



Revue des Sciences Sociales

Numéro 1 | 2026

Varia | juin 2026

REA – Impact factor (SJIF) 2026 : 6.746

Date de soumission : 05-02-2026 / Date de publication : 30-06-2026

DOMINATION THEORY: A BARRIER TO PEACE IN CAMEROON HOW DOMINATION FUELS CONFLICT

THÉORIE DE LA DOMINATION : UN OBSTACLE À LA PAIX AU CAMEROUN COMMENT LA DOMINATION ALIMENTE LE CONFLICT

Innocent Ateghang **AFUHNHANG**

ABSTRACT

Cameroon has faced a prolonged socio-political and humanitarian crisis, especially in the Anglophone and Far North regions despite repeated peace building efforts, partly because dialogue mechanisms have been judged insufficient. This article argues that the theory of domination centralizes power, excludes opposing voices and establishes patron-client relations which blocks effective conflict resolution and durable peace. The

study demonstrates the ways domination structures shape state responses and limit inclusive, bottom-up peace building processes. The study uses a qualitative and quantitative approach based on interviews, direct observations written sources and online sources. The findings reveal that top-down state responses and imposed peace measures have weakened trust, limited consensus-building and contributed to the cyclical nature of the crisis.

Keywords | • Cameroon • anglophone crisis • conflict resolution • domination theory • Humanitarian crisis • peacebuilding

RÉSUMÉ

Le Cameroun est confronté à une crise sociopolitique et humanitaire qui se prolonge, en particulier dans les régions anglophones et dans l'Extrême-Nord, malgré des efforts répétés et infructueux de consolidation de la paix. Cet article soutient que la théorie de la domination centralise le pouvoir, exclut les voix dissidentes et instaure des relations clientélisme qui font obstacle à une

résolution efficace des conflits et à une paix durable dans ce pays. L'étude démontre comment les structures de domination influencent les réponses de l'État et limitent les processus inclusifs de consolidation de la paix. L'étude se base ainsi sur une approche qualitative et quantitative fondée sur des entretiens, des observations directes, des sources écrites et des sources en ligne. Les résultats révèlent que les réponses étatiques et les mesures de paix imposées

ont affaibli la confiance, limité la recherche de consensus et contribué au caractère cyclique de la crise.

Mots-clés | • Cameroun • crise anglophone • résolution des conflits • théorie de la domination • crise humanitaire • consolidation de la Paix

INTRODUCTION

According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Annual Database, humanitarian crises have increased globally since the beginning of the 21st century, especially in the Middle East and in Sub-Saharan Africa. In Africa, we can think of countries such as Sudan, Chad, Central African Republic and Nigeria that have experienced such crises. Like in these countries, the Anglophone Cameroonian problem, a vestige of colonial legacy, has produced a disturbing record of humanitarian crises. Although the existence of the Anglophone Cameroonian problem has been denied over decades by the government of the

Republic of Cameroon, it gained national and international recognition from 2016. From then, it became a threat to the unity of the Republic of Cameroon with resultant effects, which undermined Cameroon's national stability. The causes of the crisis that turned into a deadly armed conflict from 2017 were both historical and immediate, triggered in late 2016 by teachers' and lawyers' requests that were considered by a cross section of the population to have been poorly managed by state actors. This is the state of the situation in Cameroon that justifies this research and seeks to question not only the triggers of the armed conflict but also interrogate why a solution to the crisis is difficult.

1. METHODOLOGY

THE study adopts a quantitative and qualitative approach, during which research shows that, the resolution of the crisis was based on a domination approach from the central government against universal norms and legal bases of conflict resolution with a cyclical outcome. The methods used in this study helped to explore the attitudes, opinions and feelings of the population regarding the cyclical nature of the crisis. Data collection method was based on the qualitative techniques. Thus, 30 key actors were solicited; 7 local civil society organizations, 8 state administrative actors, 10 community and traditional leaders, 5 researchers on conflict-related issues, 8 women and youth leaders. The selection criterion was based on their connection directly or indirectly with the crisis. This technique permitted us to get closer to our study population in order to delve deeper into social realities and uncover its hidden side. Thus, we used a set of qualitative processes that allowed us to gather information related to our theme: direct observation, interviews

and document analysis. At the level of interviews, Daumas (1972 : 292) holds that, the decision to use interviews primarily depends on the choice to enter into direct contact with the respondents to obtain data. It is a process that must circumscribe the respondent within their social context and be consistent with the research question. Thus fieldwork was carried out in four areas: Yaounde for national decision-makers and experts, Bamenda and Buea for the North West and South West regions, Maroua for the Far North region. Fieldwork was conducted from January to April 2025. This period allowed access to respondents while avoiding seasonal inconveniences. We also made use of a data collection technique; informants and direct observation. It is in this sense that Grawitz (2001 : 604) defines interview as a scientific investigative method using a verbal communication process to gather information related to the stated goals. For the purpose of this study, we opted for the semi-directive interview. This technique allowed us, on the one hand, to obtain socio-demographic information such as the ages, gender, educational level, occupation and ethnic

origin of the victims of the crisis. On the other hand, it allowed us to understand the actors (state actors, armed separatists, traditional authorities and civil society actors) involved in the crisis and the different roles they played and their perception on dominance

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Presentation of the theoretical framework

On the basis of the importance of theories to understanding complex historical issues, we draw on Weber's Multidimensional conflict and domination theory (Weber 1978 : 929). To Weber, conflict is a cornerstone of classical sociology, serving as a more nuanced multidimensional alternative to Karl Marx's economically deterministic conflict theory (Marx and Engels 1978: 3-6). While Marx focused solely on class struggle between owners and workers, Weber argued that conflict is pervasive, multifaceted and stems from struggles over economic resources, social status and political power. In the same vein, Weber defines dominance as the probability that a command will be obeyed by a given group, distinguishing it from mere power by emphasizing that legitimate authority requires voluntary compliance. Thus, to Weber, the key issue raised here is that, domination is the accepted, expected and for the subordinate, often desirable compliance with orders. In clear terms, domination must be seen as legitimate by those who obey it (Weber 1978 : 930).

For Pierre Bourdieu, the French sociologist, conflict is not merely an occasional disruption of social order, but an inherent, structural and often invisible feature of social life. He conceptualized the social world as a series of fields or arenas of struggle where individuals and groups compete to maintain or alter the distribution of different forms of capital. Besides

contributing to the cyclical nature of the crisis. We also had discussions with persons from all social groups as part of our data collection methods. It is based on these aforementioned articulations, that this paper takes its course.

conflict, Bourdieu also theorized on domination. For him the two are closely intertwined. Bourdieu's theory on domination focuses on how social hierarchies and power imbalances are maintained, legitimized and reproduced across generations often without overt coercion. Central to this theory is the idea that domination is not just economic, but predominantly cultural and symbolic, internalized by both the dominant and the dominated as natural (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990 : 4-8). Furthermore, to give this paper credibility, we made an in-depth reading of Foucault, who posits that dominance is not solely top-down, but an omnipresent, productive and rational force that permeates all social interactions and creates docile bodies. It is embedded in discourse, institutional norms and self-discipline rather than just overt repression (Foucault 1995 : 26-27). From a succinct examination of this theorizing on conflict and domination, we observed that though they differ in approach, they have a converging point that has the strength of complementing their different positions. In sum, we deduce that dominance focused on coercive and top-down hierarchy which was used by the government of Cameroon to impose a "solution" to the crisis rocking the country and which proved ineffective. It was based on the high handed nature demonstrated by government that had been theorized by Weber, Marx, Bourdieu and Foucault that this paper enjoys a theoretical cover and permits a critical examination of the different issues that are handled in the study. The incorporation of Anglophone Cameroonians into the Republic of Cameroun starts the operational phase of this article.

3. THE BIRTH OF ANGLOPHONE CAMEROONIANS AND THE GENESIS OF THE ANGLOPHONE PROBLEM

3.1. The birth of anglophones in Cameroon

The Republic of Cameroon is located between West and Central Africa. It stretches from the Atlantic northward to the Lake Chad Basin and Southward to the tributaries of the Congo River. More precisely, Cameroon is located at the North Eastern end of the Gulf of Guinea (Fanso 1989 : 10). The shape is like an irregular triangle with a total surface of about 475,442 km². It is bounded to the west by Nigeria, to the east by Central African Republic, to the south by Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Congo. Today, it has a total population of about 30,640,817 million inhabitants (world population

3.2. Genesis of the Anglophone problem

By the 19th century, the main European powers that were interested in Cameroon were Britain, France and Germany. On Saturday, 12 July 1884, the territory was finally annexed by Germany (Eno 2015 : 230). This was to the detriment of the British and the French. By 1914 the First World War broke out in Europe. Since Cameroon was a German protectorate, the war was extended to German Kamerun. The Anglo-French forces fought the Germans. The war ended in German Kamerun in February 1916 with the defeat of the Germans and the territory partitioned between the allies.¹

From 1922 to 1945 Cameroon was ruled as a mandate under the League of Nations and from 1945 to 1960 as a trust territory under the UNO which ended with the granting of independence to French Cameroon by France on 1 January 1960 with Ahmadou Ahidjo as the President while in British Cameroon, it ended with a plebiscite organized by

review 2026). Conceptually, “Anglophone Cameroonians” are citizens of Cameroon whose biological parents come from the former British Southern Cameroons, which became the state of West Cameroon from 1961, when they decided to reunite with their brothers of *La République du Cameroun* through a plebiscite that was organized by the United Nations Organization (UNO) in the British portion of German Kamerun, on the 11 of February 1961 (Fanso 1989 : 13) By 1972 with the referendum that was organized in the Federal Republic of Cameroon, the name of the nation changed from the Federal Republic to the United Republic of Cameroon (Fanso 1989 : 15). The state of West Cameroon ceased to exist from 1972 and was divided into the North and South West Provinces, which were later changed in 2006 into regions by a special Presidential decree, issued by H. E. President Paul Biya. The Presidential decree increased the frustration of English Speaking Cameroonians.

the UNO on 11th of February 1961 whereby the northern Cameroon joined Nigeria and the Southern part voted to join the Independent Republic of Cameroon (Fanso 1989 : 323). Historically, the 1916 division of German Kamerun brought a minority problem which surfaced as from 1961 after the reunification of British Southern Cameroons with the Republic of Cameroon immediately after the Fomuban constitutional conference of 17 to 21 July 1961 under President Ahmadou Ahidjo of the Republic of Cameroon (Tazifor and Ndip : 103). These grievances, rejected by the central authorities in Yaounde, encouraged the people of Southern Cameroon to resist further. This attitude of dominance that characterized relations between the Yaounde regime and a cross section of English Speaking Cameroonians in relation to managing the grievances raised, reached boiling point in 2016, so that the escalation of an armed conflict was a surprise only to naïve Cameroonians.

¹ Britain took 1/5 of the western portion of the territory while France took 4/5 of the eastern portion of the territory.

4. THE ARMED CONFLICT IN THE ANGLOPHONE REGIONS OF CAMEROON AND THE SEARCH FOR PEACE

4.1. The armed conflict in anglophone Cameroon

The Anglophone Cameroonian armed conflict in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon, was one of the first of its kind in the annals of Cameroon history since the 1st of October 1961. This crisis that took the form of an armed conflict, started as far back as 1961, immediately after the so-called “Foumban Jamboree” (Eno 2015: 232). The armed belligerents or protagonists were mainly the “Pro-Independent Fighters”, also called the “Ambazonian Boys” or the “Amba-Boys” (these were the military arm of British Southern Cameroonians fighting for an independent Southern) against the Central Government of the Republic of Cameroon. The neglect or the refute of existence of an Anglophone problem in Cameroon by top government officials and majority of Francophone Cameroonians in Cameroon, resulted in the poor management of the Lawyers’-Teachers’ peaceful demonstration of 2016, which by early 2017, took the form of an armed conflict in the two English speaking regions of Cameroon, caused by the declaration of war against the claimed existential Ambazonian Republic, refuted by the President of the Republic of Cameroon, as “Non-Existential” (Mafany 2020 : 35). The causes of this crisis that turned into a deadly armed conflict, due to neglect and poor management, were both historical and immediate. The current violence in the two English speaking Regions of Cameroon cannot be properly comprehended outside the historical context in which it has arisen. At first, the 1916 division of German Kamerun resulted in the balkanization of Cameroon into two fractions, (1/5) to the West by the British government and (4/5) to the East by the French government, as Mandate and by 1945 as Trust Territories (Eno 2015 : 237). However, decades of French and British colonial policy transformed the physical border into deeper divisions, which created complex cultural differences that have been manifested in the practices of communities and

embedded in the socio-political structure. By 1961 pro- independence British Southern Cameroonians were not given the opportunity to campaign for an independent state. Notably, the plebiscite did not provide the option of total and separate independence for either the British Northern or the British Southern Cameroons. The plebiscite outcome in Northern Cameroons was integration with Nigeria. Conversely, the outcome in British Southern Cameroons was a total number of 233,571 persons that voted for reunification with *La Republique du Cameroun*, and 97,741 in favour of joining Nigeria (Tazifor and Ndip 2017:111). Consequently, the reunification of British Southern Cameroons with *La Republique du Cameroun* has never been fully accepted by Anglophone “pro-independence actors like Dr. E. M. L. Endeley, P. N. Kale just to name a few. Despite vociferous frustrations expressed by Anglophone stakeholders immediately after the 17 to 21 Foumban constitutional conference of 1961, these grievances have never been addressed by the Cameroon State and the international community. The results of the reunification of British Southern Cameroons with *La Republique du Cameroun* were many (Ngho 2005 : 123). The Federal Republic of Cameroon became constitutionally bilingual, with French and English as the two official languages that retained equal legal status. Moreover, the imposed legal systems remained in place, resulting in a bi-jural legal system operating in Cameroon, with Common Law operating in the two Anglophone Regions of North and South West and Civil Law systems operating in the other eight Francophone Regions of Cameroon. Bi-jural and educational challenges, such as conflicts of laws and controversies over which courts have jurisdiction (jurisprudence applicability), and the attempts to assimilate the English educational system by the Francophone Cameroonians, remained central to the Anglophone Crisis (Ngho 2005 : 125). Although British Southern Cameroons decided to reunify with *La Republique du Cameroun*, following the plebiscite of 11 February 1961, Anglophone Cameroonian statehood retained a form of institutional autonomy. This autonomy was through a Federal system of government, which involved the practice of multipartyism, practice of the rule of law, and the maintenance of the

educational and judicial systems established under British rule (Ngoh 2005 : 127). However, the institutional autonomy of the Anglophone Cameroonian statehood, short-lived between 1961 and 1972, after which it was gradually eroded through a series of political maneuvers, initiated by Ahmadou Ahidjo, the President of the Federal Republic of Cameroon. President Ahidjo's reforms included the introduction of one-party rule in 1966, and the dismantling of the federal system in favour of a unitary state, through a referendum held on 20th of May, 1972 in Cameroon (Ngoh 2005 : 222). The abolition of federalism was met with protest in West Cameroon. Albert Mukong, for example, was a journalist who spoke out against President Ahidjo's reforms and was imprisoned for six years, first for communicating with the British Broadcasting Cooperation (BBC) and again for holding a meeting to discuss ways for the re-introduction of multi-party democracy in Cameroon (Ngoh 2005 : 224). The United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) ruled on the lawfulness of Mukong's arrest, and found that the Cameroonian State had violated several of Mukong's International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which included Mukong's Article 19 of the "Right to Freedom of Expression", and Article 7 on the "Right to be Free from Torture or Cruel, Inhumane and Degrading Treatment", among others.² Several Anglophone movements have developed since 1961, calling for the Anglophone Problem to be peacefully addressed through a genuine and an inclusive dialogue. These include the Southern Cameroons National Council and its former Southern Cameroons Youth League, the Free West Cameroon Movement, the Southern Cameroons Restoration Movement, the Cameroon Anglophone Movement, and the Ambazonian Movement (Pommerolle 2017 : 2). There exists a well-documented history of actual and perceived marginalization of the Anglophone Cameroonians from the North and South West Regions of

Cameroon in Cameroon and their populations based on political representation and socioeconomic under-development of the two English speaking regions since the 1970s. From the perspective of structuralism, Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)³, guaranteeing the right to "self-determination" of all persons (Pommerolle 2017 : 4) It includes the rights of all persons to determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, political and cultural development." Moreover, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 1352 was a violation of the right to determine political status (Konings and Nyamjoh 1997 : 14) In addition, the Anglophone Cameroonian armed conflict in the two English speaking regions was further exacerbated by the total sidelining of the "Bamenda Resolution" of June 1961, during the Fomuban Constitution of 17 to 21 of July 1961 by a large delegation of *La Republique du Cameroun*, backed by French constitutional experts (Ungitoh 2019 : 5). The root causes discussed above sent a red signal to the Anglophone Cameroonians both in Cameroon and abroad that they were not in total control of their political, economic and socio-cultural destiny.

The immediate causes or triggers of the Anglophone Cameroonian armed conflict in the North and South West Regions of Cameroon, date back to October 2016, when Cameroonian Common Law lawyers from the North and South West Regions of Cameroon⁴ decided to hold a peaceful protest to denounce the transfer of civil lawyers to adjudicate on common law matters in the two English-speaking regions of Cameroon, known as the North and the South West Regions of the country. The government responded by sending security forces against the Common Law Lawyers from the two English speaking regions of Cameroon. They were brutalized by the forces of law and order in Bamenda and in Buea.⁵ Consequently, it provoked anger amongst English-speaking Cameroonians.

²International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art 19, Dec. 16, 1966.

³See Article I of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

⁴The Anglophone Problem and the Secessionist Option in Cameroon, Conference Theme: African Engagements: On Who is

who? Panel 56 on Secessionists Movement in Africa, Fourth European Conference on African Studies, Uppsala, Sweden. 2011, Felix Nkongho, address to the Canadian Parliament on the Political Crisis in the English Speaking regions of Cameroon, October 2018.

⁵These are the two regional capitals of the two English speaking Regions of Cameroon.

Subsequently, the English speaking teachers joined the Lawyers on grounds that French teachers were sent to teach in English schools without having any idea of the English educational system. Within a short span of time all other sectors in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon had joined the strike under the umbrella of The Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (ACCSC) which now demanded for a return to the two-state federal system as agreed in 1961 (The Anglophone Problem, 2019: 9). Instead of pursuing with frank, honest and inclusive dialogue with the consortium leaders, the government opted for a domineering approach to the problem by banning the consortium. This was followed by the arrest of Barrister Agbor Balla, Dr. Neba Fontem and others, of the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC). The government responded

by shutting down the internet in the two English-speaking regions of Cameroon, arresting some key leaders while others went into exile (Ungitoh 2019 : 6). This further led to radicalism amongst English-speaking Cameroonians in the North and South West Regions who became more defiant and decided to protest on the 22 of September 2017. The government again in a domineering perspective responded with arbitrary arrests, detentions and extra judicial killings of the peaceful protesters. As usual the radicalism increased and on the 1 of October 2017, some Southern Cameroonians decided to symbolically declare the independence of the “Ambazonian Republic”, which was termed by the President of the Republic of Cameroon H. E President Paul Biya, who described it as a “ non-existent state” (Elong 2019 : 9).

4.2. The Search for peace

In a desperate attempt for peace the government intensified its crackdown, in violation of national and international laws and regulations as earlier indicated by increasing arbitrary arrests, detention and extrajudicial killings. As a result, different separatists groups in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon decided to take up arms for self-defense as articulated in international frame works.⁶ In response, the President of the Republic of Cameroon, President Paul Biya, decided to declare war against the separatists, who picked arms against the state, termed by his government as “terrorists”, orchestrating terrorism by demanding for secession of the two English speaking Regions from the Republic. Recurrent attacks, maiming, kidnappings, arbitrary arrests, arbitrary detentions, rape, killing of

children, killing of pregnant women, attacks on non-combatants, burning of civilian houses, power cut, internet shutdowns, declaration of ghost towns, imposition of curfew, decapitation of bodies just to name a few were the order of the armed conflict for close to ten years in both North and South West Regions of Cameroon.⁷ The population was caught within the whims and caprices of the separatists and the military, which resulted in more than 35,000 deaths, over 360 villages burnt, more than 437,000 persons displaced internally and over 35,000 crossed as refugees into Nigeria.⁸ National and International peace actors became alarmed and mounted pressure on belligerents to the conflict to seek an amicable solution to the crisis. There was consequently a necessity to push for a durable peace.

⁶The right to self-defense is codified in international law. It was as a result of the clamped down on the political activists, with arbitrary arrests, detention and extrajudicial killings separatist groups in the North west and South West Regions of Cameroon, took up armed, as a right to “self-defense as articulated in most international law and armed conflicts guides.

⁷UNHCR, Cameroon Situation: Responding to the needs of the IDPs and Cameroonian Refugees in Nigeria, Supplementary Appeal, January-December 2019, p.4.

⁸ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs,” Cameroon: North West and South West Situation Report No 85,1 January to 31 March 2026,” Reliefweb, March 2026.

5. THE SEARCH FOR DURABLE PEACE IN THE ANGLOPHONE ZONES OF CAMEROON

5.1. Establishing peace building mechanisms as a prelude to durable peace

In discourses of peace building, there are early warning and response efforts, violence prevention, advocacy work, civilian and military peacekeeping, military intervention, humanitarian assistance, ceasefire agreements, and the establishment of peace zones. All these are realized through legal mechanisms of peace building tools which include the conduct of a Conflict assessment, peace building program design, development of a monitoring and evaluation plan and the conduct of an end line study.

5.2. Legal foundations of a durable peace process

In international law the legal foundations of conflict resolution mechanisms are negotiation, mediation, conciliation and arbitration, often called Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). They are the most well-known and the four legal mechanisms of conflict resolution which include; negotiation, mediation, arbitration and litigation. It is important to state at this junction that the Anglophone crisis shows limits of these four internationally recognized legal mechanisms of conflict resolution. Negotiation has occurred sporadically since 2017 but failed due to mutual mistrust. Mediation by actors like Switzerland and the Catholic Church stalls because the government rejects third-party parity and separatists doubt mediator neutrality. Arbitration is absent as Cameroon refuses binding third-party rulings for an “internal” conflict and separatists reject forums without self-determination guarantees. Litigation proceeds through military tribunals and petitions to the African Commission, but addresses individual abuses, not the political crisis, and lacks perceived impartiality in North West and South West Regions. Overall, state control of forum and enforcement turns legal mechanisms into tools of domination rather than resolution.

Besides the Legal foundation to peace we have steps in constructive conflict resolution when the honest

goal is to achieve durable peace, like giving the priority to the conversation (Open communication). Focus on the issues in conflict and listen without interruption, craft a Solution and let it go (end with a Win-Win Solution)

It is important to take a break at this juncture of the work and ask an important question. To what extent have these internationally recognized instruments been used in the Anglophone conflict in Cameroon. The period from 2016 to 2026 spans nearly ten years since the crisis was transformed into an armed conflict; very limited attempts have been made towards respecting the procedures. Amongst a number of unsuccessful attempts, we have the convening of the major national dialogue which was perceived by some actors as insufficiently inclusive and which consequently produced the results that Cameroonians and the international community observe today. Rather and in an unexpected move, the government opted for dominance as a method to a lasting solution.

6. DOMINATION AS AN OBSTACLE TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACE BUILDING PROCESSES

6.1. Unilateral government solution

In an attempt to solve the problems of Anglophone-Cameroonians in Cameroon, due to the effects of the war and as a result of pressure from other countries and international organizations, the government of the Republic of Cameroon headed by President Paul Biya with his Head of Government, Dr. Dion Joseph Ngute, adopted both forceful and peaceful measures in a bid to end the conflict. All these were based on a spirit of domination against legal internationally recognized legal norms of conflict resolution and peace building process. Concerning the unorthodox measures implemented, the following were done; firstly, the allocation of 12 billion Francs CFA to schools in the two restive English speaking regions of Cameroon, which failed because a majority of the schools remained closed due to separatist- imposed boycott. Secondly, the use of force to disperse the October 2016 protesters, banning and arrest of the leaders of the Cameroon

Civil Society Consortium (CACSC).⁹ Also there was the containment of separatists, sustained use of disproportionate force against separatists due to a mix of strategic, political, institutional and historical factors and the burning of over 360 villages.

In relation to the human rights legal base approach, the following were done; participation of the government of the Republic of Cameroon in Swiss-led mediation in July 2019, the creation of DDR, the attempt of shutting down Southern Cameroon's Broadcasting Corporation (SCBC) based in South Africa by the government of the Republic of Cameroon, rehabilitation and grant of immunity to "Separatist Fighters" who surrendered to the defence forces and to local decentralized administrative authorities which failed due to mistrust on both sides, the setting up of an English division of the Supreme Court and creation of a Common Law bench at the National School of Administration and Magistracy (ENAM) in Yaounde by the government of the Republic, the creation of Common Law at the Supreme Court, the translation of the OHADA Act into English which existed prior to 2016 only in French Language, recruitment of over 1,000 bilingual teachers to teach in secondary school which did not address the root causes, the arrest of consortium leaders at Nera-10 Hotel in the Federal Republic of Nigeria by the Cameroon government in compliance with the Nigerian government which was not welcomed by consortium of African legal experts because the act went against jurisprudence with the extradition of the leaders to Yaounde central prison in Cameroon, the setting up of a National Commission for Bilingualism and Multiculturalism in 2018 that was led by Mr. Peter Mafany Musonge.¹⁰

In addition, a Major National Dialogue (MND) was organized in Yaounde from 25 of September to 1 of October 2019 by the President of the Republic of Cameroon, Paul Biya and chaired by the Head of Government, Joseph Dion Ngute. Still in line with the spirit of domination, proceedings of the MND were dictated, since they all came from government and no other proposal was accepted. The venue was not a neutral ground for both parties, and the separatist leaders in the two English speaking Regions of

Cameroon were not represented.¹¹ The major proposals arrived at during the MND that took place in Yaounde; the capital of Cameroon had the following recommendations :

- The adoption of a special status for the two Anglophone regions of Cameroon that has been termed by many political analysts as cosmetic.¹²
- The restoration of the House of Chiefs that existed in West Cameroon before 1972.
- The election of Regional Governors which failed because they were never implemented but remained nominated by the Head of State.
- The immediate re-launch of certain airport and seaport projects in the two English speaking regions of Cameroon, which was not later endorsed by the Lower House of Assembly,
- the rapid integration of ex-combatants into society, which remain a mirage by 2025
- The country's name should be changed to the United Republic of Cameroon which was proposed but not enacted by the Assembly as a law,
- The declaration of assets by top government officials, in order to curb corruption but has not been implemented was unrelated to the armed conflict in the two English speaking Regions of Cameroon (Nkatow Mafany 2020: 42).

Apart from the measures featuring on the adopted resolution of the five days MND, other initiatives were; the release of 333 Anglophone-Cameroonians, who were illegally incarcerated in major penitentiary centres in the North West, South West, Center, West and in the Littoral regions, the adoption of the decentralization bill by the Lower House of Parliament, the announcement of major projects like the construction of Limbe Deep Sea Port which has not become operational and the creation of Dr. Dion Ngute Commission. The plan for the reconstruction of devastated North West and South West Regions of Cameroon in 2020 at the peak of the war without a call for an immediate ceasefire by the President of the Republic of Cameroon was considered by some political actors as unwise. This was because the reconstruction was announced and it started

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Interview with Prof. W. Dze-Ngwa, on the 24th of January 2021, Yaounde, Cameroon.

¹²Ibid.

without any consultation between the government and the separatists.¹³ Apart from the aforementioned governmental measures, there were also some series of external measures in reaction to the Anglophone-Cameroonian armed conflict.

6.2. Competing foreign interventions and the stalemate of international mediation

Concerning external means of containment, on 18 January 2017, the African Union issued a press statement, expressing concern about the situation in Cameroon and indicated its willingness to assist in its resolution (Tita Fangbung 2020 : 12). ACHPR/Res. 395 (LXII) in its 62nd Ordinary Session of April-May 2018 condemned the human rights abuses by belligerents in the two English speaking regions of Cameroon and called for an inclusive national dialogue without preconditions with the primary aim of addressing the root causes of the problem which the government vehemently denied (Tita Fangbung 2020 : 12).

In addition, the European Parliament adopted a resolution in April 2019 for the crisis to be considered by UN Security Council (UNSC). In support of the Cameroonian government's stance, France, Russia and China as permanent members blocked the motion for UNSC to meet on the crisis on grounds that AU was best suited to handle the crisis (Article 52(2) UN Charter). It should be noted that the African Union has remained largely ineffective since the start of the crisis, except for spontaneous diplomatic outings. UNSC supported Swiss mediation attempt which failed to yield any fruit because the government of Cameroon, in respect to its domineering approach, termed the crisis an internal problem and that Cameroonians are able to get a solution which unfortunately seems far-fetched (Tita Fangbung 2020 : 13). The US House of Representatives called for a return to federal rule in Cameroon and together with Great Britain condemned government for the abuses and in support of the UNSC to discuss the root causes of the

crisis. Nigeria expressed and supported the government of Cameroon through the Extradition of 12 Ambasonian leaders caught in Nera 10-Hotel, which was unconstitutional by the Nigerian Legal Department (Tita Fangbung 2020 : 13). The Vatican City offered itself as a mediator since Cameroon has a huge Catholic base. Canada offered USD 6.65 million as humanitarian aid in April 2019, all in an attempt to encourage the government to engage in negotiations with separatists to no avail.¹⁴ This is because all the measures were cosmetic which did not aim at addressing the root causes of the Anglophone Cameroonian problem. Till 2025, the crisis remained cyclical because the Central Government has maintained a domineering approach in response to or in addressing the root and immediate causes of the Anglophone Cameroonian problems in Cameroon rather than adopting an eclectic approach as proposed by national and international partners.

CONCLUSION

The Republic of Cameroon for decades has been considered a land of peace and security within the turbulent Central African sub-region. Within the second decade of the 21st century, this assertion became untenable. Today, the country is not just Africa in miniature in terms of the economic potentials and socio-cultural dynamism of the people; it also reflects Africa in miniature in endemic conflicts. This article titled "The Theory of Domination as an obstacle to Conflict Resolution and Peace Building Processes in Cameroon" questions why it has been difficult to find a sustainable solution to the armed conflict in Anglophone Cameroon. The answer to this question resides in Cameroon's conflict dynamics as far as peace is concerned. This article further reveals that, from an objective standpoint, the dominance theory served as a lens to understand Cameroon's conflict dynamics, demonstrating how the use of domination as an instrument of conflict resolution by the government hinders

¹³Interview with Prof. W. Dze-Ngwa, on the 24th of January 2021, Yaounde, Cameroon.

effective and durable peace, thus undermining internationally recognized legal instruments and peace building mechanisms. This situation worsened the socio-political atmosphere which has made armed confrontations within the English-speaking regions to drag on for close to ten years today. From a general perspective, this article supports the view that the cyclical nature of most conflicts in Cameroon and Africa in general results from a domineering

rather than a consensual approach to getting solutions as observed by Weber, Marx, Bourdieu and Foucault in the theory on domination. No wonder, all attempts at getting a solution to the armed conflict in Anglophone Cameroon since 2017 have come from the government side. The result is that they have over time proven to be very cosmetic and unproductive on the field as far as peace is concerned.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACCSC : Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium
ACHPR: African Commission on Human and People's Rights
ADR : Alternative Disputes Resolution
AU : African Union
BBC : British Broadcasting Corporation
CACSC : Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium
CIAR.EU : Common Wealth Journal of Academic Research
DDR : Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration
ENAM: National School of Administration and Magistracy
HRW : Human Rights Watch
ICCPR : International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
IDP : Internally Displaced Person
IJRI : International Journal of Research and Motivation
JMAS : The Journal of Modern African Studies
MND : Major National Dialogue
OCHA: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian affairs
OHADA : Organisation for the Harmonization of Business Laws in Africa
SCBC : Southern Cameroon's Broadcasting Corporation
UNGA : United Nations General Assembly
UNHCR : United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNHRC: United Nations Human Rights Committee
UNSC: United Nations Security Council

UNO: United Nations Organisation

REFERENCES

- BOURDIEU Pierre and PASSERON Jean-Claude, 1990. *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, 2nd ed, London: Sage Publications.
- DAUMAS Maurice, 1972. "L'histoire des techniques: son objet, ses methodes, ses resultats", *Revue d'histoire des sciences et de leur application*, 25, no 4, p.291-358
- EBOLO ELONG Emmanuel, 2019. "The Anglophone Problem and the Secessionist Option in Cameroon", *Conference Theme: African Engagements: On who is who?*, Panel 56 on Secessionists,
- ENO Benedict, 2015, *Effective Modern History for Colleges*, NAB Venture-Bamenda, Cameroon.
- FANSO Verkijika, 2017, *Cameroon History for Secondary Schools and Colleges, from Pre-Historic Times to the Twenty-First Century (Revised and Updated Combined Edition)*, Team Work Press, Bamkika'ay-Kumbo.
- FOUCAULT Michel, 1995. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, New York: Vintage Books.
- GRAWITZ Madeleine, 2001. *Methodes des sciences sociales*, 11th ed, Paris: Dalloz, p. 604.

INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS, 1966. Art. 19, 16 Dec. 1966, 999 U.N.T.S. 171 (ICCPR).

INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP, 2019. Cameroon's Anglophone Dialogue: A work in progress, Africa Report No 279, Brussels: ICG. Available online: d2071andvipowj.cloudfront.net (last accessed 30th of March 2020).

KONINGS Pieter and NYAMNJOH Francis, 1997. "The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon", *The Journal of Modern African Studies* (JMAS), Vol. 35, no 2, p. 207-230. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

MARX Karl and ENGELS Friedrich, 1978. "Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy," in TUCKER Robert C., ed. *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. 2nd ed, New York: W.W. Norton, p. 3-6.

NGOH Victor Julius, 2005. *History of Cameroon Since 1800*, Limbe: Press Book.

NKATOW MAFANY Christian, 2020. "The Anglophone-Cameroonian Armed Conflict in the

UNGITOH Hedley, 2019. "The Legal Classification of the Current Political Upheavals in English Speaking regions of Cameroon", *African Journal of International and Comparative Law*, Vol. 27, no 3, p. 387-407.

UNHCR, 2019. Cameroon Situation: Responding to the needs of the IDPs and Cameroonian Refugees in

North and South West Regions of Cameroon: The rulings of international humanitarian law and human rights watch" *Common Wealth Journal of Academic Research* (CJAR.EU), Volume 1, no1, p. 35-50.

POMMEROLLE Marie-Emmanuelle and HEUNGOUP Marie, 2017. "The Anglophone Crisis: The Cameroonian Post colony" *African Affairs*, Vol.116,no 464, p. 526-538.

TAJOFOR TAZIFOR John and TABI NDIP James, 2017. *Cameroon History in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Bamenda:Education Book Centre, Cameroon.

TITA FANGMBUN et al., 2020 "The Protection of Civilians in Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon: An Overview of the Responsibilities of the State and Non-States Armed Groups", *Internal Journal of Research and Innovation (IJRI)*, Vol. 4.

UN OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS, Cameroon: North West and South West Situation Report No 85, 1 January to 31 March 2026, Geneva: OCHA. Available online: [Reliefweb](https://reliefweb.int)(last accessed April 2026).

Nigeria, Supplementary Appeal, January to December 2019, Geneva: UNHCR.

WEBER Max, 1978. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. ROTH Guenther and WITTICH Claus, trans. FISCHOFF Ephraim et al., Berkeley: University of California Press.

AUTEUR

Innocent Ateghang **AFUHNHANG PhD**
Senior lecturer
The university of Bertoua (ENS), Cameroon
Courriel : ateghanginnocent@gmail.com



© ÉDITION ÉLECTRONIQUE

URL – Revue Espaces Africains : <https://espacesafricains.org/>

Courriel – Revue Espaces Africains : revue@espacesafricains.org

ISSN : 2957-9279

Courriel – Groupe de recherche PoSTer : poster_ujlog@espacesafricains.org

URL – Groupe PoSTer : <https://espacesafricains.org/poster>

© ÉDITEUR

– Groupe de recherche Populations, Sociétés et Territoires (PoSTer) de l'UJLoG

– Université Jean Lorougnon Guédé (UJLoG) – Daloa (Côte d'Ivoire)

© RÉFÉRENCE ÉLECTRONIQUE

Innocent Ateghang AFUHNHANG, «The theory of domination as an obstacle to conflict resolution and peace building processes in Cameroon », Revue Espaces Africains, Numéro 1 | 2026, Varia, ISSN : 2957-9279, mis en ligne le 30 juin 2026, p. 119-131.

INDEXATIONS INTERNATIONALES DE LA REVUE ESPACES AFRICAINS

	Voir impact factor : https://sjifactor.com/passport.php?id=23718
	Voir la page de la revue dans Road : https://portal.issn.org/resource/ISSN/2957-9279
	Voir la page de la revue dans Mirabel : https://reseau-mirabel.info/revue/15151/Espaces-Africains
	Voir la revue dans Sudoc : https://www.sudoc.abes.fr/cbs/xslt/DB=2.1//SRCH?IKT=12&TRM=268039089
HAL	Voir la revue dans HAL : https://hal.science/search/index/?q=Espaces+Africains+%28Revue+des+Sciences+ Sociales%29&rows=30&page=1