

Role of Social Media in the Former British Southern Cameroons (Ambazonia) Genocide

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Abstract

For over four years, schools are been closed, torture, extrajudicial killings, arson of entire communities, unlawful detention, loathing of property have been going on in Ambazonia (Former British Southern Cameroon) though under-reported in public media. A minimum of 12,000 people have lost their lives and more than a million internally displaced persons in the Ambazonia as well as Francophone part of Cameroon. United Nations Refugee records over 300,000 Ambazonian refugees in their camps in Nigeria while the same numbers may be found in private homes in the same country. As the military commit arson and human right abuses of different natures, richer families have sent their family members to West Africa, South Africa, Asia, Europe and America the United States where they are seeking asylum. The immediate cause was a peaceful protest organized by teachers and lawyers that the government reacted with extra force. After negotiations failed, Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC) composed of teacher, lawyers and transporters trade union was formed to address the pertinent issues tabled before the government. The government banned CACSC and sent their leaders to dungeons. Cameroonians in the diaspora and the few leaders who escaped detention formed the Southern Cameroon Consortium United Front (SCACUF) was a nonviolent movement seeking a greater autonomy. When the leaders of SCACUF were extradited from Nera Hotel in Abuja, Nigeria, many pressure groups were formed as well as freedom fighters. This paper will examine the use of social media in the survival of the Amazonians during the genocide from 2016-2021. As a forefront leader and social media activist have been using my knowledge in Information Technology to assist communities to escape from danger. Social media has changed the way war is waged, covered and consumed. Though soldiers fight on the battlefields, they are increasingly shaped by competing narratives on Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp and Twitter, main social media platforms used in Ambazonia genocide.

Key words: Southern Cameroons (Ambazonia), genocide, Twitter, Facebook, social media,

Introduction

In the fifth century BCE, while sailing along the Atlantic coast of West Africa, Hanno, the Carthaginian explorer and ship's captain, observed Mont Fako erupting called it chariots of God. The name Cameroon was coined from the Portuguese explorer who saw shrimps or prawns in a river and named it 'Rio dos Cameroes'. The present-day Cameroon was ruled by kings before the German colonization of July 5, 1884. The Germans were very hardworking people who invested much in infrastructure. In less than three decades, roads, railways and many public buildings were constructed. Till today, some of these buildings are still standing. Unfortunately, the Germans, they were defeated during the first World War. The League of nations divided Cameroon (Kamerun in German) into many small fragments. The French took a lion's share which they called 'La Republic du Cameroun' while some of their portions were added to Chad, Central African Republic, Congos, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon. The British took a smaller portion which they divided into two: British Northern Cameroons and British Southern Cameroons. The British Northern Cameroons was attached to Northern Nigeria, the present-day Adamawa, Borno and Taraba States (El-Sudi, 2019) where Boko Haram terrorists dominate today. For administrative convenience, the British by the order in council of August 2, 1946 had the UN Trust Territory of Northern Cameroons administered from, but not joined legally to, the Northern Region of Nigerian protectorate while the Southern Cameroons were administered from the Eastern Region of Enugu. The British Southern Cameroon was attached to the Nigerian Eastern House of Assembly in Enugu. The British Southern Cameroons constitute the English Speaking/ Anglophone Regions of Cameroon today (Ayim, 2010).

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British Southern Cameroon was disappointed the way they were treated by their fellow African brothers. All the representatives left the Eastern House of Assembly in Nigeria and started a government in Buea by October 1, 1954. Between October 1, 1954 and October 1, 1961, Southern Cameroons could be able to self-govern and could be able to conduct free and fair elections. The UN Trust territory of British Southern Cameroons had a government, parliament, civil service, police force, and system and method of public administration, in existence. When all territories were given independence, France and Britain refused to give British Cameroons full independence. The people were asked to choose whether they want to join independence by joining the Federal Republic of Nigeria or the Republic of Cameroon. Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, first and only Prime Minister of Nigeria said that British Cameroon should think well before voting. He raised important points on lawlessness, poverty and hardship, and constant shadow of violence if we reject his advice. Conversely, he thought that a choice of Nigeria guaranteed development, rule of law, the protection of your lives, property and human rights. British Northern Cameroons followed this advice though we do not see the development while British Southern Cameroons voted to join the Republic of Cameroon Balewa, 1964).

History books have not always covered the main factors that might have influenced the choice of the United Nations. UN Resolution 1608 of April 21, 1961 on the sovereignty of Southern Cameroons. During the UN General Assembly session voted an overwhelming 64 countries against 23 and 10 abstentions for independence of the Southern Cameroons on the independence of British Cameroons. However, Britain and France rejected or did not want the implementation of this resolution because the British Southern Cameroons were pro-Russia aligning with Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana. The French has been in war with the Bassa who were advocating for independence for decades. Giving independence to British Southern Cameroons could place the peace of Britain and France in jeopardy (Chiatoh, 2019).

On the other hand, it has always been difficult to understand how Dr E.M.L. Endeley lost the election to a primary school teacher called John Ngu Foncha. Today, everybody knows that Foncha was a Francophone who grew up in Bamenda. He might not have represented the interest of the people. When books write lengthy stories about the dance that took place when the Republic of Cameroon and British Southern Cameroon met in Fouban to draft a common constitution, it is not clear if the two parties spoke some words in their common language. However, it should be noted that Foncha did not appreciate the way the country was managed few years after the Federal Republic of Cameroon was formed. It is due to this malaise between him and the President that he was removed. In the same line, Foncha publicly resigned from the government party in 1996 after making several attempts to meet with government officials to address issues he thought they did not go the way he had arranged or thought. Article 59 of 1961 constitution stated that only the French text is authentic, already showing the inferiority of the English language.

Root causes of the Ambazonian war of independence

In the words of Cardinal Christian Tumi, East and West Cameroon had their reunification on October 1, 1961. He had just returned from the seminary in Nigeria and his boss was asking him to continue his further studies there. He was worried because he thought that a seminary in his country was better. Following the principle that the boss is always right, he returned to Nigeria. Upon completion, he was given a scholarship to study at the Vatican. During his studies, the Vatican organized a reception for all African clergy and the French Ambassador to Rome was present. As he made his introduction, the Ambassador came to him and told him that France was happy the way the Francophones are assimilating the Anglophones. He never told him that he was an anglophone or it was disgusting to get that information. As a Cardinal Emeritus, he has done all the have a private chat with the president and he was turned down, a true nature of the French administration the Ambazonians are rejecting. In 2018, President Paul Biya acknowledged that francophone-dominated government has done everything to assimilate the anglophones, but it did not work. A statesman called Abouem a Tchoyi was fortunate to serve as the Governor of both the North West and South West Provinces before his appointment as the Minister of Higher Education among other top government positions. When the crisis started, he said that he had visited President Paul Biya with Professor Dorothy L. Njeuma to turn in a confidential report they got from the Anglophones. According to him, Paul Biya could simply open that letter and apply the recommendations. The narrative below gives the historical facts and dates that led to the inhalation of the West Cameroon institutions followed by economic and social exclusion from the benefits of the state. In public, he has mentioned the federal system as the name change as important parts of the problem (Tchoyi, 2017)

After the plebiscite followed by the reunification of the Republic of Cameroon with British Southern Cameroons, a joint constitution stated that nobody should even change the federal system of the country. British Southern Cameroons had a Prime Minister in Buea with the government departments as it existed between 1957 – 1961 while the Republic of Cameroon had its own departments.

There president of the Republic of Cameroon was by default the President of both territories, which was thought to be the majority (80%) rule until Anglophones had proofs that France had a grip on Cameroon and there was a clause that an Anglophone can never become a president. Accept it or not, Ni John Fru Ndi (Social Democratic Front) could have become the first democratically elected president of Cameroon if he was a Francophone. The fact that an Ambazonian can never become a president in Cameroon is well arranged to push the top executive (Prime Minister) Ambazonian to the fifth position while the Ambazonians came in for the first two position. As it stands, the post of vice president was suppressed forever because if the president were to die in power, an Ambazonian will by default become a president. It is somehow strange to understand some basic terms of the agreement and the confidence British Southern Cameroons gave the French counterparts whom they called brothers.

In the words of Ambassador Cohen, British Southern Cameroons was a federated state just as we have the United States of America with 50 states. They two territories had one currency, one foreign policy (embassies) and army. For the currency, French Cameroon had signed a black pact with France on political independence but not economic independence. French Cameroon was/is supposed to pay colonial taxes to France for a century. All minerals in French Cameroon belong to France and no important infrastructural, educational, or cultural event can take place in the French territories (often misunderstood for independent countries) without the French government authorization. This means that British Southern Cameroon was supposed to use a different currency in English is the Republic of Cameroon could not use a new currency. For the colonial taxes, British Southern Cameroon was supposed to develop fast since they are exempted from colonial taxes to a country that never colonized them.

The army of Cameroon remain French after the reunification. Without official values, at least there are more than 30 top military officers to any single anglophone official. The language of the army remained French. If you go to the hinterlands where the people do not even understand good English, the administrator who himself did military training and his forces of law and order speak French instead of English. If there are few Anglophones in the French regions, they must learn how to speak French fluently and write it correctly.

For the foreign policy, anglophones have been completely left out. Considering that it was very normal to send a francophone to a French country so that he both masters the language and the culture of the people, there is no anglophone in major English-countries like South Africa, Nigeria, United States of America, Canada and even the United Kingdom.

The first step President Ahmadou Ahidjo took against the constitution was to remove an elected Prime Minister, J.N. Foncha and appoint Solomon Tandeng Muna in 1966. The appointment of Muna and the creation Cameroon National Union as the only party in the country were giant steps to the assimilation process. The discovery of oil in Limbe (former Victoria) which contribute 12% of the country's Gross Domestic Product might have hastened the decisions.

In 1972, president Amadou Ahidjo conducted a constitutional coup by making a referendum in which the people of British southern Cameroons were asked to vote in favor or against a unitary state contrary to the article 47 para 1 of 1961 constitution which stated that nobody should even attempt to change the federal nature of the country. The greatest chock in this referendum is that the people had one ballot papers in which they were written 'Yes' and 'Oui'. Many of them were rejecting 'Yes' not knowing that it was the same thing in a different language. Days after this fake referendum, the federal republic of Cameroon became the United Republic of Cameroon. An independent territory now became an integral part of another country. Sham elections were conducted on May 20, 1972 and the United Republic of Cameroon (new name) became a unitary state with one star on the flag (African Center for Strategic Studies, 2017).

The next month, the president Amadou Ahidjo sent Gendarmes into British Southern Cameroons while road construction equipment were taken from Buea to Yaoundé under the pretext that the country had one central 'Jacobin' government. The anglophones had their greatest shocks when they went to Yaoundé to apply for their own tractors. The first reason is that the tractor was working in a different region. Later, there was no driver to bring it to Buea. This is one of the reasons the Anglophone crisis stated because the issue of road maintenance will remain from this day. Gendarmes will dominate the Mobile equipped police, and everything will become Francophonized. At the base of the referendum, pundits think that the discovery of oil in Limbe might have been the main reason the French needed a central government so that they can extract everything. From the 1970s till date, all top management officials of the national oil refinery are francophones. In fact, it will be difficult to even do cleaning services or internship in the company as an Anglophone.

All educational systems in the anglophone system became the annex while the one in the French system became the higher education. Examples like the school of Public works, Teachers training colleges, administration, police and medical facilities demonstrate this fact. The abolition of federalism is therefore regarded as the root-cause of the genocide (Mehler, 2013).

The impact of New Deal Government of President Paul Biya on the Southern Cameroons Genocide

If we can talk of one person who has influenced the history of Cameroon, we must start with President Paul Biya. He came from France in 1962 and served as Secretary-General of the Presidency from 1968 to 1975 and then as Prime Minister of Cameroon from 1975 to 1982. In 1982, he took overpower from president Amadou Ahidjo. Paul Biya was known for rigor and moralization as he used his experience from the seminary to lead the country. Apparently, Ahidjo had health issues and was advised to resign (Wikipedia, 2021). During the first years of President Biya, he visited the north west more than any other nation and people still remember his famous speech, 'Bamenda is my second home'. He was crowned the 'Fon of Fons' during one of his visits (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 1997).

The first step he took was to divide West Cameroon into North West and West Provinces of August 22, 1983, in favor in a unitary state. As though this was not enough, he suppressed the name United Republic of Cameroon and gave the new name of the country as Republic of Cameroon without recognizing the Ambazonia in the term. If there were many agitations and comments, the new social order of Fon Fongum Gorji-Dinka stands out as the most important document rejecting the presidential decree (Fongum, 1985). From this time onward, the Jacobin-system was put in place and the famous "kale kale" started in West Cameroon (UNCHR, 1999).

After individual and corporate denial of the assimilation and annexation of Ambazonia into a unitary state with the Republic of Cameroon in which Ambazonians were treated like slaves, the Social Democratic Front was like the first political party that brought hope to all Ambazonians and even francophones since its proposed a return to federalism. When President Paul Biya was apparently lost the elections but refused to concede, more pressure groups came up like the All Anglophone Conference which held its first meeting in Buea before going to Bamenda. They sent delegates to the United Nations and they were given a triumphant welcome on the Mungo bridge. International organizations and world leaders pressured President Paul Biya to dialogue with the Ambazonians. He made some consultations with his party leaders and came up with Law No. 96-6 of January 18 on decentralization remained on the paper for 20 years. The only effort the President made was to change the word of the province to regions without any political and economic implication. In April 2008, the revision of the constitution to remove article 9 paragraph on the limitation of the presidential term was one of the most important things the CPDM-led government did to maintain Biya and power and exacerbate the marginalization Ambazonia was already undergoing.

In October 2016, teachers and common lawyers took to the streets to protest over the Francophonization of the Anglophone system of education. What happened over the years was that the government authorized more students to be admitted in French training institutions than the Anglophones. Upon graduation, the idle ones were sent to English school to serve as administrators. In some cases, they were a serious need and this teacher who can barely greet someone in English is sent to the classroom. There were few options for him/her to conduct his duty. On the one hand, the person will tell the learner to read for his/her classmates. On the other hand, he/she could speak in pidgin/ broken English. The teachers trade unions were not happy with the situation among other things.

Almost at the same time, the government had sent a majority of Francophones to Anglophone courts. Francophones used the civil law as opposed to the common law applied in Anglophone courts. Apart from the system, the magistrates did not hear English. People went to prison because the magistrate did not understand them. One of the most important point was that Cameroon adopted OHADA (Organization for the Harmonization of Corporate Law in Africa) laws OHADA laws are legal instruments at the service of efficiency in the performance of enterprises and economic growth. Knowing that the document was meant from a French audience, there was no English version, but the government sent it to all courts. As they led a peaceful march, the government forces met them with guns (Terretta, 2012). There is actually freedom of expression in Cameroon before and during the speech but nothing is guaranteed after the speech.

In fact, Southern Cameroon is the only territory in the world where a colony ended up colonizing another territory. The president who has been in government since 1962 was not ashamed to say that he needed an interpreter and later said that they tried everything to assimilate the Anglophones, but it did not work. In fact, basic issues like the president addressing the citizens in a foreign language or spending all his time abroad have contributed greatly in fueling the crisis.

The teachers and lawyers presentations were banned nationwide and online activism took over. Diasporians discovered that if they do not speak up, the teachers and lawyers plight will die a natural death like the election protests in the 1990s and the hunger strike in February 2008. President Biya's response to Anglophones was brutality and delay tactics. Each time the steam was coming on and, diasporans rekindled the flames.

In a desperate response to the pressure from the diaspora, the deplorable government official issued an international warrant of arrest to social media activists like Ivo Tapang, Wilfred Tassanf, Sisiku Ayuk Tabe and Mark Bareta which led to Nigeria unlawfully arresting some of them and deporting them to Cameroon before facing serious internal challenges from their own courts as extradition treaties did not exist between Cameroon and Nigeria. These citizens like all other detainees arrested in connection to the civil war are judged under the civil law in French language instead of the common law in English language, reinforcing the same reasons why the lawyers took to the streets.

The war has kept the economic and social activities at bay with serious socio-economic implications on the local communities and economic tissue of the area (Ollong, 2021). The government of Cameroon has taken a few measures that are considered insignificant to the population and the diplomatic community:

- National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism created as an advisory body, created by decree No: 2017/013 of the January 23, 2017. The commission is concerned with window dressing of making speeches and official in both English and French as written in the constitution. However, the President of the Republic has never read out a paragraph in English for all these years that the problem started, informing the world that the commission was not important.
- Recruitment of 1,000 Bilingual teachers was the next decree the president signed. Nobody has the list of the bilingual teachers because learners continue in French or English systems. Who then is a bilingual teacher, where was he trained? When was he recruited? Where was he sent?
- Translation of OHADA document. Nobody wants to argue if the document was translated or not, but we need to know whether a French legal framework applies to an English territory and the person to interpret it does not have a training in the English culture. To understand the context, there is a professor in Cameroon who specialized in South African culture but never left Cameroon. After spending sometimes listening to South African stories and reading few books, we noticed some lapses. We cannot be comparing the speed of a fish out of water. The point is that the Anglophones are and will always be qualified/ intelligent, but they are tested by the French system, in a French language based on a caste system (Szczepanski, 2020) or highly corrupt system.
- The National Commission of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Committee in charge of ex Boko Haram fighters in the Far North region and armed groups in the South West and North West regions was created by Decree 2018/719 of November 30, 2018. Just the fact that illegal groups are added to a category that should/ could be considered as freedom fighters discredits the organization from creation. Youths who went to this commission had no food to eat and they escaped. Some of them were killed instead of reintegration as the name shows.
- The Major National Dialogue. President Paul Biya convened a Major National Dialogue from September 30 to October 4, 2019 in Yaoundé. After his state address, some people took him seriously. Unfortunately, all commissions were manned by the same government official officials who created them, and the topics were themes and panels were given to each panel. Participants could not belong to the panels of their choice neither could they comment on any topic which was not on the agenda. Worst still, he never participated, and one cannot be sure what his secretaries wrote down, if at all there was some level of freedom to express the frustrations of the people. At the end of the day, the ruling party dominated participants wrote a genuinely nice book with no impact on the population. The Houses of Chiefs and Regional elections were some of the resolutions which were taken but the implementation has nothing to do with the demands of the people (Chem-Langhee, 1983).
- House of Chiefs. The House of Chiefs was like the house of Lords in Britain where the chiefs took serious decisions. However, Biya has brought out a two Houses of Chiefs: North West and South West. This weakens the powers of the institution, a good divide and rule tactic. The new House of Chiefs can only debate on issues presented to them by the government and they can only discuss those topics in the presence of the governor who is appointed by the Head of State.
- Regional elections held in December 2020 with one (ruling, government) party participating.
- Abroad, close to 10,000 activists have participated in protests both in United Nations General Assembly in New York and the Washington D.C. in 2017 and 2018, respectively.

The government of Cameroon has created all these artificial solutions to compensate his loyalists who have been doing grandstanding by screaming no anglophone problem and to make the situation to look like representatives from Southern Cameroons are taking a central stage in finding sustainable solutions to the problems. Most if not all of them do not live in Southern Cameroons and all their offices are in Yaounde.

All these solutions are considered as martial and cosmetic solutions because the government says that the form of the state cannot be changed. The root-cause of the problem is not addressed in these decrees and actions. Why should a president rule by decrees instead of coming to the people if he was truly elected by them?

3-Social media

Social media has played an important role in uniting the nation though the views differ between French and English culture (Kome, 2019). With social media, anyone could debunk the government propaganda. Citizens were changing from what they knew to question things on a platform where thousands can tune into get alternative facts. Journalists and individuals have created their own outlets where they can put out their own ideas without government censorship. There were 7.87 million internet (97% mobile) and 3.70 million social media users in Cameroon as of January 2020. During the same period, they were 23.62 million mobile connections (Dataportal, 2020). In December 2017, the most popular social media sites used by Cameroonians include Facebook (93.92%), Pinterest (3.64%), Twitter (1.03%), YouTube (1.14%), while LinkedIn, Tumblr, Google+ and StumbleUpon all have less than 1%. Thus, Facebook Inc retains Lion's share with an estimated population of 2,100,000 users (8.6 % of the population) and therefore the designated social media for this research paper (Nseke, 2018).

Social media has changed the way war is waged, covered, and consumed. Though soldiers still fight on the battlefield, they are increasingly shaped by competing narratives on social media (Patrikarakos, 2017). It remains the most effective avenue through which acts of violence, social exclusion, and economic asphyxiation can be documented when faced with autocratic regimes like Cameroon, A tweet of 140 characters changes the narratives and the account holder circumvents government censorship to reveal the real time events. Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp and twitter are the main platforms used by activists (Agwanda *et al.*, 2020).

- Facebook

Facebook is an exceedingly popular social media platform in Cameroon. Just with 100 XAF (~\$0.19 as of today) someone can purchase data to surf on Facebook (post and send messages on messenger) for an hour or more. Today, there is an option to send messages free of charge on Facebook messenger. I made one of the first live presentations on the Anglophone crisis. In less than two months, I had over 13,000 followers excluding those who downloaded the videos to watch at home. The government got the message loud and clear. It could have been impossible to send an email or a regular mail to the government in Cameroon. It was an eye opener. Gradually, many activists started learning live shows on Facebook and they started using it. I stood up against the rape, rampant killings, extortion and maiming of the people (Lee, 2018; US Department of State, 2019)



Credit: [Mami Gera](#) | Facebook

Some of the most important presentations that went viral include

When Agbor Balla Felix Nkongho and Dr. Fontem Aforteka'a Neba were sent to jail, Mark Baretta and Tapang Ivo assured the leadership of the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium. They continued with press releases as their predecessors but soon realized that audios and Facebook daily briefings which attracted 3,000-4,000 participants per session. Mark Baretta (@MarkBaretta) and Tapang Ivo (@Tapang_Ivo) have also become incredibly famous on social media accounts in the Anglophone crisis. Later on, Eric Tataw Innocent Chia (@innochia)... joined.

There are over a dozen pages for activism on Facebook following a search with the words Southern Cameroon(s) and Ambazonia with Southern Cameroons Broadcasting Corporation having up to 51,000 subscribers. More so, there are thousands of facebook profiles with Amba and/or pikin (child) in solidarity with the homeland nationalists. Heroes who paid the ultimate sacrifice like Gen. Ivo or have been sentenced to life imprisonment like Sisiku Julius Ayuk Tabe (Sisiku is a chieftancy title), Dr Nfor Ngala Nfor, Mr. Wilfred Tassang, Professor Augustine Awasum, Dr. Cornelius Njikimpi Kwanga, Dr. Henry Kimeng, Dr. Egbe Ogork, Barrister Shufai Berinyuy and Barrister Elias Eyambe also have many Facebook accounts whose holders are family members and friends/ comrades.

- Twitter

Twitter has been the second platform was used to communicate with the outside world. Through twitter handles, the plight of the people was shared with Heads of States, diplomats, senators, representatives, and other political leaders across the world. Nobody can measure the impact of our tweets because most diplomats pressure president Paul Biya under close doors. Many activists have issues using twitter because of the limited number of characters but those 140 characters change the way war is waged on the battlefields (Patrikarakos, 2017)



Credit: [@Mamigera \(@AmbeGeraldine\) / Twitter](#)

The writing on the background is 'Nous sommes Anglophones' meaning we are Anglophones. The resistance started with a catapult in 1990 but this time around, social media has been so useful to tell the world what the United Nations Trust Territory of Southern Cameroons has been undergoing since 1961 when they willingly decided to federate with the *La République du Cameroun* like Quebec in Canada. During the Commonwealth meeting in Auckland, New Zealand in 1995, Cameroon delegation agreed to form a Quebec-style (Canada) independence before gaining admission into the commonwealth of Nations. Two decades later, the commonwealth could not do a follow up of their promise. Instead, Patricia Scotland came to Yaoundé to collect a golden statute and may be get some cash into his bank account. What is in this statute that when guests leave the Unity Palace in Yaoundé, Cameroon, they change their words against the masses?

I have been honored to receive reply from high dignitaries in the United States, Europe and fellow comrades in the struggle for autonomy. On my twitter account, I have 2,310 followers and I am following 2,702 accounts and much more through the Southern Cameroons Women Movement that I co-founded. Despite the importance of twitter, it makes up only 0.5% of the social media users above 13 years in Cameroon (Dataportal, 2021).

- Youtube

At the beginning of the anglophone crisis/ war, teachers and lawyers were sending out press releases. After Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium Society was banned on January 17, 2017 and some of its leaders arrested, it became difficult to hold meetings and bring up resolutions to communicate to the people. Many activists started writing articles, audios, and videos. It became clear that the government will arrest anybody who may be following these messages arbitrary arrests (Shaban, 2018).

Youtube became extremely popular as videos could be followed online without necessarily downloading them into the different mobile devices. I had more than 10,000 subscribers on my Youtube channel as of 2018. Videos related to the war could also be viewed from pressure group websites like Ambazonia government (www.ambazonia.org), Ambazonia Governing Council (www.agovc.org), African People's Liberation Movement (www.aplmglobal.org), Movement for the Restoration of the Independence of Southern Cameroons (www.morisc.org), British Southern Cameroons (Ambazonia) Genocide Library (www.ambazoniagenocidelibrary.com) as well as few courageous journalists like Mimi Mefo (www.mimimefoinfos.org) and Cameroon News Agency (www.cameroonnewsagency.org).

There are many Ambazonian elites who have appeared on television and international media to present the plight of the people. Many videos can be found on Youtube on the outings of Cardinal Christian Tumi and his views are rejected especially as he is one of the rare elites who has conducted field surveys. On the contrary, we have people like Dr Christopher Fomunyuy that Ambazonians hold in extremely high esteem talking of a governance crisis which we vehemently reject. There are two states that came together and if the marriage does not work, one partner can go his way. If the Republic of Cameroon were not a benefactor to our resources, they would have been the first to throw us out.

- WhatsApp

WhatsApp is an extremely popular platform in Cameroon. Though it is not a social media platform *per se*, it has been one of the main tools used by activists to communicate among themselves. I belong to a dozen platforms ranging from my community to the country and different groups in the revolution. Each day, hundreds of messages, photographs and videos are shared through these groups.

4- Blogs and vblogs

As the Facebook (social media) republic grew in strength, many blogs were also constructed. The numbers and intentions are unknown, but there are at least three major groups of blogs: Ruling party (Cameroon People's Democratic Movement)/ state agencies that accept the status quo, opposition party that stand for a two-state federation and the pressure groups stand for outright independence.

- Ruling party

All government departments and agencies including the state media will make a biased analysis of the situation in favor of the government. All government documents are sent to the public through the Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV) Radio or Television stations (www.crtv.cm) while the state sponsors a daily bilingual newspaper called Cameroon Tribune (www.cameroon-tribune.cm). Anglophone elites that may make up 0.1% of the population will be promoting this ideology. An elite like Prof. Elvis Ngolle Ngolle who represents the ruling party regularly is one of them (www.rdpdpdm.com). They will talk of all the measures and decrees the President has put in place. The elites are teleprompted in their presentations and you can see some struggles with most of these speeches written for them to read on CRTV.

- Opposition parties

The first registered political party in Cameroon is the Social Democratic Front. It was formed in Bamenda on May 26, 1990 and six people lost their lives when the chairman, Ni John Fru Ndi launched it. It was the hope of the Anglophones as one of the 10 main points was a two-state federation. When the teachers and lawyers started, the party saw what a two-state federation could have avoided. They wrote several documents and even organized demonstrations with its party leaders in Bamenda and Buea. One of its representative, Hon. Joseph might have been more radical.

On December 13, 2016, he took the Cameroon parliament by surprise when he rose to the podium to stand vehemently with the demonstrators. He recalled how he met Prof Jacques Fame Ndongu in private to express the frustrations of Anglophones. He replied that Anglophones were just like cubes of sugar in a basin of water.

That is why most social media platforms have two cubes of sugars on a spoon to show that the two cubes of sugar have refused to dissolve. Joseph Wirba will be remembered for quoting Thomas Jefferson, 'When injustice becomes law, resistance becomes a duty'. After this speech, he was received as a king in his constituency in Jakiri, Bui Division and two other places before he went into hiding. One blessed morning, he appeared again in parliament and made his last speech before going into exile. He escaped from his own party comrades and the ruling party because every elite thought that independence may remove them from their positions (Sama, 2016). An average anglophone is angry with the SDF party because they got national and international admiration from their home/ anglophone brothers. When situations changed, they refused to change with the people. However, we can also understand that the party also had French supporters. Anglophone problem made SDF to be known and the same problem has buried SDF because they were unable to follow the win of change. The climate is changing, and we are going from industrial revolution to a technological revolution. The name Ni John Fru Ndi was worshipped and adored in the 1990s and he has lived to see the burial of his party.

In recent times, Francophones have stood up to condemn the corruption and live-long presidency of President Paul Biya. Their main opposition leader is Professor Maurice Kamto, the founder Cameroon Renaissance Movement party. Some Ambazonians were thinking that if he became a president, he may end the war. Unfortunately, Maurice Kamto has never acknowledged that 2 separate states came together to form the country. Many Ambazonians therefore think that he could be worse than Biya is he becomes president because Biya openly said that he has not forgotten that Buea was the Capital of Southern Cameroon. In the same line, there are many CPDM-led opposition parties who propose that the military should bomb the whole of Ambazonia. All political activities have been banned in Ambazonia including CPDM, SDF and MRC till further notice. All elections taking place from 2018 to 2020 have been a farce.

Few elites like Bar Agbor Balla Felix Nkongho and Dr Fontem Neba went to prison for putting the form of the state into question or asking for a return to federation. When they left the prison and the protests turned into arbitrary arrests, killings, arson and serious human rights abuses, they remain on the same position till today (Mehler, 2013; BBC, 2018a;b; Smith 2018; 2019; Human Right Watch, 2019; Smith, 2018; 2019). Many people regret why they kept pressure on the president to remove them from Kodengui central prison. It is difficult to understand that Agbo Balla is in Cameroon and Fontem Neba is in the United States but the two of them have not deviated from the point they placed before the government authorities (Shaban, 2018).

Mimi Mefo (www.mimimefoinfos.org) was a journalist with a private television station in Cameroon. He was arrested in connection to the Anglophone crisis. Social media warriors kept pressure on the government, saying, 'Journalism is not a crime' until she was removed. She joined DW but formed a private blog for news on the crisis and maintains her blog as well as twitter @Mimimefo237. However, she reports everything on the society, may be without necessarily putting her views in the lamplight.

Cameroon News Agency (www.cameroonnewsagency.org) also came up when the crisis had a lot of information to share. The blog has a lot of information on the Anglophone crisis in addition to other items.

C) Pressure groups for independence

- British Southern Cameroons (Ambazonia) Genocide Library (www.ambazoniagenocidelibrary.com)

This blog keeps all videos and graphic images of the human right abuses, extrajudicial killings, raping, maiming, summary executions, barbaric arts of the Cameroon soldiers and arson meted on the Anglophone community. This blog keeps the records on all fallen heroes with the specific place where they felt and the situation surrounding their death (Dicklitch, 2002; Free Southern Cameroons, 2016). Most pictures and videos on this blog are considered graphic and may not be posted on other social media platforms like Facebook, twitter, and Instagram.

- Ambazonia government (www.ambazonia.org)

The Ambazonia government led by Dr Samuel Sako Ekume is the main pressure group that was derived from the outlawed Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society consortium. It has a lot of supporters that form several committees referred to as a government. It is claimed to be the main pressure group. They have an army is made up of soldiers called Amba Boys. They also run two television stations that run 24/7:

- Southern Cameroons Broadcasting Corporation (www.scbctv.com)
- Ambazonia Broadcasting Corporation (www.abcambatv.org)
- Ambazonia Governing Council (www.agovc.org) and with two television stations: Ambazonia. The Ambazonia Governing Council is led by Dr Ayaba Cho Lucas. He has the charisma of a revolutionary leader. Their army is made up of soldiers called the Ambazonia Defense Force.

- African People's Liberation Movement (www.aplmglobal.org) led by Dr. Ebenezer Akwanga leads an armed wing called The Southern Cameroons Defence Forces (commonly referred to as SOCADEF).
- Movement for the Restoration of the Independence of Southern Cameroons (www.morisc.org) led by Mr. Boh Herbert. As a veteran journalist, Boh has written some of the most important documents on the Anglophone crisis than any other person. MORISC beliefs in diplomacy and does not have an armed wing.
- The University of Toronto has a blog that gives a neutral view of the situation. According to Cameroon Anglophone Database of Atrocities ([Cameroon Anglophone Crisis: Database of Atrocities \(utoronto.ca\)](http://Cameroon Anglophone Crisis: Database of Atrocities (utoronto.ca))), there are war crimes on both sides, and they could use it at the end of the war to hold official accountable. The conflict has created close to twenty separatists' groups who frequently use irregular tactics in fight the police, gendarmes, and the army. To control these groups, the government forces have engaged in extrajudicial killings; random looting, shooting, beating, and torturing, using disproportionate and indiscriminate force; abusing and arresting protestors; burning more than 200 villages to the ground, displacing hundreds of thousands of civilians; attacking hospitals and beating and raping women and girls. In revenge, freedom fighters have killed and dismembered security force members; killed, tortured, or maimed Anglophone civilians who appear unsupportive of secession; kidnapped civilians for ransom; kidnapped teachers and students to enforce a school ban; lockdowns, trapping civilians in their homes for days and beaten and raped women and girls. In sum, Civilians are trapped in the crossfire. The Crisis is now a humanitarian disaster, rife with deplorable human rights violations and inhumane violence (International Crisis Group, 2019; University of Toronto, 2021).
- Mark Baretta is an activist who owns his own blog called www.baretta.news

5- Accomplishments

From 1961 when the United Nations Trust Territory of Southern Cameroon joined French Cameroon for a Québec- style (Canada) federation, there has always been pressure groups underground or in public. When literature shows Anglophones in exile from 1985, it could just be because there was a certain level of public speaking when President Paul Biya came to power. Dr Nfor Ngala Nfor wrote one of the first books on Anglophone problem in 1984 entitled the Letter to the Cameroon Patriot. This book was simply banned, and people didn't get copies. Without social media, 2016 protests and ghost towns would have ended like all the other individual and collective protests. In summary:

- Many political prisoners have been released. Agbor Balla Nkongho and Dr Fontem Aforteka'a Neba were taken to prison when CASCs was banned. Social media was the mean tool that kept pressure on the government to release them.
- Many journalists were arrested. Though it is unfortunate that Wazzizi died in prison, many others have been released. A good example if Mimi Mefo who was arrested on November 9, 2018 after #FreeMimiMefo was trending on social media (Kome, 2019).



- Release of Justice Ayah Paul Abime from prison by a presidential decree on the August 30, 2017 after spending more than 8 months in detention in Yaoundé prison.

- Many Ambassadors and High Commissions (like USA, Canada etc.) and international organizations have come to Cameroon to pressure the government. The Secretary General Commonwealth of Nations, La Francophonie and the United Nations have all come to Yaoundé to talk with President Paul Biya.
- A few initiatives have been taken to ameliorate the condition of Anglophones in the public spheres. These initiatives include:
- Decree N° 2017/013 of January 23, to lay down the Establishment, Organization and Functioning of the National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism. This commission may not do much, but its presence raises that consciousness that English is a national language.
- Decree N° 2018/240 of April 9, to reorganize the National School of Administration and Magistracy (NSAM). Created in 1959, NSAM is a large school of higher education whose main mission is the training and development of high officials of the Cameroonian government.
- Decree on March 2, 2020 created the National School of Local Administration with headquarters in Buea. This institution will train local administrators who will be working in local councils. Children who grew up in the Anglophone part of the country will have that luxury of continue professional education in their own language, something the generation before did not always have.
- Re-establishment of Houses of Chiefs. The Anglophones had a single House of Chiefs in Buea. When they gave a list of issues that the Central government had erased from the Anglophone culture, the ruling party convinced the president to bring back the House of Chiefs, but he brought back two Houses of chiefs, one for the North West and the second one for the South West Region, a good divide and rule tactic.
- Conducting Regional Elections on December 6, 2020
- Increasing the number of Anglophones in government especially the Appointment of Paul Atanga Nji to the Post of Minister of Territorial Administration for the first time, the post has been given to a Southern Cameroonian. Professor Pauline Nalova Lyonga became the Minister of Secondary Education and more Secretary General in government departments are Anglophones.
- [Decree N° 2018/719 of 30 November to establish the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Committee.](#)
- Decree pardoning of 333 lower-level Anglophone detainees
- S.Res.684 - A resolution calling on the Government of Cameroon and separatist armed groups from the English-speaking Northwest and Southwest regions to end all violence, respect the human rights of all Cameroonians, and pursue a genuinely inclusive dialogue toward resolving the ongoing civil conflict in Anglophone Cameroon (US Congress, 2021).

These measures are too little and too late. Hon. Joseph Wirba said that accepting these little initiatives is like beating a dog and later throwing a bone for the dog to eat (Free Southern Cameroon, 2016).

The United States has also taken a few measures including:

- Cut military spending on Cameroon in 2019 after spending about USD220 million between 2012-2018 including \$17 million of military assistance due to gross human right violations (Browne & Hansler, 2017).
- Scraped trade benefits for Cameroon on October 31, 2019 under the African Growth and Opportunity Act.
- U.S. House of Representatives resolved for a return to federal rule in Cameroon.
- Together with Great Britain in condemning govt for abuses and in support for UNSC to discuss crisis.
- U.S. Department of State under Secretary for African Affairs, Tibor Nagy made calls for the release of political prisoners followed by an open dialogue.

There are few cases of genocide in modern history. This term is usually referred to Adolf Hitler and the Holocaust. However, Africans have suffered from more genocide though the world has always remained silent. During the colonial era, there were massacres in different countries including Namibia, Angola, and Kenya. Could you imagine that King Leopold II killed and maimed more people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo more than the number of deaths registered during the second World War, but many people never talk about it? In fact, DR Congo was not a Belgian colony. It was the private plantation of the king.

The Rwandan genocide was a genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, carried out between 7 April and 15 July 1994 during the Rwandan Civil War. The most widely accepted scholarly estimates are around 500,000 to 600,000 Tutsi deaths. After this genocide, the world gathered to say 'Never Again' just as they said after the Holocaust. Without the VPN, Cameroon was not supposed to be anywhere better.

Ambazonia Genocide Library exposes the atrocity crimes committed by French Cameroon on the British Southern Cameroon. The collection of graphic images that Facebook has taken down from most social media platforms are authentic and shows the tip of an iceberg of what the people would have gone through if they did not master information technology.

There are few examples where technology failed, and the entire communities were wiped out. Good examples include Kwa Kwa (Manyu Division, South West) Ngarbuh- Ntumbaw (Donga Mantung Division, North West), Menka – Santa (Mezam Division in the North West) Kumba (Meme Division in the South West) or the recent massacre in Mautu (Fako Division, South West Region).

Though we are not surprised by the barbarism of the French military and the silence of the anglophone elites, everybody should be embarrassed with the silence of the international community. From the African Union, Commonwealth, La Francophonie to the United Nations, every organization has proven that they put their person egoistic interests above honesty and integrity. The numbers of deaths, Internally Displaced Persons/ Refugees/ Migrants are staggering but the world is silent. No journal has been allowed to conduct detail investigations, but figures put the number of deaths at 5,000 with more than half a million refugees/IDPs, more than 70 communities completely wiped out. These are the relics of colonialism in the twenty first century.

Looking at the Anglophone crisis and the Francophone freedom fighters (referred to as maquis) there are a lot of similarities. However, one can see a huge success/ advancement in the Anglophone crisis in 2016 partly due to social media. Like Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Myanmar and Zimbabwe, Cameroon government suspended internet for 93 days from Ambazonia (Kenmogne, 2017; Roth, 2020). They installed different virtual Private networks (VPN) and were able to communicate. Many villages in the Littoral Region (Bassas) and West Region (Bamilekes) were wiped out during when freedom fighters were advocating for independence. Looking at the sophisticated weapons and the size of the Cameroon army today, all villages would have been massacred especially youths and children. This is a true definition of genocide when the future of a people is threatened by political aspirants. Human right organizations and the churches have stood by the Anglophones, but they do not have the powers to impose sanctions on the Yaoundé government. The Speaker of National House of Assembly, Hon. Yeguie Djibril Cavaye referred to Hon. Joseph Wirba as a maquis (Free Southern Cameroon, 2016). However, Ambazonians will not be crushed like the maquis.

Setbacks

Social media has a lot of setbacks. Anybody can create an account free-of-charge and release any idea he things it should be consumed by the public. At the end of the day, there has been a lot of fake news circulated mostly by fake accounts. Using fake profile and artificial intelligence, the government was able to send contradictory information within the social media platforms and groups. The government of Cameroon invited Facebook Inc and they decided to follow up activist accounts. Any message, image or video that exposed the atrocities of the government were taken down and the account owner received a warning. After several warnings, the account was taken down. Many of the accounts holders in 2016 were real people using their true information. These account holders have suffered from arbitrary arrest, summary execution or have their property burned down. Apart from external enemies, they have been a lot of betrayals. Activists condemned each other and, in some cases, armed men have been sent behind opponents.

Apart from fake Facebook profiles, many Francophones have been paid to write on social and public media on the Ambazonian genocide. Though they may limit themselves to issues of decentralization and may be departure of President Paul Biya from power, the war is far more than that. It is an issue existence colonialism and imperialism which caused the Republic of Cameroon to colonize its neighbor. From the standpoint of an Ambazonian and after 4 years of activism, the information presented by Sombaye Eyango (2018) is faulty. He has no roots in Ambazonia and he did not travel there to make inquiries but wrote a thesis with wrong names attributed to different groups.

Conclusion

For me, Ambazonia has never been and is not a part of the Republic of Cameroon and they have international recognized boundaries at independence. It is simply occupied through fraud, violence, intimidation, and suppression by the Republic of Cameroon. The facts of Southern Cameroons story of how its statehood came to be suppressed are therefore clear and straightforward. The violence, the massacres, wanton arrests, the intimidation, lawlessness, torture, and kidnappings, which have been exercised by the annexationist colonial government in Yaoundé against the people of Southern Cameroons, to suppress the facts, stand on their own as separate crimes. This paper presents the use of information technology for the safety and survival of a people. Nothing can be done to appreciate the value that these tools have been able to safe people from danger and document the on-going genocide in Southern British Cameroons- Ambazonia. The call of Fongum Gorji-Dinka for the reconstruction of our institutions was not heard and social media has come to help Southern Cameroon reconstruct its institutions and autonomy. For 25 years, diplomacy has failed to solve the problems and social media has brought its own contribution to the autonomy of Southern Cameroon.

The portions of the Foumban Accord that were never written in the constitution will be part of the negotiation. These include but are not limited to the limit of the presidential mandate to 2 terms; true two-state federation in which a president must be from one side and the Vice President from the opposite side; election of a President and the Vice on a single ticket as it happened in 1972 when President Ahmadou Ahidjo and Solomon Tandeng Muna were elected on a single ticket; double nationality as it is the case with most English-speaking countries and the currency of the country. If the appellation “Southern Cameroons” allows French Cameroon to claim rights over us, the people will prefer the name Ambazonia. 'Ambazonia' was coined from Amba Bay, the bay whose waves wash ashore the land once called Southern Cameroons.

For four years, schools are been closed, torture, extrajudicial killings, arson of entire communities, unlawful detention, loathing of property have been going on in Ambazonia (Former British Southern Cameroon) though under-reported in public media. A minimum of 12,000 people have lost their lives in the harsh and life-threatening overcrowded, dilapidated, colonial-era prisons, or massacred directly by Cameroon forces or indirectly due to famine and illnesses as the populations flee to the bushes. More than a million internally displaced persons in the Ambazonia as well as Francophone part of Cameroon. United Nations Refugee records over 300,000 Ambazonian refugees in their camps in Nigeria while the same numbers may be found in private homes in the same country. As the military commit arson and human right abuses of different natures, richer families have sent their family members to West Africa, South Africa, Asia, Europe and America the United States where they are seeking asylum. For four years, schools are been closed, torture, extrajudicial killings, arson of entire communities, unlawful detention, loathing of property have been going on in Ambazonia (Former British Southern Cameroon) though under-reported in public media. A minimum of 12,000 people have lost their lives in dungeons, or killed directly by Cameroon forces or indirectly due to famine and illnesses as the populations flee to the bushes. More than a million internally displaced persons in the Ambazonia as well as Francophone part of Cameroon. United Nations Refugee records over 300,000 Ambazonian refugees in their camps in Nigeria while the same numbers may be found in private homes in the same country. As the military commit arson and human right abuses of different natures, richer families have sent their family members to West Africa, South Africa, Asia, Europe and America the United States where they are seeking asylum. The thought that Ahmadou Ahidjo established a Jacobin system are far gone as his successor has quietly ended his 4-decade rule as the first perpetrator of genocide in the twenty first century. However, this does not deter Ambazonians from the undaunted pursuit to liberate their country from the grip of deadly talons of colonialism and imperialism, though they face terrible persecution and loss of lives and property. Inclusive, open and frank dialogue without preconditions is the only solution to this genocide (CBC-PCC-RCC, 2017; Okereke, 2018).

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