroon. Among his accomplishments were his efforts, through civil disobedience campaigns and diplomatic channels(Agbaw-Ebai 2018), to achieve the peaceful independence of Southern Cameroon(Crawford et al 2022).

While some Ambazonian critics condemned Ayuk Tabe for forming the IG, arguing that it was inconsequential, others viewed it as a prudent move, demonstrating to the international community that Ambazonia was ready for self-governance(Mbong 2021). Tabe's unilateral declaration of Ambazonian independence on 1 October 2017 was another major step.

Besides appointing a government, Ayuk Tabe organised meet-the-people rallies with Ambazonians living in the US, Europe and South Africa(Orock 2021). His visits were enthusiastically received and accompanied by much fanfare. In his talks, he attempted to enlighten anglophone Cameroonians about their identity by recounting the history of Southern Cameroons and drawing connections with the current state of affairs(Asu 2020).

He also asked the audiences for financial support. Anglophones were encouraged by his leadership and given hope for the realisation of an Ambazonian state. Ayuk Tabe was greatly admired both at home and among the diasporas, and his national addresses received significant attention on social media(Agbaw-Ebai 2018). A respondent said about him:

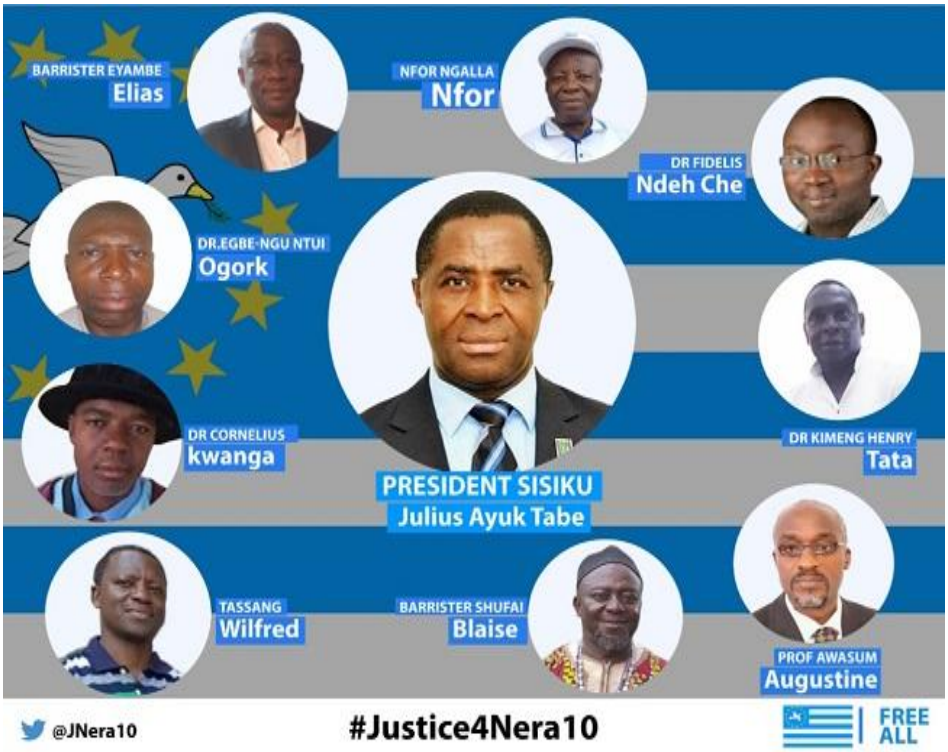
> *'Ayuk Tabe is a very charismatic and calm leader. Many of us believed in his leadership and called him President because of his brilliance, and he was well connected. His leadership was necessary for us to get to Buea'(Awah, interview, 2022).*

A good example of his popularity occurred during a protest outside the White House in Washington D.C. Upon his arrival with his entourage, Cameroonians began singing and shouting his name, referring to him as 'Papa'(father)(Akoh 2020). Even though he led the struggle for a very short period, the Cameroonian government was deeply troubled by his popularity and leadership style and he was later arrested in Nigeria sent to Yaounde Cameroon (Agbaw-Ebai 2018).

During a meeting at the Nera Hotel in Abuja in 2018, Ayuk Tabe and the majority of the IG were taken into custody by Nigerian secret service agents and transferred to Cameroon. Since the majority of deported individuals applied for political asylum, this proved contentious in Nigeria(Kwachuh 2020). A Nigerian court ruled in March 2019 that the arrest of Ayuk Tabe and his cabinet was unlawful and ordered all of them to be compensated and returned to Nigeria. This had no real-world ramifications, as on 20 August 2019, the Yaoundé Military Tribunal sentenced the ten leaders — among them Ayuk Tabe — to life imprisonment. Despite global protests demanding their release, they remain imprisoned to this day(France24 2019).

Despite his incarceration, and internal strife in the IG, Ayuk Tabe is still regarded as the foremost leader of the Ambazonian movement(Gareth 2019). In July 2020, he and other members of his cabinet reportedly met with Cameroonian government officials for talks about a ceasefire(Maxwell 2020). He stated three requirements: the public declaration of a ceasefire by President Paul Biya, the withdrawal of the Cameroonian military from anglophone territories, and broad amnesty for the separatists(Agbaw-Ebai 2019). At the time of writing, these conditions had not been met, and Ayuk and his colleagues remained in prison.

Figure 31: Interim President Julius Ayuk Tabe and his Cabinet members who were arrested in Abuja, Nigeria



Source: Ambazonia Prisoners of Conscience.

In February 2018, following the arrest of Sisiku Ayuk Tabe and the majority of his cabinet, Dr Samuel Ikome Sako was elected as the acting president in the diaspora. Dr Sako is renowned for advocating self-defence (Africa News 2018). Under his direction, the IG stated its intention to change its approach from defensive to offensive in order to weaken the occupier (ibid). In his inaugural speech, he stated that the Ambazonia Restoration Movement had entered a new phase of both individual and group self-defence (ibid). An excerpt follows:

> 'Now is the era of self-defence. From effective personal self-defence to legitimate Ambazonia community protection programs to stop the wanton destruction of lives and our property in Ambazonia. We are therefore going to work to accredit and embrace all self defence and security groups that will endorse our IG rules of engagement. I will be reaching out to all in the days ahead'(ibid:1).

Following this, Dr Sako initiated the 'My Trip to Buea and Amba' war draft to generate funding for self-defence and other initiatives(ABC 2022). In March 2018, the IG established the Ambazonia Self-Defence Council (ASC) in an effort to unify various local militias under a single banner and to bury the divisions between the IG and the Ambazonia defence forces, which are devoted to the Ambazonia Governing Council(AGoVC)(ICG 2019). This call

was crucial because of the ongoing war, which has resulted in a worsening humanitarian crisis: 8 000 deaths, 4 000 arrests, and more than 50 000 thousand internally displaced people.

Sako came to the conclusion that soldiers would only stop killing civilians when Anglophones began to defend themselves (ibid). Additionally, the ASC was established to combat criminality, fraudulent self-defence groups and alleged government militias in the Southern Cameroons. Sako also raised his voice against the growing issue of kidnapping citizens for ransom in the war for independence in the Southern Cameroons, which he claimed was 'painting the revolution black'. In an online interview in 2018, he stated:

> 'The Acting President of Ambazonia strongly condemns all groups involved in kidnapping for ransom and the killing of fellow Ambazonians which paints the revolution black. There will be zero tolerance for such practices'(Africa News 2018).

Both Sisiku and Sako have been criticised for the infighting that has plagued the IG (Asu 2020). While many have questioned Sisiku and others for forming the IG, as well as its role and credibility in the liberation struggle, Sako was blamed for incompetence, the misappropriation of funds and corruption. In 2022, the Restoration Council and executive branch of the IG voted him out and replaced him with Njomia Marianta (Effiom 2021).

There have been four major splits in the IG. The first happened after the arrest of the Ayuk Tabe cabinet and Samuel Ikome Sako's election as acting president (CNA 2018). While in prison, Ayuk Tabe announced on 2 May 2019 that the cabinet headed by Sako had been disbanded and that his own cabinet had been reinstated. The statement commended the Sako cabinet for its earnest efforts but said that it was unfit to continue leading the Ambazonian people(Journal du Cameroun 2019).

In an official statement, Ayuk Tabe explained his dissolution of the caretaker IG and reinstatement of his former government by citing the need to resolve internal conflicts as well as combat serious irregularities or improprieties in the management of both people and material resources by the Sako-led IG(Journal du Cameroun 2019). However, the Sako-led cabinet refused to step down as it did not accept Ayuk Tabe's authority.

A few days later, in June 2019, the Ambazonia Restoration Council proclaimed that Ayuk Tabe had been 'impeached' for 'treasonous misconduct' and that he was no longer authorised to speak on behalf of Ambazonia (Ibid). This series of events raises many questions about constitutionality and respect for democracy and the rule of law by Ambazonian leaders. Does the constitution allow a jailed interim president the right to fire a government that was elected following his arrest, and what about respect for the people's

right to choose their leader? Another point of controversy was whether Ayuk Tabe had the right to speak for Ambazonia while in prison, let alone talk of firing a democratically elected government.

To address these questions, this study examined the constitutional provisions which specify the power of an interim president and what happens in his/her absence. According to the constitution, the first two duties of an interim president is to use his authority in the face of aggression to secure the early and complete liberation of Ambazonian territory and a return to normalcy by taking all necessary steps to ensure that the Cameroonian government, military, and civil officials who are responsible for crimes against humanity and other crimes committed in the Southern Cameroons (Ambazonia) are held accountable without jeopardising any civil claims against all or any of them (Federal Government of Ambazonia 2017). According to the constitution, the interim president also has the power to:

- 'exercise all executive and, in the absence of a legislature, legislative powers of the Republic of Ambazonia;
- appoint ministers as he considers necessary;
- levy tax and expend monies;
- summon the future Constituent Assembly of the Republic of Ambazonia to frame a constitution for the nation and adopt the definitive name of the country as well as the national anthem, flag, motto and coat of arms;
- conclude international agreements and form alliances, and do all things and acts which independent states may do under international law;
- do all other things that may be necessary to give to the people of Ambazonia an orderly and just Government; and
- in the exercise of these powers, consult and act on the advice of the Cabinet'(ibid: 16).

The first point effectively makes him an absolute dictator by conferring on him unlimited power to make decisions and manage national affairs. Second, this study argues that the decision by Ayuk Tabe to fire the caretaker IG might have stemmed from the article that states: 'Do all other things that may be necessary to give to the people of Ambazonia an orderly and just government' and 'In the exercise of these powers, consult and act on the advice of cabinet'(Ibid: 16).

It can thus be argued that Sisiku Ayuk Tabe believed his decision to fire the Sako-led IG being was justified. Second, as he explained in his public statement, his decision was meant to salvage the image of the revolution tarnished by the caretaker government and to give the Ambazonian people a more credible government. It is noteworthy that even though Tabe was imprisoned, he was still the interim president, while Dr Sako was the acting interim president. It could therefore be argued that Sisiku Ayuk Tabe's decision to fire the acting interim president and his cabinet was valid. His statement read:

> 'Considering that despite all efforts by well-meaning Ambazonians responding to my appeals to keep the Interim Government afloat by accommodating the caretaker cabinet while these issues of infighting in the struggle involving grave improprieties both in the management of material and human resources are sorted out, the caretaker cabinet has lost the ability to reconcile our people and, in doing so, has imperiled the identity and mission of the Interim Government to complete the decolonization of Southern Cameroons through advancing our collective national interests. It is incumbent on me as a servant-leadership fiduciary to bring redress to the Southern Cameroons-Ambazonians, to their struggle and their nation, from their slow descent into a footnote of our own history. I hereby declare and direct that the caretaker cabinet is forthwith dissolved and that, the cabinet as was in office on January 5th, 2018, when parts of the leadership and I were abducted be reconstituted, restored and reactivated' (Nfor, 2019:1).

One may nevertheless ask whether he had the right to exercise his powers as interim president while in prison. The relevant section of the constitution states:

> 'In the event of there being no President ad interim or the President ad interim being unable to enter upon his office or being unable to exercise his powers due to any reason whatever, the Deputy President ad interim shall have and exercise all the powers, duties and responsibilities herein conferred on the President, and that in the event of the Deputy President ad interim being unable to enter upon his office or being unable to exercise his power (or the powers of the President ad interim in the circumstances aforesaid) due to any reason whatsoever, the Secretary of State shall have and exercise all the powers, duties and responsibilities herein conferred on the President, and that in the event of the Secretary of State being unable to enter upon his office or being unable to exercise his power (or the powers of the President and Vice President ad interim in the circumstances aforesaid) due to any reason whatsoever, any fit and proper citizen of Ambazonia duly designated by Cabinet shall exercise all the powers, duties and responsibilities herein conferred on the President ad interim'(Proclamation of the Restoration of Independence 2017:17).

In this case, the deputy president, Tassang Wilfred, was also imprisoned with Ayuk Tabe, and the secretary general, Milan Atam, was not able to exercise the powers of interim president. Consequently, it can be argued that the cabinet had the right to designate a person

who would act as interim president – in this case Dr Sako. This made him and his cabinet the legitimate government of Ambazonia.

Analysts and others argued that Ayuk Tabe should have respected this decision. Instead, his actions undermined the IG, and portrayed the Ambazonian liberation struggle as a charade. Even though he was impeached, Ayuk Tabe maintained his cabinet in prison and appointed Dabney Yerima as vice-president.

There were also splits in the Sako-led IG. Notably, he was criticised for incompetence and the misappropriation of funds, and also for his order in February 2022 to suspend the Restoration Council. Sako himself was then impeached by the Restoration Council, exacerbating the long-standing Ambazonian leadership problem(Wilson 2022). The second Ambazonian Stakeholders Strategic Conference, which took place in Washington, DC, on 10–13 March 2022, upgraded the Restoration Council to an interim House of Representatives, elected from Ambazonia's 13 counties, and confirmed support for Sako as the organisation's president(Christian 2022).

In the meantime, the Restoration Council proclaimed Sako's replacement, Marianta Njomia, as the new interim president(ibid). In addition, on 10 September 2022, the long-serving IG spokesperson General Chris Anu (a former Sako supporter) also proclaimed himself as president of Ambazonia. This means that there have been no fewer than four claimants to the Ambazonian presidency. They are listed in table 5(Pequet 2023).

Table 5: Ambazonia Presidency Claimants

No.	President	Tenure	
		Took office	Left office
1	Sisiku Julius Ayuk Tabe	1 October 2017	4 February 2018
2	Samuel Ikome Sako	4 February 2018	Incumbent
(1)	Sisiku Julius Ayuk Tabe	2 May 2019	Incumbent
3	Marianta Njomia	22 February 2022	Incumbent
4	Chris Anu	10 September 2022	Incumbent

Source: Presidents of Ambazonia,

The IG is primarily supported by donations from the diaspora, which includes a sizable number of women. However, business people and shopkeepers in Cameroon are also said to contribute in order to prevent their properties from being vandalised (Federal Republic of Ambazonia online). The IG's monthly budget is said to range from US$10 000 to US$100 000 (ICG 2019). In a 2019 report, the ICG claimed that when the IG first came into existence in June 2017, the majority of separatists and many anglophones believed it to be the legitimate government of Ambazonia.

As noted previously, the IG became politically weakened when its leader, Ayuk Tabe, was arrested in Nigeria in January 2018 (ibid: 16) and Dr Sako Ikome, a clergyman based in the US, was elected to replace him(Ketzmerick 2023). A number of separatist groups charged Ikome Sako with being inept and embezzling money. As a result, some government office holders resigned, among them the long-standing Ambazonian spokesperson Chris Anu (Jules Roger 2018). As a result, some activists now view the IG as just one separatist group among many. However, it is still the separatist group with the greatest financial and political standing(ICG 2019: 16).

In sum, the Ambazonian IG evolved from private formations at the leading edge of the cause for the liberation of the Southern Cameroons through the founding of the governing council within SCACUF to an interim government that claims to derive legitimacy from the majority of the Southern Cameroonian population(Effiom 2021:1). According to Anyangwe:

> 'The aim of forming the IG was not to ensure the governance of Ambazonia from abroad but to create a directive instrument responsible for: (i) prosecuting the national liberation struggle, (ii) internationalisation and education in regarding the quest for freedom, (iii)

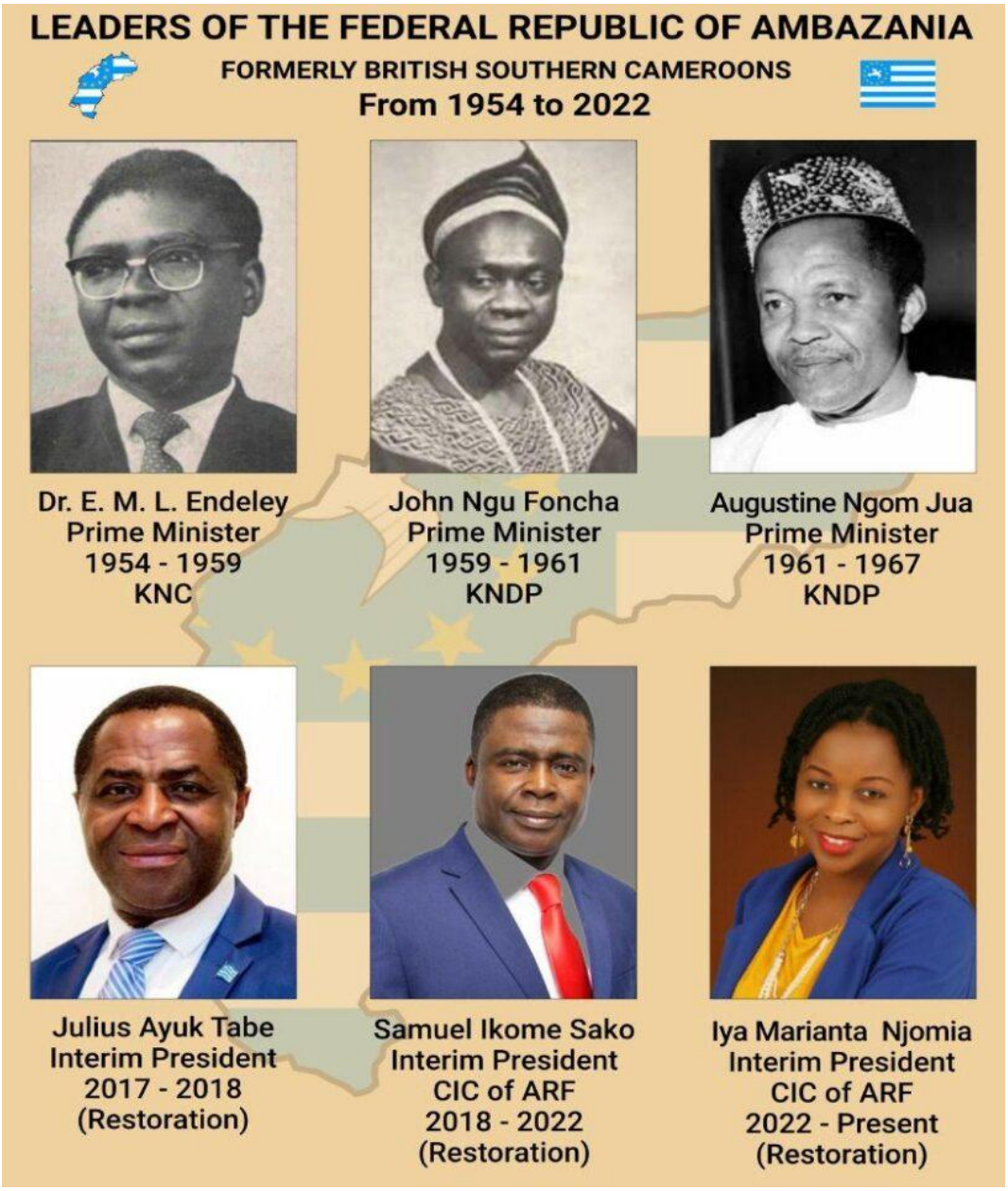
> responding to the mounting humanitarian crisis, and (iv) crafting a vision for independent Ambazonia in all areas of national life'(Effiom 2021:1).

Therefore, the purpose of the IG was to create a platform for consolidating the Southern Cameroonian struggle for independence, to provide a broad-based response to the effects of the liberation war on the people in the territory, and to set the stage for its post-war governance. This view coincides with the statement of purpose on the IG's website:

> 'The Interim Government of the Federal Republic of Ambazonia represents the People of the Former British Southern Cameroons and their aspirations as declared on 1st of October 2017: To restore their Independence, which was voted for, on 11 February 1961 and endorsed by United Nations General Assembly in Resolution 1608(XV) of 21 April 1961' (Federal Government of Ambazonia online 2021:1).

This underlines that the IG is not a government per se, but a platform for achieving the independence of the Southern Cameroons. It also functions as the drafter of a roadmap for political activities in a free state of Ambazonia.

Figure 32: Leaders of the 'Former British Southern Cameroons(1954-1967) and Leaders of the Federal Republic of Ambazonia)', 2017-2024



Source: Ambazonia.Org

7.1.2 The role of the AGovC and other liberation groups and their relationship with the IG

As noted earlier, some major organisations were left out when SCACUF was formed in 2017. This includes the Ambazonia Governing Council (AGovC), although it took part in the first conclave on 23-26 February 2017. This was because Ayaba Cho Lucas, head of the AGovC, supported armed conflict (Crawford et al 2022). Since then, the AgovC has established itself as a formidable opposition to the IG by creating an alternative structure

(ICG 2019: 16). Ayaba Cho Lucas, who lives in Norway, formed the Ambazonia Governing Council (AGC) in 2013, and has been the organisation's unquestioned head since then (Maxwell 2020). He virtually makes decisions alone, in contrast to the collaborative approach of decision-making in the IG(Home Office 2020: 22).

In 1993, Ayaba Cho Lucas was expelled from the University of Buea, a prestigious university in anglophone Cameroon, after staging a protest against rising tuition fees. He then left and sought political asylum in Norway, where he attended the Norwegian University of Life Sciences to study human rights. He became involved in activism through the SCNC and became the secretary general of the Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL) (Peoplepill.com). Disagreeing with the SCNC's policy of advocating dialogue with the Cameroonian government, the SCYL broke away from the organisation because it believed that force was necessary to liberate the Southern Cameroons(Halle 2014). This is probably what has made the Ayaba Cho Lucas-led AGC more rigid in pursuing an armed struggle than the IG(Tsafack 2022).

The leaders of the AGC claim that their goal is to render the anglophone region unruly until such time as the Cameroonian government acknowledges that the cost of fighting armed militias exceeds the revenue from exploiting Ambazonia's resources(Home Office 2020). The conflict between Ambazonian separatist groups and Cameroonian security forces was sparked in large part by the AGovC. In September 2017, the AGovC announced the deployment of Ambazonia's defence forces to the Southern Cameroons and the start of combat operations aimed at achieving Ambazonian independence(Maxwell 2022). This was the first instance of violence used by Ambazonian separatists in the anglophone crisis – months before the Ambazonian IG approved armed conflict, and seven weeks before it was formed.

The armed conflict was started by the AGovC, but the IG did not support it at first, since it favoured a diplomatic and civil disobedience campaign. However, this position shifted soon (Crawford et al 2022). The AGovC was the first to take up arms after the IG's declaration of independence on 1 October 2017, 'to liberate the territory from Yaoundé's onslaught and defend the citizens' (Effiom 2021). The AGovC operates in collaboration with the Southern Cameroon Youth League (SCYL), the Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC), the Movement for the Restoration of Southern Cameroon (SCARM), and the Southern Cameroon Peoples' Organisation (SCAPO). It also has about 20 more allies, inter alia the Ambazonia Coalition Team (ACT) and the Southern Cameroons Civil Society Consortium (SCACSC) (Julius 2019). These connections gives it great influence in the struggle.

The AGC refrained from joining the Southern Cameroons Liberation Council(ICG 2019). However, in May 2019, the AGovC took part in a workshop in Brussels where all the Ambazonian independence movements pledged to put aside their divergent views and create a united front for the freedom of Ambazonia(UNPO 2019). Furthermore, amid a leadership conflict within the IG, the AGovC formally aligned itself with the Ayuk Tabe-led group against Samuel Ikome Sako and formalised its partnership with Ayuk Tabe in August 2019.

The Southern Cameroonian activist Mark Bareta has claimed that the formalisation of the alliance between Sisiku and the AGovC has 'strengthened President Sisiku's position as the face of the revolution, and shows he has one of the strong men of the revolution, Ayaba Cho Lucas, with him'. However, in July 2020, following allegations that Ayuk Tabe and the Cameroonian authorities had met to discuss a ceasefire the AGovC and the Sako-led IG stated that prisoners could not negotiate for Ambazonian territory.

Tactics employed by Ayaba Cho Lucas have contributed to the tense relationship between the IG and the AGovC. It is alleged that he began a massive kidnapping operation in September 2022 in Bali Nyonga, which resulted in conflicts with the Buffaloes of Bali Nyonga, another separatist group, in an attempt to frustrate the latter's plans(Yves Plumey 2023). This led to a warning from Bali Nyonga's president, Bah Nji, over the Ambazonia Broadcasting Corporation to Ayaba Cho that he and his cronies would face severe consequences for their attempts to create strife among Bali's independence fighters.

Additionally, it has been claimed that in the departments of Boyo, Donga-Mantung, Mezam, Ngo-Ketunjia, and Mémé, Ayaba Cho Lucas's forces conducted a number of significant operations, occasionally working with Nigerian independence fighters from Biafra. The AGovC militia has taken responsibility for an attack on workers at the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) on 11 February 2023, killing five people and injuring many more, in a video that was shared on social media (ibid). An attack in the Northwest Region in November 2017 also claimed the lives of three law enforcement officers and one civilian, and in March 2018, a delegate from the Ministry of Social Affairs was murdered.

The AGovC and the IG's relationship has been strained by accusations of kidnapping and killing(Agbaw-Ebai 2020). Whether true or untrue, all of the accusations seek to paint Ayaba Cho Lucas as a dissident rather than a genuine freedom fighter, which highlights the divisions and mistrust between the leaders of the liberation struggle and the larger Ambazonian community. In an interview, the spokesperson of AGovC in Canada denied all the allegations, saying that the Ambazonian defence forces were not criminals but well-schooled in 'the principles of the Geneva Convention' and that the kidnappings were carried out by Cameroonian soldiers and Atanga boys (Elvis, interview, 2021).

Ultimately, Ayaba Cho Lucas's alliance with IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu caused tensions in the relationship between the AGovC and the IG. Ambazonia and Biafra have formed an alliance, as announced at a joint press conference on 9 April 2021 by Ayaba Cho Lucas and Nnamdi Kanu, the British-Nigerian political activist and leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra(IPOB)(Ekene 2019).

Ayaba Cho Lucas's alliance with IPOB was denounced by the Acting Interim President Sako Ikome, who argued that there was no connection between the Biafran struggle and the Ambazonian struggle, and that supporting Biafra was foolish as this would anger the Nigerian government and risk the lives of thousands of anglophone refugees in that country (*Southern Examiner* 21 May 2021). AGovC experienced a rift at the beginning of 2023 when Capo Daniel, the group's deputy, departed to form his own faction. He stated that he was unable to perform his tasks as expected because of disagreements about how the organisation should operate internally(CAN 9 April 2023). Even though it appeared that Daniel and AGovC had quietly parted ways, Daniel then began to publicly challenge Lucas Cho Ayaba, and ended up declaring himself 'the new leader of the struggle for the liberation of Ambazonia'(Yves Plumey 2023).

Regarding relations with other organisations, the IG formed the Ambazonia Recognition Coalition (ARC), a nascent parliament, and the Ambazonia Security Council (ASC), which functions as a forum for collaboration between the armed militias operating within its sphere of influence, including the armed groups the Tigers and the Red Dragons. The Department of Health and Social Services, one of the ten ministerial departments, handles Cameroonian refugees in Nigeria(ICG 2019). The Ambazonia Coalition Team was formed in 2019 by organisations connected to IG-Sako and Lekeaka Oliver, also referred to as the 'field marshal of Lebialem' due to his demonstrated leadership skills as militia commander. The team includes the Southern Cameroons Defence Forces (SOCADEF) and Ebenezer Akwanga's military.

The majority of ACT diasporan members are based in the US. Among them are Kometa Elvis of the Southern Cameroons National Council and Boh Herbert, leader of the Movement for the Restoration of the Independence of Southern Cameroons(Ketzmerick 2023; Beseng et al 2023). The Southern Cameroons Congress of the People is an independent group, led by Milan Atam, the former IG secretary general. SCCOP is a broad-based revolutionary movement that has played an active role in promoting the Southern Cameroonian cause overseas, and in settling internal conflicts in the broader Ambazonian movement. Besides a television station, it has branches in Europe, America and South Africa. Just like the AGC, SCCOP is fully independent of the IG.

All this confirms that there is no cohesive separatist movement – rather, it is an increasingly disorganised assemblage of disparate factions, some of which are at odds with each other. Reports are that certain separatist organisations are growing more vicious in their attacks on members of other movements. This serves as a pretext for security forces to launch more vicious attacks against separatist organisations and individuals who are said to have hosted or housed them in their neighbourhoods. The extent to which separatist leaders in the diaspora are able to influence the armed groups operating within the Southern Cameroons is unknown. On 1 January 2024, Ayuk Tabe wrote a letter urging separatist factions to cooperate and to end the leadership dilemma. A leader of one of the Ambazonia liberation groups in South Africa stated:

> *'The diaspora is at the forefront of the present war of independence in the Southern Cameroon. The diaspora provides inspirational leadership to our boys on the ground in Cameroon, funding for humanitarian concerns and to direct the war to liberate our homeland and free our people. Some people are talking about unity unity but we can never be perfectly united. Let us focus on the goal of liberation. This is quite like what happened during the struggle against racial discrimination in South Africa'(Eben, interview, 2021).*

7.1.3 Efforts to educate 'Ambazonians' about their history

One of the strategies the Cameroonian government uses to oppress Ambazonian people is to present a distorted version of the country's past(Jua & Konings 2004). This has been accomplished by academics who, for a long time, have tried to historicise Cameroon solely with the goal of nation-building and national integration(ibid). Leaders of anglophone nationalist movements overseas have come to understand how important it is to re-evaluate anglophone history, to refute the claims spread by the government, and to inform the anglophone public about their history(Awasom 2020, 2008). They have therefore made a concerted effort to refute the narratives constructed by the regime and some academics to hide the realities, and to restore anglophone history and identity in the public domain (Achankeng 2015: 11).

According to Jua and Konings(2004), among the misleading narratives is the idea that 'Cameroon has always been one'. The regime and its supporting academics seek to downplay the colonial state's contribution to the creation of what is now known as Cameroon. For instance, Elvis Ngolle Ngolle, a well-known political scientist and former minister of Forestry and Wildlife in Cameroon, has argued that Cameroon existed as a single country prior to colonial partitioning and that, thanks to God, the country was reunified in 1961(ibid). The claim here is that colonialism was simply a disruption of pre-colonial traditions of togetherness and cordiality which defined ancestral ideals (Nkoum-Me-Ntseny 1996). Anglophones should therefore transcend historical barriers and go back to the initial

state in which everyone in Cameroon coexisted harmoniously(ibid). By contrfast, Anglophone nationalists argue that the colonial state was far more important than the (largely mythical) pre-colonial state in mapping out the historical trajectory of the post-colonial state.

Another contentious storyline is that both sides enthusiastically embraced reunification because it signified the long-awaited reunion of people who had been kept apart for years by boundaries set in place by colonial powers(Donfack 1998). Instead, anglophone nationalists have provided ample evidence that the people who lived in both territories were against the union. Jua and Konings aassert that prior to reunification, the two groups had not only experienced two entirely distinct colonial realities, but had also lived apart for longer than they had as a state (ibid). The idea of reunification, which was primarily promoted by the radical nationalist party in francophone Cameroon, the Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC), and francophone immigrants in anglophone Cameroon, was rejected by the French colonial administration and the majority of the francophone political elite(Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019; Just & Konings 2004). Nkwi (2020) contends that many anglophones eventually voted for reunion, but only after being compelled to relinquish the preferred alternative of establishing an independent state through external influences. It was not until February 1958 that the idea of unification was discussed in francophone government circles. At that time, the French High Commissioner, Jean Ramadier, had assured the territory's parliament of independence as well as the union of the two Cameroons(Jua & Konings 2004).

Furthermore, according to an American intelligence report, even on the eve of the plebiscite in anglophone Cameroon in February 1961, the political preferences of President Ahmadou Ahidjo of French Cameroon were as follows:

(i) ‘to lose in both the Southern and Northern Cameroons;

(ii) to win in the Northern Cameroons where his ethnic and religious brothers, the Fulbe Muslims, ruled – and lose in the Southern Cameroons governed by an elite with close cultural affinities with his opposition in the South western part of francophone Cameroon;

(iii) to win in the two regions, or

(iv) to win in the Southern Cameroons’ (US State Department 1961,See also Jua & Konings 2004).

This indicates that Ahidjo was less concerned with reuniting with the Southern Cameroons and more focused on building his political base.

A similar controversial narrative is that the 1961 Foumban conference was a momentous occasion at which estranged brothers agreed on a federal constitution for a reunified Cameroon. However, the conference took place at a time when the francophone majority was exploiting its greater bargaining strength in order to control negotiations and impose a kind of federation that fell far short of anglophone nationalist objectives. The lack of respect displayed by francophones for even the most fundamental 'consensus' to be reached in Foumban was painful for anglophones, and came to play a significant role in their collective identity(Jua & Konings 2004).

Diasporan groups have shared declassified material from British archives and US intelligence agencies about the history of the Southern Cameroons on their websites. This has greatly contributed to popularising the current restoration of independence narrative, which has acquired support in current Cameroonian disputes about anglophone identity. In an interview, a leader in the diaspora said:

> *'Our people have been deceived for a long time by using false historical facts to explain our identity. We are Ambazonian and have been forced to believe we are Cameroonians. We are investing our money and time to educate them about their true identity' (Jacob, interview, South Africa, 2021).*

> *'We are providing the right historical facts to our people on the purpose of this struggle, to educate them. So far it is working as many of them now know their identity as Ambazonians' (Fabrice, interview, Johannesburg, 2022).*

Anglophone scholars have provided various forms of concrete proof of the history of the Southern Cameroons. Among others, they point out that anglophone nationalists refused to acknowledge the government's designation of 20 May 1972 — the day the unitary state was established – as National Day. From the early 1990s, they remain firm in not celebrating the day, calling it a 'day of grief and humiliation' for anglophone Cameroonians(Jua & Konings 2004). They have boycotted celebrations of this day since the early 1990s, also dubbing it a day of mourning, shame and slavery(ibid). They further accuse the administration of proclaiming 11 February, the date of the plebiscite in 1961, as Youth Day, and consider the government's consistent reluctance to highlight the historical significance of this day as a deliberate attempt to rewrite the nation's history. They have urged the anglophone community to observe 11 February and 1 October as national holidays. Anglophone activists have repeatedly sought to hoist the flags of the federation, the UN, or independent

Southern Cameroons on these days, and their attempts have frequently been brutally thwarted by security personnel.

Anglophone diasporan nationalists claim that using the popular secessionist narrative to categorise or characterise supporters of Ambazonian interests is another example of misinformation about the Southern Cameroonian conflict, which they are attempting to debunk(Anyangwe 2018). While narratives can stimulate civic engagement and political action to address underlying issues that cause grievances, they can also become incendiary, and divide societies to the point where core issues are eclipsed or hidden(ibid). Since the start of the conflict in 2016, the government of Cameroon has referred to actors in the anglophone conflict as secessionists, extremists and terrorists.

It insists that there is no anglophone problem in Cameroon, and that the challenges faced by anglophones are the same problems faced by people in other regions of the country(Orock 2021). For instance, the minister of Territorial Administration, Paul Atanga Nji, and the former minister of Communication, Issa Tchiroma Bakary, have rejected the notion of an anglophone problem, with Tchiroma insisting that there were no problems that were peculiar to the anglophones in Cameroon, and stating that his province of origin was also underdeveloped and had no university(Amin 2021). The purpose of such narratives is to control public opinion and naive francophones into believing that anglophones are peace-breakers trying to destroy the union of the two Cameroons through secessionism while the government is attempting to build national unity(Awasom 2020).

Anglophone activists consider the secessionist, terrorist and extremist narratives used by the government against them as state propaganda. An Ambazonian diaspora scholar reaffirms that Ambazonians are not terrorists or secessionists but freedom fighters:

> 'The coloniser is trying hard and laboriously to pin the 'terrorism' and 'secession' labels on the people of Ambazonia because Ambazonians have marshalled their collective resources to combat French Cameroun colonialism. Those labels come from the colonizer's decades-old stock of demonizing hate speech rhetoric against Ambazonians. The reality is that it is French Cameroun that is a terrorist state in this regard. Its troops in Ambazonia are daily committing atrocities ISIS-style, including the gruesome beheading and disembowelling of people, the razing of towns to the ground, the wanton destruction of infrastructure and stocked-up food, and the shut-down of electricity and Internet. It is French Cameroun that is seeking territorial aggrandisement and thereby trying to effect territorial changes contrary to international law. It is French Cameroun that is guilty of expansionism in pursuit of its destabilizing irredentist policy' (Anyangwe 2018:4).

This interviewee stresses that the Ambazonian independence struggle is a decolonisation struggle, and not a secessionist or separatist struggle, because Ambazonia has never been part of French Cameroon, nor has there ever been any voluntary political ties between these two countries. Ambazonians distance themselves from the secessionist notion of the Cameroonian regime on the basis of UN Resolution 1608, which they claim handed independence to British Southern Cameroons, and on the basis that the 1961 UN-supervised plebiscite was a sham (Ayim 2010).

Ambazonian activists insist that their local civil self-defence groups are not terrorist organisations but freedom fighters participating in collective resistance (Ayangwe 2018: 4). Embracing a restoration ideology, many Southern Cameroonians now say they are not fighting to separate from Cameroon but to restore their statehood(Orock 2021) Respondents like Epie complained that the state's official narrative about anglophones has helped to condemn Ambazonian sympathisers and has contributed to the radicalisation and polarisation of the anglophone community:

> *'Many boys are in the bush now because francophones military officers keep calling terrorists and separatists. In Anglophone Cameroon every young man is considered to be Ambazonia sympathiser and fighter until they proof their innocence' (Epi, interview, Canada, 2022).*

Francophone respondents contend that the government's labels of secessionists and separatists applied to Ambazonian sympathisers are valid because, according to UN official documents and the approved UN-organised 1961 referendum, the Southern Cameroons was offered independence on condition of either joining or integrating with Nigeria or French Cameroon. This suggests that the sovereignty of the Southern Cameroons is only acknowledged in the light of reunification with French Cameroon, with which anglophones of the 1960s generation willingly chose to federate, and that claims of independence, based on UN Resolution 1608, were never formally endorsed by the UN or the UK, which is why they preferred to hold a referendum in 1961. As a result, anyone attempting to split the two anglophone regions from Cameroon on the grounds of self-determination, whether internally or externally, is a secessionist and a terrorist.

> *'Ambazones are terrorist and separatists because they are standing against our national unity and diversity. They are destroying this country and stopping children from going to school. They cannot blame us we did not beg them to join us in 1961'(Achille, interview, Pretoria, 2021).*

7.1.4 The advent of 'cyberspace nationalism'

Anglophone diasporans continue to contribute to the quest for self-determination through cyberspace nationalism, facilitated by the advent of globalisation and the internet, which has turned the world into a global village. Ambazonian activists comment on this as follows:

> *'We are contributing by talking about the conflict on social media. We have created a number of social media platforms to make our voices heard, and it has been very effective,, as many people now know of Ambazonian'(Eric, interview, Cape Town, 2021)*

> *'As Anglophone diaspora, the internet has been very instrumental in making our voices heard. In time past, the government of Cameroon was able to hide it brutality against Anglophones, but with the advent of the social media, what is happening in Buea, Mamfe, Mankon, Ndu, Ndop, Muyuka, Ekona and Oku can spread around the world in a matter of minutes via a click of the phone'(Remi, interview, Pretoria, 2021).*

> *'We are using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram to make Cameroon pay for their genocide on our people. We have created websites, Facebook accounts, Instagram accounts and twitter accounts just for this course. The conversation above reveals how the Anglophone diaspora community is utilizing the internet for the struggle'(Louis, interview, Nigeria, 2022).*

This process has been facilitated by the internet and the widespread use of mobile phones (Anyefru 2010). In response, the government of Cameroon cut off internet access in anglophone regions for almost 90 days (Orock 2021). Nevertheless, Anglophones in the diaspora continue to form 'virtual communities' in cyberspace to create awareness of social issues (Ketzmerick 2008). The impact of information technology on the struggles for self-determination is highlighted by Kurt Mills as follows:

> 'The most obvious impact of communications technology is that it makes possible new kinds of communities, or at least provides the possibilities for a certain level of cohesion among a dispersed community which may be necessary for any kind of self-determination movement to form and assert itself. Alongside this, it creates new centres of authority, relocating authority away from traditional authority structures like the state towards more ambiguous and fluid confluences and loci of authority. It also means that territoriality, in one sense, is not nearly as important in the creation of feelings of community. That is, dispersed communities can form and remain cohesive a lot easier with advent of telephones, the Internet, e-mail, communications satellites. One can think of many other dispersed communities and such communications capabilities might aid them in various self-determination activities, by being able to exchange information, strategize'(Kurt Mills 1995:2).

Multiple organisations and websites advocating for the independence of the Southern Cameroons are based in the UK, the US, Germany, Belgium, Canada, Nigeria, South Africa

and Norway (Nganji & Cockburn 2020). Anglophone leaders like Ayaba Chou Lucas, Chris Anu, Mark Barata, Tapang Ivo, Taka Milton and Sako Ekome usually connect and communicate with their audiences via social media, and their advocacy websites promote international support for the cause.

Inter alia, social media have enabled anglophones in the diaspora to debunk propaganda by the |Cameroonian government(Ngange & Mokondo 2019). Journalists and others voice their concerns about governmental censorship on social media(Ambe 2021). This has given citizens the opportunity to gain alternative perspectives on topical Cameroonian issues. There are 7.8 million internet users (97 per cent via mobile phones) and 3.7 million social media users in Cameroon (ibid). As of December 2017, when the conflict escalated, the most popular social media sites used by Cameroonians were Facebook (93.92 per cent), Pinterest (3.64 per cent), Twitter (1.03 per cent) and YouTube (1.14 per cent), with LinkedIn, Tumblr, Google+ and StumbleUpon at less than 1 per cent. Facebook remains the most popular vehicle,, with an estimated population of 2,1 million users (8.6 per cent of the population)(Nseke 2018). IT has thus transformed the way in which war is waged, and how it is covered and reported by the media(Dinniss 2012).

Although restoration forces are fighting physical battles in Cameroon, they are greatly influenced and directed by propaganda on social media by members of the diaspora. It remains the most effective avenue through which millions of people can be reached, despite the autocratic nature of the Cameroonian regime(Patrikarakos 2017). A tweet from an influential social media personality about the crisis changes narratives, and an account holder can circumvent government censorship to reveal real-time events (ibid). For instance, when Amba posted a Facebook presentation on the crisis in the US, it attracted more than 13 000 views, excluding those who downloaded the video to watch at home(ibid).

Anglophone activists started streaming live on Facebook following the arrest and detention of consortium leaders Agbor Balla and Dr Fontem Neba(Robert 2020). At the time, Mark Bareta and Tapang Ivo also assumed leadership of the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium from abroad(Cochrane & Afungang 2019). Like their precedessors, they issued media release but soon realise that audio clips and daily Facebook briefings were far more effective as they attracted 3 000 to 4 000 participants per session(Ambe 2021). Eric Tataw and other activists have also joined Facebook. In addition, the Southern Cameroons Broadcasting Corporation (SCBC), which is based in Johannesburg, South Africa, has more than 53,000 subscribers (ibid). Thousands of Facebook profiles have been created in solidarity with Ambazonian heroes like Field Marshal, General Ivo and other leaders who were sentenced to life imprisonment(Nounkeu 2020).

Twitter is also effective in communicating the plight of anglophone Cameroonians in the international community(Lee et al 2021). Through Twitter handles, information is shared with heads of state, diplomates, senators, representatives, and other political leaders across the world. For instance, on 21 October 2020, the Cameroon web platform Poise Social created the hashtag #MyAnglophoneCrisisStory to encourage Cameroonians to 'tell your story' about the crisis, and it rapidly attracted hundreds of contributions. For example, the journalists and publisher Mark Bareta has posted the following on his Twitter (now X) account:

> 'Cameroun Journalist Sebastien Ebala has revealed that Cameroun Ministry of Defense has a killer squad that tortures/chopped the bodies of 'Anglophones' in Yaoundé. Sebastien witnessed a scene where two 'Anglophones' had their bones/heads broken/packed in bags in 2020. This revelation from a Cameroun journalist is not strange. Cameroun continues to carry out untold barbaric actions on our people under the watchful eyes of the international community. Observe as u will see no outcry from the very 'Anglophone media'/so-called human rights activists. How can anyone in their right sense ask us to live with these animals? How could anyone ask our people to drop their guns? How could anyone read this and not increase their contributions to the struggle? How could the world close its eyes to Biya's war in Ambazonia?'(Bareta on X 2022:1).

This tweet effectively calls upon Southern Cameroonians not to drop their guns but to keep fighting for their independence. The success or impact of these efforts cannot really be measured, as most of the targeted personalities such as diplomats mount pressure on the Cameroonian regime behind closed doors(ibid). However, it has helped to create awareness of the conflict. Twitter activists report that they have received positive feedback from dignitaries in the US and Europe as well as fellow comrades(Ambe 2021). As one interviewee stated:

> *'We have been receiving positive response from the people we contact on social media, especially through Twitter. Twitter is very important to us because it is a platform for leaders and dignitaries across the globe. Though these responses have been covert, they are useful for our cause'(Eben, interview, US, 2022).*

As noted previously, YouTube is extremely popular as videos can be viewed online without downloading them(Budji 2020). Videos related to liberation can also be viewed on pressure group websites like the Ambazonia government(Bih 2019). Many Ambazonians in the diaspora have appeared on television and international media (Ngange et al 2019). Youtube videos include those by leaders like Dr Sako Ekome, Ayaba Chou, Sisiku Ayuktabe, Carlson Ayangwe, Dr Christopher Fomunyuy and Taka Milton, as well as the Oxford investigative team on the anglophone conflict led by Dr Roxana Willis(Wantaah 2018).

More recently, the anglophone diaspora has also begun to use WhatsApp to distribute propaganda and to reach people on the ground in Cameroon(Agwanda et al 2020). People are often added to WhatsApp groups involuntarily. Discussions on the revolution are given priority, and audio and video messages including photographs of corpses are shared and available for sharing. People with contrary opinions are usually blocked or removed in case arguments and insults ensue. Each day, hundreds of messages, photographs, and videos are shared in these groups, which help to create awareness and help those on the ground to keep track of events, both internally as well as in the diaspora.

Prominent websites include the Ambazonia Genocide Library (www.ambazoniagenocidelibrary.com), which archives videos and images of human rights abuses, extrajudicial killings, rapes, maiming, summary executions, barbaric acts of Cameroon soldiers, and acts of arson in anglophone communities. It also contains records of activists or fighters who have lost their lives, citing the specific places and circumstances surrounding their deaths. Most pictures and videos on this blog are classified as graphic and cannot be posted on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

The Ambazonian government maintains an official website (www.ambazonia.org), and runs two television stations which are aired 24/7 and have their own websites -- the Southern Cameroons Broadcasting Corporation (www.scbctv.com) and the Ambazonia Broadcasting Corporation (www.scbctv.com). The University of Toronto maintains a website that serves as an archive of the atrocities in the Southern Cameroonian conflict (Utoronto.ca). According to this database, war crimes are committed on both sides, which could be used at the end of the conflict to hold their perpetrators accountable. The activist, journalist and publisher Mark Bareta mainains his own blog (www/.bareta.news). These and other sites display the Ambazonian flag, map, coat of arms, passport, and documents about the history of the territory(Doho 2020). They engage in ideological and strategic warfare, and sometimes practice ‘gatekeeping’ by removing subscribers with alternative views or those who challenge them. One of the most successful activities has been the posting of declassified documents from the British government archives, which provide evidence of the alleged British betrayal of the Southern Cameroons in the pre-reunification era. It should be noted that promoting Anglophone identity in cyberspace is not new, as it started in the 1990s(Anyefru 2010; Jua &Konings 2004).

Social media has its problems and drawbacks, since anyone can create an account and post any information or advance any ideology for consumption by the public. Much fake news is circulated on the internet, mostly from fake accounts(Nounkeu 2020). Using fake profiles, the government has also been able to post contradictory information on social media platforms(Agwanda et al 2020). The government of Cameroon even invited a Facebook

representative to visit it, and as a result Facebook began to censor activist accounts(Ambe 2021b). Messages or videos that depict atrocities by government agents are taken down, and the account owner receives a warning. After several warnings, the account is taken down.

Some of these account holders have been arrested and executed or have had their properties burnt down. Besides external enemies, there have also been a lot of infighting between activists, and in some cases armed men have been sent to kill opponents (ibid). Apart from the creation of fake Facebook profiles, francophones have also been hired to present alternative views on the Ambazonian conflict. Anglophone youths in the diaspora, notably in the US, have underscored the importance of the internet and are using it to move the struggle forward(Jules Roger 2018).

7.1.5 Diasporan use of the legal space, including litigation

Litigation is a vital strategy for protecting the rights and expanding the power of subordinated groups, particularly when other channels of influence are unavailable. Groups complaining about marginalisation or problems of collective action may turn to courts as they struggle for social justice(Cummings & Rhode 2009: 603). Public interest litigation offers a ladder to justice for disadvantaged sections of society, provides an avenue to enforce diffused or collective rights, and enables civil society members to not only spread awareness about human rights but also to participate in government decision-making(Deva 2009:19). Public interest litigation can promote good governance by keeping governments accountable. The public interest law movement that rose to prominence in the 1960s and 1970s advanced the idea of court-centered social change drawing on models of civil rights and civil liberty campaigns in the US and across the globe(Cummings 2018).

In line with this, Anglophone Cameroonians have been exploring public interest litigation as a means of asserting their rights to self-determination(Orock 2021:14). According to Willis et al(2019:14-15), an important body of scholarship has documented the efforts of anglophone nationalists in the diaspora to draw international attention to their plight through jurisprudence. For many years, Ndeh Ntumazah attempted to make the international community open its eyes to the plight of anglophone Cameroonians(Doh 2014), and the human rights activist Albert Mukong dedicated their lives to challenging the marginalisation and mistreatment of southern Cameroonians(Jumbam 2018; Tanjong 2014; Mukong 1991). Since the anglophone struggle has yet to gain formal international recognition, anglophone nationalists have not been able to present their case before international courts(Jua & Konings 2004:12; Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019:22). Several attempts to sue Britain in British courts for its role during the decolonisation process have been unsuccessfull (Anyefru 2010).

However, the decision in 1994 of the Nigerian and Cameroonian governments to defer their dispute over the oil-rich peninsula of Bakassi to the International Court of Justice for adjudication offered anglophone nationalists an opportunity to access legal space. They claimed that Bakassi was neither part of Cameroon nor of Nigeria, but belonged to the Southern Cameroons(Konings 2005; Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019). In 2001, the former provisional government of British Southern Cameroons created a new body, the Southern Cameroons People's Organisation (SCAPO), for the specific purpose of pursuing the ideal of self-determination and independence from *La Republique du Cameroun* by legal means (Konings 2009; Jua & Konings 2004: 624).

Led by the SCNC chairman and chancellor of the provisional administration, Dr Martin Luma and Dr Kevin Gumne respectively, SCAPO applied in the Nigerian High Court for an interdict restraining the Nigerian government from treating or continuing to treat or regard the Southern Cameroons or the people of that territory as an integral part of *La République du Cameroun*(Jua & Konings 2004). SCAPO had two main grounds for its court action. First, Southern Cameroons had been administered by Britain as an integral part of Nigeria. Consequently, Nigeria should be regarded as a co-conspirator with Britain in the process that led to the annexation of the Southern Cameroons by *La République du Cameroun.* Second, Nigeria had ratified the OAU Charter of Human Rights which recognised the right of all colonised or oppressed people to free themselves from the bonds of domination by resorting to any means recognised by the international community(ibid).

In March 2002, SCAPO scored a landmark victory when the Federal High Court of Nigeria ruled that 'the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be compelled to place before the ICJ and the UN General Assembly and ensure diligent prosecution to conclusion the claims of the peoples of Southern Cameroons to self-determination and their declaration of independence'(Anyefru 2010). It also placed a perpetual injunction on the Federal Republic of Nigeria, restraining it from treating the Southern Cameroons and all the peoples of the territory as an integral part of the Republic of Cameroon. This ruling gave a degree of international recognition to the anglophone struggle for independence(Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019:22).

Other examples include the cases of Ebenezer Akwanga, Ambassador Henry Fossung, Fongum Gorji-Dinka, and Sisiku Ayuk Tabe. However, some interviewees criticised public interest litigation, saying it does not work and has not yielded any satisfactory results. As one interviewee stated:

'For many years we have been pursuing legal solutions to what Anglophones are going through in Cameroon. Gorji Dinka started with the Bamenda High Court where he won,

then later Abuja judgement by members of the SCAPO till now much has not been achieved in that domain. It just ended with court judgements and injunctions which Cameroon government has refused to obey'(Stephen, interview, US, 2022).

The assertion here is that independence is hardly won through court judgements, rules or verdicts. It still comes back to the conclusion that independence or sovereign statehood is acquired not given. Therefore, if Ambazonians really want sovereignty from Cameroon they have to do more than pursuing legal solutions to a problem that requires more than a court decision.

Others have criticised public interest ligation on the grounds that it drains scarce resources, creates confusion between 'symbolic' and' substantive' victories, and co-opts potential movement leaders by paying them off with monetary awards(Scheingold 2010; Guarnieri 1974). For some, collective political struggle is the only effective way to challenge structural inequality. They argue that, when strategically deployed, lawsuits can destabilise entrenched institutional structures and subject them to greater accountability(ibid). Michael McCann(2004: 509) argues for a constitutive understanding of the role of law in social transformation. His approach moves beyond a causal analysis of the relationship between court decisions and social outcomes, and instead traces the complex processes by which law shapes social meaning and informs individual and collective actions. For instance, a lawsuit that receives widespread attention may raise public consciousness and stimulate movement activity by revealing the vulnerability of structural arrangements that once seemed impervious to change(ibid). Even lawsuits that are unsuccessful in the courts may generate public outrage that spurs political action. Judicial decisions are therefore not simply legal decrees, but also social signals channelled into collective movements(Galanter 1983). Similarly, legal action may allow activists to leverage gains by putting specific issues on the public agenda and threatening to impose litigation costs if decision-makers fail to find political solutions(Cummings & Rhode 2009: 603). In summary:

> 'Litigation is a political tool that, when used strategically, can stimulate meaningful change and complement other political efforts; whether litigation 'works' or not must be judged in relation to available alternatives; and in order to evaluate the social change potential of litigation in a given circumstance, it is necessary to examine the conditions political, economic, cultural, and organizational within which a lawsuit operates'(ibid: 609).

Litigation has played an important role in raising local and worldwide awareness about the predicament of the people in Southern Cameroons. Secondly, such litigations have served to bolster activists' confidence that there will be a push on the Cameroon government to solve the matter, especially if Ambazonians continue to emphasise the fact that significant

human rights violations are occurring in Ambazonia. This may result in international support for a breakup based on the Buchanan remedial right to secede.

7.1.6 The diaspora and the funding of the independence campaign

Anglophones in the diaspora are the principal funders of self-defence militias, humanitarian efforts, and public interest litigation for Ambazonian prisoners in Cameroon. Interviewees affirmed this role as follows:

> *'We are sacrificing a lot to fund the revolution knowing without money our boys on ground zero, refugees in Nigeria and IDPs in Cameroon will suffer'(Cyprene, South Africa, September 2021).*

> *'Finances are very instrumental in a war, and in our case the diaspora stand in a better position to support our quest for self-determination. Coming against a regime like Cameroon that has taxpayers' money at their disposal, the diaspora well understands the need of their role in funding the self-determination conflict'(Tony, US, November 2022).*

The diaspora has thus played a major role in supporting self-defence units, providing humanitarian aid to refugees in Nigeria and internally displaced people in Cameroon, and meeting the legal fees of imprisoned leaders and activists(Orock 2021). In its initial statement on the deployment of the Ambazonian Defence Force (ADF) in the Southern Cameroons, the Ambazsonian Governing Council (AGC) called on the anglophone diaspora to provide financial support for the revolution (CISAC n.d.). It has also started online crowdfunding campaigns. There are increasing efforts to obtain firearms for those willing to fight the Cameroonian government(Freudenthal 2018), and some activists have launched fundraising campaigns specifically for procuring Kalashnikov assault rifles and other firearms. Some of the specific strategies used by diaspora movements to raise funds for the struggle are examined below.

7.1.6.1 The leveraging of natural resources

A specific strategy for raising funds for the independence campaign is to leverage natural resources in the Southern Cameroons(Finance 2018). Following many years of economic exploitation by the francophone-dominated regime without any visible economic development, the anglophone diasporan leadership is now using the same resources for the liberation of the Southern Cameroons(Willis et al 2019). As noted previously, the two regions of Cameroon (Northwest and Southwest) that make up the Southern Cameroons (Ambazonia) are richly endowed with natural resources, fertile soils and climates that encourage agricultural activities such as banana, rubber, tea, and palm oil plantations(ibid). This has made the regions strategic to the Cameroonian government as well as the separatist

movement. The Southern Cameroons generate about 65 per cent of Cameroon's GNP(Muh et al 2018). This has made Southern Cameroons (Ambazonia) the economic backbone of the state of Cameroon, and Ambazonian leaders abroad argue that a sovereign Ambazonia means the right to extract and use these resources for the benefit of the people.

Most secessionist struggles in Africa are linked to the presence of natural resources(Collier & Hoeffler 2012; Wegenast & Basedau 2014). Research for this study confirms that the availability of natural resources in the Southern Cameroons is a major driving force in the struggle for an independent Ambazonia. In 2019, the IG created Ambazonia Freedom Bonds yielding an annual interest of 15 per cent, payable upon the achievement of Ambazonian independence(Federal Republic of Tanzania n.d.). According to the IG, the funds raised are utilised for the de-annexation and economic recovery of Ambazonia(ibid). This is an innovative strategy in that, while the IG is currently unable to utilise the territory's natural resources, it will be able to do so after independence, among others to repay these investors.

Vital resource-rich areas include Kupe Muanenguba county, endowed with dense equatorial forest, much of which is still untouched, as well as Mount Kupe, Etam, Ekanjo Banjo-Epen and the Mbayand Mbo forest, which are already protected areas (ERUDEF n.d.; Federal Republic of Ambazonia n.d.). Although timber in these forests have been intensively exploited by logging companies linked to the French-dominated government, the Kupe Muanenguba county is still valuable as it still has huge timber exploitation potential(Fru 2022). According to the IG, the Southern Cameroons harbours the largest forests in Central West Africa. This not accurate and the reality is that Cameroon's most forested regions are the South, East, and Littoral, with the two Anglophone regions ranking lower . Nonetheless, the Korup Park in Ndian, covering an area of 1 260 square kiliometres, is made up of mostly pristine forest and is one of the oldest and richest African rain forests in terms of flora and fauna diversity, attracting more than 100 000 tourists to Ndian a year(ibid).

The Southwest Region has one of the largest oil deposits in the Gulf of Guinea and has been exploited by a gas company known by its French acronym SONARA(Ekah 2020). Established in 1973, and operationalised in 1981, SONARA manufactures the following petroleum products: butane, gasoline, jet fuel, kerosene, fuel oil, distillate, and fuel oil (SONARA 2021). The Limbe refinery has a theoretical capacity of 2 100 000 tons a year (ibid). Petroleum accounted for more than 50 percent of the country's total exports in 2019 (Ordway et al 2019: 114). The Ambazonian leadership has also used the presence of oil as leverage for foreign funding in exchange for exploration rights and business deals in a future independent state of Ambazonia. According to Sahara Reporters(2015), a Canadian private company, Kilimanjaro Capital, and a clandestine separatist group reached such an agreement in a secret meeting on 1 November 2012:

> 'According to a statement by Kilimanjaro Capital Ltd, Kilimanjaro Capital Ltd is pleased to announce that on 1 November 2012, it signed a formal Oil and Mineral Right Assignment with the Government of Southern Cameroons. Their region contains known petroleum reserves'(ibid:1).

The agreement grants exclusive rights to an area of about 43 000 square kilometres(Ngoh 2019). In 2013, the CEO of Kilimanjaro Capital, Rashid Zulfikar, appointed Ebenezer Akwanga (a long-standing Ambazonian activist in the diaspora) as a member of the advisory board of the company(Ekah 2020). Ebenezer Akwanga is the leader of the African People's Liberation Movement(APLM), which advocates the independence of Ambazonia, and also commands the armed wing of the Southern Cameroons Defence Forces(SOCADEF), a militia operating in the Southwest Region(ibid). Moreover, the IG has created funding websites calling for compulsory independence dues (CID) from members of the Southern Cameroonian diaspora(Sunjo 2020).

7.1.6.2 My Trip to Buea funding

Another resource mobilisation strategy used by the Ambazonian diaspora is MyTripToBuea (MTTB), a fundraising programme launched by Dr Samuel Sako Ikome in 2018 (Budi 2021). On the day of the launch, the acting president of the IG declared:

> 'Fellow Ambazonians: the journey to freedom is very bumpy, and the challenges are enormous. Although the world ignores our plight, we must fight on like one man. Our resolve is unshakable. Support OurTripToBuea and end the revolution sooner rather than later' (Solowayne 2019:1).

There are various reports on exactly how much was raised through the MTTB scheme (McAllister 2018; Strick 2018). Ambazonians contributed about US$800 000 to the MTTB fund for humanitarian purposes. Other sources like Cameroon News Mail is estimated to have collected more than US$1.3 million dollars for MTTB, to be used for self-defence (change.org 2020). Unfortunately, the funds have not been used for the originally intended purposes, since refugees, IDPs and prisoners have hardly received a dollar (ibid). Evidence from bank transactions and receipts from whistle-blowers show that the funds have been diverted and recklessly spent for private purposes completely unrelated to the objectives of the campaign (Agbaw-Soter 2019). However, Sako has denied all the allegations of embezzlement and the misappropriation of funds. In a speech on 10 February 2019, he declared:

> 'Dear comrades of the revolution, we need to do more! Why do you allow yourself to be discouraged by baseless events? Why do you tell yourself a lie and believe in it. Why do you ignorantly assume that someone in the heart of this war has collected more than 700 000 US Dollars for MTTB and dumped it on some individual somewhere? Maybe you need to

> know how costly it could be to prosecute a war. Our enemy is versatile with an estimated capacity of at least 30 000 trained armed terrorist soldiers, and with a budget of over 250 million US dollars for their wars. More than 50 percent of this amount has currently been allocated for the war they declared against us with the pretext of safeguarding peace in the territory. They have vowed to 'neutralize' us ... in the words of Chief Terrorist Dictator Biya. That's why we have more than 10 000 of their terrorist soldiers scattered all over our territory'(Acting President Address to the Nation 2019:6).

In the same speech, Sako claimed that the IG had spent more than US$100 000 in Cameroon and in Nigeria on the legal fight for the release of Sisiku and other Ambazonian war prisoners, and that this effort would continue(ibid). In sum, the Ambazonian leadership continues to deny any misappropriation of funds.

7.1.6.3 The Amba War Draft

Dr Sako Ikome's resource mobilisation manager, Irene Ngwa, then launched another project known as the Amba War Draft (AWARD) and pledged to right the wrongs of the MyTripToBuea crowd funding initiative(Fru 2022). The Amba War Draft is an initiative involving all 13 counties of the Federal Republic of Ambazonia and aimed at adequately funding all legitimate community groups fighting for Ambazonia's independence. More specifically, it is aimed at engaging Ambazonian indigenes at home and abroad to make financial donations or commitments to upgrade self-defence weapons.

The ICG has estimated that there are somewhere between 2 000 and 4 000 fighters attempting to take Ambazonia from concept to reality(Fru 2022). However, separatist leaders claim that there are far more people who have taken up the fight, and an even greater number willing to do so. The availability of financial resources to militia who are willing to join the struggle for independence has greatly assisted in recruiting new separatist fighters (Ketzmerick 2023). To curb corruption, the Amba Peace Plan was launched to allow people to 'own' the revolution through active participation, directly supporting their local government areas through elected LGA administrators and bringing accountability and responsiveness closer to the people. All local government area contributions go to 'Ground Zero', a reference to the domestic Cameroonian areas engaged in or affected by the conflict. Another important instrument is the Amba Peace Plan, which is aimed at 'building a large, committed society through the reorganisation of Ambazonians in the diaspora and at ground zero'.

The IG's website offers other online options for donations to the cause of liberation. The Compulsory Independence Due is a monthly contribution to support essential administrative and diplomatic activities. The Ambazonia Restoration Fee is a monthly payment of $50 or $100 represents a 'patriotic and charitable commitment to defending, restoring, and

protecting the motherland'(Federal Republic of Ambazonia n.d.) The Ambazonia Communication Tariff is a monthly subscription of $10, $25, or $50 designed to reinforce communications with Ground Zero and to promote international awareness of the Ambazonian conflict. One-time donations are also an option. This is a payment in support of other project-based community initiatives, and donors have to submit the project name in a 'purpose of the donation' box(ibid).

The IG has also created an official Ambazonian cryptocurrency known as AmbaCoin, supported by the vast natural riches of Ambazonia(Amindeh Blaise Atabong 2018). The AmbaCoin was established in 2018, and the Ambazonian government claims that all proceeds go to their independence movement and humanitarian help(Finnan 2019). It cannot be relied on as an official currency because many Ambazonians lack internet connections, have limited online literacy, and lack adequate electricity supplies. As a result, if and when independence is achieved, the IG intends to introduce a new curreny for everyday transactions and business-related matters(Aljazeerah 2018).

On 15 April 2023, the IG announced a new Accountability and Action (AA) policy aimed at ensuring the 'accountable management of financial resources'. It stated that:

The AA policy is one of the main binding policies to ensure accountability in the management of financial resources, with the objective of stabilising the financial management of the liberation struggle and fast-tracking the liberation of [sic] homeland.

This policy is adapted based on the need to increase financial availability required to reinvigorate and maintain firepower in Ground Zero (GC) as well as to pre-emptively close all loopholes for embezzlement, misappropriation or siphoning of funds meant for the prosecution of the liberation struggle by diaspora leadership or officials of any Ambazonian institutions or entities.

It went on to say that 90 per cent of donations would be allocated to 'ground fighters' in Cameroon, 10 per cent to refugees, and none to leaders in the diaspora(Federal Republic of Amazonia n.d.) This spoke to the notion that leaders in the diaspora should volunteer their services at no charge.

7.1.6.4 Kidnapping for ransom

As noted previously, separatists also generate funds from kidnapping citizens and central government officials. They target civilians from well-to-do families and as well as influential officials and demand ransoms for their release(Ilaria Allegrozzi 2021). The opportunity to generate funds from extortion has made the insurgence war desirable for

many Ambazonian separatists, since they see it as a source of income which is not available to them in times of peace(Sunjo 2020). The Ambazonian Defence Forces (ADF) have often been accused of using kidnapping and ransom in order to raise funds (Oxford Analytica 2022). This tactic has led to a public breach with the IG. In April 2018, for instance, a minister in the IG issued a public statement condemning the leader of the Ambazonia Governing Council(AgovC), Lucas Ayaba Cho, for the kidnapping and disappearance of the Cameroonian government official Animbom Aaron Ankiambom. An interviewee for this study commented as follows:

> *'We do not condone the kidnapping of civilians for whatever reason, but I must be sincere that even the kidnapping for ransom that everyone is condemning has been profitable in sustaining our boys on ground zero. It provides the much-needed funds to keep the revolution going. It also helps the boys not to depend on the diaspora'(Albert, interview, US, January 2021).*

While Ambazonian leaders abroad vehemently condemn kidnappings, especially for ransom, they have also acknowledged that the Amba Boys sometimes do it out of desperation. Although unacceptable, it has become a source of funding for self-defence militias who also use extortion and taxes to make ends meet(ICG 2019). Some Ambazonian leaders claim that the Amba Boys are not members of self-defence groups but criminals who use the struggle as an opportunity to make money. This increase in kidnapping can also be attributed to the breakdown of law and order in Ambazonia(Sunjo 2020).

7.1.7 Humanitarian efforts by the diaspora

Much of the contributions by the diaspora has been seen as a humanitarian effort to support refugees, internally displaced persons and prisoners of conscience.

> *'We are sending support to the Ayah Foundation for humanitarian support to IDP and refugees in Nigeria. We also take care of the medical bills of wounded anglophones'(Eben, interview, South Africa, December 2021).*

> *'We provide assistance to women that have lost their husbands and are displaced in the conflict. We also assist private teachers that have no salaries due to closures of schools' (Henry, South Africa, May 2022).*

The conflict in the Southern Cameroons is a humanitarian crisis of great concern(Robert 2020). More than half a million people have been displaced in the Northwest and Southwest Regions(ibid), representing more than 10 percent of the population. As the infographic shows, attacks on villages have steadily increased since 2017(Reliefweb 2019). Cameroon now has the sixth largest displaced population in the world. Many people are fleeing

violence because of raids on villages and surrounding areas. Men, women, and children have found refuge in forests where they lack hygiene, health services, sanitation, shelter and food. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported in January 2019 that 1.3 million people needed humanitarian assistance(ibid). I 2019, the Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa reported that military and security operations by the central government had resulted in attacks on 206 villages, of which 134 were destroyed or badly damaged(ibid).

These attacks are the single largest cause of the population displacements. About 60 000 Cameroonians are refugees in Nigeria. This figure includes only those who have been registered by the United Nations. According to Ambe(2021), security forces and non-state armed groups are reported to have committed crimes of sexual assault, rape, sexual exploitation, public humiliation and torture against vulnerable women and children. There have been multiple reports of severe deprivations of liberty, torture, overcrowded and unsanitary conditions, arbitrary and incommunicado detentions and disappearances, and trials of civilians before military tribunals(Nanche Billa 2020).

In a speech in 2017, Dr Samuel Ekome Sako, acting president of Ambazonia, declared:

> *'Let me give you the statistics: 500 of our villages have been burnt down, I'm not talking about those villages now that have been abandoned since 2017, I mean burnt down to ashes, it's happening right now as we speak,' he said. 120,000 of our people are in Nigeria as refugees right now, and some are in Ghana, more than 2,000, and in other countries. Some of them have been able to cross the Mediterranean, we don't know where they are, in Cyprus, Mexico, many are dying in the process. About 1.5 million of our people are hiding somewhere in the French Cameroon and about 10,000 of our people have disappeared. We don't know, it is likely they have been killed by the French Cameroon thugs and buried in mass graves. We have had many massacres and any time we have these massacres there will be outcry here and there, few human rights organisations will say something, because these French Cameroon and their French masters are spending so much money to lobby in the continent, the US, everywhere. We have had several massacres. They have burnt down more than 100 of our people in houses, in the process of burning the houses they burn our own people in there. Our lives don't matter to these people'(quoted in Ezeamalu 2021a:1).*

Another organisation founded by English-speaking Cameroonians living abroad is the Cameroon Humanitarian Relief Initiative (CHRI), which works with regional non-profit and religious organisations in the two English-speaking regions to provide life-saving supplies like food, water, shelter, and medical care(Orock 2022:12). A worldwide humanitarian fundraising effort was announced in March 2023 by the Southern Cameroons National

Council in the United Kingdom to assist the victims of the war in British Southern Cameroons (Ketzmerick, 2023). The media release appears in Figure 36.

Figure 33: Announcement of global humanitarian fundraising event in support of war victims in British Southern Cameroons

SOUTHERN CAMEROONS NATIONAL COUNCIL – UK (SCNC UK)
"The Force of Argument, Not the Argument of Force"
Our Ref: 00SCNCUK/2023
Tel: +44 7538 520552
Email: support@scnc-uk.com

March 28th, 2023

Press Release: Global Humanitarian Fundraising Event

The Southern Cameroons National Council United Kingdom (SCNC-UK) is announcing a global humanitarian fundraising event to support the victims (IDPs, refugees in Nigeria and other neighbouring countries, prisoners of conscience) of the war in British Southern Cameroons.

The event, scheduled for the **24th of June 2023** at **17:00**, aims to raise funds to provide food, shelter, and medical assistance to those affected by the ongoing conflict.

The war in the British Southern Cameroons has been ongoing for years and has resulted in the displacement of thousands of people, many of whom are women and children.

It's important to note that this event will not have anything to do with politics. We are solely focused on raising funds to help those affected by the conflict regardless of their political beliefs or affiliations. Our aim is to come together as a global community and support those who are in dire need of our help.

We invite everyone around the world to join us in supporting this important cause. Together, we can make a difference and help alleviate the suffering of those affected by the war in the British Southern Cameroons.

For more information about the event and how you can contribute, please visit our website https://scnc-uk.com/

For and on behalf of the SCNC-UK

Robert Miki Tamanji
Chairman
SCNC-UK

Website: www.scnc-uk.com
Address: 13 Clifford Road, Canning Town
E16 4JW

Source: SCNC UK

According to Tataw (2020), Ambazonians in the diaspora have contributed at least US$800 000 to the MyTripToBuea fund. Another NGO that receives financial contributions from the diaspora intended for humanitarian relief is the Ayah Foundation, which provides food, health care, clothing and in some cases housing to internally displaced persons(Mimi Mefo Info 2020). In 2021, Dr Chris Fomunyoh, through the Fomunyoh Foundation, distributed food items to refugee camps and rural areas as well as major cities including Calabar, Oban, Akor Adagom I and III, Okende, Ajasor, Basua in Cross River, Ikyogen in Benue, and Abuja (Uchechukwu 2021).

Women in the diaspora have created projects to assist teachers who were laid off due to the shutdown of schools(Ambe 2021:18). A project known as Shield My Family is a movement formed by six Ambazonian diaspora women to raise awareness of the crisis in the Southern Cameroons(ibid). Women have also organised fundraising conferences for humanitarian purposes, and about US$8 000 was raised when the Southern Cameroons Women Movement (SCWM) was formed (ibid). Through the SCWM, funds were used to purchase reusable pads from China which were distributed to internally displaced persons through the Ayah Foundation. Fundraising has also been organised for prisoners in the Kondegui prison, followed by $4 000 to feed victims of war(ibid).

The medical organisation Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has assisted with humanitarian efforts, though it was forced to withdraw its teams from the Northwest Region after months of suspension by government authorities (Masias 2021). Cameroonian authorities accused the aid group of helping separatist groups in the Northwest Region, a charge it has strongly denied (ibid). MSF provided free emergency medical care and ambulance services in the Northwest Region from 2018 until December 2020, when their activities were suspended by Cameroonian authorities.

It has been challenging to reach out to victims of the conflict through humanitarian efforts, first, because of the terror that prevails throughout the region. Aid workers have been kidnapped by the Amba Boys (the independentist armed groups) while trying to reach victims of war in the forests. Some have been killed when caught in crossfires between rebels and government forces, and others kidnapped for ransom(ibid).

7.1.8 The use of diplomacy

The anglophone diaspora has made active use of diplomacy in order to advance the Ambazonian cause. An interviewee stated:

> *'We have done a lot in diplomacy, Siseku Ayuk Tabe designed the Southern Cameroon Ambazonia Consortium United Front (SCACUF) structure from the conclave and created an office in Ethiopia for diplomatic relations led by Barrister Eyambe Eliase. He also oversaw relations with the African Union. We are pushing for Resolution 604 and we also have the Foley Holt law firm that was hired to push for diplomacy, Siseku had access to the Trump administration. There has been engagement with the South African Department of International Relations and with its political leadership' (Eldine, South Africa, 2022)*

According to Akoh(2020), many conferences on the Ambazonian conflict and its humanitarian consequences have been held in Johannesburg and New York. As noted previously, many diasporan organisation regard the raising of international awareness as a major goal, and lobbying western diplomats and politicians has been a priority(Akokh 2020). An interviewee in charge of the Johannesburg-based Sam Soya Centre for Human Rights and Democracy said:

> *'The 'Release Them' campaign for Ambazonian prisoners of conscience is ongoing. Ambazonian activists use the deplorable humanitarian crisis at Ground Zero to draw empathy and push the right diplomatic doors. The Sam Soya Centre for Democracy and Human Rights under theme 'Stop Cameroon Violations' has been working with the University of Pretoria to raise awareness about human rights abuses in Ambazonia. The church in South Africa is also on board, and Human Rights Watch and other pressure groups are working, especially when Human Right Watch comes up with negative reports about the situation in the Southern Cameroons.*
>
> *In Europe, Ambazonians have access to the UN's Human Rights Council, and Sisiku [Ayuk Tabe] has visited the Lower House in the UK. They have had meetings with country representatives and with governing and opposition parties in South Africa and other countries. They have also appointed diplomatic heads in different countries. They have been knocking on the doors of the AU, the UN, and the Pan African Parliament'(Patrick, UK, May 2022).*

The Ambazonia International Policy Commission (AIPC) led by Dr Bernadette Ateghang uses systematic and targeted diplomacy to advance the Ambazonian cause(Gi3C 2019). Over the past five years, Dr Ateghang has participated actively in human rights bodies in Geneva to raise awareness of the conflict. She is also a founding member and vice-chair of the Southern Cameroons Congress of the People(SCCOP) and has served as secretary for strategy and coordination in the Southern Cameroons Governing Council and as director of

protocol and international relations in the presidency of the IG. Dr Ateghang has been on diplomatic missions to the UN in Geneva, the EU and the AU(UK Home Office 2020).

In his end of year message in 2018, Dr Samuel Sako said the revolution had scored more goals than ever before, especially in terms of international involvement. He cited the efforts of the US, the UN Security Council, the UK, Canada and other countries as well as their parliaments that have petitioned their governments to intervene and save lives(CNA 2018). Among others, they were able to convince the Confederation of African Football (CAF) not to grant Cameroon the rights to host the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) (*The Guardian* 2019). In 2021, Dr Sako expressed his gratitude to all Ambazonians for their diplomatic efforts, be it through social media or letters to organisations, politicians or heads of state. He continued:

> 'We salute the clear position taken by the US Government to cut US$17 million in military aid to the terrorist nation of La Republic du Cameroon. We urge the EU Countries, UK and Commonwealth countries, Russia, and China to follow suit. We will continue to persuade the international community to consider applying targeted economic sanctions against the perpetrators of the genocide and war crimes in our country. We will continue to call on the United Nations to send a Peace Keeping Mission to our country to impose a cease fire and pave the way for negotiations without preconditions. We want to warn any country sending their soldiers to help Paul Biya in his efforts to annihilate our people to know that Ambazonia will consider any gifts to LRC at this time as an act of war against Ambazonia'(CNN 2019:1).

Despite all these efforts, Ambazonia has not been internationally recognised, except by Camara de Barueri, a community located on the south-eastern side of Brazil. Among others, Ambazonians have met with British Members of Parliament to try to persuade them to recognise Ambazonia and support the independence of former British Southern Cameroons (see Figure 37).

Figure 34: Members of SCNC UK meet with members of the British House of Commons

Source: SCNC-UK

Most superpowers have focused on a call for the Cameroonian government to desist from human rights abuses and to address the conflict through inclusive dialogue(Kewir et al 2021). Based on a US Department of State's 2017 Country Report on Human Rights Practices, Cameroonian military are liable for extrajudicial executions, abductions, assault, violations of the right to free speech, and wrongful detentions in harsh prison conditions (Willis et al 2019). The Cameroonian Army was officially accused by the US in 2018 of conducting targeted killings(Eluke 2020). The US Department of State released a statement in November 2018 demanding that all conflict parties desist from attacks on civilian targets after an American missionary Charles Wesco was killed in Bamenda(Keke 2020).

The US equally denounced the "systematic intimidation based on ethno-religious affiliation" that is practiced in Cameroon(ibid). Due to Cameroon's poor human rights record, the US revoked Cameroon's invitation to the State Partnership Program known as the American Growth and Opportunity Act in February 2019 and cut military funding to the country to the value for $17 million(Eluke 2020).Thomas Waldhauser, the US Africa Command, leader said that President Biya's lack of transparency in the investigations into government soldiers' abuses of human rights might seriously affect their capacity to assist Cameroon in its counterterrorism efforts(O'Grady 2019). In March 2019, US Secretary of State for African Affairs Tibor P. Nagy urged the Cameroonian government to take more serious steps into addressing the anglophone conflict by giving autonomy to the anglophone regions and freeing political prisoners(Kindzeka 2019). In response, René Sadi, the minister

of communication for Cameroon, stated that the country's security services uphold human rights and that it must defend its territorial integrity from ‘secessionist terrorists’(Mates 2021a). In May 2019, the US critique the Cameroonian government once more during an unofficial meeting of the UN Security Council. Tibor Nagy complained on May 16 that the government of Cameroon was "doing nothing" to end the war(Mates 2021b). Additionally, Nagy stated that the US acknowledged Cameroon's territorial integrity and that he did not think Ambazonian independence was a realistic possibility(ibid). The US House of Representatives passed Resolution 358 in July 2019 urging for Cameroon to return to a federal government(US Congress 2019-20a).

President Donald Trump suspended a trade agreement with Cameroon in October 2019, claiming violations of human rights as justification for the action. The US further placed visas restrictions in June 2021 for anyone thought to be subverting peace efforts to end the conflict without clearly stating who it would impact(Office of the US Trade Representative 2021). In 2021 the US Senate passed Resolution 684 which calls on the government of Cameroon and separatist armed groups from the English-speaking Northwest and Southwest Regions to end all violence, to respect the human rights of all Cameroonians, and to pursue a genuinely inclusive dialogue toward resolving the ongoing civil conflict in anglophone Cameroon(US Congress 2019-20b). Furthermore**,** the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) granted Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to Cameroonians for a period of 18 months(Federal Register 2022). This may be done when countries fall into one or more of three categories, namely ongoing armed conflict, environmental disaster, or extraordinary and temporary conditions (IBID). All three categories applied to Cameroon.

This was confirmed by Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, who said the US recognised the ongoing armed conflict in Cameroon and was providing temporary protection to Cameroonian nationals currently residing in the US who could not safely return home due to extreme violence, and because a rise in attacks led by Boko Haram. These Cameroonians would be able to remain and work in the US until conditions in their home country improved (Portugal 2023). This was the first time that the Secretary of the DHS permitted qualifying Cameroonian nationals to temporarily remain in the US pursuant to a TPS designation (ibid). Individuals eligible for TPS under this designation must have continuously resided in the US since 14 April 2022, and those who have travelled to the US after this date are not eligible for TPS. Many Ambazonian activists celebrated this as a victory for their activism and covert diplomacy(Seibert 2022). Other Ambazonians lamented the fact that TPS would be granted to all Cameroonians, not only Ambazonians.

All things considered, Cameroon now faces a diplomatic dilemma as a result of the war in the anglophone regions, which has also strained relations with some of its friends. Several

European nations and the US are critical of Cameroon, despite the fact that AU members and France are either neutral or support the Cameroonian government. The United States has voiced its criticism most vocally. I, the House of Representatives demanded in July 2019 that federalism be reinstated in Cameroon, response to a field investigation by certain US lawmakers led by Karen Bass a US Congress woman(Willis et al 2020:36). In June 2019, Switzerland declared that it had been asked by both the Cameroonian government and the separatists to serve as an intermediary for peace talks to take place. This was the first known meeting between the two conflict parties and gained international support. However, the negotiations failed, as did a subsequent Canadian process(Fuh 2024:46).

The diaspora and the calls for conflict mediation

Ambazonian leaders in the diaspora are also involved in talks about conflict mediation. As stated by some interviewees:

> *'We have been hearing a lot about peace and mediation of the conflict, I can say we are open, the diaspora leadership is open to these talks, but we want to negotiate our way out of this evil union with French Cameroon', let them go there so we can also go our way'(Pius, US, October 2021).*

> *'We no longer want their federation, decentralization or the so-called special status as its been pushed down our throat by the regime. We want to negotiate our way out of the union with La Republique'(Alex, South Africa, November 2021).*

> *'We want peace, and we want the war to end but they cannot be peace without justice. We are always willing to meet Biya and his team at the negotiation table. It is la Republique that has consistently rejected third party talks which are aimed at peace and end of the conflict' (Cosmas, UK, June 2021).*

> *'If La Republique wants peace they know where to meet us and what to do but I don't see the political will from their side. This is because they are determined to wipe us all out of the land so they can keep on exploiting the resources. Paul Biya's regime loyalists want war so they can use it to embezzle state resources' (John, Belgium, June 2021).*

It can thus be deduced that the anglophone diaspora is willing to end the war and make room for peace. According to Maxwell(2020), leaders of the Ambazonian diaspora are showing a willingness to engage in third-party mediated negotiations with the Cameroonian government. In a press statement in Brussels on 28 May 2019, during a capacity-building workshop, leaders of all the Ambazonian liberation movements stressed the need for a more united front and declared their readiness to engage in negotiations with the Cameroonian government(UNPO 2019). The Swiss Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and the Swiss

government agreed to mediate talks between Cameroonian authorities and Ambazonian leaders(Cochrane & Afungang 2019).

In a major televised speech on 10 September 2019, the Cameroonian president, Paul Biya, called for a 'major national dialogue'. This came after increased diplomatic efforts and rounds of political consultations led by French diplomats and the prime minister of Cameroon, Joseph Dion Ngute(Edimo 2021). Biya framed the dialogue within the 1996 Cameroonian constitution, thereby disregarding the separatist and federalist ideals of anglophone nationalists at home and abroad(ibid). The deliberations were held from 30 October to 4 September 2019 and were addressed by eight commissions with appointed heads(Aime 2020). They represented a diverse range of Cameroonian stakeholders, including academics, business owners, government officials, CPDM members, religious and traditional actors, civil society leaders and political leaders from both francophone and anglophone backgrounds. The discussions were also wide-ranging, focusing on the educational and judicial systems, reconstruction and development, the return of displaced anglophone persons, and decentralisation(Mbwoge (2021).

Although some of these commissions were headed by anglophones, they were dominated and controlled by regime loyalists – mostly members of the ruling CPDM party. Although the major national dialogue and eventual release of a number of political prisoners were positive steps towards resolving the conflict, the dialogue did not address the underlying causes of the conflict, consider different forms of governance, or offer sufficient security guarantees to allow separatist leaders and members of the diaspora to attend(Centre for Human Rights 2019). The conversation failed to put an end to the crimes or produce a workable and agreeable political solution for the anglophone areas.

Another positive step towards peace was when the Swiss government and the Swiss Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue accepted to mediate in the dispute between Ambazonian separatist leaders and Cameroonian government. In an effort to mediate the anglophone war, the leaders of the anglophone separatist movement met several times in 2019 with the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with the Swiss NGO Humanitarian Dialogue(Mutah 2022, Orock 2021). To gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics, Swiss authorities also visited Cameroon and met with representatives of the government and civil society organisations(Salome 2022). Although the Swiss-led process is supported by the UN and the US, the Cameroonian government only made an implicit commitment to it; President Biya's response was unclear. Out of mistrust, Biya formally halted involvement in the Swiss mediation attempt and instead extended an invitation to Switzerland and other relevant parties to assist Cameroon in carrying out the decisions made during the mainly fruitless 2019 National Dialogue(Mutah 2022). Following this, the Swiss-led effort to

facilitate a lasting solution officially ended. Nevertheless, in order to prepare for upcoming talks with the Cameroonian government, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and the Swiss foreign ministry have had numerous meetings with different anglophone separatist organisations in the diaspora(ibid).

The Coalition for Dialogue and Negotiations (CDN),a group of anglophone Cameroonian professionals residing abroad, particularly in the US prefer a peaceful solution to the war(Orock 2021). By means of its 'Let's End the War' campaign, the CDN has been pushing for worldwide pressure on both parties for a 'ceasefire' and an international conference as such discussions cannot openly take place in Cameroon(ibid). On 11-13 March 2022, the CDN facilitated bilateral and cluster meetings with more than 12 stakeholder groups at home and in the diaspora and held a physical meeting with six stakeholder groups in Stuttgart, Germany, to build bridges and trust among relevant groups. This resulted in in commitments by stakeholder groups to work together in the spirit of the Toronto Declaration of 2021(CDN 2022).

From 29 October to 1 November 2021, the CDN organised a high-level leadership retreat for leaders and stakeholders of the Southern Cameroons in the diaspora in Toronto, and produced a document known as the Toronto Declaration. This is basically a set of guiding principles relating to engagement among the various stakeholders in the conflict(Nsoseka 2021:1). It focuses on issues of 'leadership in the struggle, communication, trust, humanitarian aid, human rights, and building a framework for future negotiations. The declaration states that leaders will work together in humility to build trust, respect, tolerance and courtesy towards achieving consensus during the first stage of the internal dialogue and negotiations. Leaders also pledged to commit to a memorandum of understanding(MoU) on communications etiquette, especially in the use of social media to minimise the use of aggressive, confrontational, hostile and discourteous language among Southern Cameroonian leaders'(Ibid). Lastly, they pledged to set up a working platform supported and facilitated by the CDN where the leadership meets periodically to share views and information and to address disagreements.

On 'education, access to humanitarian aid and human rights, the declaration stated that more than 700 000 children were out of school, and less than 30 percent of schools, especially in rural communities, were operational; in the quest for freedom, the right to life, the right to education, and access to humanitarian aid and human rights were inalienable'(Nwenfor 2021:1) They undertook to promote the rights of children to education, especially through community schools; encourage parents to consider safety and security when making educational choices for school children; support provision of access for humanitarian workers, and assistance to all victims of the armed conflict; call on aid workers to abide by

international humanitarian law, especially in armed conflict; and safeguard the rights and dignity of all Southern Cameroonians, especially women and children(ibid).

On guiding principles for negotiations, 'the declaration stated that the leaders had agreed to build a team for internal and external negotiations, create space for different strategies but to engage in external negotiations as one entity, represent the people of the Southern Cameroons and their ultimate interests, put the Southern Cameroonian people at the centre of their engagements in and outside the Southern Cameroons; harmonise and standardise strategies for negotiations with the Republic of Cameroon, and leverage Southern Cameroonian and external expertise through a process designed and adopted by the stakeholders of the struggle'(Berinyuy, 2021:1).

Another highlight of the declaration was 'the framework for international mediation, where stakeholders discussed the Switzerland facilitation process, noting the lack of progress and commitment from Cameroon. They agreed to collectively ensure that international mediations were credible and met internationally recognised standards, improve the internationally facilitated process by the Swiss government, and commit to a multilateral mediation process as a viable way to achieve a genuine resolution of the conflict(SCPC 2023). The leaders also agreed to use the CDN as a platform to facilitate implementation of the agreements. Some of the organisations present at the Toronto retreat were the Ambazonia Governing Council (AGovC), the Interim Government (IG), the Ambazonia Military Force (AMF), the Terminators of Ambazonia, Psalm 91, Bafut 7 Kata, the Ambazonia Prisoners of Conscience, the Southern Cameroons Congress of the People (SCCOP), the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), the Southern Cameroons Civil Society Consortium (SCCSC), the Indigenous People of Ambazonia (IPOA-GovC), the Ambazonia International Policy Commission (AIPC) the Southern Cameroons Ambazonia Activists Front (SCAAF),the Diaspora Ambazonia Community (DAC) the West Cameroon Association (WCA), and Southern Cameroon Women's League (SCAWOL)'(Nsoseka 2021:2). The CDN has continued its efforts to mobilise international pressure for a ceasefire and broad-based negotiations to resolve the conflict.

Regional and continental bodies like the AU have largely been silent about the conflict. However, the AU has supported the Swiss-led initiative. It was also party to a joint statement on a tripartite commitment to supporting Cameroon's ongoing peace and reconciliation process(Asanga & Achiri 2021). The AU president Moussa Faki Mahamat visited the Cameroonian president, Paul Biya, in July 2018, and discussed the need for national dialogue to resolve the conflict(Shai 2022). He visited again in November 2019, but the conflict has been conspicuously absent from the agenda of the AU's Peace and Security Council, which is meant to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts. The main reason

for this is that African states regard the Cameroonian conflict as a separatist conflict, and that – in line with the AU Charter -- Cameroon's territorial integrity must be protected (ibid). According to Asanga and Achiri, in 1963 the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the AU's predecessor, adopted the principle of the inviolability of borders inherited from colonisation. Since then, there has been little support for secessionist movements in Africa (Asanga & Achiri 2021). Eritrea and South Sudan were able to become independent states, and many African countries support Western Sahara's quest for self-determination (McNamee 2012). But a host of others including Biafra, Katanga, Zanzibar, Darfur, Casamance, and Somaliland have not seen much support(Bereketeab 2012). Cameroon's neighbours and a few countries serving on the PSC face similar challenges and are therefore not sympathetic to this cause(Keke 2020). Indeed, during his visit to Biya in 2018, Mohamat reconfirmed the AU's 'unwavering' commitment to the unity and territorial integrity of Cameroon(Cameroon Intelligence Report 2020).

On 30 January 2023, the Canadian minister of foreign affairs, Melanie Joly, mentioned that three pre-talks had already taken place in Ontario and Quebec about the country's role as a mediator in a peace process aimed at resolving the ongoing crisis in Cameroon(Whitman & Leke 2023). The governments of the US and the UK supported this, and the people of Cameroon were extremely optimistic about the new development. While numerous observers thought these peace negotiations spearheaded by Canada had gained greater traction than Switzerland's previous attempts, the government of Cameroon refuted claims that it had agreed to Canada serving as mediator to resolve the anglophone conflict(Gillies 2023).

Figure 35: Letter by the Minister of Communication of the Cameroonian government denying its involvement in the Canadian-led mediation process between Cameroon and Ambazonia separatist leaders

UE DU CAMEROUN
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REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON
Peace – Work - Fatherland

PRESS RELEASE 23 JAN 2023

Following recent information disseminated by certain media, the Government of the Republic of Cameroon informs national and international community that it has not entrusted any foreign country or external entity with any role of mediator or facilitator to settle the crisis in the North-West and South-West Regions.

It recalls that it is first and foremost up to the Cameroonian people, to the institutions and leaders that they have freely chosen, to seek appropriate ways and means to address problems facing our country.

The Major National Dialogue, which was held in Yaoundé in 2019, was an opportunity for the sons and daughters of Cameroon to exchange freely and discuss prospects for a future of peace, security and progress for our country.

Since then, the Government of the Republic has been working to implement the recommendations of this Major Dialogue. It is also continuing its efforts for the reconstruction of areas affected by the crisis and providing assistance to the populations concerned.

The Government of the Republic thanks friendly countries and International Institutions for the interest they take in our country and for the multifaceted support they provide.

The Government firmly condemns the deadly attacks and the destruction that certain terrorist groups continue to perpetrate in the North-West and South-West Regions. It commends the Defense and Security Forces for their bravery and the professionalism with which they accomplish their missions of defending the territorial integrity and protecting the civilian population.

The government urges friendly countries to track down and bring to justice those who, from abroad, are financing and encouraging violence in our country and thanks the Government of the United States of America for the actions that have made it possible to bring the perpetrators of such acts to justice and encourages other friendly countries of Cameroon to do the same.

The Government of the Republic once again urges members of the armed groups to seize the peace offer of the President of the Republic, His Excellency Paul BIYA and once again contribute to the great work of nation building.

REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN
REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON
THE MINISTER
LE MINISTRE
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATION
MINISTÈRE DE LA COMM

René Emmanuel SADI

Minister of Communication

Source: Cameroon's Ministry of Communication

The persistent collapse of peace negotiations headed by the Canadian and Swiss governments exposes the government of Cameroon's deliberate downplaying of the gravity of the issue and its lack of commitment to find a solution(Willis et al 2020:85). In response to the government's declaration, armed anglophone separatists launched new violent campaigns and attacked government personnel in English-speaking areas. The African Union must think about how to get Cameroon to the negotiating table. Despite the government's continued hesitation to resolve the issue through inclusive dialogue and

addressing the conflict's underlying causes, Herman Jay Cohen, a retired American diplomat, has claimed that Cameroon cannot win the war through the military solution (Ambe 2020).Drawing comparisons to the Eritrean War of Independence, he urged that the increasing resentment emanating from prolonged hostilities would only serve to shut the window of opportunity during which reconciliation and territorial integrity remained viable option, thus paradoxically raising the possibility of Ambazonian secession(Campbell, 2020).

7.1.9 Conclusion

When the anglophone crisis started in 2016 with a teachers' and lawyers' protest, no one foresaw that the conflict would take a violent turn(Konings and Nyamnjoh 2019; Pelican 2022:17-18). The assessment of experts on the possible trajectory of the conflict was based on the peaceful demonstrations of the anglophone movements of the 1990s, and an SCNC member asked:

> *'With no money, no foreign support, no arms, little grass-roots support and most of the fighting and activism taking place on the Internet instead of on the ground, are we not wasting our time?'(Pelican 2022:18, quoted in Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019:83).*

However, the struggle quickly spread beyond the virtual space and gave rise to offshoots on the ground, resulting to the complex relationship between virtual space(online) and ground level(offline)warfare(Ibid). This historic turn of events can be greatly attributed to the valuable contribution of the diaspora which transformed the initial administrative demands by lawyers and teachers into a robust political movement that the Cameroonian government is still struggling to deal with effectively.

This chapter has established the following: Given that there is a large number of anglophone Cameroonians living abroad, the diaspora has made a substantial contribution to the separatist movement through fundraising, organising communication, providing visionary leadership, teaching anglophones about their history and true identity, and lobbying for international political support. Separatist leaders who are living abroad have established online communities using social media, websites, and satellite TV channels. These virtual spaces are used to report on the situation, shape public perception, and direct violent actions in Cameroon(Pelican 2022:18-19 quoted from Nganji & Cockburn 2020). The diaspora is also playing a role in jurisprudence, diplomacy, mediation calls and humanitarian assistance to imprisoned Ambazonian leaders and activists, refugees in Nigeria, and internally displaced anglophones. Through fundraising schemes like MyTriptoBuea and the Amba war draft, leveraging natural resources in Ambazonia, and imposing liberation tax and kidnapping, funds are made available for the militias on the war front.

The leaders of some of the larger militias are abroad and communicate with their followers via social media. Primarily funded by the English-speaking diaspora, a number of militias have turned to extortion to collect cash from the general public and kidnapping for ransom in order to gain some degree of independence from their leadership abroad(ICG,2019:3). Therefore, the militias, which were previously almost entirely supported by the diaspora, have now gained greater autonomy(Ibid). Regardless of complains of human rights abuses, extortion and alleged corruption, anglophone Cameroonians in the diaspora have remained committed to the struggle as of the time of this study.

8 Strategies used by the anglophone diaspora to advance the Ambazonian cause

8.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the strategies used by the anglophone diaspora to advance Ambazonian statehood. As the Cameroonian government increasingly doubles down on its centrist ambitions, Ambazonian activists have seen less and less chance of restructuring the federal arrangements and have started to explore more forceful and disruptive strategies like 'ghost towns' and sectarian violence involving the formation of militia groups to achieve total independence. Additionally, Ambazonian activists support the establishment of regional ties with leaders of the Biafra independence movement in order to support their efforts at self-defence and simultaneously use their cooperation as leverage to put pressure on the international community to address their situation.

8.2 The formation of government in the diaspora

The formation of a government in exile was a noteworthy strategy to pursue the cause of an independent Ambazonian state(Ekah 2020; Anyefru 2010). This leadership has been instrumental in internationalising the anglophone liberation struggle through organising public protests at the legislative buildings of Western nations, through diplomatic efforts like hiring the American law firm Foley Hoag to advocate for Southern Cameroons' independence(Orock 2021). This campaign has had a significant impact. First, when the protests started in 2016, the US alone released at least five statements. In 2020, the bipartisan House Committee on Foreign Affairs released a resolution denouncing the violence and violations of human rights by armed separatist groups and government security forces. In addition, it exhorted the disputants to 'seek dialogue and [a] peaceful solution for their differences.' On 1 January 2021, the committee passed a second bipartisan resolution in which it called on the parties to the conflict to respect human rights, put a halt to violence, and engage in truly inclusive dialogue. This resolution brought the issue to the attention of a wider international audience. It also encouraged dialogue with Western politicians and policymakers in countries such as Canada, England and Germany, which had formerly been silent about the crisis. In 2017, President Ahidjo Biya and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guiterres spoke over the phone and in person when Guiterres visited Cameroon. The UN has also urged all parties to provide humanitarian access to people and groups affected by the conflict, and to participate in inclusive talks to put an end to the war. It even offered to mediate, but the conflict still lacks enough votes to be placed on the UN Security Council's agenda. The dispute was discussed at a biennial UN Security Council meeting in 2017 when the US, the UK and other key Western players sought humanitarian access for the UN and

other rights organisations plus an investigation into the violation of human rights by both parties. But the UN's perceived lackadaisical approach to settling the problem is heavily criticised.

This is also true of the role played by the AU In 2017, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, then chairperson of the AUC, voiced concerns about the crisis, and called for moderation and negotiation. She also underlined the need to respect the law, including the freedom to hold protests in a peaceful way. In 2018, her successor, Moussa Faki Mahamat, met President Ahidjo Biya and other government officials during a two-day visit to Cameroon. He praised Biya's humanitarian efforts and reaffirmed the AU's 'commitment to the unity and territorial integrity of Cameroon'. He also eschewed the violence and advocated honest dialogue. But besides this, the AU has not taken any significant action to resolve the conflict.

Although the IG has seen some international responses to its advocacy, the solutions offered remain insignificant. Some loyalists and opposition leaders have gone to the extent of writing to the governments of countries harbouring leading exponents of the secessionist movement, or members of the IG, to call for their expulsion (ibid). Although there are many factions within the anglophone diaspora, the majority of figures interviewed for this study said they support the call for Ambazonian statehood.

According to Fru(2022), the IG has been weakened because of internal divisions over strategy, alleged corruption, mismanagement and jealousy. Some diaspora leaders support the struggle for more freedom within a federalist framework, while others advocate secession, or what they term restoration. There exist persistent divergences within the secessionist movement over strategies and methods of operation. There are many who would rather focus on diplomatic offensives and 'Operation Ghost Towns' while others prefer armed self-defence. In addition, just before the introduction of self-defence, there were disagreements whether the use of violence is permitted or not. Following the introduction of self-defence, violence was adopted but interpreted as self-defence and which later exacerbated within the movement due to power struggles and rivalries that led to the emergence of numerous small-scale militia groups between 2017 and 2018(ICG 2017:15, Orock 2021:14).

Through social media platforms, separatist leaders circulate the contact information of persons and groups including the personal details of high profile anglophone state officials and politicians who do not adhere to calls for "Ghost Towns''(civil disobedience strategy or seat at home order from separatists leaders) and who oppose the strike action, urging their supporters to commit arson by burning down their homes. These groups also advocated for attacks on Francophones and encouraged anglophones not to pay their taxes(Ibid)

It should be noted that since the arrest of Ayuk Tabe, the IG shifted from it first approach of mounting a non-violent diplomatic offensive to one of armed self-defence(Carsten & McAllister 2018). The self-defence campaign was launched by Dr Cho Ayaba of the AGC in the Manyu division of the Southwest Region. Since then, several small militia groups have formed to defend their communities against the scorched earth policies of the Cameroon military(ibid). Again, the IG has been instrumental in establishing an effective self-defence militia and fighting criminality in the Southern Cameroons. On 31 December 2018, Dr Sako declared that the separatists were going to ditch their defensive approach and go on the attack, and that a mobile police wing would be organised. Additionally, he pledged to take legal action against anyone responsible for the increasing number of civilian kidnappings in the Southern Cameroons.

On 31 March 2019, a coalition of federalists and separatists came together to form the Southern Cameroons Liberation Council with the support of the IG and several Ambazonian movements. Nevertheless, detractors charged the Sako administration with incompetence and financial mismanagement in spite of its attempts to bring the separatists together. The 'radicalisation' of some anglophones is the result of intensive propaganda activities launched by diaspora leadership on social networks, which feeds into the feelings of marginalisation among local people(Africanews 2018). The diasporan leadership has also established a cable television channel, the Southern Cameroon Broadcasting Corporation (SCBC TV), which is banned in Cameroon but operates from South Africa(Abel 2019; Orock 2021; Prah 2017). Online efforts play a part in the growing public resentment and the rise in prominence of separatist ideologies(Jules Roger 2018).

The establishment of an interim government is considered one of the crowning achievements of the liberation struggle under Dr Sako's leadership. He regards the formation of the IG as the restoration of the government of the former West Cameroon(Anglophone Cameroon), which was dismantled by President Ahidjo. In an address on 10 February 2019, he said:

> 'There are two very important aspects that encapsulate the facets of our independence restoration movement which this Interim Government under my leadership has not only shown full commitment towards the realisation of it but has demonstrated a great sense of excellence in an endeavour to restore our stolen statehood; Number 1, the Restoration of our Government that was dismantled by late President Amadou Ahidjo of LRC. As a priceless inheritance from our forebears, this Interim Government is sustaining and building pilot structures that serve as the pride of Ambazonia. Number 2, the liberation war, that we are proudly at the top of our game from all the different dimensions of diplomacy via advocacy, propaganda, and communications as well as the defence homeland'(British Southern Cameroons 2019:10).

In sharp contrast, many Ambazonian community members have noted that the establishment of the interim government was unnecessary and has contributed to the current high level of confusion by turning the revolution from a liberation movement into a struggle for power and dominance(Effiom 2021:1). However, since, 2019, the IG has been going through a leadership crisis(Nwati 2021), which has led to it splitting in two factions. The first is what has become popularly known as the 'Pastors Interim Government' (PIG) led by Dr Sako Ekome and the second is what has come to be known as the 'Kondengui Interim Government' (Journal du Cameroon 2019). It is called Kondengui IG because many of its leaders are incarcerated in the Kondengui prisons in Yaoundé. This faction operates under Sisiku Ayuk Tabe. The current power struggle began in February 2022 when Sako issued an order to dissolve the IG's legislative branch, the Restoration Council. Sako was then impeached by the Restoration Council, exacerbating the long-standing Ambazonian leadership problem(ibid).

Given these internal squabbles in the diaspora-led government, some anglophone members of the diaspora argued the formation of the IG was a tactical error that has hampered the progress of the liberation struggle(Effiom 2021). Many Ambazonians have called it a distraction and a polarising instrument against individuals who are genuinely interested in the independence struggle(ibid). As of October 2019, credible sources indicated that 800 Ambazonian fighters had died as a result of conflicts between competing militias and government forces; by May 2020, that number had risen to 1,200. It is conceivable to draw the conclusion that the creation of the so-called IG was not just a tactical error, but also one whose effects might negatively affect Southern Cameroonian politics long after the country's freedom and eventual independence are achieved(ibid). In 2019, Anyangwe, one of the principal architects of the IG, conceded that its formation might have been a mistake,, but rationalised it as follows:

> *'It is often forgotten that the original idea of an Ambazonian IG was not to ensure the governance of Ambazonia from abroad. That is infeasible. The idea was to create a directive instrument responsible for: (i) prosecuting the national liberation struggle, (ii) internationalisation and education in regarding the quest for freedom, (iii) responding to the mounting humanitarian crisis, and (iv) crafting a vision for independent Ambazonia in all areas of national life' (ibid: 1).*

The establishment of a government provided a coordinated structure and system whose responsibility was to guide the present struggle to independence and to boost advocacy for Ambazonia at the international level. Although still a very controversial topic among some Southern Cameroonians in the diaspora, the IG's achievements are many.

8.3 Unilateral declaration of independence

Another key strategic feature of the quest for Southern Cameroon statehood was the unilateral declaration of independence in October 2017(Keke 2020). UDI has a significant history in Africa, particularly in the post-colonial period. It was first used in 1960 by Moise Tshombe when the Congolese province of Katanga proclaimed its independence from Congo-Leopoldville. On 30 May 1967, the eastern region of Nigeria declared its independence as the Republic of Biafra, led by the Igbo military officer and Eastern Region governor C. Odumegwu Ojukwu(Michael et al 2020). This came after Yakubu Gowon, then head of state, announced the creation of 12 states, breaking the eastern region into three: the South-eastern state, the Rivers state and the East central state – a move seen by Ojukwu as contrary to the letters of the Aburi Accord(Offodile 2016).

As noted earlier, on 1 October 2017, Ambazonian nationalists abroad, under an umbrella organisation known as the Southern Cameroons Ambazonia Consortium United Front (SCACUF), unilaterally declared the restoration of the independence of Southern Cameroons(Kučera 2020). SCACUF describes itself as a movement for the restoration of the independent 'Republic of Ambazonia' (Keke 2020). The claim of restoration hinges on UN Resolution 1608 which granted complete independence to the Southern Cameroons (Ayim 2010). An interviewee commented as follows:

> *'Declaring our independence from La Republique in 2017 was a way of showing the international community that we are fed up with the union between us and French Cameroon. Again, we were reconnecting ourselves to our history as our father Gorji Dinka and Justice Ebong have before taken the same steps'(Charles, South Africa, March 2021.)*

This declaration by SCACUF under the leadership of Sisiku Julius Ayuk Tabe was preceded by two other declarations of independence(Fonchingong 2013). Early in1985, Fon Gorji-Dinka, an anglophone lawyer and the president of the Cameroon Bar Association, distributed a number of essays and pamphlets in which he called for the creation of an independent Republic of Ambazonian and contended that the Biya government's decision to rename the nation from the United Republic of Cameroon to the Republic of Cameroon was unconstitutional and akin to secession under international law(Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003). Gorji-Dinka was the first head of the Ambazonian Restoration Council and came up with the name Ambazonia. He was arrested and detained in May 1985, although he was later freed and put under house arrest for three years. He then fled to Nigeria and then the UK, where he has continued to advocate for the right to self-determination of the Southern Cameroons(Elong 2012).

In 1999, Judge Justice Ebong Alobwede proclaimed the restoration of the independence of Ambazonia on Radio Buea(Bareta 2019). After taking over the radio station, he announced to the people of Southern Cameroon:

> 'Justice Ebong Frederick Alobwede, Chairman of the High Command Council of the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), here come to address you this 30th December 1999 on the Proclamation of the Restoration of the Sovereignty and Independence of the Southern Cameroons on behalf of Prince Esoka Ndoki Mukete, National Chairman of the Southern Cameroons. This proclamation is to formalize the Restoration of the Sovereignty and Independence of what used to be the Southern Cameroons under UK administration henceforth to be known and called the Federal Republic of the Southern Cameroons. Pending re-establishment of the institutions of the Federal Republic of the Southern Cameroons, the Chairman and the Executive council of the SCNC shall co-ordinate the day-to-day internal administration of the state. …We the people of the Former British Southern Cameroons officially declare our independence from the Republic of Cameroon, as from this day, we call on the former colonial master to recognize this declaration and enter diplomatic talks with the leaders of our nation to agree on the terms of leaving peacefully'(ibid:1)

On October 1, 2017, a great crowd of people started a nonviolent march holding plants symbolising peace and shouting 'no violence' to declare Ambazonia's independence restoration(Kondu et al 2022). People marched and raised Ambazonian flags at crossroads, atop traditional chiefs' homes, and in front of police and gendarmerie posts in Bamenda, Buea, and numerous other cities. In chiefs' compounds, independence was symbolically declared(Robert 2021:8). This declaration conforms with "the proclamation of the second All-Anglophone Conference (AAC 2) held in Bamenda in May 1994 The first All-Anglophone Conference(AAC1) was held in Buea in April 1993'(Konings and Nyamnjoh 2004:106 &109;).

The 'Buea Declaration, issued after this historic meeting, listed the many anglophone grievances about francophone domination, assimilation and exploitation, and called for the return to a two-state (anglophone-francophone) federation'(Halle 2014:14;Fonchingong 2013:225). The Biya government's persistent refusal to enter into any negotiations caused growing radicalisation among anglophone movements (ibid). The Bamenda Proclamation, adopted by the second All-Anglophone Conference (AAC II) held in Bamenda from 29 April to 1 May 1994, stated that:

> 'Should the government either persist in its refusal to engage in meaningful constitutional talks or fail to engage in such talks within a reasonable time, the Anglophone leadership would proclaim the revival of the independence and sovereignty of the Anglophone territory and take all measures necessary to secure, defend and preserve the independence,

> sovereignty and integrity of the said country'(Konings 2005:170; (Konings & Nyamnjoh 1997: 218-220).

After AAC II, the anglophone movements reintroduced the name of Southern Cameroons to refer to the anglophone territory, making it clear that their struggle was neither linguistic in character nor in defence of a colonial culture, but aimed at the restoration of the autonomy of the former British Southern Cameroons which had been annexed by the Republic of Cameroon(ibid). The declaration of Ambazonian independence on 1 October created new hope among Ambazonians at home, and many took to the streets. It also revived Southern Cameroonian/Ambazonian consciousness in the diaspora(Robert 2021:8).The declaration of independence and the government crackdown that followed led to the radicalisation of many anglophones youths, which helped to escalate the conflict into a full-blown war of liberation(Brice 2020:11).

The declaration of independence prompted renewed debates on the Southern Cameroons in the UK House of commons, Chatham House, US Senate committees, and the UN, and elicited strong responses from Pan-Africanists like Professor P.L.O. Lumumba, Jerry Rawlings and Dr Massango of Punchline Africa in support of the cause. It also provoked many calls on the Biya government on the one hand and the secessionists on the other to respect human rights and to enter into dialogue.

Many people interviewed for this study said they were no longer Cameroonians but Ambazonians. They consider the international advocacy and the rise of militia groups which they refer to as 'self-defence or restoration forces' in the Northwest and Southwest Regions as necessary to assert their sovereignty. The declaration of independence in 2017 did more to bring the struggle to the forefront than any other strategy.

8.4 The use of communication/mass electronic media

The use of different media platforms to mobilise support, connect with a broader audience and strengthen their legitimacy has become a major strategy used by social resistance movements throughout the world. In line with this, separatist leaders in the anglophone diaspora have set up multiple communication platforms to spread information about their struggle.

8.4.1 Establishment of the Southern Cameroons Broadcasting Corporation

In 2917, leaders in the anglophone diaspora established a television station to report on the crisis, inform public opinion, and guide militant interventions on the ground(Pelican, 2021; Orock 2021). Known as the Southern Cameroon Broadcasting Corporation (SCBC), it is

based in Johannesburg, South Africa. According to Frank, an anglophone Cameroonian based in Italy and a key architect of the SCBC, the station plays a vital role in the

Ambazonian campaign. In his words:

> *'There is no revolution without communication, so we created the Southern Cameroon Broadcasting Corporation to disseminate information about our revolution. The SCBC remains a channel of inspiration to our people in Ambazonia'(Frank, Italy, January 2023).*

South Africa harbours a large diasporan community and is an important centre of Ambazonian activism. Since the transition to democracy in 1994, growing numbers of Cameroonians have migrated to the major cities of Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town and Durban(Orock 2021:12; Angu & Mulu 2020:136).) Since the beginning of the conflict, hundreds of anglophone Cameroonians have assembled for frequent rallies and demonstrations in front of the Cameroonian Embassy in Pretoria, as well as government facilities in Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Pretoria(ibid). In alliance with the anglophone diaspora around the world, anglophone Cameroonians in South Africa established the SCBC, which is playing a key role in the struggle(Orock 2021:12).

Figure 36: The SCBC studio in Johannesburg

Source: SCBC Facebook Page.

The station was started in 2017 with financial contributions from members of the diaspora throughout the world (Nkwain 2022). It exposes cases of genocide and other atrocities in anglophone Cameroon and seeks to re-educate Cameroonians about the history of the country and particularly about Ambazonia. By contrast, the state broadcaster, Cameroon Radio & Television (CRTV), seeks to deny the existence of the anglophone problem, and conceal the identity of anglophones within Cameroon.

An interviewee living in Bamenda commented as follows on the domestic role of the SCBC:

> *'We used to watch the SCBC until the conflict became too serious and the government soldiers started searching houses, then we stopped (Elad, Bamenda, January 2022).*

> *I was always watching SCBC, I like their programs especially those on the history of the Southern Cameroons. However, it became too dangerous when soldiers started searching our homes' (Pamela, Kumba, January 2022).*

The Cameroon government has tried to persuade the South African government to shut the station down (ibid). When this failed, it banned local Cameroonians from watching the channel and threatened cable TV service providers with sanctions if they did not stop broadcasting it(Orock 2022:12; Ngange et al 2020). Many anglophones still watch programmes on SCBC despite the government ban. The diaspora uses the channel to celebrate important days in the history of the Southern Cameroons, for cultural programmes and newscasts, and for making important announcements to the anglophone community.

8.5 The use of social media

Anglophone leaders in the diaspora maintain a plethora of websites and social media platforms on which they conduct online propaganda and other forms of criticism against the Cameroon government's policies in the Southern Cameroons(Ngange & Mokondo 2019; Abel 2019) and try to raise international awareness of the Cameroonian crisis. Most of them advocate total independence (Nganji & Cockburn 2020).

As noted previously, the IG maintains two websites, one called the Official Site of the Federal Republic of Ambazonia (https://www.ambazoniagov.org/), and the other the Interim Government Official Website of the Federal Republic of Ambazonia (https://federalrepublicofambazoniagov.org/). Another major website is that of the Ambazonia Governing Council (AGovC), led by Dr L Ayaba Cho, which advocates the 'total independence of a sovereign Ambazonia', and established the Ambazonia Defense Forces (ADF), a military organ 'fighting for the independence of Ambazonia' (https://agovc.org/).

Besides these, many organisations and individuals in the diaspora are active on X (the former Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, and other social media. According to these social media activists, Ambazonians only seek justice, peace and happiness which can only be achieved as an independent nation(Ambe 2021). They argue that 'the people of Ambazonian are not Cameroonians, have never been Cameroonians, nor shall they ever be Cameroonians'(ibid). They contend that the use of the name to Ambazonia shapes an identity that differentiates them from Cameroonians. Ambazonia, according to them, asserts their patriotism and commitment to the cause(Anyefru 2008). They also point out that this name was accepted by anglophones at home and abroad as far back as September 1988, as an appropriate name for the former British Trust Territory of the Southern Cameroons (Afungang 2020).

Figure 37: Social media post cautioning Southern Cameroonians not to watch World Cup matches by Cameroon

Figure 38: Jubilant Cameroonian soldiers with the Ambazonia flag

Source: King Uba, 2020 (King 2020).

Figure 39: Soldiers in Bamenda carry the coffins of soldiers killed in the Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon

Photograph: AFP/Getty

Figure 40: Ambazonia forces present war 'trophies' from Akwen in the Eyumojock Subdivision and another in Nsanakang

Source: Cameroon News Agency, 2021

Photos posted by activists on social media appear in Figures 42 and 43. Some images are too graphic to be reproduced. The purpose of these photos is to depict Ambazonian restoration forces as heroes and to create the impression that they are winning the war.

According to Ketzmerick(2023), it could be aruged that the Internet has transformed the Cameroonian community and identity(Ketzmerick 2023). Social media propaganda has affected the peaceful coexistence between anglophone and francophone Cameroonians, radicalised young people, enforced the operation of ghost towns, and tarnished the image of the Cameroonian regime in the international community, especially with regard to human rights violations. The Cameroon government finds itself challenged by the cyber-nationalism of anglophones in Cameroon and by propaganda abroad(Jules Roger 2018). One of the main resolutions of the major national dialogue in Cameroon was to call on the government to 'create a team responsible for mediation with radicalised members of the anglophone diaspora'(Emmanuel 2024:73).

In August 2020, as the anglophone crisis was gaining momentum at home and abroad, President Biya instructed a delegation of government ministers to visit, engage and consult with anglophone Cameroonians overseas. Many of these engagement missions were faced with stiff resistance as they were disrupted by Secessionist activists(Orock 2022:13; 2021:2).As a result, the government took harsh measures against English-speaking Cameroonian nationals who were residing and employed overseas and considered to be backing the separatist movement. In retaliation against the diaspora secessionist activists, some were arrested at ports of entry while on visit to Cameroon detained, imprisoned, or deported(Ibid).

In response to growing international pressure, the regime has searched for other strategies to combat the influence of the diaspora. In 2021, 61 members of Cameroon's National Assembly wrote to the US Congress to complain about the role of the anglophone diaspora in the conflict. It is clear that, since 2016, social media have played a vital role in escalating the conflict(Ibid).

8.6 Non-violent protests

Non-violence has always been the strategy and philosophy of choice for the Southern Cameroonian struggle(Nkongho 2017). For instance, a decade-long freedom slogan of the Southern Cameroons, crafted by the Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC), has been 'the force of argument, not the argument of force'(Wilmot 2019). Since the 1961 reunification between Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon, the SCNC has always preferred dialogue and not violence to get the Cameroonian government to meet its demands

(Musah 2022). The Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium spearheaded the initial wave of peaceful protests in 2016 against the central government's marginalisation of Cameroon's anglophone regions(Robert 2020). Agbor Nkongho stated in a DW interview that the CACSC had never supported violence and that the early actions taken to put pressure on the government such as lockdowns and school boycotts were only intended to be temporary. Yaoundé was to blame for the escalation of the situation. The only purpose of the actions was to alert the global community to the suffering of the anglophone population and to the fact that the leaders of the CACSC were even preparing to cancel the school boycott before the consortium was banned(Mimi Mefo Takambou 2021).

Figure 41: Confrontation between the police and lawyers in southern Cameroons

Source: Cameroon Online

The issue worsened as the second wave of mass protests broke out on 22 September and 1 October 2017 in major cities and towns throughout the Southern Cameroons. The non-violent demonstrations drew participants from many anglophone towns and communities, including Bamenda, Buea, Kumba, Kumbo and Limbe(Ambe 2021:52). The protesters called for independence from French Cameroon, the release of anglophone political prisoners, the resignation of President Biya, the introduction of federalism, and an end to the ongoing detention of some of its citizens(Robert 2021:3). Anglophone activists living abroad also participated in the demonstrations in the run-up to 1 October – the day on which the secessionist organisations declared Ambazonian independence. President Paul Biya was due to speak to the UN General Assembly in New York at the same time as the protests(Ibid:11).

Southern Cameroonians of all ages participated in these non-violent protests. They also brought Ambazonian leaders together, especially in major international centres such as New York as well as European capitals. Additionally, the protests were a signal to democratic countries that the Ambazonian movement was non-violent and that its leaders were freedom fighters and not terrorists. The protest created massive international awareness of the struggle, leading to many nations and organisations calling on the Cameroon government to address the root causes of the conflict and to respect human rights(CHR 2018).

Figure 42: The white coffin revolution and its pioneer, Manch Bibixy

Source: Robert 2020.

When the anglophone crisis started, the escalation of violence was not foreseen because experts based their assessment on the peaceful demonstrations of the anglophone movements in the 1990s. However, the conflict soon developed into a full-blown war; a drastic shift from the former slogan of 'the force of argument' to what may be referred to as the 'argument of force'. From the 1960s until 2016, not a single stone was thrown in the course of the resistance, and anglophones never anticipated engaging in armed resistance (CNA 2020; *The Guardian* 2018). From 2016 onwards, violent repression by government forces of non-violent protests eventually led to some movements turning to an armed struggle. Therefore, anglophones were radicalised by state repression, which triggered a switch from non-violence to self-defence (Wilmot 2019).

Speaking during an interview, Samuel, a coordinator of activities in a local government in Ambazonia, had the following to say:

'Anglophones are a peace-loving people. From the onset violence has never been our way of getting our demands attended to, though we long for freedom we always prefer peaceful strategies like public protest and petitions, but the regime always respond with brute force. Even in 2017, it started with protest, but the government instead responded with force' (Samuel, Pretoria, February 2022).

8.7 Enforcement of Operation Ghost Town

Operation Ghost Town is another strategy used to assert demands for independence. This campaign, also known in local parlance as 'kontri Sunday' (traditional Sabbath) is observed every Monday throughout West Cameroon, a.k.a Ambazonia(Vakunta 2021). It comprises a total strike and stayaway that brings towns and surrounding areas to a complete standstill.

This political tactic dates back to the early 1990s (Takougang 2019). In 1991, a series of pro-democracy demonstrations ended in bloodshed after clashes between students and security forces turned violent(Ayuk 2018; Lekunze 2023). The resistance movement responded with Operation Ghost Town, which locked down large parts of the country (Lekunze 2023). More specifically, it was started by the leadership of the Anglophone Civil Society Consortium, notably Agbor Balla and Dr Fontem Neba, to compel the regime to meet their demands, release Ambazonian activists held in prison in French Cameroon, and create an atmosphere for effective dialogue(Okereke & Ukaeje 2022). In response, these leaders were arrested and imprisoned, and the Anglophone Civil Society Consortium as banned.

Leadership of the struggle then passed over to the diaspora, which continued to organise Operation Ghost Town in the Northwest and Southwest Regions (Ashu 2020). Details of people and organisations who disrespect or fail to observe ghost town orders are circulated on social networks(Akame et al 2021). Activists in the diaspora have used Facebook to call on members of the public to burn down the properties of people who fail to observe Operation Ghost Town(Bennett 2017). They also call on citizens not to pay tax, and encourage attacks on francophones living in the Northwest and Southwest Regions(Sunjo 2020). Most of these messages are in the public domain and are accessible on Facebook and YouTube(Jules Roger 2018).

Some critics, especially Biya regime loyalists, have questioned the effectiveness of the Ghost Town strategy (Lawal 2017). The IG and other Southern Cameroonian organisations usually depict Operation Ghost Towns as non-violent civil disobedience strategy, and very effective across all villages, towns and cities in Southern Cameroon/Ambazonia(Bareta 2017). The evidence shows that the authorities are unclear about how to respond (ibid). According to some analysts, even the government respect ghost towns in Ambazonia

(Agbor 2017). Inter alia, it does not schedule any serious events on Mondays because they know that Mondays are ‘kontry Sunday’ (Amindeh 2021). School resumption dates, for instance, are scheduled for Tuesdays instead of Mondays(Nkembi 2017). According to Nkembi(2017), the government may pretend that it has no effect, but the international community is getting the message.

Africa Rising has reported that ‘ghost towns’ were unprecedented in the whole of Africa (Lawal 2017). In spite of a complete internet blackout across Southern Cameroons, ghost towns persisted, and information about the struggle and government brutality continued to circulate(Bareta 2017). Every Monday, schools, offices and businesses throughout the Northwest and Southwest Regions remain closed(Fru 2022).

According to a report in The Sun (2017), normally bustling towns such as Bamenda, Yuku, Nkambe, and Buea come to a standstill, and excited Ambazonians post photos and videos online to show the success of ghost towns.

The videos of deserted towns and cities help to embolden citizens on the ground and those abroad. Leaders of Ambazonian separatist groups have also used the ghost town strategy to boycott the celebration of national days, such as Youth Day on 11 February, and another National Day on 20 May(Delancey et al 2019).

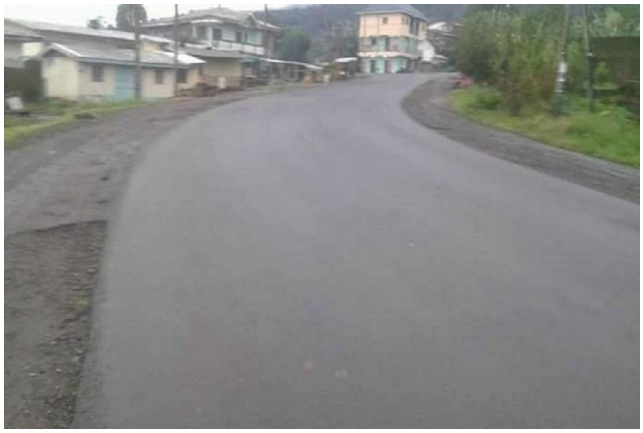


Figure 46: Empty streets during Ghost Town Day in the Southern Cameroons

Source: Cameroon Intelligence Report.

In Mamfé (a town in the Southwest Region) the whole town and schools are closed, and parents keep their children at home every Monday. Though people may not want to stay at home, they respect the ghost town campaign for fear of reprisal from Ambazonian militias. All educational institutions, from nurseries through schools to universities, close down in a

bid to force the government to address the demands of the Anglophone community. During research for this study, parents were hoping their children would be able to go back to school full time as soon as possible. One parent said:

> *'We don't really want the kids to stay at home. We hope the government will make some decisions leading to the reopening of the schools' (Presca, Mamfe, September 2022).*

One respondent described how ghost towns were frustrating key government officials:

> *'While in the Southwest, I saw how the colonial governor showed literal frustration as he used force, used intimidation, used radio and TV power, used bribes, used sell-outs but all his efforts were futile. It was frustrating. You could get it in his voice. Ghost towns are working, and they will keep working the respondent said'(Jack, Buea, February 2021).*

The former major of Buea attempted to end the Ghost Town campaign by threatening punitive measures (notably shutting down businesses that observed the strike) and deploying armed forces to advise residents to go about their business as usual. However, these efforts have largely gone unheeded (Crisis24 2018). All in all, Operation Ghost Town has dealt a severe blow to the economy of the Northwest and Southwest Regions by affecting major parastatals like CDC and Pamol in the anglophone regions(Chung 2020). This is due to the killing and kidnapping of workers and senior officials who dare to violate calls for Ghost Towns(CHRDA 2023).

8.8 Self-defence

Ambazonian diaspora leaders have resorted to guerrilla warfare or what they term self-defence to assert their independence. Following the arrest of IG leaders in Nigeria, Sako Ikome was voted the new leader. In his first address, he declared that the movement had entered an era of self-defence (Africanews 2018).

> *'Now is the era of self-defence. From effective personal self-defence to legitimate Ambazonia community protection programs to stop the wanton destruction of lives and our property in Ambazonia. We are therefore going to work to accredit and embrace all self defence and security groups that will endorse our IG rules of engagement. I will be reaching out to all in the days ahead' (ibid: 1).*

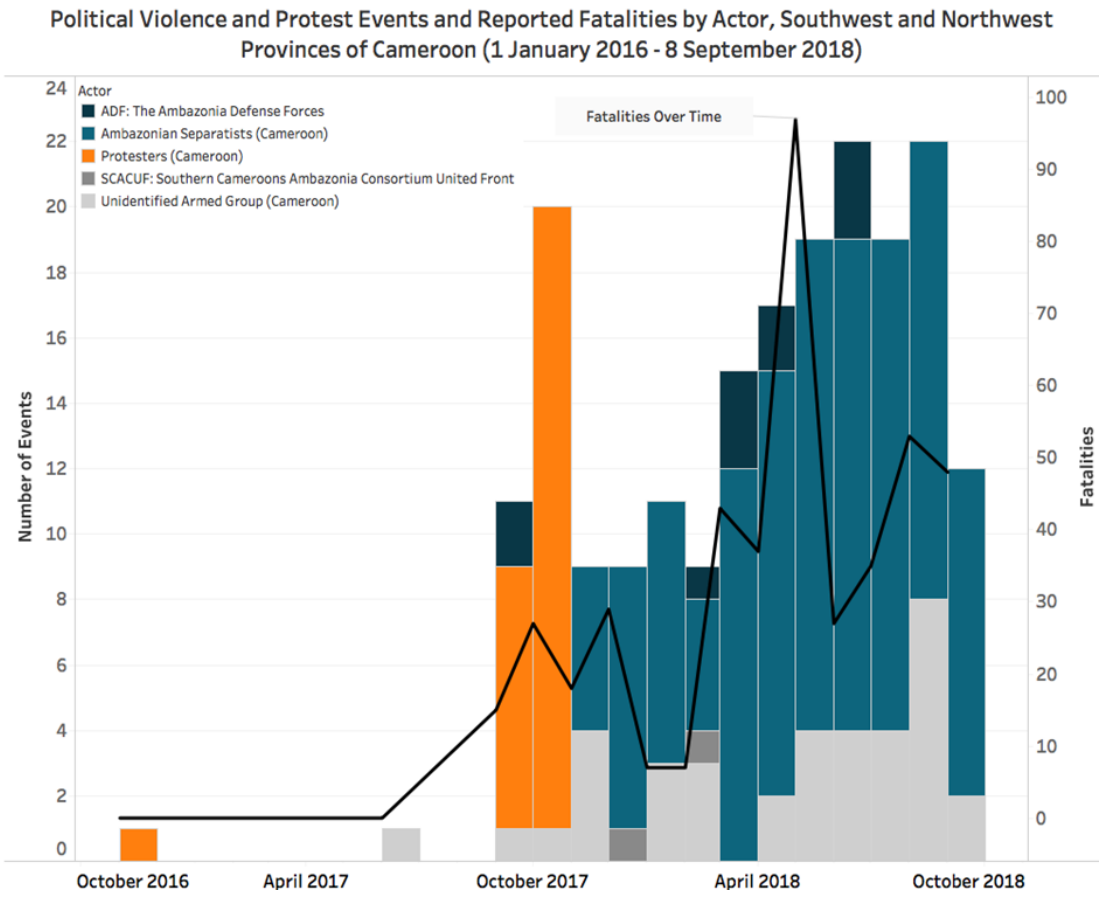
Following the government's oppressive handling of the protests that took place in September and October of 2017, groups of armed separatists, also called restoration forces, emerged with support from the diaspora and local communities(Ngah 2019). Ensuing guerrilla-style attacks on security forces police, army, and gendarmes had been the order of the day since

2017(Wilmot 2019; Crawford et al 2022). The reprisals have led to thousands fleeing their homes into the forest and into Nigeria.

The armed separatists try to ambush government soldiers, but not to engage them in open confrontation(Ngam & Budi 2020). These groups are well-supported by diaspora networks in the US, UK, Nigeria, and South Africa, and they have a sizable online fan base(Endong 2021). Since then, a few foreign-based internet activists have declared themselves to be "commanders" of armed groups and frequently use incendiary rhetoric against law enforcement officials.

In retaliation for the government labelling anglophone secessionists as ‘terrorists’, these leaders of armed groups commonly refer to members of state security forces as dogs,’ ‘animals’ or ‘terrorists,’ accuse them of ‘genocide,’ and urge fighters to send them ‘home to meet their father, Lucifer’(HRW 2018:19) According to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Database (ACLED), an independent media monitor. The pace and scope of armed separatist attacks against security forces, government employees, and state institutions more than doubled in late 2017 and continued to rise after the Biya government outlawed the CACSC and the SCNC(Matfess 2018).

Figure 43: Escalation of political violence in anglophone regions from 2017 -2018



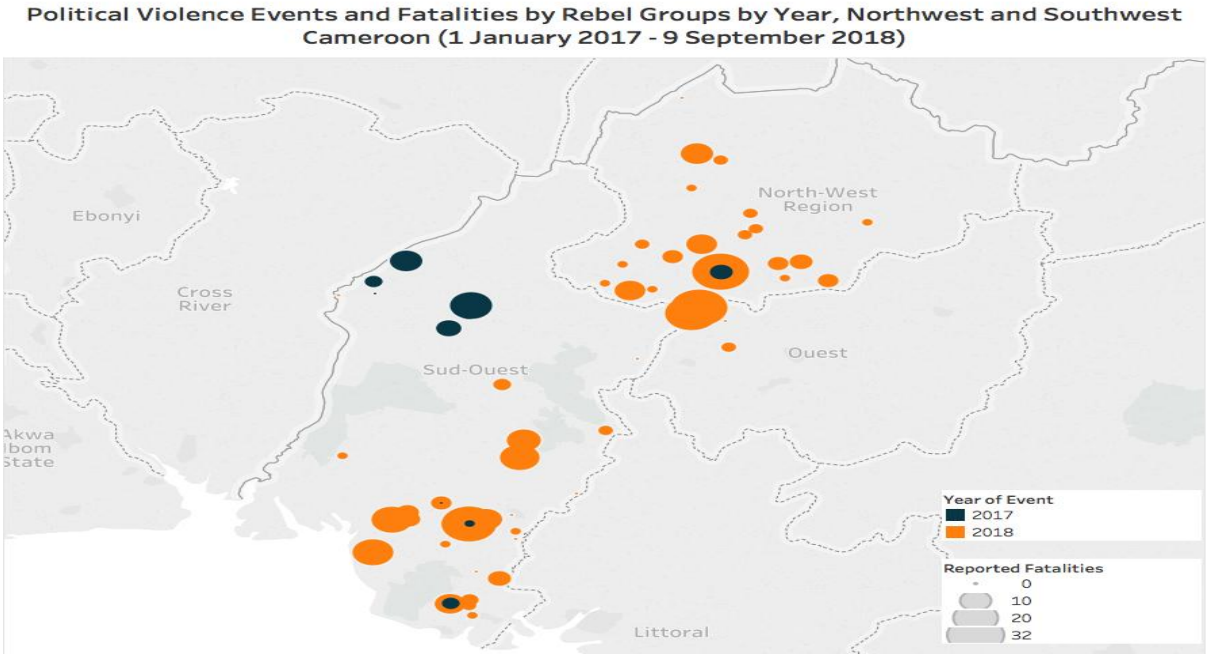
Source: Armed Conflict Location and Event Database (ACLED)

The CACSC and SCNC were involved in mobilising non-violent protests in the two anglophone regions. However, the number of violent incidents in anglophone Cameroon has rapidly increased since September 2017. During that time, 133 separate incidents involving the Ambazonian Defence Forces, organisations solely identified as Ambazonian secessionists, and SCACUF resulted in 369 reported fatalities. In 2018 there was a change in activity as well as the geographic locations of violence following the arrest and deportation of 47 secessionist activists from Nigeria(Matfess 2018; also see HRW 2018).

According to Matfess, 2018 saw a geographical expansion in the activities of the ADF, Ambazonian separatists and SCACUF. In 2017, these groups were active in five provinces in Northwest and Southwest Cameroon; by 2018, they were active in 12 provinces. Mainly funded from abroad, these groups have increased their use of deadly violence, and broadened the geographic areas in which they operate(ibid). In short, they have been

effective in containing the state military and have also exerted some form of territorial control in parts of Ambazonia.

Figure 44: Escalation of political violence in anglophone regions in 2017-8



Source: Armed Conflict Location and Event Database (ACLED)

In 2018, an independent Cameroonian journalist who had conducted research on these groups and spoke to Human Rights Watch, multiple armed organisations were reportedly active in the two regions(HRW 2018). The International Crisis Group stated that as of December 2017, different groups in anglophone Cameroon with a total of or roughly 500 fighters were engaging government forces in anglophone regions(Bang 2022:9 quested from ICG 2019). The most notorious and aggressive group was the Ambazonia Defence Forces (ADF), which surfaced in late 2017 and is led by Ayaba Cho Lucas, a former activist of the Southern Cameroons Youth League and current the leader-in-exile and chief commander of the Ambazonia Governing Council. The ADF primarily operated in Mamfe the Southwest Region. But later grew to have camps in other parts of the two anglophone region(ICG 2018).

The ‘Southern Cameroons Defense Forces (SOCADEF), reportedly with a presence in the Meme division of the Southwest Region, was under the control of Ebenezer Akwanga, a former political prisoner living in the US. Others were the Lebialem Red Dragons, with a reported presence in the Lebialem division in the Southwest Region; the Ambazonia Self-Defence Council, created by the IG in March 2018; the Ambazonia Restoration Army, a

militia reportedly under control of General Paxson Agbor, a former police officer; the Tigers of Ambazonia, a militia with a presence in the Southwest Region's Meme and Manyu; the Southern Cameroons Defense Forces (SCDF), led by Nso Foncha Nkem, an Anglophone Cameroonian who is said to have served in the US army; and the Manyu Ghost Warriors, with a presence in the Southwest Region's Manyu division'(HRW 2018: 20&21,Giovanni 2018:1).

Militias members are trained in rural areas all over Ambazonia, at the Cameroon-Nigerian borders, in with refugees and they are armed with assault rifles, homemade rifles, improvised explosive devices and grenades. Many Ambazonian militias members were unable to purchase firearms due to a lack of funds, yet some separatists obtained guns from police stations that were taken over prior to fund-raising efforts for weapons and equipment initiated by their leaders overseas(Ibid). Furthermore, it is yet unclear how each group is organised and how much they coordinate or share intelligence with one another, nonetheless, a few of the groups appear to have a local structure, with village commanders seemingly answering to regional commanders(HRW, 2018,Giovani, 2018, Orock 2021). An interviewee involved in coordinating self-defence groups in remote areas in the Southwest Region explained:

> *'We have local commanders that are in charge of these soldiers. We have a chain of command from the commander in chief to county coordinators to coordinators of small units of soldiers. We also brief them on the Geneva convention and respect for human rights'(Ben, South Africa, March 2021).*

Another interviewee indicated that some of these groups have a definite chain of command and take instructions from the top.

> *'Ambazonian boys stopped me at a checkpoint on my way to Bamenda. When I said that I am with a medical NGO, they pulled me aside. They questioned me seriously, and the leader let me go after receiving instructions on the phone from someone else' (Beatrice, Bamenda, March 2021).*

Armed have been accused of human rights abuses, kidnapping for ransom, torture, and targeting government officials in the region(Sunjo 2020). The government claims that armed separatists are killing civilians and security forces(Cho & Agbor 2022). Human rights groups have reported that civilians suspected of collaborating with the government have been targeted by the armed groups for extortion, torture and murder(Willis et al 2020). In the Southwest Region's Meme division, for instance, armed separatists have targeted civilians who hail from the francophone Bamileke ethnic group for kidnapping and extortion (HRW 2018). Armed groups have also been accused of carrying out attacks on schools, and

kidnapping principals, teachers, and other school officials (Robert 2020). Father William Neba, the principal of St. Bede's College in Ashing, Northwest Region, was reportedly kidnapped on the morning of April 30, 2018; while attending mass with his students and he was freed two days later. On the day of the kidnapping, classes were cancelled at the school(HRW 2018:23). Also, Georgiana Enanga Sanga, the principle of the government high school Bolifamba Mile 16 Buea, and Eric Ngomba, the principal of the Cameroon Baptist Academy Muyuka, were abducted on May 25, 2018, in two different instances that occurred just days before the commencement of the national exams. Ngomba was seen seated on the ground with three armed men requesting for ransom money while pointing rifles at his head in a video that went viral on social media(Ibid:24)

In an interview, an Ambazonian leader based in Canada said all the accusations were baseless and a tactic of the Cameroonian government to dent their struggle by using human rights violations allegations to turn the international community against them. In his words:

> *'We love our people, that is why we are fighting in the first place, we are not baby killers, arsonists or rapists. We have trained our restorations forces on the need to respect the Geneva convention as we fight for our freedom'(Douglas, Canada, 2019).*

The US, other western powers and international organisations have taken note of the abuses on both sides and have repeatedly called on the Cameroonian government and separatist fighters to respect human rights and address the root causes of the conflict(Hugues 2021). The diaspora-sponsored self-defence militia have been able to make the Southern Cameroons ungovernable, and the conflict has increased the fragility of the country (Tschudin 2019). For instance, according to the Ibrahim Index of African Governance, Cameroon's overall governance has declined in recent years, largely as a result of the violence in the Northwest and Southwest Regions(Ismail 2018). Since 2014, national security indicators have likewise declined annually(ibid).

Cameroon is among the countries with the most significant declines in terms of the indicators that evaluates government involvement in armed conflict, non-state actor violence, and internally displaced people (IDP). Additionally, it has equally revealed a drop in the indicators related to police service reliability(Froehlich et al 2020). The last presidential elections, where voter turnout in the Northwest and Southwest Regions was apparently particularly low due to the anglophone conflict in those regions, reflect poor performance in the category connected to participation and human rights(Piabuo 2018)..

Table 6: The decline in Cameroon's governance indicators since 2012-2022

Most deteriorated indicators (2012-2021)	10-year trend	Score (2021)	Rank (2021)	Subcategory
Absence of Violence against Civilians	-71.6	18.9	50	Security & Safety
Absence of Armed Conflict	-62.0	37.9	48	Security & Safety
Personal Liberties	-34.5	23.7	42	Rights
Rural Market Access	-32.2	56.7	26	Rural Economy
Labour Relations	-25.3	30.1	42	Business & Labour
Environment Anti-Corruption Mechanisms	-25.0	34.5	24	Anti-Corruption
Digital Rights	-20.7	47.8	33	Rights
Freedom of Expression & Belief	-15.3	40.3	40	Rights
Freedom of Association & Assembly	-12.5	0.0	46	Participation
Media Freedom	-12.0	42.6	41	Rights

Source: Ibrahim Index of African Governance 2022.

Cameroon also showed a deterioration in all sub-categories of the security and rule of law categories.

8.9 Economic sabotage

According to Willis et al(2020), economic marginalisation is one of the driving factors of anglophone nationalism. Anglophones feel excluded from the gains of their natural resources. Additionally, 'they frequently lament the poor representation of their people in public corporations like the Southwest-based National Refining Company (Société nationale de raffinage, Sonara) and the National Hydrocarbons Corporation (Société nationale des hydrocarbures)'(Ollong 2021:33). As result, anglophone diaspora leaders have called for industries and companies exploiting resources in Ambazonia to be targeted in the ongoing guerilla war(Mates 2019). According to the 2018-2019 emergency humanitarian aid plan for the Northwest and Southwest regions, some Ambazonia conflict leaders are very determined and have the primary goal of crippling the economies of these two regions(World Bank Group 2021). Consequently, a number of the self-defence strategy's components were purposefully designed with this goal in mind, and the results have had extremely negative economic effects on these two regions(Ngangnchi 2019). Some of these aspects include geared toward the wrecking of the two regions economy include ghost towns, attack on public corporation like the CDC, PAMOL PLC, kidnapping of corporation workers, destruction of the smooth function of these corporations, the assault on the smooth functioning of the administrative functionaries of the state in the two regions.

Dr Cho Ayaba of the AGC reportedly sees this as the best strategy to ‘make the occupier bleed’(Amindeh 2022). Considering the local economy in these two regions is dependent on the exploitation of crude oil, timber, intensive agriculture, and large plantations owned by the Cameroon Development Corporation as well as other smaller plantations that supply Douala and other countries within the CEMAC (the Central African Economic and Monetary Community). This sector continues to be one of the main targets of the conflict by militias controlled by the diaspora(ibid). Targeted attacks began with the abduction of employees of some public construction companies deployed to and carry out projects in these regions(Mates 2019).

The economy of the various areas and the state as a whole suffered greatly as a result of the systematic paralysis and eventual cessation of operations of parastatals, most notably CDC and PAMOL, as the conflict progressed(Chung 2022:281).Later attacks were geared towards company facilities and properties like vehicles, transport agencies, shops, resorts, and telecom companies(Amindeh 2022). The ‘ghost towns’ have also had drastic effect on economic activities and household earnings in the two regions as a result of the lockdown of shops and companies on Mondays. The majority of Cameroon's production and marketing activities in the two anglophone regions have been suspended due ghost towns, which are identical with days of general strikes in Nigeria. The hardest-hit industries are craftsmen and retailers, who are unable to make up for lost economic activity, severely harming these regions' economies(Lawal 2018).

Agriculture, a significant economic sector in the two regions, is mainly affected by the security dilemma, and the Southwest and Northwest are major production zones for tea, oil palm, timber and particularly cocoa and coffee(Ngangnchi 2019). The crisis has especially affected the coffee and cocoa industries(Ollong 2021). While the Northwest is the primary Arabica coffee production zone, producing more than 70% of the nation's output, the southern part of Cameroon accounts for 45% of the nation's cocoa production. Plantation maintenance and post-harvest operations have been reduced to a minimum(Ngwa 2020). This has consequently led to the abandonment of farms and the non-treatment of a significant portion of the harvested pods due to the difficulty of carrying out the fermentation and drying of the crops, which were vulnerable to threats and crop sharing between farmers and separatists(Amindeh 2022).

Majority of the 210 000 farmers who are involved in the day-to-day operation of the plantations in the southwest lost their sources of revenue. This climate of insecurity is mainly damaging to the gathering, trading and transportation of produce, which typically takes place from October to February for cocoa and December to March for coffee(Ekah

2020). Stakeholders are especially worried about this issue given that checkpoints are established on the roads by both separatists and law enforcement officers (Willis et al 2019). As though this was not enough. there have been several road blockages, warehouse arson, truck seizures and destruction, kidnappings of drivers followed by demand for ransom, and treatment facility demolition(Menyoli 2021).

During 2017–2018, the Central Region overtook the Southwest Region as the country's top producer of cocoa, with the Southwest Region's share in national sales dropping from 45.5% to 32%, or 43 000 tonnes(Ollong 2021). The consequent loss on export revenues came to 56 billion CFA francs, or $100,000,000 USD. It is possible that farmers lost roughly 3 billion CFA in revenue. Long-term effects include the abandonment of several plantations and the significant destruction of production equipment, even in the event that the security climate is restored (Amindeh 2022).

As the economic gems of the Cameroonian economy in the Southwest Region, CDC and PAMOL have been especially impacted by the crisis(Atabong 2022a, b). As of September 2018, the CDC had experienced property losses and profit declines totalling 12 billion CFA Francs(Ollong 2021). Of its 29 production sites—plantations and factories—twelve were completely closed; some had been turned into bases for Ambazonia armed militias' member or fighters who had driven out labourers; ten sites were only partially operational because armed groups had periodically interrupted operations; and in some areas, power supplies had been interrupted. There were still two plants and seven locations in use. Approximately 7,000 jobs had been lost, and 5,805 more were in danger of being lost, accounting for 71% of the CDC's entire workforce(Ibid).

The corporation suffered enormous financial losses in addition to labour maltreatment, kidnappings, and workers and family suffered severe fatalities in the hands of armed separatists fighters almost on daily basis. Armed individuals were extorting money, factories and production sites were vandalised, some equipment went missing and some were set on fire, executives' and employees' residences were vandalised and others were set on fire(ibid). Numerous transport vehicles were either stolen or vandalised. Crop theft and looting were particularly prevalent in the palm industry. Large amounts of palm oil had been left in reservoirs because it was impossible to transport them to factories due to road insecurity; plantations were no longer maintained or treated, giving free rein to the spread of pests and other diseases; purchase contracts had been terminated due to the CDC's failure to uphold its obligations; nurseries were locked and others abandoned, endangering the survival of young shoots(ibid).

Contracts with partners and subcontractors had been terminated, and operational costs had increased, due to the need to reinforce security measures around operational facilities and to protect employees (ibid). Contracts and other arrangements with foreign partners had also been cancelled(ibid). In sum, economic sabotage as a strategy employed by the Ambazonian diaspora has greatly affected the national economy of Cameroon.

8.10 Alliances with other separatist organisations

Ambazonian leaders have also formed alliances with other separatist organisations on the continent. Examples include the coalition between the Ambazonia Governing Council, an armed separatist organisation battling for the secession of Cameroon's English-speaking Northwest and Southwest regions, and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), which is pushing for the establishment of an independent Biafran nation(Craig 2021). The IPOB and AGC 2020 Alliance was announced by the leaders of both organisations, Nnamdi Kanu and Ayaba Chu respectively (Oxford Analytica 2021). Cho Ayaba leader of the AGC has the following to say about the alliance:

> 'We have assembled here today in front of our two peoples to declare our intentions to walk together to ensure collective survival from the brutal annexation that have occurred in our home nations. The Ambazonia and Biafra alliance is critical in an area where Nigeria and Cameroon have established two autocracies that have used violence as political tools to suppress our own peoples' (Ekene 2019:1;Craig 2021:1).

The IPOB leads the movement to bring back the former Biafra, which attempted to break away from Nigeria in 1967 culminating into a violent civil war that led to the death of millions of Nigerians on both side of the spectrum that is from both the state of Nigeria and the ambitious Igbo secessionists militias(Ekpo & Agorye 2018). Nnamdi Kanu, the head of IPOB, is promoting the establishment of an independent Biafra nation(Nwankpa 2022). After three years of fighting, the Nigerian federal forces triumphed, and Biafra—which includes the South-East and portions of the South-South—remained a part of Nigeria. However, pro-Biafra sentiment has persisted throughout time and seems to have become more violent recently(Nwangwu et al 2020). Attacks on federal security formations and institutions in the South-East are being attributed to the Eastern Security Network (ESN), a military branch of IPOB that was established to defend communities in the region against suspected armed Fulani herders(Iwuamadi et al 2021).

According to the Deputy Défense Chief of the Ambazonia Defence Forces, the military wing of the Ambazonia Governing Council, The IPOB-Ambazonia partnership encompasses sharing of troops and weapons, joint operations and training sites(ibid). The AGC also offered to help IPOB with the know-how on how the group(AGC) was able to

make the Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon 'ungovernable'(Agbo 2020). The goal of this is primarily to assist IPOB in making its territory ungovernable by the states administration and Nigerian Federal Government.

A military alliance between Ambazonia and IPOB can contribute to instability in West and Central Africa and the oil rich gulf of Guinea enclave. In an interviewee with Capo Daniel the former AGC spokesperson, he stated that the oppressive cooperation between the governments of Cameroon and Nigeria led to IPOB and AGC becoming allies. This implies the two separatist groups were severed cornered by the government of the two nation(Tindo & Ndobegang 2022). Therefore, they have to unionise for their survival is a dangerous jungle ruled by well-known strongmen Paul Biya and Muhammadu Buhari with clear track record of crushing internal politic revolts in their territories. He stated that 'Biafrans' and 'Ambazonian' were cornered and had no choice other than to fight to defend themselves. Here are his word:

> *'We have been very careful in our association with the Biafra movement, because we didn't want to destabilise the region, but we have been cornered. The Nigerians have failed to act, the international community has failed to act, so we have no other choice but to get into an alliance that can better our chances to defend ourselves'(Zam Lukas 2021:1).*

The two groups' alliance prompted a sharp response from the military forces of Cameroon and Nigeria, which were already cooperating to combat the Boko Haram insurgency in their respective countries' northern areas. It's interesting to note that Nigeria has previously supported Cameroonian authorities in their efforts to quell the Ambazonian independence movement(Ekene 2019). This fragmentation in strategy, whereby the AGC has formed an alliance with the IPOB, has contributed to increasing tensions between the AGC and the Ambazonian IG. The IG has distanced itself from the AGC-IPOB Alliance with the interim president, Sako Ikome, calling it political suicide(Ezeamalu 2021). In his words:

> 'It is political suicide and a very wrong calculation for us to take any position that jeopardises the lives of 120,000 of our people who are enjoying the hospitality of Nigeria right now under the eyes of their government and security forces'(ibid).

The leadership of the Ambazonia IG insists that the Ambazonian cause has no similarities with the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). Dr Sako reiterated in a press briefing that his statement about the AGC-IPOB Alliance represented the stance of the IG, which represents more than 90 per cent of the people of the Southern Cameroons(Sahara Reporters 2021b). To him,, Ambazonians are not in alliance with the IPOB, and they do not intend to have one because their struggles are not the same. He insisted that unlike the IPOB, the Amazonian activists are not trying to break up an existing country, but are restoring their independence,

and would rather have Nigeria endorse their position than have a group of activists or movements that are fighting to secede, to recognise them. It is still uncertain how this alliance has impacted on the Ambazonian struggle and what will become of the alliance after the arrest of Nnamdi Kanu by the Nigerian government(ibid). Whatever the case may be, this alliance is first of its kind, with two separatist groups in the same region forming a coalition to pursue self-determination in two different countries, namely Cameroon and Nigeria.

8.11 Women activism or global Takumbeng mobilisations

Ambazonian diaspora leaders are also using women activism to keep the struggle afloat, and these women play a vital political activist role in the collective mobilisation of the Ambazonia quest for self-determination(Robert 2020). Since 2017, Southern Cameroonian women abroad have been at the centre of the secessionist campaign(Ambe 2006). They have moved from being victims of the war through peacemakers supporting humanitarian efforts to soldiers fighting in the frontlines and rising to position of leadership charged with the responsibility of prosecuting the independent struggle from abroad (ibid).

Cameroon is not the only country where the efforts of women in political activism are documented(Kah & Kah 2011). In fact, history is replete with stories of the role of African women in political activism and collective political mobilisation(Tanga & Fonchingong 2007). Women in sub-Saharan Africa have actively resisted the impositions of colonial rule in the form of levies and taxes(Berry 1993). As individuals and groups, women have resisted colonial policies that they considered inimical to their social and economic progress(Bush & Maltby 2004). The Aba riots were provoked by the expected threat to women's economic activities by tax impositions of the colonial government, and the Anlu(1958) agricultural protests were launched by women who resisted the colonial government's demands that they switch from horizontal to vertical contour farming, – an onerous task for farmers who were expected to farm horizontally on steep slopes(Ukeje 2002). Before 1994, the contribution of women in politics in the western grass fields of Cameroon manifested through resistance to colonial rule(Ndjio 2009). For example, from 1958 to 1961, Kom women in Boyo 'renounced their customary household duties and agricultural work to participate in a rebellion against British administrative intervention in agriculture and the supposed Kamerun National Congress scheme to market community land to Nigerians' (Ambe 2021:19). Anlu, a group of old women interfering with funeral rites, insulting men in public, and demanding that all public institutions close before engaging in civil disobedience thereby disobeying both traditional and British authorities in the Bamenda western grass field of Cameroon(Mougoué 1990). They were crucial to the Kamerun

National Democratic Party's overwhelming victory in 1961, which brought back political stability during the independence era(ibid).

Figure 45: Global Takumbeng

Source: Takumbeng Website

The Takumbeng are a group of older women in the western grasslands of Bafut who put their lives at risk to bring order and peace to their community(Ambe 2021). They have three main roles, namely exercising moral guardianship in their local or traditional communities resisting colonial rule; and transforming a local cultural movement into a force for political change through activism and collective mobilisation(Tanga 2006). As regards moral guardianship, the Takumbeng mobilise to reprimand individuals who violate key community moral standards. As regards resistance to colonial rule, Takumbeng women from many rural areas have linked with each other to demonstrate against colonial and post-independence rules, initially agricultural, from the 1950s onwards(Yenshu 1995). Lastly, the Takumbeng have been transformed into a force for political activism by targeting political institutions(Fonchingong & Tanga 2007). For instance, in 2017, Takumbeng came out in numbers to protest against what they termed as the invassion of Southern Cameroons by Cameroonian military. Demonstrations took place around the world, especially in Europe and the US, in front of Republic of Cameroon embassies in France, the UK and the US, with the largest of the demonstrations on the grounds of the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

After colonialism ended, the Takumbengs became well known gaining notoriety/influenced in the 1990s following the ghost towns era in Cameroon. These are the four main occasions in which they stepped up to protest(ibid). The first occurred following May 26, 1990 due to the deaths of six citizens at a pro-democracy demonstration. The second instance took place when they publicly dare Cameroonian security forces in a march to the provincial governor's residence on July 5, 1991(Jua 1993). When the women undress, the law enforcement officers became essentially helpless to stop them. Female genitalia are revered in this culture; a woman can sacrifice everything else, but not her vagina, which is the essence of

her femininity(ibid). The third occurred amid the turbulent shift to multiparty politics in Cameroon in the early 1990s and the fourth occurred in 1991 during the "villes mortes" (or "ghost town") operations and the state of emergency that was proclaimed in Bamenda on October 27, 1992(ibid).

During this time, the Takumbeng surrounded the compound of Fru Ndi, chairman of the Social Democratic Front (the main opposition party in Anglophone Cameroon), who was placed under house arrest in the aftermath of proclaiming the results of the 1992 presidential election(Numvi 2016).

As of that time, the Takumbeng encircled Fru Ndi's home to ensure his safety while under house arrest by the Biya government. Fru Ndi who is now late was the chairman of the Social Democratic Front, the major opposition party in Anglophone Cameroon. After declaring the results of the 1992 presidential election, Fru Ndi was placed under house arrest (Numvi 2016). The women stormed his home in an attempt to stop him from being formally arrested by the government of Cameroon while also providing him with food and access to supporters(Diduk 2004). Ultimately, in 1998, the women escorted him during his diplomatic mission away from Cameroon as he travelled from Bamenda to Douala to catch flight at the Douala international airport(ibid).

The role of the Takumbeng in the present conflict started on 1 October 2017 when Ayuktabe called for their participation in the demonstration for the restoration of independence (Kindzeka 2022). During this time, women on ground in Cameroon and in the diaspora adorned themselves in white loin cloths known as rappers, while tying their hair with red cloths and having in their possession kitchen utensils as weapons of defence (ibid). The white loin cloth is indicative of purity and peace, while the red cloth and kitchen utentils signify an end to bloodshed and violence. Many of them carried the peace plant (*dracaena diesteliana*) locally called ‘nkeng’ (ibid). The peace plant has great cultural significance on the western highlands of Cameroon and is usually used to demarcate a boundary between two houses or farmland. It is also used when a traditional leader sends a messenger to someone in the community(Fongod et al 2014).

The women also carried out protest marches in Washington D.C., although not in the nude as in the 1990s, as a concession to Christianity and social media, thereby reducing the impact of the movement. Centuries ago, women had palm leaves in their mouths to indicate a longing for peace. Since the start of the war, women have made their voices heard(Ambe 2021). Ambazonian women abroad also play leading roles in the IG. This includes Marianta Njomia, who was chosen to replace Sako Ikome by the Restoration Council(ibid).

7.12 Special status for the Northwest and Southwest Regions

In 2019 the major national dialogue ended with the granting of special status to the anglophone regions of the Northwest and Southwest(Amin 2021), and in December the same year the Cameroonian parliament ratified the Regional and Local Authorities (RLA Code) to legislate and govern the special status granted to the regions (Republic of Cameroon 2019).

Figure 46: Prime Minister Dion Ngute addresses the opening ceremony of the Major National Dialogue (2019)

According to the rapporteur-general of the Major National Dialogue, the recommendation was as follows:

> 'Grant a special status to the North-West and South-West Regions, in conformity with Section 62 Sub 2 of the Constitution; Take specific measures to ensure equality of English and French in all aspects of national life; Reinforce the autonomy of Decentralised Local Entities; [and] Improve upon the infrastructure of judicial services throughout the country…' (Enonchong 2020).

The granting of special status to these regions sparked great optimism among anglophones, especially the SDF party members who thought that the two regions would enjoy autonomy akin to the special status granted to Quebec, Canada's minority French-speaking province (Ndi 2019). There was some resemblance between the cultural past of the two states (Canada and Cameroon) and while it may have been an exaggeration to draw parallels between them, anglophone optimism was not entirely unwarranted, given their unique historical experiences.

The RLA Code governs the overall decentralisation framework, the status of local elected officials, the regulations that apply to regions and councils, and the budgetary policies that

apply to both local and regional authorities. It specifies that regions and councils will serve as local authorities, and that they will conduct their operations with due respect for the state's primacy, territorial integrity, and national unity (Republic of Cameroon 2019). With regard to the anglophone regions, it is acknowledged that the regions have unique characteristics, and that 'the North-West and South-West Regions shall have a special status based on their language specificity and historical heritage' (Section 3(1)). Section 327(1) restates this and adds that the Northwest and Southwest will enjoy unique status in line with the requirements of Article 62 of the Constitution. The law also specifies that special status will be given within the framework of decentralisation, in particular with regard to functioning of the two anglophone regions. It shall also consider the specificities of the Anglo-Saxon legal system and respect the uniqueness of the anglophone education system.

Sections 267 to 273 of the RLA Code deal with the powers devolved on each of the state's ten regions with regard to economic growth, health and social development, education, sports, and cultural development. In the field of education, regions are able to participate in creating and executing the regional components of the national school map. Regarding national language promotion and culture, the regions have the authority to create regional linguistic maps, develop functional command of national languages, and gather and translate oral tradition works in order to facilitate publishing of the latter. In accordance with Section 328(1), the Northwest and Southwest Regions shall exercise additional powers of establishing and overseeing regional development bodies, taking part in the creation of national public policies concerning the anglophone education subsystem, and taking part in the process of determining the status of traditional chiefdoms.

Initiatives for local development that support regional economic growth will be overseen by anglophone regional administrations. An example would be the establishment of a regional produce marketing board similar to the West Cameroon Marketing Board during the federal era, which served to promote the marketing of regional cash crops like cocoa, coffee, tea, and palm oil(Ollong 1978). Such initiatives would be developed at the request of the local authorities and administered by them, taking into account concerns that are particularly pertinent to local communities. The unique legal tradition founded on a common law system is also acknowledged.

Section 328(2) stipulates that anglophone areas may be consulted when judicial policies in the common law subsystem are being developed. This recognition is new since no other Act expressly gives anglophone officials the ability to confer with others while creating judicial policies. Thus, there is room for the equality of the system of common law to be strengthened and preserved – something that has taken on new importance since the

beginning of the crises in 2016. The establishment of a common law division in the supreme court's judicial bench was proof of this acknowledgment. A department was also created in ENAM dedicated to the training of judicial officers with a background in common law (Enonchong 2023). This aimed to solve the predicament where judges trained in French civil law are assigned to anglophone areas with a common law heritage. Although the implementation of special autonomy status could potentially address the fundamental causes of the anglophone problem, some detractors viewed the dialogue and solutions as subterfuge(Muvunyi 2019). They opposed the idea of special autonomy status, arguing that it represented subjugation and was a worse arrangement for these regions (ICG 2023). Others rejected the proposal because it originated from pro-government participants at the major national dialogue on the decentralisation commission. They argued that the plan was to stifle any debate about federalism(Enonchong 2020: 208). This was supported by the fact that the proposed special status would be provided in accordance with Article 62(2) of the constitution, which provides that decentralisation laws must take into account the specificities of all regions(ibid).

8.12 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the strategies used by members of the anglophone diaspora in their international advocacy for Southern Cameroonian self-determination. It has found that the struggle morphed from a peaceful movement in the 1990s to a more violent and virtually directed movement between 2016 and the present. Ambazonian activists abroad have used various strategies such as non-violent protests, ‘ghost towns’, a unilateral declaration of independence, the formation of a government in exile, the introduction of self-defence militias, economic sabotage, the establishment of a TV station in South Africa, and social media to radicalise young people and create regional linkages with the activists of Biafra’s independence movement. Even though these tactics have not secured the recognition of the Republic of Ambazonia, they have helped to ensure that the Cameroonian government recognises the anglophone problem, makes concessions to try and solve the issue by through significant national dialogue, and grant special autonomy to the Northwest and Southwest Regions.

9 Challenges faced in advocating the independence and international recognition of Southern Cameroons (Ambazonia)

9.1 Introduction

This chapter surveys the setbacks and challenges experienced by members of the anglophone diaspora in the course of the secessionist project. A notable feature of the Cameroonian conflict is its lack of recognition by international actors(Willis 2021). Despite the brutality of the violence in which children have been prime targets, and recurrent reports of mass killings and images of families in shared graves, the international response has been surprisingly muted(ibid). In 2019, the Norwegian Refugee Council named Cameroon as the seat of the world's most neglected displacement crisis for the second year running (Hajer 2020). It said nine out of ten of the world's most neglected conflicts were found in Africa,, with Cameroon's anglophone conflict first on the list(Lee Soomin et al 2022).

Contrary to the international attention given to other conflicts like the Ukrainian war, the Cameroonian anglophone conflict is plagued by diplomatic and political paralysis, weak aid operations, and scant media attention(Nji 2016). 'Despite facing a tornado of emergencies, their calls for help fall on deaf ears,' Jan Egeland, secretary-general of the Norwegian Refugee Council, stated in 2022(NRC 2022). As a result, the council has called for increased attention to be given to this crisis, and to place it higher up on the international agenda (Hajer 2020).

9.2 Lack of military capability to combat the state

The military power of the armed anglophone cannot be compared with the military power of the Cameroon state, which is heavily backed by international actors(Willis 2021). In response to unexpected state violence, some anglophone groups have tried to defend the local population(Ayuk-Etang 2020), initially with makeshift weapons, but as state violence escalated, anglophone resistance has grown. Civilians have picked up arms and joined the violent struggle, many of them relying on old hunting rifles. A good example is a video showing a young militia member equipped with very old weapons being killed by state forces. An interviewee has confirmed that soldiers use dane guns and sticks to fight the well-equipped Cameroonian army(Daniel, Norway, September 2022).

The Cameroonian military forces receive aid from the US, Germany, the UK and France. Over the past 10 years, the US has channelled hundreds of millions of dollars to the

Cameroonian military, and Germany pays Cameroon the largest sum of development funding in the world – €100 million between 2017 and 2019 alone. Germany has also conducted a four-year covert military operation in Cameroon to train the army in anti-terrorism techniques. Since 2018, the UK government has supported the London-based firm New Age to win a contract to develop an offshore gas project in Cameroon estimated to be worth more than $250 million. This lucrative contract sees money going directly to the state-owned company SNH, which reportedly funds the elite armed forces of the Cameroon state (Willis 2021). France's involvement in Cameroon has continued since independence and is by far the most significant(Endong 2020). In addition to military support and trade deals, France has maintained indirect control of the local currency, has been heavily involved in the political process, and also gives significant military aid to the state. The strength of the Cameroonian military was revealed by the president of the Ambazonian Interim Government, Dr Sako, in speech to the nation on 10 February 2019. In his words:

> *'Our enemy is versatile with an estimated capacity of at least 30 thousand trained armed terrorist soldiers, and with a budget of over 250 million US dollars for their wars. More than 50 per cent percent of this amount has currently been allocated for the war they declared against us with the pretext of safeguarding peace in the territory. They have vowed to "neutralize" us...in the words of Chief Terrorist Dictator Biya. That's why we have more than 10 thousand of their terrorist soldiers scattered all over our territory'(Federal Republic of Ambazonia 2019).*

This situation has led to the adoption of guerrilla-style attacks by Ambazonian militia groups on the national army to avoid open confrontation, while keeping up continuous calls for a UN peacekeeping force to intervene, and applying for the right to protect Ambazonia(Amin 2023).

9.3 The loss of key self-defence leaders

Ambazonian militia groups have lost many key commanders to the Cameroon army as well as through infighting. Interviewees commented as follows:

> *'We have lost many self-defence militia leaders. Many of them were sold out by their brothers, others out of foolishness lost their lives' (Calvin, Nigeria, 2021).*

> *'Many of our boys on ground have died, others have been seduced by La Republique to join their juvenile detention centres tagged DDR centres (Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration Centres)'(Ekoka, Nigeria, November 2021).*

Ambazonian separatist have lost thousands of fighters(Willis et al 2023). Some of these were killed by the Cameroonian military, and others in inter-militia rivalries and betrayals

in the restoration forces. According to Musa(2022), inter-group clashes started after separatist political leaders voted to impeach Samuel Sako Ikome, president of the IG. In an interview with the Voice of America, a leading figure in the diasspora stated:

> 'We have seen forces distancing themselves from command and control as a result of the impeachment of Sako Ikome and the further splintering of the IG group, and we have seen field marshal Lekeaka Oliver, who is supposed to be the overall commander of the Ambazonia Restoration Forces, desperately trying to command loyalty from forces who have denied aligning themselves with him'(Kindzeka 2022).

On 2 February 2022, the legislative arm of the IG passed a vote to impeach its leader, Sako Ikome. The council accused Ikome of corruption, embezzlement, the misappropriation of funds, and illegal deals with the Cameroonian government. This led to rivalries between restoration forces who supported Sako and those who chose to remain loyal to the Restoration Council (ibid). There were also clashes between the Red Dragons, a separatist militia group led by Lekeaka Oliver, popularly known as Field Marshal, and another militia group (ibid). In an interview with the Voice of America, a military spokesperson confirmed that the fighting was bloody in Kumbo (a town in the Northwest Region), with at least 15 separatist fighters killed or wounded.

A self-proclaimed separatist general who goes by the name 'Mad Dog' led attacks against separatists who supported Lekeaka Oliver(Bareta News 2022). Mad Dog stated that he had not received guns, ammunition, or congratulatory messages from Lekeaka since becoming the leader of separatist fighters in Kumbo, and as a result Lekeaka's orders were not respected in Kumbo. He also even accused Lekaaka Oliver of not being a field marshal but a Cameroonian government agent pretending to be fighting for Ambazonia(ibid).

Eric Tataw, an activist based in the US, noted the discouraging effects that separatist divisions were having on the spirits of the people and fighters (Cameroon Concord News 2020). Some deceased Ambazonian militia commanders are listed in Table 7.

Table 7: Deceased Ambazonian militia commanders

Name	Rank	Affiliation	Place of operation	Year of death	Place of Death	Killed by
Ivo Mbah	General	Ambazonia Defence Forces	Matoh and Teke	2018	Teke	Cameroon Military
Oliver Lekeaka	General	Red Dragon	Lebialem	2022	Menji	Cameroon military
Ayeke	General	Alou Guerilla Fighters"	Lebialem	2020	Alou or Besali Wabane	Cameroon Military
Divine	General	Unknown	Meme Division	2020	Marumba Botunda	inter-rebel clashes
Above The Law	General	Fako-Meme Black Tar Council	Fako, Bui and Meme	2021	Mbalangi	security forces
Ebube	General	unknown affiliation	Bafut, Bui, and Donga-Mantung	in 2021	Nfoyah/ Nseh	Security Forces
Abakwa	General	Ambazonia Defence Forces	Muluf	2021	Muluf	Security forces
RK	General	Southern Cameroons Restoration Forces	Fundong	2023	Fundong	Security forces
Opopo	General	SOCADEF	Munyenge	2021	Munyenge	Security forces
Leonard Nyambere	General	Unknown Affiliation	Meme	2019		Surrendered to the government

Source: Maxcel Fokwen

Key fighters like Leonard Nyambere laid down their weapons and joined the government to convince other fighters to follow suit (VOA 2020). In an interview, Nambere claimed he was still in touch with separatist fighters who also wanted to surrender but did not trust the authorities' offer of reintegration. Some of the fighters think the government wants to trick or kill them(Mimi Mefo Info 2021). According to Tata, some separatist fighters have accused Nyambere of being a sell-out or traitor and called for his recapture on social media (ibid). Other fighters have been caught by the Nigerian government and sent to Cameroon. The Nigerian Special Forces reportedly arrested scores of Ambazonian fighters around the Nigerian-Cameroon border town of Ikom(Sahara Reporters 2021). The Biafra Nations League claims that the forces also arrested a top commander of the Ambazonian separatist fighters, General Black Mamba. The security agencies are said to have carried out his arrest after the Ambazonian forces attacked Nigerian security forces and collected their guns

(ibid). Some fighters have joined the disarmament, demobilisation and re-integration centres established by the government of Cameroon. The establishment of the DDR has also seen many militia fighters drop their weapons, leave their camps in the bush, and join the DDR progamme to seek reintegration into society.

Cameroon authorities have confirmed the arrival of ex-combatants at the DDR centres in both anglophone regions(Kindzeka 2020). The government has also complained of more than 130 former separatist fighters escaping from DDRF centres. These ex-fighters turned themselves in at the rehabilitation centres but later escaped, complaining about poor facilities and a shortage of basic supplies. In spite of initial voluntary surrenders, Cameroon authorities still regard former rebels as a security threat. The Cameroon military spokesperson in charge of the war in Anglophone regions even threatened to kill any ex-combatant who again takes up arms against the state of Cameroon, but promised ex-fighters that they would be pardoned if they returned to the DDR centres – and insisted that security and defence forces were there to protect them. In an interview, he reportedly said:

> 'We need collaboration to succeed in this operation, because we have to win hearts and minds. Many Ambazonians separatist fighters have been misled, but let them drop their weapons, we take them to the DDR Centres and then they come to normal life'(Kindzeka 2021).

The operation to bring back ex-fighters and encourage those who are still reluctant to drop their weapons is carried out in local media. Messages about the functioning of the centres are shared on social media, and some ex-fighters have reported that the conditions at the DDR centres were improving and that there was enough food, agriculture, livestock, and carpentry training facilities to give former fighters revenue-generating skills(Kindzeka 2020). To encourage other fighters to quit the separatist cause, a former fighter at the disarmament centre in the northwestern town of Bamenda stated that the military did not torture ex-fighters to get information, and that claims of harassment and killing shared on social media were separatist propaganda to discourage those who wanted to quit fighting (ibid). In his words:

> 'Social media information that the military has killed some ex-fighters is fake news and separatists who have not handed themselves to the Cameroon government want to intoxicate the minds of fighters who are ready to surrender, such information should not scare young fighters who have just joined the demobilization centres and are still to know how the centres function. I am already learning how to repair computers and hopes to earn a living from it in the future'(ibid: 1).

9.4 Arrest and Imprisonment of key diaspora Leaders

Another challenge facing diasporan activists is the arrest and imprisonment of some of their leaders. As two interviewees stated:

> *'Our leaders have been arrested; they are now serving a life sentence in La Republique concentration camp in Yaoundé. The absence of those leaders has caused many damages to the revolution. It has resulted to leadership vacuum at the begin of the arrest, the division, infighting and many killings' (Kingsley, South Africa, May 2021).*

> *The arrest and imprisonment of our leaders has caused so much confusion and infighting in the revolution. The leadership crisis has slowed the revolution (Stephen, US, October 2021).*

The Cameroonian regime's tactics in combating the recognition of Ambazonia are limitless. Sisiku Julius Ayuk Tabe, President of the Ambazonia IG, is still being held in jail in Yaoundé where he is serving a life sentence in spite of demands from human rights organisations and activists demanding his release(Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019). After Siseku Julius Ayuk Tabe was arrested with nine other separatist leaders in January 2018, they were handed over to Cameroon where they were kept incommunicado for many months, tried in a military court, and sentenced to life imprisonment(Cochrane & Afungang 2019). The group was convicted of charges including terrorism and secession and given a fine of US$350 million(Ngando 2019; Maclean & Kiven 2019).

The severity of the sentence raised fears that the conflict playing out in Cameroon's anglophone regions between separatist rebels and military forces would be prolonged, and that no ceasefire would be possible (ibid). Felix Agbor Balla, a leading human rights advocate in Cameroon, described the decision as a sham which would cause a lot of anger among anglophones. He argued that sentencing Sisiku Ayuk Tabe and his cabinet members was not the solution to the problems but rather ran the risk of escalating the problems(ibid). True to this prediction, more Anglophone youth joined the self-defence militia after the arrest of Sisiku, and Sako Ikome who replaced Sisiku Ayuk Tabe shifted the ground from independence by diplomatic means to self-defence(Ketzmerick 2023).

Although Ayuk Tabe's leadership was not accepted by many of the other veteran leaders of the liberation struggle,, who saw him as too inexperienced to handle the struggle and even called him a JJC (Johny Just Come) or 'new guy on the block', his arrest and that of his cabinet members created a large vacuum that has led to serious infighting within the IG,, and ultimately one of the most notable challenges to the struggle(Agbaw-Ebai 2019).

9.5 Limited funding

Members of the Ambazonian diaspora are finding it difficult to fund the liberation war in Cameroon. Although the organisations at the forefront have come up with numerous fundraising strategies, it has never been sufficient. Furthermore, accusations of the misappropriation of funds and mismanagement have discouraged donors for fear of placing resources in the hands of unaccountable leaders.

> *'War needs money and given the strength of the government we are fighting,, money will never be enough'. Cameroon has taxpayer funds at their disposal, we have just the determination of our people and their wishes' (Carlson, US, October 2021).*

> *'When it comes to funding the revolution, money will always be needed. One of the reasons why members of the Anglophone diaspora have an edge over the home front in the liberation struggle is their role in financing the revolution, or what I called their deep pockets, which simply implies their financial strength. Money will always be needed until the war is done' (Eric, Canada, October 2021).*

No matter how financially viable members of the anglophone diaspora community may be, they still fall short compared to the financial power of the Cameroonian government that has access to taxpayer money and can easily borrow from international organisations or other partner states to fund the war effort in Ambazonia(Willis et al 2020; Sheehan et al 2019). This was clearly revealed in a speech by the Acting President in 2018:

> 'Dear comrades of the revolution, we need to do more! Why do you allow yourself to be discouraged by baseless events? Why do you tell yourself a lie and believe in it. Why do you ignorantly assume that someone in the heart of this war has collected more than 700 000 US dollars for MTTB and dumped it on some individual somewhere? Maybe you need to know how costly it could be to prosecute a war; Our enemy is versatile with an estimated capacity of at least 30 000 trained armed terrorist soldiers, and with a budget of over 250 million US dollars for their wars. More than 50 percent of this amount has currently been allocated for the war they declared against us with the pretext of safeguarding peace in the territory' (Federal Government of Ambazonia 2019).

The Cameroonian government has spared no expense in defending its policy which initially consisted of denying that there was a crisis in Cameroon, branding the activists secessionists and terrorists, and then declaring war against them(ibid). Perhaps because those policies have not yielded the expected level of success, the government of Cameroon has embarked on a diplomatic offensive by expending exorbitant amounts of money to retain western lobbyists(Akoh 2020). Christopher Fomunyoh of the National Democratic Institute captured this situation when he said it is the typical routine seen in Washington when autocrats kill their own citizens and pay a lobbying firm to clean up their image(ibid).

According to public disclosure filings under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) and the Foreign Lobby Watch project at the Center for Responsive Politics (CRP), the government of Cameroun has spent a minimum of US$940 027 in the US on lobbying since 2017. Some of the lobbying firms include the Denver-based Squire Patton Boggs, which has a long history of representing dictators in Africa, including the genocidal government of Sudan (ibid). Clout Public Affairs is a firm created by the former aides of the Republican Senator from Texas, Ted Cruz. Clout signed a contract requiring $55 000 a month to represent Cameroun. Jimmy Soniof, a former editor of the liberal Huffington Post, joined David Polyansky, Cruz's former chief of staff and Catherine Frazier, another former Cruz's aide to do public relations for the government of Cameroun, and placed targeted op-eds in conservative-oriented outlets to foster a robust and growing partnership narrative into the future(PM News 2019; Belin 2019). Cameroon is financially capable of prolonging this war until the separatists become exhausted. As it is, many people are already tired of the war, and this calls for a change of strategy by the diaspora leaders to prevent a century-long war like the one in Eritrea and South Sudan.

9.6 Infighting within the government in exile

The struggle is bedevilled by endless fights among separatist leaders. Every now and then social media is abuzz with news of divisions and a lack of compromise between diaspora leaders. Edward, an Ambazonian supporter in the UK, and others had the following to say:

> *'Our struggle is plagued by divisions and infightings. This is common in any revolution movement around the world, for instance South Africa during the fight against apartheid, South Sudan and even IPOB there are divisions and infightings but for Ambazonia I think it's been poorly managed and too publicized by an inexperienced media'(Edwards, UK, September 2021).*

> *'We have division, unfortunately it has caused us a lot; these divisions are over-publicized by La Republique to discredit our revolution and make us look unfit to lead a new nation'(Ebel, US, September 2021).*

> *'The Cameroon regime's enablers among us are sponsoring division to make us look unserious in the eyes of the international community. Anglophones have always been divided even before, during and after reunification, but it has not stopped the revolution'(Henry, UK, August 2022).*

> *'Our leaders are divided; they need to work together so this war can end. We are refugees in Nigeria while they are fighting one another in Europe, America and South Africa'(Perpetua, Nigeria, October 2022).*

The movement has split into four main factions: one is led by the imprisoned Sisiku, and the second by the US-based former pastor, Samuel Ikome Sako. The other two are led by Chris Anu, the long-time spokesperson of the IG, and Marianta Ijeoma. Apart from this there is also SCOOP led by Atam Milan(ibid). Sisiku's faction is regarded as the strongest of these groups(Crawford et al 2022). Due to a lack of cohesive leadership, separatist movements now have divergent opinions about how to go about achieving their goals (Asanga & Achiri 2021).

Following the detention of Sisiku and his government in Nigeria, there was internal strife within the movement. Samuel Ikome Sako was chosen to serve as the acting interim president, a decision that several people criticised for lacking transparency(DeLancey et al 2019). The Southern Cameroons Liberation Council was established in April 2019 as part of his administration's efforts to bring the many separatist militia groups together. However, he was criticised for being incompetent, polarising, and misusing public monies(Sunjo 2020). When Sisiku declared that he was dissolving the IG in early 2019, tensions between the two leaders reached an all-time high(Journal du Cameroun 2019b). As previously noted, Ayuk Tabe announced on 3 May 2019, that the cabinet, headed by Sako, had been disbanded and that his own cabinet had been reinstated. The Sako government was acknowledged for its earnest efforts in the statement but was eventually deemed unfit to lead the struggle going forward(Journal du Cameroon 2019a). Here is an excerpt from the document explaining the dissolution of the IG:

> 'Considering that despite all efforts by well-meaning Ambazonians responding to my appeals to keep the Interim Government afloat by accommodating the caretaker cabinet while these issues of infighting in the struggle involving grave improprieties both in the management of material and human resources are sorted out, the caretaker cabinet has lost the ability to reconcile our people and, in doing so, has imperilled the identity and mission of the interim government to complete the decolonization of Southern Cameroons through advancing our collective national interests. It is incumbent on me as a servant-leadership fiduciary to bring redress to the Southern Cameroons-Ambazonians, to their struggle and their nation, from their slow descent into a footnote of our own history. I hereby declare and direct that the caretaker cabinet is forthwith dissolved and that, the cabinet as was in office on January 5th, 2018, when parts of the leadership and I were abducted be reconstituted, restored and reactivated' (ibid:1).

The Sako-led administration declined to acknowledge the legitimacy of Ayuk Tabe's authority to remove the interim cabinet and hence refused to step down. In June 2019, the Ambazonia Restoration Council impeached Ayuk Tabe for 'treasonous actions' and proclaimed that he had lost the right to make decisions on behalf of Ambazonia(Journal du Cameroon 2019b). In November 2019, pro-separatist outlets said that Sako and his allies

had changed his title from acting interim president to president, with the goal of permanently replacing Ayuk Tabe even if he was released(Ibid). On 13 October 2020, Ayuk Tabe reached out to Sako from prison in Yaoundé to resolve the fall out amongs the two of them. President Ikome Sako maintained his unwillingness to accept Ayuk Tabe's cabinet, adding that ‘there is only one Interim Government’. He also asked that Ayuk Tabe declared the dissolution of his cabinet before any reconciliation could occur. The right step was Ayuk Tabe engaging or consulting with Sako on issues of concern to him before proceeding to dismiss Sako and his team from their responsibilities.

The leadership crisis exacerbated the already fragile alliances between Ambazonian separatist factions. The AGovC, which has a difficult relationship with the IG, expressed support for Ayuk Tabe. Wirba Joseph declared the impeachment of Ayuk Tabe 'ridiculous'(Mbala 2019:1). On 2 February the Restoration Council passed a vote to impeach Sako Ikome, accusing him of corruption, the embezzlement of funds and illegal deals with the government of Cameroon. He was replaced by Marianta Mjomia (ibid). While divisions within the separatist movement had existed since the 1980s, this rupture proved to be far more significant, considering its impact on the liberation war.

The split led between Sako and Ayuk Tabe complicated and delayed the prospect of direct talks with the Cameroonian government (Asanga & Achiri 2021).

The schism between Sako and Ayuk Tabe hindered and delayed the possibility of direct talks with the Cameroonian administration(Asanga and Achiri 2021). In 2019, Switzerland surfaced as an arbitrator for negotiations for peace between Ambazonian nationalists and the Cameroonian government(Beseng et al 2023:97). The Sako faction of the IG assembled officials and delegates from 10 Ambazonian nationalist movements to form the Ambazonia Coalition Team (ACT), also known as Team Ambazonia, and a 'joint platform for negotiations' with the Cameroonian government(Ketzmerick, 2022; Afungang 2020). The majority of the activists in ACTs were US-based, and they included other nationalists from the Southern Cameroons diaspora, such as Kometa Elvis of the Southern Cameroons National Council and Boh Herbert, the leader of the Movement for the Restoration of the Independence of Southern Cameroons. The Geneva-based Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (CHD), an NGO that mediates in disputes, assisted in the negotiations. The IG Sisiku alliance declined to take part in the process, doubting the legitimacy of the discussions and the Cameroonian government's commitment to peace, mockingly referring to them as the ‘Swiss chocolate talks’, despite the fact that the ACT groups were dedicated to the process (Maxwell 2020). Similar to Sisiku, Ayaba of the AGovC questioned

Switzerland's neutrality throughout the negotiations, calling the discussions a 'Trojan horse' designed to give the Cameroonian government the upper hand(Foute 2019).

On 2 July, Ayuk Tabe, Wilfried Tassang and Blaise Shufai met with representatives of the Cameroonian government, led by Léopold Maxime Eko Eko, head of the Directorate General of External Research (DGRE), and a military tribunal delegate to ascertain the requirements set by the Ambazonian people to facilitate an effective ceasefire in Ambazonian territory(Jeune Afrique 2020). Ayuk Tabe listed the following as requirements for engaging in negotiations: demilitarisation of the anglophone areas, prisoners to be released, and diaspora leaders to be allowed to come home. Finally, once the other requirements were satisfied, the talks could only happen outside Cameroonian territory. In response to the meeting, the group led by Sako said that inmates were not capable of negotiating, and the AGovC, which had previously backed Ayuk Tabe in opposition to Sako, adopted a similar position(Maxwell 2022).

Aside from this, conflicting policy viewpoints are thought to have resulted from the infighting. Foreign-based leaders who struggled with coordination adopted divergent policy stances – a recurring issue that affects day-to-day operations in the regions involved in the conflict (ibid). The separatists, for instance, initiated a protracted school boycott at the outset of the conflict, arguing that the educational system discriminates against anglophone pupils by requiring them to study French, while francophone students are exempt from this requirement (ibid). Separatist leaders also frequently imposed lockdowns, or what they refer to as 'ghost towns' – a cessation of all commercial activities(Bennett 2017).

In 2020, Chris Anu, the former communications secretary of IG Sako, based in Texas, issued a warning that an indefinite lockdown would be implemented unless all political leaders were released. In opposition to this announcement, Boh Herbert, an activist with ACT, tweeted that the threat was unacceptable and that the lockdowns common in the anglophone crisis held civilians hostage and caused immense suffering(Maxwell 2020).

Divisions also surfaced between the AGovC and IG Sisiku. A spokesperson for the AgovC's armed wing, Tapang Ivo Tanku, once threatened that anyone who did not pay the 'liberation war tax' would be kidnapped and held for ransom. The political branch of the AGovC and IG Sisiku dissociated themselves from the claim, which some saw as mere blackmail (ibid). Last but not least, the pro-Ayuk Tabe AGovC declared an association with the independence movement, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), resulting in yet another clash of policy positions(Khan 2021). Sako criticised the alliance, calling it 'political suicide', and claimed that the AGovC had endangered hundreds of thousands of anglophone refugees living in Nigeria. Sako also emphasised Ambazonians' need for Nigeria's goodwill(Ezeamalu 2021).

Instead, the government led by Sako favoured mending Ambazonia's relationship with Nigeria. The AGovC responded by saying that ‘those who liberated Rwanda came from refugee camps in Uganda’, and ‘Nigeria has shown itself not to be our friend.’ Sako's claim to the presidency of Ambazonia was likewise rejected by IPOB, which labelled him one of many ‘traitors and selfish fellows’(Aliuna 2021).

Ultimately, the humanitarian efforts of international relief organisations on the ground have been made more difficult by infighting. Inter alia, relief workers are unsure which group to ask for permission to enter villages that are in need. Humanitarian organisations have also complained about their members being kidnapped by separatist rebels and held for ransom while the government repeatedly accused them of helping separatist fighters, regarded as terrorists. This has resulted in NGOs being required to provide evidence that they are helping the civilian population impacted by the conflict on the basis of need and without bias(Maxwell 2022). For example, Chris Anu of Sako-IG ruled that funds for home repairs were being ‘stolen’ by the government, and thus ordered the suspension of a UNDP project intended to rebuild houses that had been demolished by security forces(ibid).

9.7 Cameroon’s counter-Ambazonia efforts

The government of Cameroon is not giving up on suppressing separatist sentiments in the country's anglophone communities. According to Eden, an Ambazonian diehard in the UK:

> *‘Cameroon is not willing to leave, they are not going to withdraw the military. There is still Cameroon active presence in the Northwest and Southwest Regions after five years of the war’(Eden, UK, January 2023).*

In spite of continued lobbying by the Ambazonian diaspora, the Cameroonian government continues to exercise authority over the Northewst and Southwest regions and has been relatively successful in keeping the actions of militias in the contested zones under control, while preventing the international community from recognising Ambazonian independence(Fru 2022: Okereke 2018). These efforts to suppress Ambazonian nationalism have limited the impact of the conflict to cyber nationalism(Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019). All of this began in 2017 when the government labelled anglophone movements secessionists and terrorist organisations(Orock 2021). The government of Cameroon has persistently employed the argument of territorial integrity or state sovereignty to persuade the global community that the conflict in the disputed regions is an internal matter(Lapegna 2018). By upholding its political rhetoric of one indivisible sovereign Cameroon, the government has condemned secession and any proclamation of independence.

9.7.1 Increased militarisation of anglophone regions

Cameroonian military presence has been enforced in response to the rise of Ambazonia militias to prevent obstruction to the functioning of administrative duties in anglophone regions(VOA 2017). As James Ker-Lindsay states, it is vital that the act of secession is contested from the moment a declaration of independence is made, if not before, since silence may possibly be read as de facto acceptance of the loss(Ker-Lindsay 2012). The government has challenged the declaration of Ambazonia restoration of independence by maintaining political authority in both conflict regions that constitute Ambazonia(VOA 2017). To ensure the maintenance of political control over the contested regions, the Cameroon government ensures that presidential elections and other political activities are kept running(Keke 2020). For instance, on October 7, 2018, elections were held in the two regions despite continuous calls for boycotts by separatist groups who consider election a foreign affair(ibid). Due to the increase violence in the regions arising from the October 1 celebration of Ambazonia Independence Day and the emergence of militia groups, the separatist hoped to disrupt the planned elections thereby expanding the sense of exclusion and non-participation of anglophones in the political life of Cameroon (Fru 2022).

The election took place in the contested regions, but the turnout was poor with about 10 per cent of the registered voters able to make it to the polls because of the atmosphere of hostility and internal displacement of some of the voters who could not vote in different districts. Attempts by separatist to sabotage municipal and parliamentary elections witnessed threats and attacks on candidates and their properties (ibid). Separatist fighters in anglophone regions claimed responsibility for the abduction of some of the parliamentary and local council's candidates who defied their request to resign (ICG 2020). Some English-speaking candidates in the February 9, 2020, local and parliamentary election withdraw their candidacies because of threats and destruction of their houses by secessionist (AfricaNews 2018). Separatist fighters also took to social media to object to elections being organised in anglophone regions and imposed a 6-day lockdown. However, Cameroon's territorial administration minister, Paul Atanga Nji, insisted that despite the threats the elections would still take place, that security in the conflict zones would be enhanced, and called on residents in the areas to work with the military and the administration by reporting suspected separatists in their towns and villages(ibid). In the Minister's words:

> 'In the Northwest and Southwest, the head of state has given firm instructions that we have to do everything for these elections to hold properly. The security services must protect the electorate, protect those who are going to vote, protect the system and protect all the structures put in place to conduct free and fair elections'(ibid: 1).

Even the African Cup of Nations took place in Cameroon against all separatist threats that matches would not be played in Limbe. The tournament was hosted by Cameroon and took place from January 9 to February 6, 2022. The tournament was originally scheduled to be played in June and July 2021 but was postponed(Amin 2020).

9.7.2 Preventing acts with the potential of endorsing Ambazonia

Over the last 5 years, the government of Cameroon has been tactful in handling issues that could legitimise secessionist campaign. Even though it has successfully prevented recognition the international organisations especially the UNs and foreign states, the government wants to ensure that not even an illusion of legitimacy of an Ambazonia state is created in the territory(Fru 2021). Acts that legitimise Ambazonia are continuously fought against, especially its supporters and loyalist who attempt to celebrate independence on the streets and radio stations(Olomojobi 2022). These celebrations are usually characterised by a declaration of independence and hoisting the Ambazonian flag in the historically important town of Buea which used to serve as the capital of German Kamerun and British Southern Cameroon, but these efforts are being stopped by the security forces and perpetrators are arrested and tried for treason(Kindzeka 2019). During the major national dialogue, for example, while the government of Cameroon and various opposition parties and civil society organisations were in Yaoundé seeking solutions to the anglophone conflict, separatist militias and their supporters took to the streets in rural areas to celebrate the independence of Ambazonia opposing the national dialogue because it failed to consider discussions about the form of state(Robert 2021).

Attempts to include this issue in the agenda were dismissed as Cameroon's state official stating that secession was not recognised in the constitution. The government also keeps denying the existence of a problem peculiar to the anglophones in Cameroons and refrain from making use of the designation Ambazonia' in its correspondences and speeches – they refer to the territory as the Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon and to the militias as secessionists, terrorists and sometimes 'enemies of the state'. Apart from this, possession of the Ambazonian flag and logo are considered acts of treason(Ngala 2020).

9.8 Non-recognition of Ambazonia by superpowers

At time of completing this study, only Camara de Barueri, a community located on the South-eastern side of Brazil has officially recognised the state of Ambazonia(Arrey 2019). This acknowledgement has no legal status in international law. Apart from this, there has not been any overt international recognition of the declared restoration of Ambazonia state. Efforts geared at preventing other states from recognising of Ambazonian independence lies

at the very heart of the counter-recognition strategy by the Cameroonian regime(Fru 2022). Although the parent state has a part to play in the decision of recognizing and acknowledging a secessionist state, the reality is that superpowers of the world shape international attitudes towards the recognition of a seceding state(Troco 2019). The most influential country in international politics is the US whose influence and prominence on the international stage helps to shape decisions of other international political actors to accept or reject the recognition of newly form states(Daalder & Lindsay 2003). This recognition can help to solidify anglophone claims of secession and pave the way for admission into the international community of states or the United Nations General Assembly(Caspersen & Stansfield 2011). Recognition by the USA helped in the secession of South Sudan(Olusesan & Basiru 2018), and lack of recognition stifled the secession of de facto states like Somaliland(Pegg 2017).

When it comes to Ambazonia, international actors have emphasised respect for human rights and the fact that the conflict can only be resolved by addressing the root causes through inclusive dialogue involving all parties in the conflict(Beseng et al 2023; Anna 2021). The USA Department of State has described USA-Cameroon relations as 'positive' and continue to emphasise concerns over human rights abuses particularly in the anglophone and Northern Regions where secessionist conflicts and Boko Haram terrorism are ongoing (ibid). Prior to the emergence of Boko Haram in the northern region of Cameroon, USA-Cameroon policy focused more on influencing the Cameroon government to carry out political reforms (ibid). But after 2014 the bilateral relationship shifted to focus on counter-terrorist cooperation through the support of Cameroon's efforts in the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) (ibid). These efforts by Cameroon are of great significance to the US war on terror and the latter assisted with tactical training and the supply of military equipment(Foyou et al 2018). The USA provided a support package of $45 million to train the Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR) and 300 US troops to provide airborne intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance operations in the region. It is considered that this corporation against terrorism between the US and the Cameroonian government has caused the United State to keep on treating the genocide in anglophone Cameroon as an internal conflict.

On the 28 November 2017, the US called on the government of Cameroon to respect the fundamental freedoms and to dialogue with the anglophone regions(ICG 2017). The Cameroonian government's failure to respect human rights resulted in the termination of trade benefits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and a reduction in military aid but no official statement was made to recognise the anglophones minority as a people under oppression(Ketzmerick 2023). Again in 2020 the US Senate passed Resolution

684 relating to the Cameroon conflict(Ambe 2021). This resolution denounces abuses perpetrated by government security forces and militant groups in Cameroon's Northwest and Southwest regions and indicates that the US remains committed to holding Cameroon liable for defending the security and constitutional rights of all its citizens, irrespective of region, religion, or political opinions. It also encourages every party involved in the conflict in Cameroon, including the government of Cameroon, US foreign relations entities, and members of the international community, to take specific efforts towards addressing the ongoing civil war(Beseng et al 2023:98).

France has also not done much to support conflict resolution efforts. Instead, Cameroon's diplomatic relationship with France has aided in hindering recognition of Ambazonia in the international community(Agbaw-Ebai 2017). This can be attributed to French economic interests in the Southern Cameroons. Endong posits that French diplomacy in Africa, to a greater extent, is aimed at maintaining relationship with the colonies where they have economic interest and investments(Endong 2017; Powell 2017). French diplomats have emphasised that their influence in Cameroon is maintained by the direct and private relationship they have with President Biya and that any public move or condemnation of the regime's activities might undermine this(Fru 2022). Britain has done little to acknowledge its responsibility to the people of the Southern Cameroons(Chiatoh 2019). Despite the history of British Southern Cameroon being a former colonial territory of Britain, British has maintained a strong bilateral relation with the regime in Cameroon. Germany, Russia, and China for their part, have remained silent and prefer not to make public statements about Ambazonian independence and ambitions to secede(Fru 2022).

According to the International Crisis Group, at the early phase of the conflict in 2017, the EU response to the conflict was the most sluggish and though some European countries wanted the EU to release a joint statement on the anglophone conflict, their request was thwarted by other member nations who were concerned about denouncing Cameroon too openly because of its support in the fight against the terrorist group Boko Haram(ICG 2017:16 &17).

Other European countries prefer to side tacitly with the Cameroon government to protect their economic interests in Cameroon against the Chinese (Fru 2022). The EU is an essential international trade, humanitarian aid, and development partner for the state of Cameroon, but the organisation has little political weight and is unable to interfere in major internal political dispute like the Anglophone crisis(Mutah 2022:5). . However, it later considered reevaluating its development and humanitarian assistance to Cameroon if the country's leadership fails to take aggressive steps to end the conflict. For instance, in 2019, EU

endorsed a resolution calling for the unconditional release of political prisoners, including Maurice Kamto, the leader of one of Cameroon's largest opposition groups. The resolution also called on both sides to engage in what they called "sincere and constructive dialogue" to find a peaceful political solution to the situation. Furthermore, EU authorities have published statements advocating for the proportionate use of force and punitive actions against perpetrator of violence, particularly those who engaged in acts of violence towards civilians(News24: 2018:1 Euractiv 2018:1;Mutah 2022:5). Finally, Cameroon's neighbour Nigeria which is the only country sharing a common boundary with the Southern Cameroons regrettably does not support Ambazonia(ibid). The Nigerian government expressly does not recognise Ambazonian independence as it is worried that secession in Cameroon would promote the already existing secessionist movements for an Independent Republic of Biafra(Asujkwo 2021). In addition, Cameroon and Nigeria's military cooperation in the fight against Boko Haram in the north of Cameroon and Nigeria has contributed greatly to maintain a cordial relationship between Cameroon and Nigeria which of course is unfavourable for the recognition of Ambazonia(Foyou et al 2018). The friendly ties between the two nations are considered to be the reason for the arrest and incarceration of Sisiku AyukTabe and his cabinet in Cameroon(Kwachuh 2020). Although the federal high court in Abuja ruled against the arrest of these leaders considering it unconstitutional and ordering their return to Nigeria, no effort has been made by either the Nigerian or Cameroon's government to do so(Konings & Nyamnjoh 2019).

9.9 Complaints of undemocratic culture and extreme secrecy in the internal workings of diaspora-led liberation movements

Ambazonian nationalist movements in the diaspora have been accused of espousing undemocratic norms and secrecy in their internal operations. According to two participants:

> *'For a long time, we have been asking how Sisiku became President. What made him credible as a leader of Ambazonia. They keep telling us of 4th conclave, but I and majority of our people did not vote in that process'(Patience, South Africa, May 2021).*

> *'President Sako has been holding on to power since he was chosen to replace AyukTabe. How long is he going to be there? Is he going to lead the IG forever? He has too my scandals of corruption and embezzlement, even refusing collaboration with other groups. He leadership has led to too much factionalism within the I.G'.(James, Cape Town, January 2021).*

The liberation movements fighting for the restoration of the independence of Southern Cameroons, like many liberation fighters of previous generations, have shown 'obsessive secrecy and an unapologetically hierarchical command structure', even though their written constitutions are praiseworthy examples of democracy (ibid). These practices probably

make sense in light of the threats from the Cameroonian government, but the top-down management style has of the organisations suggest blind allegiance to choices taken by a select few without seeking the opinions of the majority (DW 2021). Group loyalists have made considerable efforts, even at this critical level of the revolution, to suppress criticism of the decisions taken by an unrepresented minority (ibid). The problem here is that once revolutionary movements get traction, it is difficult to break the culture of secrecy around them. Many people in Ambazonia fear that this might actually be the reality for their country now that the outside community has recognised their reestablished independence. Some have even declared that they do not wish for South Sudan to recur in Africa (Gumede 2017).

Ambazonian liberation organisations should not only have constitutions that affirm adherence to democratic principles but must also internalise these ideals and show sincere efforts to create inclusion plus checks and balances. If they fail to do so, it will be nearly impossible for these practices cease once they come into power (Poe 2012). For example, it can be argued that a non-discrimination clause in the liberation movement constitution is more likely to be maintained and continued after independence than created anew (Akoh 2020). There are reports of discrimination against the Mbororo people in the Northwest (CHRDHA 2021). Following fights between Mbororo Fulani gangs and Ambazonia militants in the Northwest, leaders of the Ambazonia liberation movement have called for Fulanis' deaths. An administering structure during the revolution which is inclusive of all ethnicities or does not discriminate on the basis gender, religion, or ethnicity and protects minorities, youths, and people in the rural areas, and youths – will create a better foundation.

9.10 Discrimination against opposing viewpoints, dissent within the liberation movement, and the diaspora-led I.G.'s drive to establish a one-party state

According to Akoh, there are factions in all the Ambazonia liberation movements that harbour intolerance towards any dissent. These individuals often consider anyone questioning a decision made by the leadership of their group as an enemy or an agent of French Cameroun(Akoh 2020). This is in sync with what the research on observed from social media posts and during group meetings. Some individuals in the liberation movement even attack leaders from rival groups though they are all fighting for the same liberation. Groups have differed with and criticised each other, and some have broken away from established alliances such as SCACUF to form new relationships like the ARCC. As previously pointed out, when allegations of corruption against the Interim Government surfaced, the interim president was forced to order an audit of the IG financial records. The various conclaves were all held accountable for the identified shortcomings of the revolution (Akoh 2020).

Since the arrest of Ayuk Tabe, many critics have argued that the new administration of Sako has stalled the revolution. Others have defended Sako by invoking the fact that in the face of a genocidal attack against Ambazonia, President Sako's signature MyTriptoBuea achievement, raised the funds used in self-defense against French Cameroun. Whatever, the case maybe opposing or criticizing the IG has been welcome (ibid). Nevertheless, Marc Chebs, resigned from SCACUF because of alleged corruption by some individuals within the group, and an IG loyalist said that the Ambazonia revolution need people in leadership who are ready to serve the people of Southern Cameroons unconditionally (Agbor 2017). This implies that the primary goal of the revolution should be to free the 8 million Southern Cameroonian currently in captivity.

In many other circumstances when Ambazonians have criticised the actions of the Interim Government, they have been advised by surrogates to save the criticism 'until we get to Buea' which means 'until victory is won'. The secretary of communication of the Interim Government, Chris Anu, has been known to unleash vitriol against anyone who dares to oppose the IG (CHRDHA 2021). After MoRISC and the AGC broke away from SCACUF and refused to recognise the IG, many condemned them along ethnic lines or accused them of being agents of La Republique du Cameroun(Tembon 2018). There have been multiple attempts to bring all the leaders of the front-line resistance groups back into the same fold as the IG. The general argument raised in favour of this has been that Ambazonians must be united and those who reject unity must be agents of the colonial government. Furthermore, they claim, the only way to get to Buea is for all Ambazonians to be united (Moussissa 2022).

Members of the Ambazonia Self-Defence Council (ASC) have demonstrated that the disunity among the leaders in the diaspora has consequences in Ambazonia. Unity can be divided into two distinct categories: good unity – which is solidarity in fighting for a common cause and bad unity where some people claim that they are trying to get good unity but are really forcing everyone to agree with their point of view, and those who disagree are accused of being disloyal. Ambazonians needed good unity because bad unity is counterproductive to the revolution and ultimately to democracy(Akoh 2020). Militia groups loyal to the AGC have been accused of attacking the hideouts of the IG forces causing the deaths of many restoration fighters in the process. Contrary to expectations, the AGC leader Dr Cho Ayaba has never denied these allegations which generated additional backlash on social media against his supporters(Nwati 2020).

There have been legitimate fears when supporters of the IG demanded everyone to come into the same camp. This seemed like calling for the creation of a one-party liberation

movement of Ambazonia – similar to the battle cry for a one-party state that was the norm shortly after independence in many post-liberation African countries(Akoh 2020). Nkwame Nkrumah started to call for a one-party state as early as 1962, Julius Nyerere in 1965, Senghor in 1966, Kenneth Kaunda in 1972, and Mozambique in 1977 (Saul 2002). The argument raised in all these countries was that a united single party which represented everyone was the only feasible approach for newly minted African countries with limited resources trying to engage in nation-building. Some believed that multiparty elections would be divisive and could undermine new governments.

The popular Ambazonian phrase that all criticisms of the IG or the revolution 'must wait until we get to Buea', is not new. It encapsulates a similar argument made by Julius Nyerere in 1961, when he held that until the war against poverty, ignorance and disease had been won, the people of Tanzania should not let their unity be destroyed by a desire to follow somebody else's book of rules(Nyerere 1997).

This idea that democracy or freedom of speech must wait either until the revolution is won or until economic development is attained, is incompatible with the standards of successful liberation movements. Just as the creation of one-party states generate more conflicts than it prevents, the evidence suggests that African leaders who advocate for withholding democratic principles in favour of achieving unity or economic development, gain neither (Akoh 2020). Dani Rodrik in his acclaimed research on countries in the Global South has demonstrated that there is a positive correlation between democracy and economic growth, but poverty reduction is also essential(Rodrik 1998). Ambazonian leaders need to allow free debates and accept the viewpoints of all parties to show themselves as a nation that respect democratic norms and principles and that their desire is not to establish another autocratic government in Africa.

9.11 An endemic lack of collective domestic support by anglophone political elites in Cameroon

In addition to the points presented above, there is an endemic lack of collective domestic support for the Ambazonian cause from anglophone political elites, especially on the home front, which hinders diaspora efforts. Achakeng(2012) and Fonchingong (2013: 224) claim that this is a historical issue in the Southern Cameroons' cause, and that a lack of domestic support for anglophone nationalism by anglophone political elites in Cameroon is a major obstacle. Domestic support from established political elites is critical to the success of any separatist or nationalist movement(Kellas 1998). For example, Irish nationalism was greatly boosted after 1916 when 'nearly all MPs and local officials in the South of Ireland gave it domestic support to break away from Britain(Agnew 2009:47).Also, Eritrea's success in

regaining autonomy from Ethiopia was also attributed to the active participation of its domestic political leaders in the war(Thompson & Adloff 1968). By 1995, 'Eritrea had lost so much of its autonomy that, unwilling to tolerate, the prime minister and the secretary general of the Union Party that had advocated federation with Ethiopia, resigned their government posts and threw in their weight behind the nationalist movement'(Fonchingong 2013: 224). A comparable circumstance arose when the South Sudanese John Garang, a member of the Dinka tribe and a high-ranking military leader in the Sudanese military, joined the fight for South Sudan's independence and established the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). The South Sudanese liberation movement gained recognition both domestically and internationally thanks to the backing of a senior military officer in Sudan(Young 2005).

However, the elites of Southern Cameroons have not been able to come together and lend domestic support to the Ambazonia cause, assisting leaders of the diaspora in accomplishing their independence goals(Achankeng 2012; Jua & Konings 2004). With the notable exception of the eastern Nigeria crisis, in which Southern Cameroonian leaders banded together and collectively took decisive action, resulting in the establishment of a separate legislature for the region in 1954, the problem of a lack of collective domestic support in the region can be traced back to the 1950s. The British Southern Cameroons' success in securing regional autonomy inside Nigeria's federation was the outcome of the unity and decisiveness of its political elites(ibid). In 1955, all 13 Southern Cameroon lawmakers in the eastern assembly at Enugu decided that 'if for any reason the resolution to create a Cameroon's House of Assembly was rejected; they would stage a walk-out'(Halle 2014). Since that historic event, Southern Cameroonian officials have not rallied as a group to address the territory's political issues of their territory(Achankeng 2012). They did not work together in the interest of the territory and its people at the Mamfe Conference, which was held in August 1959 to present a united front regarding the territory's future, and they did not present a united front at the Bamenda Conference in June 1961 to prepare for the Foumban Talks(ibid).

Following Foumban, the situation in the Republic of Cameroon deteriorated as the anglophone territories diminished to a colony of ex-French Cameroon, making the effects of subordination more agonising. Yet, they did not come out of their docility against their subordinate status in Republique du Cameroun(Anyangwe 2009). The only other time Southern Cameroonian officials got together for a single cause was in 1993, at the All-Anglophone Conference (AAC I) in La Republique du Cameroun, to address the territory's and its people's complaints. The momentum generated by AAC I in Buea and AAC II in Bamenda a year later quickly dissipated due to heavy repression, weak leadership, and

organisational challenges, leaving the battle in the hands of a few leaders(Fonchingong 2013, Konings and Nyamnjoh 2004).

One might conclude that Southern Cameroonian leaders continue to overlook the advantages of collective action for 'perceived collective efficacy' in the pursuit of the nationalist fight(Nyamnjoh et al 2012). As in the past, Cameroonian elites of anglophone extraction who support the Biya regime reject or downplay the existence of an anglophone problem(Awasom 2020).

As a result, with the exception of Joseph Wirba, who stated the truth and then resigned for fear of his life, no member of the anglophone political elite has resigned from a prominent position in protest of anglophone marginalisation. There is no anglophone political figure of the elite, either from the ruling party or the opposition, who is an activist for the anglophone problem(ibid). Instead, they are at loggerheads with those in the diaspora funding the conflict and work hand in glove with the government as infiltrators to sabotage the aspirations of Ambazonian(Orock 2021). The danger of this lack of collective action from the Southern Cameroon elites at home is that it supports the narrative by Biya that the conflict is promoted by a handful of disgruntled individuals abroad(ibid).

This state of affairs is caused by poverty and co-optation (selective distribution of benefits) of the docile Southern Cameroons' elites. Besides being administratively excessively centralised, the public service remains the main employer in Cameroon(Achankeng 2012). Many Southern Cameroon elite members consider their livelihoods inextricably linked to Republique du Cameroun's public service (ibid). Many Southern Cameroonians are hesitant to join the restoration of independence and sovereignty battle, at least overtly, since they are afraid of the unknown and do not want to risk losing their public sector positions, which keep them and their families alive. The hesitation to publicly join the struggle may also be interpreted as fear of consequences, as well as from the perspective of the collective action dilemma(ibid).

According to Achankeng, the unwillingness of the elites to join in the collective action is due to the regime's co-optation strategy or selective distribution of financial rewards (ibid). Gros(1995) argues that successive regimes of French Cameroun have attempted to create divisions among Southern Cameroonians so that they can easily be conquered and controlled by the Francophone dominated state through selective distribution of material benefits to bait them into becoming regime loyalists. Divide and rule has been the undoing of the Southern Cameroonians and the inability to achieve their statehood dream. The result is that Southern Cameroonians do not act as a unified group. The government has used political appointments like prime minister, ministers, board memberships, parliamentary

seats, and assembly speaker to co-opt and divide Southern Cameroonians(Martin 2012). The wedge this has caused in Southern Cameroonian society has contributed to enforcing the politic of the belly (where people put their interest first instead of the collective) and the big man syndrome (Achankeng 2012). For instance, a certain Samuel Tamfu, a Member of the House of Assembly of Southern Cameroons is quoted as saying that he would join the struggle when he leaves the House of Assembly in Yaoundé and returns to the Southern Cameroons (ibid). Even traditional rulers oppose the SCNC and the diaspora's efforts to establish an independent Southern Cameroons state(Fonchingong 2013). Numerous traditional rulers, notably in the Northwest, may identify with anglophone issues on an individual basis, but as a group the Northwest Fon's Union (NOWEFU) has not endorsed the SCNC or any other party advocating for a restored Ambazonia state (ibid). This is because they are viewed as administrative auxiliaries who must serve the ruling party. In fact, several Southwest and Northwest traditional rulers 'have repeatedly condemned the call for an independent Southern Cameroons, appealing to the head of state to employ every available means to defend the unitary state'(ibid). It is obvious that unless anglophones settle their disagreements and prioritise the general good over individual or personal interests, Ambazonia will remain a fantasy.

9.12 Blackleg-ism or infiltrator within diaspora nationalist movements

According to the participants in this study another great hurdle faced by Ambazonian activist in the diaspora is what they have described as 'blacklegism'. The phrase is used by Anglophone nationalists to mean agents of the Biya regime who have infiltrated the ranks of the Ambazonian revolution movements abroad for the purpose of creating division and infighting (A Better Cameroon 2022).

According to one of the participants:

> *'One of the difficulties we have in this struggle is blackleggism, they pretend to be part of the Ambazonian liberation struggle, however, they are lobbyist of the Biya regime abroad who want the status quo maintained. They are also referred to as saboteurs, enablers, or infiltrators and they are the advocates of the so call federalism and decentralization'(Festus, South Africa, May 2021).*

These infiltrators are said to be part of the leadership of some of the frontline groups especially the AGC and the IG. According to Effiom(2021), in February 2019, many informed minds spoke out against the PIGs, as there was mounting and irrefutable evidence that vital elements within it were infiltrators of the Yaoundé regime. Some have blamed the prevalence of infiltrators on the creation of the I G, saying that once the Interim Government was created individuals within it seized control of it through decapitation of the initial

leadership core, and since then the IG has given a semblance of legitimacy to the harmful activities of these scoundrels(ibid). According to Amindeh(2018), Obadiah Mua, secretary general of the Ambazonia governing council, claimed that infiltrators and saboteurs were planted in the Ambazonia independence cause. Akoh(2020) describes the infiltration as a cult of violence. Many people have been killed and maimed because they were accused of being infiltrators working for the Biya Regime (ibid). A wardress by the name of Florence Ayafor was for killed for this reason (CHRDA 2019), Senator Regina Mundi was kidnapped for collaborating with the regime (Africa News 2022), and so were Ni John Fru Ndi, Cardinal Tomi, and many more(Mudge 2019). This practice of the colonised internalising the violence of the coloniser has been observed in the way many liberation movements treat their own, especially those accused of espionage or of being sympathetic towards the enemy (Akoh 2020). Anyone so accused is not given due process; the same arbitrary arrest and extrajudicial killings perpetrated by the coloniser are meted out against the victims. Across many parts of Ambazonia today, the population has condemned the execution of those accused of being spies (ibid). Eric Tataw, another well-known Ambazonian social media activist, has been on record calling for the execution or use of violence against infiltrators and anyone who has violated the ordinances of the IG. In a twitter on May 2, 2020, he stated:

> 'I've asked Ambazonian fighters in the various states to storm the residences of these thieves and burn them down. They work with the government of Cameroon. They're enemies' (Tataw 2020:1).

As already highlighted, every revolution has its own fair share of infiltrators which calls for caution when dealing with people accused of helping the Cameroon regime to kill Ambazonian freedom fighters who may sometimes be innocent. For example, Nelson Mandela apologised to the South Africans who lost family members or were in the Quatro Camps in Angola where the ANC tortured and executed those who were accused of infiltration or spying for the apartheid government(ibid).

9.13 Ambazonian restoration activists in the US sued for their alleged role in the conflict

The anglophone conflict is playing out in the US with the US State department cracking down on suspected Ambazonian leaders linked to arms trafficking in support of the revolution (Kamsu Kom 2019). People from Cameroon were charged last August after investigations by the US Department of Homeland Security in relation to their activities in the revolution (Bagnetto,2021). An interview participant confirmed this:

> *'It is true that some of our comrades have been arrested and charged in relation to their activities in the revolution. Some are facing trials for arms trafficking charges. It is my*

personal believe that you don't have to break a countries law in order to prevent another person from breaking laws in your own country'(Likambi, US, January 2021).

There are allegations that some Ambazonia diehard supporters have been attempting to illegally export arms through Nigeria and at least one other location in Africa from November 2017 to December 2019(Kamsu Kom 2019). The interviewee above confirmed this and stated that Ambazonians cannot break another country's law to fix their own country and must face the music. The three cases in the US federal court system involving ardent Southern Cameroons independence activists were against: a navy reservist, a healthcare attendant and a healthcare business owner. Each case involved alleged shipping or attempting to ship weapons and military goods from the US to Nigeria, including ammunition, without an export license(ibid).

The US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) seized military-grade weapons and military equipment from two shipping containers and two different homes in 2019. According to the affidavit from an ATF agent, 131 orders from two online gun retailers were shipped to a home in Rosedale, Maryland in the US between March 2018, and March 2019. The items were flagged by the ATF along with other information, leading to a search of the premises (ibid). A naturalised US citizen and a US Navy reservist, Nchumuluh, originally from the Southern Cameroons, was accused of converting shipping high-powered AR-15s and AK-47s (Mimi Mefo Info 2021).

A defendant in a related case, detailing a similar exhibit list of 39 firearms, 45-gun magazines of various calibres and at least 39,000 rounds of ammunition, will soon go in front of a judge (ibid). Edith Ngang, an Anglophone Cameroonian and naturalised US citizen has also been accused of conspiracy and exporting guns without a license. The court documents detailed a series of coded WhatsApp messages, exchanged at the time, purportedly showing that the weapons would be concealed in a truck that she owned and put into a shipping container for Nigeria (Bagnetto 2021). She also heads Ambazonian Women for Independence and the Ambazonia Public Affairs Committee. She is very vocal about the injustices that the people in Southern Cameroons have been going through over the years (ibid).

Another Ambazonian activist who has faced charges in a high court in Houston, US, is Tapang Ivo Tanku. His case is in connection with misappropriation of public funds collected for the Southern Cameroons struggle and charges of terrorism and transferring weapons across international borders (Godlove 2019). Plaintiffs allege that Tapang who was the spokesperson for the ADF provided expert assistance to the ADF through Facebook postings and YouTube videos. Many Ambazonian freedom movements have been sued for

their involvement in the liberation struggle. The risk of going to prison on arms trafficking charges has created an atmosphere of fear and caused some Ambazonia diaspora activists to become indifferent to the cause while others tread with care. Apart from this, Ambazonians have to contribute money to support those facing charges in court. This has reduced the money meant for other activities in support of the revolution(Massa 2019) and slowed down the effort of the militias.

9.14 Anglophone diaspora divergence on the most appropriate resolution options

Although the majority of the anglophones interviewed in this study profess to be ardent supporters of the restoration of Ambazonian independence, there are factions in the diaspora who support federation. The group is divided into those that support a two-states federal system with two prime ministers and two governments/ legislatures as it was before unification in 1972 – and those who support federation with ten autonomous states with elected governors, state assemblies, and a central federal government. A group of pro-government anglophone elites in the diaspora is strongly in favour of decentralisation, which has been the Cameroonian government's proposed solution to the problem. A major weakness in anglophone nationalism, as already pointed out, is that anglophones are, however, not united which echoes previous studies on the subject of the anglophone problem in Cameroon (Anyefru 2010). Evidence of the disunity and lack solidarity between the Northwest and Southwest can be seen on social media platforms trying to use ethnic rivalry to silence the struggle by creating division. This divide is fuelled by selective distribution of political appointments among anglophones factions which lead them to discredit their fellow anglophones (ibid). For instance, a minister or general manager from the Northwest or Southwest is made to understand that he owes his appointment to the disappointment of another anglophone and that he must derail all signs of solidarity among anglophones(ibid).

The worst kind of ongoing tribalism is found in the Southwest – worse than the divide between the Northwest and Southwest. The Southwest, for example, suffers from tribalism and the Northwest from tribal regionalism and because of this, each wants to stay in its own camp (Ngwane George, interview, 20 August 2005). This was confirmed by the former prime minister of Cameroon, Simon Achidi Achu, who stated that anglophones should stop having a complex when an anglophone is appointed and that anglophones should target a post in the republic, not a post to be occupied by a South Westerner or a North Westerner. According to him, it is envy, egotism, and position that blind Anglophones. He has always blamed the anglophones for being short-sighted when the government appoints a North

Westerner, or a South Westerner. He advised anglophones to use the republic as their yardstick and not their fellow anglophones.

The previous discussions underscore the fact that lack of solidarity among anglophones has prevented the anglophone problem from being debated in the Cameroonian parliament. While anglophone nationalist groups fight over who will be president instead of focusing on their collective cause, a new war is ignited(Anyefru 2011). According to Effiom, Ayuk Tabe has been called 'Johnny Just Come' (new guy in the block) in terms of experience, and the Interim Government has been heavily criticised as being illegal (Mbong 2021). The Southern Cameroons National Council has also for many years has been criticised for been too diplomatic(Konings 2005). The AGC leader, Ayaba Cho, has been regarded as sell-out, being too much of a hardliner, and responsible for the deaths of many fighters on ground zero(ICG 2019). There is always a hidden agenda as far as loyalty is concerned and every group recognises only its own people, which is tantamount to blind loyalty(Akoh 2020). Ayefru (2010) affirms that the absence of a united voice makes the anglophone case weak and therefore a serious impediment to the success of the liberation struggle being pilot by the diaspora. As already highlighted, the failure to collectively act for the independence of Ambazonia has left anglophone leaders divided on the best way to address their grievances.

9.15 Greed, exploitation, criminality and economic opportunism in the conflict

Aside from the difficulties mentioned above, some people now see the Ambazonia liberation movement as an economic opportunity. The struggle for independence has, in some instances, given way to the pursuit of wealth. An interviewee comments on the ugly situation:

> *'The struggle is now a business, many are now landlords, millionaires because of the struggle. Greedy individuals are making money at the expense of our people's blood, their sweat and sacrifice. We no longer know if we di(sic) save our people from la republique or from our own greedy brothers and sisters at home and abroad'(Ben, US, January 2021).*

Other regrettable activities are kidnapping for ransom, extortion, and the imposition of liberation taxes on civilians who are unable to conduct their economic activities without hindrance during the week due to ghost towns. Separatist fighters were initially funded almost entirely by anglophones in the diaspora(Sunjo 2020), but because of mismanagement of diaspora contributions, the Cameroon government's strict control of remittance flows into anglophone Cameroon, and a sense of fatigue due to prolonged conflict, external sources of funding are drying up. As a result, the separatists' militias have become more self-sustaining in terms of funding and strategy (IDG 2019) and detached from the struggle leadership in the diaspora(Sunjo 2020). The economic gains enjoyed by many of the

separatist militia commanders has emboldened them to a degree that they prefer no other resolution to the conflict except secession or what they call 'restoration' (ibid). Many human rights abuses have been committed against the civilian population to ensure compliance with their civil disobedience strategies in operation since 2016(Willis 2019). Consequentially, this has made them hated and therefore alienated from the very people on whose behalf they picked up arms to defend and liberate. Human Rights Watch estimates that since October 2018, more than 350 people have been kidnapped, some of whom have been school kids and clergy(HW 2019b). Some of the victims are high-profile anglophones such as Fru Ndi, chairman of the opposition Social Democratic Front (SDF) and Cornelius Fontem Esua, emeritus archbishop of Bamenda (ibid). Reports suggest that Ambazonian fighters often molest, rob and torture those kidnapped for a perceived violation of specific instructions (ibid). Relating to the imposition of taxes, Tapang Ivo Tanku, spokesperson for the ADF, said last year that anybody not paying the so-called 'liberation war tax' would be kidnapped and held for ransom but AGovC's political wing and IG Sisiku distanced themselves from the statement, which described by some as basic extortion(Susa Africa 2020).

Some of the interviewees for this study complained about being targeted by Amba fighters and having money extorted from them. The majority of those kidnapped were accused of not respecting ghost towns. Livinus, a local cocoa farmer, was kidnapped by Amba fighters and asked to pay 2 million francs before he was released. Another local chief, Alex, was kidnapped and asked to pay a ransom of 20 million francs before his release; the Amba fighters said he was kidnapped because his community refused to support the struggle, and the community has many people working in the government. In their words:

> *'They came to the village disguised as Cameroonian state military men and said the government has sent them to come rescue us from the impunity of Amba fighters in our community. Later they asked us if we know all the amba fighters in the community, we agreed and starting naming and pointing their houses in the community then they told us they were Amba fighters and told us they will kill us all if we don't give them money. That is how the community started raising money to pay them' (Livinus, Ogoja, Nigeria, January 2022).*

> *'I was held hostage in the village square and asked to pay 20million Francs before I will be released and kept sitting without sleep for three days. The militia fighter complained that my community was not supporting them in the fight and that we are in league with the government to kill them' (Chief Alex, Kumba, January 2022).*

> *'The conflict is now a money-making venture. My God children were kidnapped in the northwest region and the kidnappers who happened to be Ambazonian fighters are asking*

me to pay a ransom or else they won't release my children. The struggle is now a breeding ground for criminality and all sorts of evil' (Henry, London, January 2023).

It is clear that the civilian population is caught in an inescapable web of violence and why they are reluctant to support Ambazonian nationalism. The illegal acts also undermine the legitimacy of this nationalism. Apart from the Ambazonian diaspora's leadership is also entangled in a web of economic opportunity(Sunjo 2020). There have been accusations and counteraccusations of corruption, embezzlement, mismanagement of funds in general and of the MyTriptoBuea crowdfunding initiative(ibid). The IG launched an online crowdsourcing initiative My Trip To Buea in 2018 to support Ambazonia's armed forces and to guarantee their logistical preparedness for eventual sovereignty.[2] Over $1 million was raised by anglophone Cameroonians all over the world, primarily in the diaspora.

Later, the diaspora leadership under Ikome Sako, IG's acting interim president and the communication secretary, respectively, were unable to account for the funds raised (Solowayne 2019). For instance, Yinkfu Nsangong, founder of the Ambazonia Security Council, claimed to have donated $20,000 to the fund. He claimed that the money was stolen while Ambazonia fighters were expected to carry locally made dane guns and 'odeshi' (a system of magic) to protect themselves instead of the envisaged AK-47s and bulletproof vests(Sunjo 2020). This claim is supported by Soter Tarh Agbaw-Ebai, who argues that the growing frustration and rift within the IG has been catalysed by the extravagant life of the acting president of the IG, Dr Sako, who used liberation money for hiring private cars and paying off private bills while most Southern Cameroonians live in dismal conditions in the bushes or as IDPs and refugees in Nigeria. This and other incidents of financial impropriety have led many anglophones to question people who had no gainful employment before the conflict but now live in well-furnished apartments in Europe and America(Agbaw-Ebai 2019).

Cameroon's security service personnel, especially those in the police and gendarmes, have also been accused of extortion and collecting bribes from civilians. Another way the military has been exploiting the conflict for economic gain is through random search and arrest operations(Sunjo 2020). The colonels organise raids in residentials areas suspected of hosting Amba fighters, arrest whoever they suspect, take them to detention centres for two to three weeks and release them when they pay money to the officers(ibid). The struggle has become a profitable venture for both sides, since separatist militia commanders, police officers, soldiers, colonels, the defence minister, and even other government ministries

[2] Buea is seen as the future capital of the Ambazonia Republic. This explains why the fund is named My Trip to Buea (MTTB)

participating in the fight benefit from it. Security forces also carry out their extortion by withholding personal identification documents of civilians, sometimes forcibly requesting access to people's phones looking for any justification to ask for bribes(ibid). Like in Buea, the policemen are just out for money, giving that there has been an increase in the number of security checkpoints by these security services on the highways in the Anglophone regions. These checkpoints are considered by many as an opportunity for the military to raise money from the suffering masses whose livelihoods have been shattered by the prolonged conflict and militia ghost towns(Atlantic Chronicles 2020). The constant harassment of drivers in Anglophone Cameroon by the military in the guise of security checks has led to some standoffs between the taxi drivers' unions and the administration.

In February 2020, taxi drivers in Buea staged a sit-down strike to denounce the harassment they face from separatists and the military (ibid). To resolve the situation, the divisional officer (DO) for Buea urged the striking drivers to return to work while a solution is found to their grievances, but the angry drivers insisted that the illegal police checkpoints mounted in the town should be removed. The drivers equally raised an incident in which a schoolgirl was shot in a taxi while going to school because the taxi driver refused to give money at a checkpoint. They also complained that security forces frequently seize their vehicles and drive them around town, using up the fuel and asking them to pay fines before collecting their cars(ibid). Although the official explained the reasons for these security controls is to ensure compliance with the required documents, the riders argued that all the officers want is for them to pay bribes and that the amount required is too exorbitant for them(Mimi Mefo Info 2020). For its part, the government argues that there is a need to enforce strict security measures in the sector, which it sees as facilitating the activities of separatist fighters(Sunjo 2020). This analysis demonstrates how civilians are caught in a vicious cycle of extortion and opportunistic enrichment at the hands of authorities. Conflict may never end because of greed which promotes extortion and economic exploitation by corrupt individuals.

9.16 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the challenges faced by members of the Anglophone diaspora in their quest for the self-determination of Southern Cameroons. It established that though Anglophone in the diaspora have been supporting what they called self-defence militias on ground in Cameroon, this militia groups still lack the capabilities to fight a well-trained, well-equipped state military. Apart from this, the Southern Cameroons self-defence militias have suffered the loss of most of their key leaders. Additionally, Some of the leaders in the diaspora have been arrest and imprisoned in Cameroon creating a critical leadership vacuum that has been a terrible setback to the realization of the dream for an Ambazonian state in Africa. Moreso, Southern Cameroonians interviewed in this study highlighted limited

financial support to sponsor a prolonged war with the state of Cameroon. This is quite true because while these diaspora activists depend on the good will of their supporter to get funding for the independence war, the Cameroonian government has access to taxpayers money and the help of international partners who are sympathetic to the regime in Cameroon. Another challenge to diaspora effort has been the infighting within the caretaker government in the diaspora that has led to many factions within the movement. This infighting has given birth to complication in terms of delays in negotiations as there exist disagreements on who will take part in the negotiations on behalf of Southern Cameroons.

Secondly, the government of Cameroon has complained of not knowing who to talk to among the various Ambazonia factions and this has derailed the planned Swiss and Canadian Peace talks. There is also conflicting policy positions within these movement that usually cause confusion on who to obey at the ground level and humanitarian efforts have been complicated due to this infighting in the movement leadership abroad. Another challenge has been Cameroon's counter Ambazonia diplomacy abroad, the non-recognition of the independence of Ambazonia in the international milieu and the conflict remains among the ten most neglected in the world. Amongst all these, there exist the commonality of undemocratic culture and excessive Secrecy in the internal operations of Diaspora led liberation movement, prejudice towards the views of dissidents, an endemic lack of collective domestic support of the Ambazonia statehood by Anglophone political elites, blackleg-gism or infiltrators within the diaspora nationalist movements, Ambazonian Restoration Activists in the US are being Sued for their Alleged Role in the Conflict as repeated charges of gun smuggling and conspiracy against diaspora Cameroonians in the US suggest. Also, there still exist amongst anglophone diaspora divergence on the most appropriate resolution option. Ultimately, there is the problem of greed, exploitation, criminality and economic opportunism in the conflict which regrettable many in the diaspora lamented about in the course of this study.

10 General conclusion

10.1 Summary of findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of the diaspora in the campaign for Southern Cameroonian independence. The researcher specifically examined diaspora mobilisation and the struggle for political autonomy by Cameroon's Northwest and Southwest regions. The specific objectives were to investigate the emergence and evolving role of the diaspora in the Southern Cameroonian quest for self-determination and examine the factors or drivers that have motivated this involvement. The study looked at the long and complex genealogy of anglophone diasporas in the enduring anglophone nationalist struggle for Ambazonian nationhood. Second, the study scrutinised the role of the diaspora by looking at the various activities they are carrying out to achieve international recognition for Ambazonia. Third, the study probed the strategies employed by diasporan movements to achieve the independence of Ambazonia and last, the study discussed the challenges or limitations faced by these diasporan movements.

The study has revealed the existence of numerous factions within the Anglophone diaspora comprising independentists or restorationists who will accept nothing less than the independence of the Southern Cameroons. The second faction is made up of those who stand for a return to the federal system before 1972. However, there is divergence within the groups between those who stand for two-state federalism like in 1961, and ten-state federalism under which every region in Cameroon is autonomous. A third faction supports government policy on decentralisation as contained in the constitution, and the last faction is made up of those who prefer the status quo. The two last factions are mostly pro-regime loyalists and supporters who use ethnicity to divide and conquer and have denied the existence of an anglophone problem in Cameroon. This is still the group that supports the special status granted to anglophones after the grand national dialogue on September 30 and October 4, 2019.

The study has also revealed the existence of a long and complex genealogy of Cameroon anglophone nationalism and the role of its diaspora. While cross-border migration in Cameroon gained grounds mainly in the 1960s, the anglophone diaspora began canvassing for political autonomy or full independence of the British Southern Cameroons (Ambazonia) as early as the 1950s through the efforts and activities of a Southern Cameroons student association known as the National Union of Kamerun Students (NUKS) based in the UK and Nigeria in the cities of London and Ibadan. From the 1950s to 1960s these anglophone Cameroonian diasporas comprised students involved in the Pan-Africanist independent movement abroad led by Nkrumah. Their first engagement or role in the

independence struggle came to the fore during the decolonisation days. Prior to the UN-organised plebiscite in the territory of British Cameroons, NUKS pushed for independence of the Southern Cameroons by writing petitions to United Nations — though they later split because of disagreements on the exact mechanics of the struggle.

The 1960s—1970s are punctuated by the assimilation of the Southern Cameroons by the French-dominated regime and an augmentation in the number of anglophones who went abroad through the African Scholarship Program of American Universities (ASPAU 1961 – 1975) and the African Graduate Scholarship programme for Postgraduates studies (AFGRAD 1963 – 1997) overseas studies in the US and UK and became quite visible in their political activism against oppression in their motherland. This was the first emergence of an anglophone diaspora in the US of America and also the first time that the Southern Cameroons had a working-class diaspora in the US, UK and Nigeria comprising professors, doctors, engineers, lawyers and more. Consequentially, they had more money and exposure and began to write about the annexation of West Cameroon by French Cameroon with the goal of bringing this crime to the public international space. Between the 1970s and 1980s, British Cameroons saw Ahidjo change the form of state from a federal to a centralised system, leaving anglophones surprised and unable to fight back due to the repressive nature of the then regime. The 1980s and 1990s saw the emergence of President Biya (in 1982) and a change from the United Republic of Cameroon to the Republic of Cameroon — an appellation used by French Cameroon before their reunification with West Cameroon, increasing anglophone discontent with the status quo. The 1990s saw liberalisation of the political space in Cameroon and the resurgence of anglophone nationalism leading to the formation of the SDF party and later organisations like SCNC and CYL and a host of others to represent anglophone interests. During ? the period of liberalisation, AAC1 and AAC2 were convened by Anglophones to find a way to dialogue with the government and propose constitutional changes for a return to federalism to solve the disenfranchisement of anglophones.

After many years of silence from the government, Ebong Alobwede declared the independence of the Southern Cameroons on the eve of the new year in 1999. This led to his arrest and imprisonment, and also exiles like Fon Gorji Dinka, Ayaba Cho, Ebenezer Akwanga, and Ayangwe Carlson advocating the independence of the Southern Cameroons abroad. Southern Cameroons was admitted to UNPO in December 2004, which provided it with an opportunity to address certain organs of the UN about the situation in Southern Cameroon. Other activities were carried out by anglophones in the USA, UK, and Germany for self-government. The study shows that the anglophone diaspora has been in the struggle for the independence of the Southern Cameroons since the 1950s to the present day. While

this role has not been well known, it has evolved and become more effective with the advent of the internet and social media.

The study has also found that the drivers of the diasporan involvement vary and can been classified into two main categories. The first factors are related to the colonial history of the territory or what participants in this study call incomplete decolonisation and the other factors emanate from the failures of the post-colonial state. Under the category of Southern Cameroons colonial history, the drivers for diaspora participation are flawed decolonisation, British colonial double standards and French neo-colonialist influence in Cameroon. In relation to these factors, the anglophone diaspora considers the conflict a colonial legacy and blame the United Nations, Britain, and France as architects of the present issues in the Southern Cameroon on the basis that Britain could have granted full independence to the Southern Cameroons instead of conducting a plebiscite in 1961. France is blamed for being the invisible hand behind the French Cameroon assimilation of the Southern Cameroons and the direct beneficiary of Ambazonia's natural resources, and because of this they are utilising their seat in the UN security council to block the Southern Cameroon conflict from getting any attention from the UN.

Factors contributing to the failures of the post-colonial state include the francophone regime's centralisation powers after reunification — in complete disregard of the spirit of federalism. The underdevelopment, socio-economic marginalisation and gross inequality of the anglophone regions is another pull factor for diaspora involvement. Anglophone regions complain of neglect and underdevelopment in terms of good, paved roads. Other drivers of anglophone participation in the struggle are: co-optation of anglophone elites, regime authoritarianism, a protracted history of human rights abuses, collective anglophone experiences of stereotyping, the failure of the Social Democratic Front as a political party to take over the reins of power — especially in the 1992 presidential election to grant freedom to the Southern Cameroons, the government's dismissive responses to anglophone grievances, a growing Southern Cameroons or Ambazonian consciousness and lastly the resilience of the anglophones and restoration forces on the home front or ground zero. At the root of the struggle, according to Ambazonian diaspora leaders and sympathisers, is the issue of incomplete or flawed decolonisation which was masterminded by the British colonial administration accompanied by the complacency of the United Nations. After reunification, the Cameroon French-dominated instituted centralisation policies in utter disregard of the 1961 constitution. This marked the beginning of the failures of the post-colonial state. Later, the anglophone regions were disenfranchised leading to their underdevelopment and inequality. Anglophone elites who could have been the voice of the people were co-opted by the regime and silenced. Also, the authoritarian nature of the

regime has led to a protracted history of abuse of human rights of those who dare to challenge the regime for its unjust treatment of anglophones. Irrespective of anglophone complaints, the government was utterly dismissive and ignored the complaints giving birth to mass protests and an ongoing call for secession. After the 2017 protests, an Ambazonian consciousness became the new liberation narrative strengthening to the resilience of anglophones in Cameroon who now want to settle for nothing less than independence.

The study has also revealed that the diaspora has been playing a leadership role in the anglophone conflict. Almost all the organisations are headed by diasporan leaders, who are educating 'Ambazonians'' about their history. They are making declassified documents on the history of the Southern Cameroons and its reunification available to the sons and daughters of the territory with the aim of conscientising and radicalising them in support of the liberation war. In addition, the anglophone diaspora is contributing to the struggle through cyber space or virtual space nationalism. In this space, anglophones have created cyber communities to support the struggle and make the anglophone plight known. The powerful influence of social media is palpable in present day social movements especially in helping to spread information to a broader audience. Unlike previous years when the Anglophone struggle was kept under wraps, the advent of social media has been a game changer. In addition, the anglophones in the diaspora are channelling their efforts through jurisprudence or the legal space, and have made use of public interest litigation mechanisms to authenticate the anglophone cause. Organisations like SCAPO, SCNC and the present IG are utilising litigation especially on human rights grounds and allegations of genocide to push court cases against the regime's use of brutal force and to defend its territorial integrity. The anglophone diasporans are also the principal funders bankrolling the revolution. They use crowd funding, compulsory liberation tax, the leveraging of natural resources, kidnapping for ransom and other extortion avenues to raise funds for the war and carry out humanitarian efforts. Under humanitarian efforts, they provide food, clothes, and medication to refugees in Nigeria and to internally displaced persons in Cameroon. They also financially support those who have lost their teaching jobs, especially private school teachers during the war. They support anglophones who are in prison as a result of the struggle. They launch campaigns about prisoners of conscience on Twitter, Facebook and other social media platforms. The diaspora is involved in diplomacy albeit very covertly, and in this regard their diplomatic efforts include talking to congressmen in America, human rights organisations, heads of state, the African Union, and political parties. They are also involved in calls for conflict mediation.

The study also reveals that the diaspora is using strategies to gain recognition for Ambazonia from the international community. Ambazonia leaders formed a government in the diaspora,

and just like Biafra and Katanga, the diaspora leaders under Sisiku Ayuktabe, unilaterally declared the independence of Ambazonia in 2017. The diaspora also established the Southern Cameroon Broadcasting Corporation in South Africa to broadcast their propaganda. In addition, the study revealed the use of social media propaganda as a strategy to recruit and gain support from anglophones at home and abroad. This has proven to be very effective as it has radicalised many anglophone youths who have joined the ranks of the restoration forces or secessionist militias fighting the government in Cameroon. Non-violence is the strategy that has been used by anglophones in the last five decades as it has been the slogan of one of the most prominent anglophone liberation organisations, the Southern Cameroon Nation Council ('The force of argument, not the argument of force'). Another strategy is the use of ghost towns; initially used by the Anglophone Civil Society Consortium leaders, Barrister Agbor Nkongho and Dr Fontem Neba. However, after their arrest, the diaspora took over and used force and threats of force in operation Ghost Town in Ambazonia. Every Monday everybody is expected to stay indoors, business places are closed, and government offices are not functional, to respect separatist ghost towns.

Leading on from ghost towns the diaspora, through Ayaba Cho and later Dr Sako Ikome, endorsed the use of self-defence by armed militia to defend women and children from government forces. This is when the liberation war began and turned very violent leading to the death of some leaders and others wounded on both sides. Economic sabotage is also a strategy endorsed by the AGC leadership. Its focus is to target prominent economic entities in Ambazonia like CDC, Pamol PLC, SONARA and other companies and to stop them from operating as a way of crippling the economy of Cameroon. Many of these organisations were not functioning as their workers faced being kidnapped or killed to enforce the ghost towns lockdown imposed by diaspora leaders. The AGC also endorsed the formation of alliances with other separatist organisations like the IPOB to collaborate and share intelligence on self-defense around the Gulf of Guinea. Although the IG led by Dr Sako Ikome called it a suicide mission, the AGC has continued its alliance with the indigenous people of Biafra, a separatist organisation in Eastern Nigeria. Women activism or Takumbeng mobilisations is another strategy endorsed by Sisiku in 2017. The women play a critical role in the liberation struggle. Ambazonian women have formed support organisations to help refugees at home, take part in protests marches abroad, occupy leadership positions in the struggle and serve as militia leaders from abroad.

Regarding the challenges, the study shows that the anglophone diaspora is encountering many challenges that inhibit their efforts to free the Southern Cameroons (Ambazonia). First, Ambazonia militias lack the military capability to combat the state. This is a serious challenge because it is not about declaring independence but defending territory. Cameroon

is using its military might to defend the territorial integrity of the Northwest and Southwest Regions. Second, the Southern Cameroons or Ambazonia militia groups have suffered the loss of their key self-defence leaders. In addition, and key diaspora leaders such as the first president of the IG, Sisiku Ayuktabe, and his cabinet are now serving long prison-terms in Kondengui. Unlike the Republic of Cameroon that has taxpayers' money and the help of international organisations and partners at their disposal to finance the war in Ambazonia, the liberation movement is limited in terms of funding the struggle. Their lean purse is stretched in many directions such as equipping the militias, supporting refugees, taking care of prisoners and internally displaced persons, plus ongoing court cases money needed to open diplomatic doors.

All of this places Ambazonia at a disadvantage compared to Cameroon. One of the most critical obstacles to the Ambazonia liberation struggle is the infighting within the caretaker government. This has slowed down the pace of their advocacy, divided the militia groups, complicated mediation efforts, and encouraged conflicting policy options within the movement. The IG has suffered many splits which have contributed to weakening it significantly. It began with the establishment of the Southern Cameroons Congress of the People in South Africa by Milan Atam a former cabinet member of Sisiku Ayuk Tabe's government after their arrest in Nigeria. Then there are four IG factions which include IG led by Sisiku Ayuk Tabe from prison, then there is IG led by Sako Ekome who was supposed to be acting for after the arrest of Ayuk Tabe in Nigeria. Ultimately, there is another IG faction led by Marianta Ejeoma and the IG led by Chris Anu, the former communication Secretary under both Sako Ekome and Sisiku Ayuk tabe. This factionalism has led to many attacks on the character of key leaders within the liberation movement on social media making many people think the independence of Ambazonia may just be another South Sudan in the making.

The government has exploited these divisions to set up a very effective counter Ambazonia movement that has seen the struggle remain in the shadows. The struggle remains a non-event in the international community. Another great challenge is the Non-recognition of Ambazonia by Superpowers. Western Powers have only emphasized respect for human rights. Also, there is within the Ambazonia diaspora leadership the commonality of undemocratic culture and Excessive Secrecy in their internal operations. Also, there exist within the liberation movement bias against opposing viewpoints and the Diaspora-led I.G. is pushing for the creation of a one-party state. Another challenge is the endemic lack of collective action problem by Anglophone Political Elites. Anglophone elites have not come up in unison to support the call an independent Ambazonia, there is also the problem of 'blackleggism' or infiltrators within Diaspora Nationalist Movements. This is a group of

pro-government individuals within the liberation movement abroad paid to sabotage the struggle and betray the cause. In addition, Ambazonian Restoration activists in US and the UK have been facing Court charges for their Action in the Struggle. Furthermore, due to the various faction within the liberation movement, there exist what this study refers to as Anglophone Diaspora Divergence on the most appropriate resolution for the conflict and lastly Greed, exploitation, criminality and economic opportunism is at the verge of eroding the credibility and the genuineness of the Anglophone cause as scores of civilians have been victims of extortions, kidnapping and sheer robbery precipitated by greed and economic opportunism in the struggle. This has seriously dented the image of the Ambazonia struggle in the eyes of the international community who are now calling on both parties to refrain from human abuses. One of the civil leaders even quantified it as open criminality as Ambazonia militias are now oppressing the same people they took up guns to defend.

10.2 Applicability of the selected theories in this study

This study has been guided by post-colonial theory, long-distance nationalism theory, and the social movement theory of deprivation. Post-colonial theory has been found to be applicable because the anglophone struggle is a direct result of a complex and controversial process of decolonisation. Specifically, anglophone diaspora groups claim to be fighting to free their homeland from the grip of 'a successor colonialist la republique du Cameroun'. They have also called on the UN and UK to revisit the decolonisation process and to take responsibility for their failure to implement UN General Assembly Resolution 1608.

Long-distance nationalism theory is also applicable in that generations of Ambazonians abroad are laying claim to a homeland in Africa, and demanding that this be separated from its mother state. The connection between long-distance nationalists and their homeland government fluctuates significantly. Long-distance nationalists usually participate in their homeland in four ways, namely anti-colonization, regime change, secessionism, and participation. Actions taken may include voting, demonstrating, lobbying, contributing money, creating works of art, fighting, killing, and dying (Schiller, 2005). Anglophone Cameroonians abroad have made use of all these strategies to publicise and legitimise their cause, thereby triggering major policy changes in favour of anglophones in Cameroon.

Deprivation theory is also relevant to this this study because anglophones complain of not benefiting from the natural resources in Southern Cameroon; of being excluded from top government positions; and of being deprived of their identity

10.3 Recommendations and the way forward

It has been six decades since the end of colonial misadventure in Cameroon, but its effects will linger for generations to come. Put differently, the Cameroonian conflict is deeply rooted in its precolonial, colonial and postcolonial past, and will therefore not be easily resolved. Specifically, the Ambazonian resistance movement is deeply entrenched in Cameroon and elsewhere, and will not easily be suppressed. In this regard, digital communication has created new opportunities for long-distance political mobilisation and advocacy. Instead, it will have to be accommodated, and its legitimate claims and grievances recognised.

In order to make progress, the government must desist from branding every concern raised by anglophones as expressions of 'secessionism'or 'terrorism'. This biased categorisation works against addressing legitimate issues of governance and marginalisation, and conitinues to aggravate the conflict.

Secondly, the government should consider the root causes of the conflict – including failures of the post-colonial state -- and call for a sincere and inclusive dialogue with all the factions of the anglophone diaspora, to be held on neutral ground. It should also be willing to include the 'form of state' in the discussions.

Thirdly, the government needs to release all political prisoners related to the secessionist conflict, including those arrested in Nigeria, and withdraw its armed forces from the two contested regions, as demanded by diasporan leaders as well as the international community.

Fourthly, the government need to devise effective youth development programmes, thereby preventing impoverished youths in the anglophone regions from being easily politically radicalised.

At the same time, Ambazonia supporters abroad need to end their infighting and factionalism, and work to huild an ethical and effective movement that will gain the recognition and respect of the international community, and bring the government to the negotiation table.

By the same token, diaspora leaders must become more accountable, among others in respect of managing funds raised for the independence movement, and also work to ensure that all those active in the Ambazonian struggle desist from human rights violations and maintain and respect basic human rights.

10.4 Contribution to Knowledge Production

To start with, the study makes a meaningful contribution in the domain of transnational actors and conflict politics in Africa generally and Cameroon specifically. It goes beyond exploring the complex nexus between diaspora and secessionist conflict in other African states and focused on the anglophone Cameroonian case study, providing a thorough and chronological examination of the anglophone diaspora's involvement in the Southern Cameroons self-determination struggle or nationalist aspiration by highlighting key periods and events from the 1950s to 2022.

It argues that since the 1950s, the diaspora has been instrumental in this struggle through awareness campaigns, legal initiatives, funding, humanitarian efforts, diplomacy, and conflict mediation with the goal of achieving independence or sovereign statehood for the former British Southern Cameroons (Ambazonia). This comprehensive coverage of the anglophone diaspora's involvement from the 1950s to present allows for a deep understanding of the evolution of diaspora involvement in the movement for self-determination. Unlike many studies, it adds to the existing literature on diaspora studies by offering a coherent account of the origins and evolving role of the diaspora, drivers of this involvement, contributions, strategies and the challenges faced in the Southern Cameroons self-determination quest over time.

Furthermore, the study revealed the diaspora by virtue of distance from the zone of conflict have contributed to advancing the cause of Southern Cameroon independence, including the proclamation of an interim government in exile.What the people in the two anglophone regions have been able to do is to launch protests and occasionally ambush the security forces, but without substantially making a dent in the militarized conditions that exist on the ground. Emboldened by the support it obtains from France and other powers, the government has barely countenanced even a return to the federal system that some Southern Cameroonians still prefer to the secessionist option. The government also has the resources to woo a bulk of Southern Cameroonians in the country through patronage and other means to stymie the secessionist drive. The diaspora, therefore, is left to carry the entire burden of keeping the banner of self-determination alive. The depth of research by unveiling the contributions of the anglophone diaspora to the Southern Cameroons self-determination quest add to the existing knowledge on diaspora and nationalism studies in Africa.

Equally, the study challenges the common perception of Cameroon's Anglophone crisis as merely an identity conflict, instead framing it as a struggle rooted in historical grievances, political rivalries, and regional geopolitics involving Nigeria. This is important as the study provide an understanding that the anglophone conflict is beyond language, social identity

but a colonial legacy and to resolve the conflict, the colonial roots of the conflict cannot be ignored.

Furthermore, the study employ the use of a historical lens to analyze a contemporary issue—a critical approach given that existing literature often lacks historical context, making the conflict difficult to grasp. Therefore, its importance lies in its historical grounding, its argument for former colonizers as potential mediators, its insights into conflict dynamics, and its potential as a framework for dialogue. The integration of both historical context and contemporary developments strengthens the relevance and timeliness of the findings presented in the study.

Also, the exploration of both the tangible contributions (e.g., funding, legal efforts, and humanitarian work) and the more abstract elements (e.g., the rise of cyberspace nationalism, women's activism) underscores the multifaceted nature of the diaspora's engagement revealing the significance of the internet and social media in making the nationalist conflict transnational and global. Additionally, through the analyses of the contribution of the internet and social media, the study adds a significant new epistemological dimension in conflict politics, namely 'cyberpolitics' – the opportunities provided by digital communication for dispersed or distanced political organisations to mobilise and influence politics in their homeland. In this case, it includes the formation and attempted maintenance of a largely virtual government in exile, complete with the staging of long-distance 'elections'. Among other things, its intangible and dispersed nature creates new opportunities for distance organisations for their international advocacy making it far more difficult for the current Cameroonian government to suppress the conflict.

Additionally, it specifically addresses anglophone diaspora grievances or motivations for their involvement in the Southern Cameroons self-determination conflict. The various drivers of the diaspora involvement like the claimed non implimentation of UN resolution 1608 of 1961, British supposed betrayal of the Southern cameroons, long history of human rights abuses in anglophone cameroon, underdevelopment and the centralization of political power and the marginalisation of anglophones by the francophone dominated regime revealing once again the link between colonialism and the failures of the postcolonial state to many conflict in post-colonial african states which have contributed to attracting the attention of diaspora actors to homeland politics.

The study also examines the anglophone diaspora strategies for international advocacy and its difficulties in securing global recognition for a sovereign Southern Cameroons state, revealing that the diaspora faces long-term structural issues of legitimacy and accountability which are common among African liberation movements—that warrant further research.

Also, challenges faced, such as lack of military capability, funding limitations, infighting in the diaspora movement and the Cameroon's government anti-ambazonia tactics have contributed enormous to stifling the efforts of the diaspora movement to secure any overt recognization of Ambazonia statehood or sovereignty in the international community. This revealed the daunting task of getting other states within the community of states to recognise a secessionist group.

While what the Ambazonian diaspora movement faces is meant to embody or express the legitimate aspirations of the Southern Cameroon people, it faces similar long-term structural problems of legitimacy and accountability. This perspective allows normative evaluations of the diaspora movement and its leaders in terms of these foundational concepts. Moreover, it allows the Cameroonian 'struggle in exile' to be linked conceptually to political struggles waged more conventionally on African soil. This implies the line of analysis and evaluation of the diaspora contribution and challenges in this study represent a framework which can assist future scholars of diaspora and nationalism studies to reflect more on both concepts and see how things can be handle differently in the future

As is the case with most social science research, this dissertation is not an end in itself. While the study has made an encompassing and substantive contribution to understanding contemporary politics in Anglophone Cameroon, it has also proposed ways of closing the knowledge gap and opened a new and exciting area of study. There are several possibilities for future research on the Ambazonia struggle, an in-depth study on the impact of regional collaboration between the Ambazonia diaspora and the IPOB is required to appreciate why and how the alliance between both groups is contributing to getting the attention of the international community.

Furthermore, a comparative study can be carried out on how Ambazonia groups and IPOB have been carrying out their advocacy and why they have not succeeded in gaining their independence. Moreso, the study revealed that the Southern Cameroons diaspora has been in 1950s and became overt in the 1980s, 1990s went mainstream in 2000s through the SCNC, SCYL Ambazonia but in 2016 everything escalated leading to the present conflict so a study can be carried explaining why the diaspora's role remained in the shadows all those years, what contributed to the upsurge in 2016 and how has the government contained the diaspora on these years. Additionally, further research can be undertaken on the Francophone led diaspora group called BAS with a high presence in France that is advocating for regime change in Cameroon and how their goals, modus operandi and changes differ from that of the Ambazonia diaspora advocacy movement. A study can also be carried out on the impact of the narrative of secessionism and restorationism and how

this is influencing the resolution process in this conflict. Lastrly, there is room for a study on the long-term impacts of secessionism on options for resolving this and other conflicts in Africa

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Ata, 46 years, Amba Restoration activist, Johannesburg, 16 October 2022

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Ben, 54 years Amba activist, UK, April 2021

Ben, 64 years of Age, lawyer and Ambazonia Supporter, USA, January 2021

Calvin, 39 years, Nigeria, July 4th, 2021

Carlson, 56 years, USA, 12 October 2021

Charles, 58 years, South Africa, 20 March 2021

Chief Alex, 68 years, Kumba, 17 January 2022

Cosmas, 54 years, UK, 8 June 2021

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Eldine, 47 years, Johannesburg, 2 July 2022

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Emmanuel, 48 years old, Ambazonia activist, Johannesburg, July 2021

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Fabrice 44 years, Johannesburg, 20 June 2022

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Green, 72 years of age, Researcher on Cameroon UK, January 2023

Henry, 29 years, UK 22 August 2022

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Isaac, 48 years leader of Ambazonia Restoration group, Cape Town, 22 March 2022

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CONSENT FORM

Title of project: Diaspora Movements and the Quest for Self-Determination in Post-Colonial Africa: The Case of Southern Cameroons (Ambazonia)

Name of researcher: Mr Enu Rene Ayuk

I, ……., agree to participate in this research project.

The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve.

I agree to the following (please circle the relevant options below):

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous in the final report of this research

YES / NO

I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes in his / her research report

YES / NO

With my permission, I agree that the interview may be audio/video recorded.

YES / NO

I agree that the information I provide may be used anonymously after this project has ended, for academic purposes by other researchers, subject to their own ethics clearance being obtained.

YES / NO

Name of participant: ……..,

Signature: ……

Date: ……..

Name of person seeking consent: ……

Signature: ……..

Date: ……

UNIVERSITY OF THE
WITWATERSRAND,
JOHANNESBURG

Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Enu

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: H20/09/09**
PROJECT TITLE	Diaspora Movements and the Quest for Self-Determination in Post Colonial Africa:Case Study of Southern Cameroon (Ambazonia)
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Mr R Enu
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	Social Sciences/
DATE CONSIDERED	18 September 2020
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved Risk Level: Low
EXPIRY DATE	26 January 2024

DATE 27 January 2021 **CHAIRPERSON** J. Knight
(Professor J Knight)

cc: Supervisor : Dr S Louw

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10004, 10th Floor, Senate House, University. Unreported changes to the application may invalidate the clearance given by the HREC (Non-Medical)

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to submit an amendment of the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a regular progress report. For Minimal and Low studies, this is due annually on 31 December. For Medium and High Risk studies, this is due twice annually on 30 June and 31 December.**

Signature **Date** 28 / 01 / 2021

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

University of the Witwatersrand
Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), annual progress report

A condition of receiving a protocol number from the HREC is that an annual progress report is supplied. Please complete this table and email to Shaun Schoeman (Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za) as soon as possible.

Project protocol number	H20/09/09
Date ethics clearance certificate was issued	27 January 2021
Risk Level	Low
Is this for degree purposes?	Yes
Project applicant name	Enu Rene Ayuk
Project title	Diaspora Movements and The Quest for Self-Determination in Post-Colonial Africa: The Case of Southern Cameroon (Ambazonia)
Brief description of your progress in the above project over this past year	I am done with chapter 1 2 and 3.
Brief description of any problems you have encountered	Financial difficulties (No funding for my research), Adjustments due to COVID-19 .
Did you encounter any ethical issues during this past year?	NO
If YES, how were these issues managed or resolved?	
Date ethics clearance certificate was issued	27 January 2021
Estimated date of completion of the project*	31 December 2022
Researcher's signature	
Chairperson's signature	

**Reminder: the expiry date of the protocol certificate is given on the certificate itself. If you need an extension of up to two year after this date, please email Shaun Schoeman (Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za) giving a full and complete explanation for why you need an extension and what you will be doing on the project in this extension period.*

INFORMATION SHEET

Dear Sir / Madam,

My name is Enu Rene Ayuk and I am a Ph.D student in the Department of Political Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As part of my studies, I have to undertake a research project, and I am investigating The Role of Diaspora Movements in the Quest for Self- Determination in Post-Colonial Africa: Case of Southern Cameroon (Ambazonia), under the supervision of Dr Stephen Louw and Dr Michael Jana. The aim of this research project is to find out the impact of the Diaspora Movement on the Southern Cameroonian quest for self-determination.

As part of this project, I would like to invite you to take part in an interview answering questions on the research topic Diaspora Movements and the Quest For Self-Determination in Post-Colonial Africa: Case of Southern Cameroon (Ambazonia). This activity will involve answering semi-structured, open-ended questions on the origins, causes, strategies used, challenges faced by Diaspora groups in their quest for an independent Southern Cameroons statehood/self-determination and how conflicting narratives are influencing or stifling the resolution of the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon. I will take around 45 minutes to one hour. With your permission, I would also like to record the interview using a digital device.

There will be no personal costs to you if you participate in this project, You will not receive any direct benefits from participation but there are no disadvantages or penalties if you do not choose to participate or if you withdraw from the study. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. The interview will be completely confidential and anonymous as I will not be asking for your name or any identifying information, and the information you give to me will be held securely and not disclosed to anyone else. I will be using a pseudonym (false name) to represent your participation in my final research report. If you experience any distress or discomfort at any point in this process, we will stop the interview or resume another time.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you (optional). The data collected from this research project will be stored in digital form with all identifying features removed and will be kept for 5 years. With your permission the data collected from this research project may be used by other researchers (optional). If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely, Enu Rene Ayuk
Wits email: 2265434@students.wits. ac.za
Cel number: 083 515 6060

Supervisor: Dr Stephen Louw, Stephen.Louw@wits.ac.za, tel 011 717 4368
Co-Supervisor: Dr Michael Jana,Michael.Jana@wits.ac.za, tel 011 717 4364

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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR LEADERS OF DIASPORA ORGANIZATIONS

Dear Sir / Madam

My name is Enu Rene Ayuk and I am a PhD student in Department of Political Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. For my studies, I am undertaking a research project which investigates the Role of Diaspora Movements in the Quest for Self- Determination in Postcolonial Africa: Case of Southern Cameroon (Ambazonia) under the Co- supervision of Dr Stephen Louw and Dr Michael Jana. The aim of this study is to investigate the contribution of these diaspora groups in the British Southern Cameroons quest for independence. As part of this project, I would like to invite you to take part in an interview, answering questions on the topic.

This activity will involve answering semi structured, open ended questions on the origins, causes, strategies used, challenges faced by Diaspora groups in their quest for an independent Southern Cameroons and how conflicting narratives are influencing or stifling the resolution of the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon. This interview will take around 45 minutes to 1 hour. With your permission, I would also like to record the interview session using a digital device. There will be no personal costs to you if you participate in this project, You will not receive any direct benefits from participation but there are no disadvantages or penalties if you do not choose to participate or if you withdraw from the study. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. The interview will be confidential and anonymous as the information you give to me will be held securely and not disclosed to anyone else. I will be using a pseudonym (false name) to represent your participation in my final research report. If you experience any distress or discomfort at any point in this process, we will stop the interview or resume another time. If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you (optional). The data collected from this research project will be stored in digital form with all identifying features removed and will be kept for future research. With your permission the data collected from this research project may be used by other researchers (optional).

If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical) at:
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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESEACHERS ON CAMEROON

Dear Sir / Madam

My name is Enu Rene Ayuk, and I am a PhD student in the Department of Political Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. For my studies, I am undertaking a research project which investigates the Role of Diaspora Movements in the Quest for Self- Determination in Postcolonial Africa: Case of Southern Cameroon (Ambazonia) under the Co- supervision of Dr Stephen Louw and Dr Michael Jana. The aim of this study is to investigate the contribution of these diaspora groups in the British Southern Cameroons quest for independence. As part of this project, I would like to invite you to take part in a remote interview, answering questions on the topic.

This activity will involve answering semi structured, open-ended questions on the origins, causes, strategies used, challenges faced by Diaspora groups in their quest for an independent Southern Cameroons and how conflicting narratives are influencing or stifling the resolution of the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon. This interview will take around 45 minutes to 1 hour. With your permission, I would like to request that this interview session be audio/video recorded using a digital device. There will be no personal costs to you if you participate in this project, You will not receive any direct benefits from participation but there are no disadvantages or penalties if you do not choose to participate or if you withdraw from the study. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. The interview will be confidential and anonymous as the information you give to me will be held securely and not disclosed to anyone else. I will be using a pseudonym (false name) to represent your participation in my final research report. If you experience any distress or discomfort at any point in this process, we will stop the interview or resume another time. If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you (optional). The data collected from this research project will be stored in digital form with all identifying features removed and will be kept for future research. With your permission the data collected from this research project may be used by other researchers (optional).

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Supervisor: Dr Stephen Louw, Stephen.Louw@wits.ac.za, tel 011 717-4368
Co-Supervisor: Dr Michael Jana, Michael.Jana@wits.ac.za, tel 011 717-4364

QUESTION GUIDE FOR ACTIVISTS

The questions below will provide guiding framework within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe and ask questions that will elucidate on the issue(s) under investigation, while at the same time allowing the participants latitude to supply the depth and breadth of information they are willing to divulge.

The questions comprise five sections: (a) respondent's background information. (b) respondent's perceptions on the origins and factors necessitating diaspora involvement in the Southern Cameroons(Ambazonia's) quest for self-determination, (c) the role played by these diaspora movements in the struggle for Southern Cameroons(Ambazonia's) right to self-determination, (d) respondents' perceptions on the challenges faced by these diaspora organizations in achieving self-determination for Southern Cameroon(Ambazonia) (e) respondent's perception on how the conflicting narratives in the conflict have impacted on the peaceful resolution of the crisis.

Respondent's background Information

1. What is the name of your organization?
2. What is your position/rank in the organization?
3. How many years have you worked with the organization?
4. What is your highest educational qualification?
5. How old are you?

Respondent's perceptions of the origins and factors fuelling diaspora involvement in the Southern Cameroonian quest for self-determination

1. What is your opinion about the ongoing Anglophone quest for Self-Determination in Cameroon?
2. What is your view on the role of the diaspora in the anglophone self-determination quest/claims? Please explain your answer.
3. What do diaspora movements supporting the self-determination of Southern Cameroon seek to achieve? (a) Secession (b) Restoration (c) Federation (d) regime change in Cameroon. Please explain your response.
4. In your view, what are the origins of the diaspora involvement in this struggle for self-determination in the British Southern Cameroon (Amazonia)? Please elaborate on your answer.
5. As an activist, what factors would you say necessitated diaspora support for the Southern Cameroonian quest for self-determination?

Respondent's perception of the role played by diaspora movements in the quest for self-determination in the Southern Cameroon

1. As an activist in the diaspora, what role are you playing in the struggle for self- determination in Southern Cameroon (Amazonia)?

2. What strategies are you using to mobilize support for the achievement of an independent Southern Cameroons (Amazonia)?
3. In your opinion, have those strategies been successful in achieving the goal of an independent Southern Cameroon? Please justify your response with examples.
4. In what ways have you been successful in your contribution towards achieving self-determination for Southern Cameroon?
5. What platforms do you use in order to be effective in your advocacy for an independent Southern Cameroon?
6. What role if any is the social media playing in your activism?

Respondent's perceptions of obstacles faced in the pursuit of Southern Cameroonian independence

1. What challenges if any are you facing in your advocacy for an independent Southern Cameroon? Please explain.
2. In your view, what would you say are constraints to the recognition or realization of an independent Southern Cameroon (Amazonia) state in contemporary Cameroon?
3. What other challenges do you think the diaspora community is facing in their quest for an independent Southern Cameroon?

Respondent's perceptions of how the conflicting narratives in the struggle have impacted on the peaceful resolution of the conflict

From my observation and a review of literature about the Anglophone struggle for self-determination, there are principally two narratives that are common to the struggle. These include the restorationist narrative propagated predominantly by proponents of the Amazonian statehood and the secessionist or extremist/terrorist's narrative constantly used by the state or government officials to designate the former group or the self-defence forces or activist of the movement for Ambazonia.

1. In your opinion how has the media contributed to shaping these narratives?
2. In your view what are the reasons for these conflicting narratives by rival parties?
3. In what ways if any have these conflicting narratives impacted on the peaceful resolution of this conflict?
4. What are the challenges faced by activists in their advocacy for an independent Southern Cameroon?
5. What do you propose as a lasting solution to the ongoing Anglophone crisis in Cameroon?
6. How can the diaspora contribute to the peaceful resolution of the conflict?

With thanks, Enu Rene Ayuk

QUESTION GUIDE FOR LEADERS OF DIASPORA ORGANIZATIONS

The questions below will provide guiding framework within the interviewer is free to explore, probe and ask questions that will elucidate on the issue(s) under investigation, while at the same time allowing the participants latitude to supply the depth and breadth of information they are willing to divulge.

The questions comprise five sections: (a) respondent's background information. (b) respondent's perceptions on the origins and factors necessitating diaspora involvement in the Southern Cameroons(Ambazonia's) quest for self-determination, (c) the role played by these diaspora movements in the struggle for Southern Cameroons (Amazonia's) right to self-determination, and (d) respondents' perceptions on the challenges faced by these diaspora organizations in achieving self- determination for Southern Cameroon(Ambazonia) (e) respondent's perception on how the conflicting narratives have impacted on the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Respondent's background Information

1. What is the name of your organization?
2. What is your position/rank in the organization?
3. How many years have you worked with the organization?
4. What is your highest educational qualification?
5. How old are you?

Respondent's perceptions of the origins and factors fuelling diaspora involvement in the Southern Cameroonian quest for self-determination

1. What is your opinion about the ongoing Anglophone quest for Self-Determination in Cameroon?
2. What is your view on the role of the diaspora in the anglophone self-determination quest/claims? Please explain your answer
3. What do diaspora movements supporting the self-determination of Southern Cameroon seek to achieve? (a) Secession (b) Restoration (c) Federation (d) Regime change in Cameroon. Please explain your response.
4. In your view what are the origins of the diaspora involvement in this struggle for self-determination in the British Southern Cameroon (Ambazonia)? Please elaborate on your answer.
5. In your view, what factors necessitated diaspora support for the Southern
6. Cameroonian quest for self-determination?

Respondent's perceptions of the role played by diaspora movements in the quest for self-determination in the Southern Cameroon

1. What role is your organization as part of the diaspora movement playing in the struggle for self-determination in Southern Cameroon (Amazonia)?

2. What are the strategies used by your diaspora organization to mobilize support for the achievement of its quest for an independent Southern Cameroons (Ambazonia)?
3. In your opinion have those strategies been successful in achieving your mandate?
4. Please justify your response with examples.
5. How has your organization been successful in its contribution towards achieving self-determination for Southern Cameroon?
6. What other platforms does your organization engage to realize its mandate?
7. Probe. Alliances, Military Campaigns/self-defence, lobbying, public protests, humanitarian work, litigations, fund raising, propaganda, framing etc.
8. How does your organization engage in the international political discourse relating to the recognition of Amazonia as a state? Please support your claims with examples.

Respondent's perceptions of obstacles faced in the diasporan quest for Southern Cameroonian independence

1. What are the challenges faced by your organization in fulfilling its mandate? Probe. Discuss them in terms of the following:
    a) Your relationship with the people in the homeland especially those engaged in the struggle?
    b) The relationship with the government of your host states or environment within which your organization operates (enabling or restrictive).
    c) Your organization relationship with international organizations like United Nations, African Union etc (cordial, hostile, independent, and autonomous or apolitical affiliations).
    d) Access to resources (finance, human capacity, technical, others, specify)
    e) Your organization's relationship with sister organizations involved in the same course (cordial, suspicious, peaceful).
    f) Getting international media attention on the Southern Cameroon (Ambazonia) quest for self-determination?
    g) Internal challenges (internal policies within your organization, including membership registration, criteria to become office bearers and their term of service, degree of involvement/active participation by all members, coordination of self- defence groups, responsibilities in terms of human right abuses.
    h) Is there any other issue you may want to raise that directly impacts on your mandate as a diaspora movement?
    i) What are your organizations experiences in terms of dealing with these challenges surrounding it is, especially regarding failed plans, social media propaganda, loss of lives, threats from homeland government officials or betrayals, training of self-defence groups? Please indicate how your organization was specifically involved.

Respondent's perceptions of how the conflicting narratives in the struggle have impacted on the peaceful resolution of the conflict

From my observation and a review of literature about the Anglophone struggle for self- determination, there are principally two narratives that are common to the struggle. These include the restorationist narrative propagated predominantly by proponents of the Ambazonian statehood and the secessionist or extremist/terrorist's narrative constantly used by the state or government officials to designate the former group or the self-defence forces or activist of the movement for Amazonia.

1. In your opinion how has the media contributed to shaping these narratives?
2. In your view what are the reasons for these conflicting narratives by rival parties?
3. In what ways if any have these conflicting narratives impacted on the peaceful resolution of this conflict?
4. What are the challenges faced by the media in providing a fair coverage of this crisis?
5. What do you propose as a lasting solution to the ongoing Anglophone crisis in Cameroon?
6. How can the diaspora contribute to the peaceful resolution of the conflict?

With thanks, Enu Rene Ayuk

QUESTION GUIDE FOR JOURNALISTS

The questions below will provide a guiding framework within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe and ask questions that will elucidate on the issue(s) under investigation, while at the same time allowing the participants latitude to supply the depth and breadth of information they are willing to divulge.

The questions comprise five sections: (a) respondent's background information. (b) respondent's perceptions on the origins and factors necessitating diaspora involvement in the Southern Cameroons(Amazonia's) quest for self-determination, (c) the role played by the media in diaspora involvement in the struggle for Southern Cameroons(Amazonia's) right to self-determination, and (d) respondents' perceptions on the challenges faced by these diaspora organizations in achieving self- determination for Southern Cameroon(Amazonia) (e) respondent's perception on how the conflicting narratives have impacted on the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Respondent's background Information

1. What is the name of your organization?
2. What is your position/rank in the organization?
3. How many years have you worked with the organization?
4. What is your highest educational qualification?
5. How old are you?

Respondent's perceptions of the origins and factors fuelling diaspora involvement in the Southern Cameroons quest for self-determination

1. What is your opinion of the ongoing Anglophone quest for Self- Determination in Cameroon?
2. What is your view on the role of the diaspora in the anglophone self- determination quest/claims? Please explain your answer.
3. What do diaspora movements supporting the self-determination of Southern Cameroon seek to achieve? (a) Secession (b) Restoration (c) Federation (d) regime change in Cameroon. Please explain your response.
4. In your view, what is the origin of the diaspora involvement in this struggle for self-determination in the British Southern Cameroon (Amazonia)? Please elaborate on your answer.
5. As a media personality, what factors would you say necessitated diaspora support for the Southern Cameroonian quest for self-determination?
6. In your view, what role has the media played in diaspora's involvement in the conflict?

Respondent's perception of the obstacles faced by the diaspora in the quest for Southern Cameroon's right to self-determination

1. In your view, what are the challenges faced by the diaspora in their quest for Southern Cameroon's right to self-determination? Please explain.
2. In your opinion, what are the constraints on realizing an independent Southern Cameroonian state?

Respondent's perceptions of how the conflicting narratives in the struggle have impacted on the peaceful resolution of the conflict

From my observation and a review of literature about the Anglophone struggle for self- determination, there are principally two narratives that are common to the struggle. These include the restorationist narrative propagated predominantly by proponents of the Amazonian statehood and the secessionist or extremist/terrorist's narrative constantly used by the state or government officials to designate the former group or the self-defence forces or activist of the movement for Amazonia.

3. In your opinion how has the media contributed to shaping these narratives?
4. In your view what are the reasons for these conflicting narratives by rival parties?
5. In what ways if any have these conflicting narratives impacted on the peaceful resolution of this conflict?
6. What are the challenges faced by the media in providing a fair coverage of this crisis?
7. What do you propose as a lasting solution to the ongoing Anglophone crisis in Cameroon?
8. How can the media contribute to the peaceful resolution of the conflict?

With thanks, Enu Rene Ayuk

QUESTION GUIDE FOR MEMBERS OF CIVIL SOCIETY WORKING ON PEACE-BUILDING EFFORTS IN CAMEROON

The questions below will provide guiding framework within the interviewer is free to explore, probe and ask questions that will elucidate on the issue(s) under investigation, while at the same time allowing the participants latitude to supply the depth and breadth of information they are willing to divulge.

The questions comprise five sections: (a) respondent's background information. (b) respondent's perceptions on the origins and factors necessitating diaspora involvement in the Southern Cameroons(Ambazonia's) quest for self-determination, (c) the role played by the media in diaspora involvement in the struggle for Southern Cameroons(Ambazonia's) right to self-determination, and (d) respondents' perceptions on the challenges faced by these diaspora organizations in achieving self- determination for Southern Cameroon(Ambazonia) (e) respondent's perception on how the conflicting narratives have impacted on the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

A. Respondents background information

1. What is the name of your organization?
2. What is your position/rank in the organization?
3. How many years have you worked with the organization?
4. What is your highest educational qualification?
5. How old are you?

Respondent's perceptions of the origins and factors fuelling diaspora involvement in the Southern Cameroons quest for self-determination

1. What is your opinion about the ongoing Anglophone quest for Self-Determination in Cameroon?
2. What is your view on the role of the diaspora in the anglophone self-determination quest/claims? Please explain your answer.
3. What do diaspora movements supporting the self-determination of Southern Cameroon seek to achieve? (a) Secession (b) Restoration (c) Federation (d) regime change in Cameroon. Please explain your response.
4. In your view, hat are the origins of the diaspora involvement in this struggle for self-determination in the British Southern Cameroons (Ambazonia)? Please elaborate on your answer.
5. In your view, what factors necessitated diaspora support for the Southern Cameroon's right to self-determination?
6. What are the strategies used by the diaspora to achieve the quest for an independent Southern Cameroons (Ambazonia)?
7. In your opinion, have those strategies been successful in achieving the quest for Southern Cameroons independence? Please justify your response with examples.

8. In your view, how has the diaspora contributed to shaping local, regional and international understanding of the anglophone problem?
9. What role if any did the civil society play in the involvement of the diaspora in the quest for the recognition of the right to self-determination of Southern Cameroon?
10. In your opinion how has the diaspora involvement in the conflict to shaping Cameroonian government policy in the North West and South West Regions?
11. What role is the civil society playing in the conflict?

Respondent's perception of the obstacles faced by the diaspora in the quest for Southern Cameroonian right to self-determination

1. In your view what are the challenges faced by the diaspora in their quest for Southern Cameroon's right to self-determination? Please explain.
2. In your opinion, what are the challenges of achieving an independent Southern Cameroon statehood?

Respondent's perceptions of how the conflicting narratives in the struggle have impacted on the peaceful resolution of the conflict

From my observation and a review of literature about the Anglophone struggle for self- determination, there are principally two narratives that are common to the struggle. These include the restorationist narrative propagated predominantly by proponents of the Ambazonian statehood and the secessionist or extremist/terrorist's narrative constantly used by the state or government officials to designate the former group or the self-defence forces or activist of the movement for Ambazonia.

1. In your opinion, how have the media contributed to shaping these narratives?
2. In your view, what are the reasons for these conflicting narratives by rival parties?
3. In what ways if any have these conflicting narratives impacted on the peaceful resolution of this conflict?
4. What are the challenges faced by the civil society in addressing the anglophone of crisis?
5. What do you propose as a lasting solution to the ongoing Anglophone crisis in Cameroon?
6. How can the diaspora contribute to the peaceful resolution of the conflict?

With thanks, Rene Ayuk Enu

QUESTION GUIDE FOR RETIRED GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

The questions below will provide guiding framework within the interviewer is free to explore, probe and ask questions that will elucidate on the issue(s) under investigation, while at the same time allowing the participants latitude to supply the depth and breadth of information they are willing to divulge.

The questions comprise five sections: (a) respondent's background information. (b) respondent's perceptions on the origins and factors necessitating diaspora involvement in the Southern Cameroons(Ambazonia's) quest for self-determination, (c) the role played by the media in diaspora involvement in the struggle for Southern Cameroons(Ambazonia's) right to self-determination, and (d) respondents' perceptions on the challenges faced by these diaspora organizations in achieving self- determination for Southern Cameroon(Ambazonia) (e) respondent's perception on how the conflicting narratives have impacted on the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Respondent's background Information

1. What is the name of your organization?
2. What is your position/rank in the organization?
3. How many years have you worked with the organization?
4. What is your highest educational qualification?
5. How old are you?

B) Respondent's perception on the Origins and factors fuelling diaspora involvement in the Southern Cameroonian quest for self-determination

1. What is your opinion about the ongoing Anglophone quest for Self- Determination in Cameroon?
2. What is your view on the role of the diaspora in the anglophone self- determination quest/claims? Please explain your answer.
3. What do diaspora movements supporting the self-determination of Southern Cameroon seek to achieve? (a) Secession (b) Restoration (c) Federation (d) Regime change in Cameroon. Please explain your response.
4. In your view, what are the origins of the diaspora involvement in this struggle for self-determination in the British Southern Cameroon (Ambazonia)? Please elaborate on your answer.
5. In your view, what factors necessitated diaspora support for the Southern Cameroon's quest for self-determination?

Respondent's perception of the role of the Diaspora Movements in the Southern Cameroon quest for self-determination

1. What role is the diaspora playing in the Southern Cameroon's struggle for self-determination?
2. In your view, what role has the government played in diaspora's involvement in the conflict?

3. What are the strategies used by the diaspora to achieve the quest for an independent Southern Cameroons (Ambazonia)?
4. In your view, have those strategies been successful in helping the diaspora quest for an independent Southern Cameroon?
5. In your opinion, how have those strategies influence a shift in the Cameroonian government policy regarding the South West and North West Regions of Cameroon? Please justify your response with examples.
6. What steps have been taken by the government to engage the diaspora in addressing the concerns of the Southern Cameroonians?

Respondent's perceptions of obstacles faced in the pursuit of Southern Cameroonian independence

1. In your view, what are the challenges faced by the diaspora in their quest for Southern Cameroon's right to self-determination?
2. In your opinion, what would you say are constraints to the Southern Cameroon's quest for self-determination?

Respondent's perceptions of how the conflicting narratives in the struggle have impacted on the peaceful resolution of the conflict

From my observation and a review of literature about the nglophone struggle for self- determination, there are principally two narratives that are common to the struggle. These include the restorationist narrative propagated predominantly by proponents of the Ambazonian statehood and the secessionist or extremist/terrorist's narrative constantly used by the state or government officials to designate the former group or the self-defence forces or activist of the movement for Ambazonia.

1. In your opinion, how has the media contributed to shaping these narratives?
2. In your view, what are the reasons for these conflicting narratives by rival parties?
3. In what ways if any have these conflicting narratives impacted on the peaceful resolution of this conflict?
4. What are the challenges faced by the government in providing a lasting solution to this crisis?
5. What do you propose as a lasting solution to the ongoing Anglophone crisis in Cameroon?
6. How can the government and diaspora contribute to providing peaceful resolution of the conflict?

With thanks, ENU RENE AYUK

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QUESTIONNAIRE

The questions below will provide a guiding framework within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe and ask questions that will elucidate on the issue(s) under investigation, while at the same time allowing the participants latitude to supply the depth and breadth of information, they are willing to divulge.

The questions comprise five sections: (a) respondent's background information. (b) respondent's perceptions on the origins and factors necessitating diaspora involvement in the Southern Cameroons(Ambazonia's) quest for self-determination, (c) the role played by these diaspora movements in the struggle for Southern Cameroons(Ambazonia's) right to self-determination, and (d) respondents' perceptions on the challenges faced by these diaspora organizations in achieving self- determination for Southern Cameroon(Ambazonia) (e) respondent's perception on how the conflicting narratives have impacted on the peaceful resolution of the conflict f) how can the diaspora contribute to peace building or a resolution to the conflict in Anglophone Cameroon?

Respondents background information

1. What is the name of your organization?
2. What is your position/rank in the organization?
3. How many years have you worked with the organization?
4. What is your highest educational qualification?

Respondent's perceptions of the origins and factors fuelling diaspora involvement in the Southern Cameroonian quest for self-determination

1. As a diaspora movement, how versed are you with the ongoing Anglophone quest for self-fetermination in the British Southern Cameroon?
2. In your opinion, do you agree with the hypothesis that the sustainability of the Anglophone separatist claims relies on the important support of Cameroonians from the diaspora with the contribution of social media? Please explain your answer.
3. In your opinion, what exactly is the Southern Cameroonian diaspora movement fighting for? Is it (a) Secession (b) Restoration (c) Federation (d) Regime change in Cameroon? Please support your response with examples.
4. Probe. Can you mention as a diaspora movement what are the origins of this struggle for self-determination in the British Southern Cameroon (Ambazonia)?

5. As a diaspora movement, what would you describe as the factors necessitating diaspora involvement in the current Anglophone crisis?

Respondent's perceptions of the role played by diaspora movements in the quest for self-determination in the Southern Cameroons

1. What role is your organization as part of the diaspora playing in the struggle for self-determination in Southern Cameroons (Ambazonia)?
2. What are the strategies used your diaspora organization to mobilize support for the achievement of its quest for an independent Southern Cameroons (Ambazonia)?
3. In your opinion have those strategies been successful in achieving your mandate.cPlease justify your response with examples.
4. How has your organization been successful in its contribution towards achieving self-determination for Southern Cameroon?
5. What other platforms does your organization engage to realize its mandate? Probe. Alliances, Military Campaigns/self-defence, lobbying, public protests, humanitarian work, litigations, fund raising, propaganda, framing, etc.
6. How does your organization engage in the international political discourse relating to the recognition of Ambazonia as a state? Please support your claims with examples.

Respondent's perception on the obstacles faced by Diaspora

1. What are the challenges faced by your organization in fulfilling its mandate?
2. Probe. Discuss them in terms of the following:
    a) Your relationship with the people in the homeland especially those engaged in the struggle?
    b) The relationship with the government of your host states or environment within which your organization operates (enabling or restrictive).
    c) Your organization relationship with international organizations like United Nations, African Union etc (cordial, hostile, independent, and autonomous or apolitical affiliations).
    d) Access to resources (finance, human capacity, technical, others, specify)
    e) Your organizations relationship with sister organizations involved in the same course (cordial, suspicious, peaceful). vi Getting international media attention on the Southern Cameroon (Ambazonia) quest for self-determination?
    f) Internal challenges (internal policies within your organization, including membership registration, criteria to become office bearers and their term of service, degree of involvement/active participation by all members, coordination of self-defence groups, responsibilities in terms of human right abuses.
    g) Is there any other issue you may want to raise that directly impacts on your mandate as a diaspora movement?

h) What are your organizations experiences in terms of dealing with these challenges surrounding it's, especially with regard to failed plans, social media propaganda, loss of lives, threats from homeland government officials or betrayals, training of self-defence groups? Please indicate how your organization was specifically involved.

3. Lastly, please indicate other challenges common to this struggle but have not been mentioned above.

Respondent's perceptions of how the conflicting narratives in the struggle have impacted on the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Within the Anglophone struggle for self-determination, there are some narratives that are common to the struggle, these include restoration narrative propagated predominantly by proponents of the Ambazonian statehood while secessionist and extremist or terrorists are constantly used by the state or government officials to make the international community see self-defence forces as terrorist, on the other hand there is another group standing for federation and decentralization.

1. In your opinion, what are the reasons for these conflicting narratives by rival parties and how have these conflicting narratives impacted on the peaceful resolution of this crisis? Please elaborate with examples.
2. What do you propose as a lasting solution to the ongoing Anglophone crisis in Cameroon?
3. How can the diaspora contribute to peacebuilding efforts in the Ambazonian conflict?

With thanks, Enu Rene Ayuk

QUESTION GUIDE FOR RESEARCHERS

The questions below will provide a guiding framework within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe and ask questions that will elucidate on the issue(s) under investigation, while at the same time allowing the participants latitude to supply the depth and breadth of information they are willing to divulge.

The questions comprise five sections: (a) respondent's background information. (b) respondent's perceptions on the origins and factors necessitating diaspora involvement in the Southern Cameroons(Ambazonia's) quest for self-determination, (c) the role played by these diaspora movements in the struggle for Southern Cameroons(Ambazonia's) right to self-determination, and (d) respondents' perceptions on the challenges faced by these diaspora organizations in achieving self- determination for Southern Cameroon(Ambazonia) (e) respondent's perception on how the conflicting narratives have impacted on the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Respondent's background information

1. What is the name of your organization?
2. What is your position/rank in the organization?
3. How many years have you worked with the organization?
4. What is your highest educational qualification?
5. How old are you?

Respondent's perceptions of the origins and factors fueling diaspora involvement in the Southern Cameroons quest for self-determination

1. What is your opinion about the ongoing Anglophone quest for Self-Determination in Cameroon?
2. What is your view on the role of the diaspora in the anglophone self-determination quest/claims? Please explain your answer.
3. What do diaspora movements supporting the self-determination of Southern Cameroon seek to achieve? (a) Secession (b) Restoration (c) Federation (d) regime change in Cameroon. Please explain your response.
4. In your view, what are the origins of the diaspora involvement in this struggle for self-determination in the British Southern Cameroon (Ambazonia)? Please elaborate on your answer.
5. In your view, what factors necessitated diaspora support for the Southern Cameroonian quest for self-determination?

Respondent's perceptions of the role of the diaspora movements in the Southern Cameroon quest for self-determination

1. What role is the diaspora playing in the Southern Cameroon's struggle for self-determination? Please explain in terms of:
    a) Mobilization of the people back in Cameroon
    b) Funding
    c) Mobilization of the international community
    d) Self-defence groups
    e) Humanitarian efforts

Respondent's perceptions of the strategies employed by the diaspora movements in the Southern Cameroon quest for self-determination

1. What are the strategies used by the diaspora to achieve the quest for an independent Southern Cameroons (Ambazonia)?
2. In your opinion, have those strategies been successful in achieving the quest for Southern Cameroons independence. Please justify your response with examples.
3. In your view as a researcher, how has the 2016 involvement of the diaspora in the crisis been a game changer in this Southern Cameroons decades long quest for self-determination?
4. In your opinion, how has the diaspora's involvement influenced the Cameroonian government policy in the Northwest and Southwest regions?

Respondent's perception of obstacles faced in the Pursuit of Southern Cameroon's independence

1. In your opinion, what would you say are constraints to the diaspora support for the Southern Cameroon's right for self-determination?
2. In your view, what do you see as peculiar challenges to the Southern Cameroonian/Ambazonian quest for self-determination/statehood in contemporary Cameroon?

Respondent's perceptions of how the conflicting narratives in the struggle have impacted on the peaceful resolution of the conflict

Within the Anglophone struggle for self-determination, there are some narratives that are common to the struggle, these include restoration narrative propagated predominantly by proponents of the Ambazonian statehood while there is a secessionist narrative used by the government of Cameroon to designate those standing for the statehood of Southern Cameroon.

1. In your opinion, how have the media contributed to shaping these narratives?
2. In your view, what are the reasons for these conflicting narratives by rival parties?

3. In what ways if any have these conflicting narratives impacted on the peaceful resolution of this conflict?
4. What are the challenges faced by the research community in providing a fair public understanding of this crisis?
5. What do you propose as a lasting solution to the ongoing Anglophone crisis in Cameroon?
6. How can the diaspora contribute to the peaceful resolution of the conflict?

With thanks, Enu Rene Ayuk