



## Research Article

# THE GOVERNMENT OF CAMEROON AND THE ANGLOPHONE CIVIL SOCIETY CONSORTIUM: GLIMMERS TO THE CAMEROON ANGLOPHONE ARMED CONFLICT

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## ABSTRACT

After the reunification of Cameroon in 1961, some West Cameroonian political class began to cast their doubts on the centralized Federal System put in place. This system according to some Anglophones gave room for marginalization and assimilation of West Cameroon especially with the closure of its development agency. This somehow nursed grievances and in 2016, the bon a fide English Speaking Cameroonians lawyers and teachers rose up in a “peaceful civil disobedient protest” to express their disillusion, over the erosion of the Common Law Judicial System and the Anglo-Saxon Education System in Cameroon. This paper from this angle looks at the origin of the Consortium, Government position and the impact. The paper argues that, Government’s responses and policies towards the corporate grievances and the ban on the Consortium laid the foundation of a radicalized armed conflict in the Anglophone region and within this dispensation; other discourse towards a lasting solution became valuable. The major instrument used for data collection was interviews, secondary literature, author’s experience and a multidisciplinary approach to present the facts. This paper concludes that the failure to break even between the Government of Cameroon and the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC) introduced armed conflict with costly consequences.

## KEYWORDS

Anglophone Problem, Strike, Consortium, Civil society.

## INTRODUCTION

The Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC) emerged on the background of the Anglophone Problem. This can be traced from the

colonial era. Following the defeat and ousting of the Germans out of their Kamerun Protectorate in 1916 (after the First World War), Britain and France who

were victorious partitioned German Kamerun Protectorate into two unequal halves. The French had four-fifth (4/5) and the British took a fifth (1/5) of the territory. The British for administrative imperatives divided her own part into British Southern Cameroons and British Northern Cameroons and administered it as an appendage to Nigeria. In February 1916 two diplomats Oliphant Lancelot of Britain and George Picot of France met in London and provisionally partitioned the territory in what came to be referred to as Oliphant-Picot Line. The line drawn on the map of Kamerun the former German Protectorate ran from Lake Chad in the North to the Mungo River in the South created a boundary between British and French spheres. On 10<sup>th</sup> July 1919, the Milner- Simon Agreement settled the 1916 partition. In 1922, the League of Nations (LON) recognized the partition and the international boundaries that separated the two territories.<sup>1</sup>

In the course of ruling the territories as Mandate B territories of LON, the French introduced the Policy of Assimilation in French Cameroon and the British on their part introduced the British system of Indirect Rule. Two distinct cultures and attitudes then developed. The people of British Southern Cameroons adopted the Anglo-Saxon culture and French Cameroon was introduced to the Centralized Republican System of administration tied to “Napoleonic Code”. This greatly alienated the two territories in the areas of language, social attitudes and

lifestyle, system of administration, education and judiciary system.<sup>2</sup>

When French Cameroon achieved independence on 1 January 1960 as *La Republique du Cameroun*, British Southern Cameroons political atmosphere was still very tensed and characterized by political ideologies and shades. Due to the differences in the political path to follow between the leaders and main political parties at the time such as J.N. Foncha leading Kamerun Peoples Democratic Party (KNDP) and E.M.L. Endeley of Cameroon Peoples National Convention (CPNC) and One Kamerun (OK) under Nde Ntumazah, the United Nations organized a plebiscite in British Southern Cameroons. The territory had two options of vote either to gain independence in association with the Independent Federal Republic of Nigeria or voting to reunify with the Independent *La Republique du Cameroun*. Following the results of the UN organized plebiscite of 11 February 1961 in British Southern Cameroons, those for reunification won. According to Ebune, there was an overwhelming vote to gain independence by reunifying with their “brothers” of *La Republique du Cameroun* with 233,571 for against 97,741 votes for union with Nigeria.<sup>3</sup> Foncha’s KNDP won<sup>4</sup> and by this victory, British Southern Cameroons reunified under an already independent *La Republique du Cameroun*.<sup>5</sup>

Ngho posits that the Fouban Constitutional Conference of July 1961 sealed the union of these two states with federation as the form of government which as best was to preserve the cultural values of

<sup>1</sup> J. L. Nfi, “The Anglophone Cultural Identity in Cameroon 50 Years after Reunification”, *International Journal of Advanced Research*, Vol. 2, No.2,(2014):121.

<sup>2</sup> C.P Musa, “The Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon: Unmasking Government’s Implication in the Radicalisation of the Crisis” *African Journal of History and Archaeology* Vol 6. No. 1,( 2022):23.

<sup>3</sup> J. Ebune, *The Growth of Political Parties in Southern Cameroons, 1916-1961*(Yaounde: CEPER, 1992), 102.

<sup>4</sup> Anthony Ndi, *Southern West Cameroon Revisited 1950-1972: Unveiling Inescapable Traps*. Vol. one (Bamenda: Paul’s Press, 2013), 135.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

each state as well as their institutions.<sup>6</sup> On October 1, 1961, the Federal Republic came into existence with British Southern Cameroons regarded and called State of West Cameroon and *La Republique du Cameroun* called State of East Cameroon. However, post-independence developments and adjustments left the British Southern Cameroons with a series of politico-economic and social grievances as the constitutional agreements that were concluded at Foumban were gradually being scrapped off by the Francophone majority regimes and there was need for the Anglophone indigenous people to come together and act in civic space to address the situation.

By 1961 in October, West Cameroonians had already been provoked with the appointment of J.C Ngoh as a Federal inspector answerable to the Yaoundé government of Amadou Ahidjo and many agitated.<sup>7</sup> Benard Folon in 1964 in his article titled “will we make or mar” enlightened the Anglophone community on the excessive use of power by the Yaounde regime and called for liberty, democracy and equality and the rule of law.<sup>8</sup> A.N. Jua the Prime Minister of West Cameroon openly showed his opposition to the imposed Federal Inspector to West Cameroon and was out to preserve the West Cameroon identity. Albert Mukong another Anglophone Cameroonian through writing of petitions and other anti-government literature expressed his dissatisfaction to what the Anglophones went through. He organized meetings in order to draw the attention of the Anglophones on

what was going on. In 1984 Mukong founded the Cameroon Anglophone Movement (CAM) which called for separation. According to Ngoh in 1972 Anglophone Cameroonians were challenged in their marginalization when the Federal structure was dismantled,<sup>9</sup> and prominent West Cameroonians protested and criticized the move publicly in the likes of Albert Mukong, Gorji Dinka and Bernard Fonlon.<sup>10</sup> Ngoh in another argument pointed out that in 1984, through the modification of the constitution’s articles 1, 5, 7, 8, 26 and 34, the name of the State was changed from the United Republic of Cameroon to the Republic of Cameroon.<sup>11</sup> He went further to say that Law No. 84-001 of 4 February 1985 abolished the name “United Republic of Cameroon” to replace it with “Republic of Cameroon”.<sup>12</sup> According to the Voice Newspaper quoting some Anglophone hardliners “It was a country that already existed since January 1960”.<sup>13</sup> According to Mutanga, “The move by Biya in 1984 was a clear signal to Anglophone Cameroonians that they have been dissolved in an already existing nation and they ought not to exist”.<sup>14</sup> To some respondents many English speaking Cameroonians stomached so much and in 1990s, the wind of change that blew across the continent opened more opportunities for the Government of Cameroon to right the wrongs that had vexed the Anglophones over years but it was still dashed into the sea with outright killings, arrest and imprisonment of Anglophones during and after the creation of the Social Democratic Front Party in 1990<sup>15</sup>

<sup>6</sup> J. V. Ngoh, *The Untold Story of Cameroon Reunification, 1955-1961* (Limbe:Presprint, 2001), 53-54.

<sup>7</sup> Benjamin Jacques, *West Cameroonians the Minority in a Bi-Cultural State* (Canada: Montreal University Press, nd), 57.

<sup>8</sup> V. J. Ngoh, *History of Cameroon Since 1800* (Limbe: Presbook, 1996),320.

<sup>9</sup> V.J. Ngoh, *Cameroon 1884-1985: A Hundred Years of History* (Yaounde: Navi Group Publication, 1987), 268.

<sup>10</sup>The Voice No.155, April 09, 2019, 3.

<sup>11</sup>Ngoh, *Cameroon 1884-1985*,...313.

<sup>12</sup> V.J Ngoh, *Cameroon 1844- Present (2018) The History of a People* (Limbe: Design House, 2018), 388.

<sup>13</sup>The Voice No. 155, 3.

<sup>14</sup>David Noro Mutanga, 52years Barrister of law interviewed at Bamenda Commercial Avenue, 12/12/2019.

<sup>15</sup>Waikai Nyo, *Inside the Fence: Reminiscences as a Detainee* (Bamenda: Patron Publishing House, 2000),9.



a party with a pro- federalist position and a national following.<sup>16</sup> The regime crushed outspoken opposition<sup>17</sup> in Anglophone Cameroon and in 1992 when elections were rigged (presidential) according to some respondents, Anglophones showed their togetherness in opposing the government. Achille posits that in 1993 the government failed to take proposals of the Southern Cameroons' delegates in the Tripartite Conference on the return of a two State Federation. He went further to say that The All Anglophone Conference (AAC) of 1994 led to the formation of the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) with a mandate to force the regime to move to a two State Federation but the Anglophone efforts were watered down and to him, the "principle of equality was undone by law".<sup>18</sup> This discontent sipped through the vent of the demands of the Common Law Lawyers of Anglophone extraction and the Anglophone teachers strike in 2015 and 2016 to degenerate into a point where it could not be handled through simple dialogue.

## CONTEXTUAL ISSUES

Within the Cameroon Federation as early as 1961, the Anglophones started witnessing aspects of marginalization, assimilation as well as exploitation. They complained bitterly against disparagements which were in the form of appointments of Francophones into key positions in West Cameroon, imposition of the French language and administrative style on the Anglophones, closure of economic institutions and the violation of the Fouban Constitutional agreements of 1961 which put the two Federated States on equal stand. These resentments

and other aching issues led to what became known as the Anglophone problem in Cameroon. Ngoh postulates that 1961 is the logical historical date for the start of the Anglophone problem.<sup>19</sup> Anglophone problem through the lens of this paper is the struggle by the ethnic Anglophones (former British Southern Cameroons) to uphold and preserve their cultural identity especially the Anglo-Saxon style of administration, educational system, the Common Law Judiciary System and the English language by the deliberate attempts at eroding or assimilating them by the Francophone regimes. The English speaking Cameroonian grievances were varied and owe their roots to the Federal Constitution which gave so much power to President Ahijo who ruled by decrees and purposefully violated the Constitutional agreements of 1961. Same administrative procedures were carried out by his successor President Paul Biya from 6<sup>th</sup> November 1982 when he became President of the United Republic of Cameroon and the Anglophones continued to fight back through concerted efforts. For instance in 1983, the English speaking students in the University of Yaounde I went on strike due to the use of the French language in all aspects of the university and an attempt to eradicate the English educational system and the government responded by creating the Buea University Centre (for students in the 1985/1986 academic years to decentralize the University of Yaounde)<sup>20</sup> later the Anglo-Saxon University in Buea was established. Tasi says that parents and teachers of the Anglophone extraction went to the streets in demand for an examination board in the early 1990s and the government reacted positively by creating the

<sup>16</sup> International Crisis Report. Cameroon Anglophone Crisis at Crossroads: Africa Report No.250, 2 August 2017, Translated from French, 7.

<sup>17</sup> Kelvin Shillington, *History of Africa, Revised Edition* (London: Macmillan Education Ltd, 1995), 407.

<sup>18</sup> Mbembe Achille, *Necro-Politics* (London: Duke University Press, 2019), 3.

<sup>19</sup> Ngoh, *Cameroon 1884- Present* (2018), 385.

<sup>20</sup> Ngoh, *Cameroon 1844- Present* (2018), 308.

Cameroon General Certificate Examination Board (CGCEB).<sup>21</sup>

The fear for an eventual elimination of the unique Anglo-Saxon judicial and educational system by the Francophone system caused the lawyers and teachers strike of the Anglophone faction in 2016. Their desire to reconstitute the past in an old tradition of marginalization only met with a Government bed rock of intolerance, denial,<sup>22</sup> excessive use of intrigues and brutality, humiliation and above all, resistance to embrace truth. However, the need to effect change and reverse the socio-economic and political situation of the Anglophones through the lawyers and teachers only became a new venue and opening for all Anglophones to converge and break new grounds for the former West Cameroon. The strike call from lawyers who gave the Government a period from the date of deposit of their worries was also supported by Cameroon Education Forum (CEF) who decried among other things the violation, neglect and partial implementation of a twenty years old ordinance on education.<sup>23</sup> Together with Cameroon Teachers' Trade Union, Teachers Association of Cameroon, Teachers of Higher Education (the University of Bamenda was not a signatory to the strike decision but was involved only when the Prime Minister asked that, the representative of the teachers attend a meeting called by him) a strike was called. Later, other Associations in the Anglophone area<sup>24</sup> joined the strike action as called

and to some personalities, the government was well informed of it but did not take action.

The lawyers and teachers civil strike was a recurrent of protests that had for decades been staged by Anglophone Cameroonians in demand for a return to the Federal System, an Independent Anglophone State, equal opportunities and attention to be given to the social and economic needs of the Anglophone minority who were undervalued according to many Anglophones.

### CONCEPTUAL ORIENTATION

An Anglophone in the Cameroon context according to Ngoh refer to a person who after the partition of German colony of Kamerun in 1916 found him/herself in the British Cameroons and they and their off springs grew up under the British in British Southern Cameroons and embraced the Anglo-Saxon culture.<sup>25</sup> Nfi on his part holds that, an Anglophone is one whose ancestry is Southern Cameroons and ethnic bases are in the former territory of British Southern Cameroons whether they speak the English Language or not.<sup>26</sup> To this paper, an Anglophone refers to people of the defined territory of British Southern Cameroons with a defined culture, history and ancestry.

The concept of strike has been variedly scaled by researchers to suite their variant ideologies. This term had hardly been defined without violent. Borrowing from the Hegelian<sup>27</sup> school of thought, when reality

<sup>21</sup> Lucas Ntang, Tasi 75years, retired member of Cameroon Parliament interviewed at Ntamulung 14/01/2020.

<sup>22</sup> The Voice, No. 155, 1.

<sup>23</sup> Ngoh, *Cameroon 1844- Present* (2018), 390.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

<sup>25</sup> Ngoh, *Cameroon 1844- Present*,...381.

<sup>26</sup> J. L Nfi, "Stages and Changing Modus Operandi of Anglophone Separatists in Cameroon since 1984" *Africana Studia*, No.33,(2020), 34.

<sup>27</sup> Hegelianism was a philosophy of G.W.F. Hegel which can be summed by the dictum that "the rational alone is real" which means that all reality is capable of being expressed in rational phylum. He aimed at reducing reality to a more synthetic unity within the embodied system of absolute idealism.

and rationality are absent, a people become pruned to chaos and eventually revolutionary ideas are planted which leads to an uprising. Some respondents have it that prior to the strike action, the Anglophones had been resilient to the assimilation machinery put in place by the regime and the accumulated vexation overtime caused an outburst of a strike (protest) in 2016. It was a rise up (mass) against the constituted authority of Cameroon.

The civil society belongs to that expanding and variegated composition of all institutions, voluntary organizations and corporate bodies within a state. Civil Society according to European Union is the involvement of “all forms of social action carried out by individuals or groups who are neither connected to, nor managed by the state”.<sup>28</sup> Van Dyck on his part opines that Civil Society is “an organized social and cultural relationship that exist within a State build on indigenous values, tradition and principles to foster collaboration and the achievement of specific goals among citizens and other stakeholders”.<sup>29</sup> He went further to say that the actors usually operate in civil space. To Evers, Civil Society is the coercive association which cuts across the borders of the state, family or community and which influences and strengthens policies through its operation and leadership.<sup>30</sup> In the context of this paper, Civil Society refers to the coming together of labour unions, social entrepreneurs, academic and research workers, judicial workers and indigenous people of Anglophone extraction in an attempt to position development dialogue as a means to provide opportunities, collective action and mobilize

the people to articulate demands, voice and address the concerns and common plights of the society at local, national and international levels. Thus, Anglophones came together as a body in 2016 (though they have been meeting as a group) through an outburst of an agitation to change the status quo.

The Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC) was the mass mobilization of the people of Anglophone extraction of Cameroon composed of formal and informal, non-institutionalized and non-political groups who seek to restore lost liberties and privileges<sup>31</sup> as a result of their differences witnessed in the union which was formed in February 1961. The Consortium on the other hand was an association of Anglophones formed during the suppression of the lawyers’ strike of 6<sup>th</sup> October 2016 to establish a common front against the government. It was a society of Anglophones business community, (Traders and Buyam Sellams), Teachers Associations, (Higher, Secondary and Basic) motorbike riders, drivers syndicates and other interested persons formed for the purpose of the fight against marginalization and other injustices. It was also widely asserted that the development of the CACSC and their stand point was only understood as an embodiment of grievances in the economic, social and political domain. The CACSC for a period of time dominated political discourse in Cameroon and became a liaison between the people of English speaking Cameroon and the State of Cameroon. Evidences show that the creation of the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC) on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2016 was the outcome of an

<sup>28</sup> [https://eur-ler.europa.eu/summary/glossary/civil\\_society\\_organisation.html](https://eur-ler.europa.eu/summary/glossary/civil_society_organisation.html), accessed 11/11/2021.

<sup>29</sup> C. VanDyck, Concept and Definition of Civil Society Sustainability, Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2017, 1. Retrieved from <https://CSIS-Prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs->

<sup>30</sup> A. Evers, Part of the welfare Mix: the third sector as an intermediate area. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Non-Profit Organizations*, 2 (1995):160.

<sup>31</sup> Jack Goldstone, “Towards a Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory” *Annual Review of Political Science* 4, (2001):139-87.



array of concerted ideas by a people to unanimously make a case inspired by huge discontent and proofs of marginalization.

## ORIGIN OF THE CONSORTIUM

The Consortium draws its origin from the different stages, *modus operandi* and diverse weapons and methods used by the Anglophones to resist the extermination and assimilation policies of the Central Government towards the Anglophone cultural identity. According to Neba, the Teachers Association of Cameroon (TAC) led by Azong Wara in 1993 launched a serious campaign to have an independent examination board for Southern Cameroons' examination and this move was supported by the Confederation of Anglophone Parents-Teachers Association (CAPTAC) and a cross section of Anglophones (a sign of unity and community spirit expressed by the Anglophones).<sup>32</sup> He went further to say the people demonstrated publicly their wants and desire to have their Anglo-Saxon culture preserved just like the Consortium demands led by Agbor Balla and co in 2016.

Teachers in the Anglophone regions in 1993 had also expressed their discontentment with the educational system in Anglophone Cameroon through petitions to international bodies.<sup>33</sup> Through groups like Cameroon Anglophone Movement (CAM), Free West Cameroon Movement<sup>34</sup> and others, Anglophone solidarity had been expressed and the government had tried to play ignorance and created division among the people. Moreover, in 1995, lawyers had articulated their worries through a strike and individuals like Barrister F. Alowbwede, E. Elad and others were arrested because

they demanded for a return to Federal and Anglo-Saxon Court systems. The Voice newspaper went further to expose that in the heat of the crisis, brothers on the other side made statements and calls for the "complete annihilation of Southern Cameroonians".<sup>35</sup> When the lawyers strike began and lawyers were arrested and beaten, in solidarity with them other Anglophones joined and this goaded the brutality which was used by government to dismantle such togetherness. In the same line, television journalists of Vision 4 in Yaoundé in the persons of Jacque Ze and Ernest Obama likened the Anglophones to "roaches and cockroaches who deserved to be wiped out".<sup>36</sup> Others called Anglophones "terrorists" and called the government to impose a state of emergency in the two regions. Banda Kani a politician expressed his worries as to why government had not used military techniques and weapons that could completely delete every single soul of Anglophone origin from surface of the earth. It was alleged that Bernard Okalla Bilai called protesters "dogs" and Tchiroma called Anglophones "secessionists". As exposed in the Voice Newspaper, the scar was also made deep on the Anglophones when names were tagged on them such as 'Anglo fools', "Biafrans", "les ennemis dan la maison" (in English enemies within) only went a long way to spark flames of an already existing vexation.<sup>37</sup> These utterances and hate speech only hardened the Anglophones who were undeniable marginalized, suppressed and humiliated but togetherness remained their strength in a spirit to disassociate with Francophone Cameroon.

<sup>32</sup> M. Neba, 70 years old retired educationist interviewed in Buea, 19/07/2020.

<sup>33</sup> *idem*

<sup>34</sup> V.J. Ngoh, *History of Cameroon since 1800* (Limbe: Presprint, 1996), 322.

<sup>35</sup> The Voice. No. 155, 3.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>37</sup> The Voice No.155...3.

In fact some Anglophone leaders such as Chief Ayamba, F. Alobwede, James Sabum and others had assembled Anglophones to a first ever held session of the Constitutional Assembly of the Federal Republic of Southern Cameroons in Bamenda on May 1-2, 2000.<sup>38</sup> This signaled the coming together of Anglophones in another dimension to use such togetherness and meetings as weapons to propagate and disintegrate themselves from their French “brothers”.

Class antagonism as propounded by Karl Max<sup>39</sup> was at the heart of the formation of the Consortium. The system of inheritance (political appointments), bad governance,<sup>40</sup> economic exploitation with Southern Cameroon territory contributing 60% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) but were least developed all projected the subjugation of the Anglophones and caused them to come together; form a common force to clearly show their social economic, cultural and political dissatisfaction and interest to free themselves. Neba argues that the Anglophone discontent was a result of systematic neglect and alleged bad faith of the president who had the “master card” to solve the presented problems.<sup>41</sup> Based on the above, the “Anglophone minority” who also worked within the ambit of Tasang’s statement; “The fight at hand is not a teacher’s fight. If it were, it would talk about living and working conditions. This is an Anglophone struggle... is time for us all to rise up as one man.”<sup>42</sup> This call by CATTU leader was not only in support of the

lawyers strike but pregnant with other grievances which saw all endemic, brave and charismatic Anglophones coming together and was within this backdrop that defenders of the course representing the Anglophones such as Agbor Balla,<sup>43</sup> Tasang Wilfred, Fontem Neba and others put in their all to pilot the CACSC activities.

In 2016, the move took another twist and Anglophones from all quarters came together to form what was called the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC). A group formed to defend the course of Anglophones striking lawyers and teachers and to discuss the way forward with the government of Cameroon. Many have argued that, government delay; threats and empty promises caused CACSC to emerge and eventually demanded separation.

#### THE CONSORTIUM AND GOVERNMENT OF CAMEROON

The lawyers and teachers strike in 2016 was supported by the entire Anglophone community and they got seriously involved after the ill-treatment of lawyers in Buea on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October 2016 when some were beaten and robes seized. It was in solidarity with the call of lawyers and teachers that made the situation a “community problem”<sup>44</sup> and this conglomeration of Anglophones of all works of life brought what was later called “The Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium”.<sup>45</sup> The Government of Cameroon formed

<sup>38</sup> A.M. Ayim, *Former British Southern Cameroons Journey Towards Complete Decolonisation, Independence and Sovereignty* (Bloomington: Author House, 2010), 457.

<sup>39</sup> Brian Aarons, “Marxist Theories of Revolution” *Australian left Review* (March 1972):18

<sup>40</sup> Said Adejumo, “Africa and the Challenges of Democracy and Good Governance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, DPMF Workshop and Conference Proceedings, 1.

<sup>41</sup> M. Neba, 70 years old retired educationist interviewed in Buea, 19/07/2020.

<sup>42</sup> Ngoh, *Cameroon 1884- Present*, 390

<sup>43</sup> Felix Agbor Balla Nkongho, was the founder and Executive Director of Center for Human Right and Democracy in Africa. Barrister in Law in Cameroon and the president of the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC)

<sup>44</sup> The Voice, No. 155, 3.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid



the Ad-hoc Committee led by Professor Paul Ghogomu<sup>46</sup> and included four Ministers who on many occasions with his *etat major* met with the striking lawyers and teachers in Bamenda. The meetings as described by Ngoh, saw increase in number of grievances from eleven points in December 2016 all due to mistrust of the Government bench by the lawyers and teachers and the Government bench also not trusting the teachers and lawyers.<sup>47</sup> Trust became a “scarce commodity” for bargain and Government lack of perspective, officials’ solipsism and deceit as recounted by Tum, delayed the handling of the problem from scratch.<sup>48</sup> Another political mind reported that;

**The government could not pretend to be ignorant of the problem. They fully had it in front of them but they lacked the political will to honestly solve the problem for fear of losing grip over the territory and a people already impoverished, disgraced, cheated, robbed of their economic resources and systematically suppressed by the regime.<sup>49</sup>**

It was within this premise, of denial of facts, mistrust, tension and wearisomeness that the Cameroon Anglophones Civil Society Consortium (CACSC) was formed on 6 December 2016 as an umbrella organization which involved all the various teachers’ trade unions and lawyers of common law.<sup>50</sup> Agbor

Balla Nkongho represented the lawyers and was president<sup>51</sup>, Tasang Wilfred backed up the teachers and was program coordinator and the Secretary of the Consortium was Fontem A. Neba. A press release No. 3 of 13 December 2016 confirmed these persons as leaders of the Consortium and had Eyambe Elias as deputy secretary general and advisers were Harmony Bobga, Abangma James, Abia D and George Ngwane.<sup>52</sup>

The “Consortium” now managed the strike actions of the lawyers and teachers and pressed hard on the Government as classes for the second term 2016/2017 academic year was to begin.<sup>53</sup>

The Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium in one of their demands asked for the return to federalism. The Government argued that, it was unconstitutional to change the form of state and settled on the use of repressive and political tricks to handle the problems tabled by the Consortium. The Government solved some of the grievances; for example provided the English version of OHADA Uniform Acts, created a polytechnic, and released some Anglophones arrested in connection to the strike; but the contagious nature of the strike saw pro-Anglophones activists and movements who hijacked the stage in demand for secession and not even federalism as was demanded by the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC). The misinterpretation of context and orientation of the Consortium on the one hand, mistrust, use of intimidation on both sides and government response

<sup>46</sup> Professor Paul Ghogomu was the Director at the Prime Minister’s office. Leader of inter-ministerial Ad-hoc Committee to examine and bring out solutions to the issues raised by the striking Anglophone Teachers’ Trade Union.

<sup>47</sup>Ngoh, *Cameroon 1884-Present*, 392.

<sup>48</sup>Vally Tum, 53years Barrister of law based in Bamenda interviewed on 21 December, 2019.

<sup>49</sup> P.C Fanso retired educationist and one time Member of Parliament for SDF interviewed in Bamenda 23 December, 2019.

<sup>50</sup>Ngoh, *Cameroon 1884-Present*...,392.

<sup>51</sup> International Crisis Report. Cameroon Anglophone Crisis at Crossroads, 11.

<sup>52</sup> Consortium Press Release No.3 of 13 December, 2016.

<sup>53</sup> Consortium Press Briefing of January 6, 2017.

on the other hand brought about armed conflict in the Anglophone regions. Provoked by delay and the wind of change that blew across the country, the strike action took another twist as the already angry lawyers and teachers were poised to bring the government on its knees.

As aforementioned, it will be good to present some of the grievances of the Common Law Lawyers and those of the teachers that finally bought them together in a Consortium (6 December, 2016). There were eleven points from the teachers which moved up to twenty five and the government had almost agreed to handle twenty one of them before the Consortium was banned.

#### a- Common law lawyers

- That “Justice rendered” in the North West and South West Regions was not in accordance with common law;
- The absence of an English version of the OHADA Uniform Acts, the main document, used in commercial proceedings before Cameroonian courts;
- Bar Association of Cameroon to be independent without government influence and supervision;
- Too many Francophone Magistrates who manned the courts of North West and South West Region with little knowledge and mastery of the common law and barely speak or understand English the language of the courts;
- Absence of English law in the Cameroonian judicial system, and,
- No notaries should be appointed in the North West and South West Region.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>54</sup>Ngoh, *Cameroon 1884-Present*, 394.

<sup>55</sup> Eden, No 1001, Monday, 16 January 2017, 5; and The Post, No. 01849 Monday, September 4, 2017, 2-6.

<sup>56</sup>The Post, No. 01771, Monday October 31, 2016, 7.

#### b- Teachers Trade Union grievances

- The education system in English sub-systems should not be adulterated;
- Improvement of working conditions;
- Admission procedures of students into the University of Buea and the University of Bamenda should be according to Anglo-Saxon tradition;
- Francophone teachers with little or no mastery of English language in Anglophone schools in the North West and South West Regions be redeployed to French speaking regions;
- Creation of a Higher Teacher Training College exclusively reserved for English-speaking region and,
- Lifting of ban on University of Buea Students’ Union (UBSU).<sup>55</sup>

These were some grievances of lawyers from the various Associations Fakol Lawyers’ Association (FAKLA) Manyu Lawyers Association (MALA), Meme Lawyers Association (MELA) and North West Lawyers Association (NOWELA) and Teachers associations; Cameroon Teachers’ Trade Union (CATTU), Teachers Association of Cameroon (TAC), Teachers of Higher Education under SYNES Buea who had sent out a communiqué stating; “we teachers of Higher Education approve the Common Law Lawyer’s action in a genuine expression...against the... culture...”<sup>56</sup> prior to the formation of the Consortium and after it was formed. Government response to the strike action was that of feet dragging. Quoting Yenkong, “When facts are produced, a leader needs to take swift and clear decisions”<sup>57</sup> in order not to spoil a bad situation. But the government failed to handle the issue on time. Earlier on 21 November 2016 Teachers Trade Unions in

<sup>57</sup>Emmanuel Y. Sobseh, *Rethinking Citizenship :Politics and Governance in Cameroon Towards a Better Future*(Bamenda: Global Press, 2012),30.

the Anglophone regions declared an indefinite strike until their tabled grievances were looked into and the government did not take serious the strike call. Some Anglophone politicians like Paul Atanga Nji fuelled the flames of the strike when statements such as “there is no Anglophone problem were made.”<sup>58</sup> The government through the Prime Minister Philemon Yang convened a meeting in Bamenda from the 25-26 November 2016 to discuss with the teachers and it was in the meeting that he rejected Atanga Nji’s statement that, “there was no Anglophone problem”.<sup>59</sup> To him, Atanga Nji’s position was not the Government’s stance.<sup>60</sup> Some political heavy weights even openly articulated that there was confusion within the government ranks because of the counter statements from these political gurus. On this count, the Government intensified its efforts through meetings with opinion leaders and visits to traditional rulers such as Fon Agwafor III of Mankon which did not curb the situation. The Governor of the North West Region Adolphe Lele L’Afrique together with top Government officials had talks with church authorities, teacher’s trade union leaders and political leaders but the talks failed as evidenced with “ghost towns” and closure of schools and the Government sent more officials to help solve the problem.

The Consortium asked parents to continue to keep their children at home. The Government of Cameroon made efforts to ensure school resumption on 7 January 2017 and a team of ministers stormed Bamenda; the

Minister of Basic Education Hadidja Alim, Jean Ernest Massena Ngalle Bibehe of Secondary Education and the Minister of State, Minister of Higher Education Jacque Fame Ndongo. Their efforts were futile as the Consortium leaders frustrated Government efforts and declared more “ghost towns” in the English speaking region. Tasang as one of the lead Consortium members made this statement; we will see and know if Yaoundé controls West Cameroon or we control our people if we don’t see this government crippling on its knees on Monday, 7 January 2017.<sup>61</sup> To the University of Bamenda representative, Tasang had become so hard and many did not know what he actually wanted and seemed to have another agenda.<sup>62</sup>

The Government felt the least threatened with the above statement and in an effort to allow schools resumption for the term in the North West and South West Regions, the Ad-hoc committee of Paul Ghogomu held another meeting on the 12-13 January 2017 to convince the leaders for schools to start while solutions would be made to the grievances but the meeting as well failed as demands were increased with federalism as an option which later also echoed by one of Anglophones reunification activist of the 1960s, Victor Mukete.<sup>63</sup> In another vein, the government sent politicians of Anglophone origin to discuss with the people and their arrogance instead brought mayhem between them and nothing was achieved. Prime Minister Yang and Jean Kwete were sent to Bamenda to calm the striking teachers and lawyers in December

<sup>58</sup> Paul Atanga Nji, Minister and permanent secretary at the National Security Council, once Minister of special Duties at the Presidency of the Republic who was later on raised to the prestigious position of Minister of Territorial Administration during a cabinet shakeup on 2 March 2018 by the President of the Republic of Cameroon, President Paul Biya.

<sup>59</sup> Eden, No. 994, Monday, 28 November 2016, 4.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid

<sup>61</sup> The Post, No. 01849, Monday, September 4, 2017, 5.

<sup>62</sup> Tata, Simon N. 65years, senior lecturer and SYNES president of the University of Bamenda in 2016, interviewed at the University of Bamenda, 14/01/2020.

<sup>63</sup> Breaking News Bilingual, No.057 of February 26, 2018, 3.



2016<sup>64</sup> and there was no solution and later President Paul Biya sent the former Minister of Civil Service Garga Haman who met the lawyers during a meeting held at Presbyterian Youth Center Kumba on 13 January, 2017 and his trip yielded to nothing. His meeting to some Common Law Lawyers was;

**An insult on the Southern Cameroonians who were looked upon as some disposable issue that any body could be sent to talk to at any time. It was a great misconduct and an act to despise the Prime Minister and Head of Government who was mandated and came up with the Prime Ministerial Decree that put in place the Ad-hoc commission.<sup>65</sup>**

According to Bobga Harmony,<sup>66</sup> the President of the Republic committed an error to had sent Garga Haman. It was gross disrespect for the people of the two regions North West and South West. Though the former minister promised to report to the president who sent him his findings, government actions were insufficient according to many people. According to the Consortium adviser, government actions were just to delay change that the people wanted. He reiterated that;

**Government of Cameroon has failed to be foresighted and has been very ridiculous in managing crisis and only come to pick pieces when disaster has already occurred. The Head of State and his agents have not given a keen interest in the cry of the lawyers**

**and teachers but instead had glued themselves to their comfort in Yaoundé without going to the scene of event to handle issues. The reason why the people saw Federation as the only solution and a means to disconnect themselves from a system that refuses change.<sup>67</sup>**

Another personality sent by the Government was Baba Danpollo (Ndawara) to talk with the striking lawyers but the talks failed because the Government position was that Federation was not going to be an option. Government feared that Federation was “equal to secession.” The CACSA viewed federation as the only way out but the Yaoundé regime saw it as a “taboo” a word that should not be used or mentioned.<sup>68</sup> The Government of Cameroon made it clear to the Consortium that the idea of a Federation was irrelevant and not debatable. That the “State of Cameroon was one and indivisible.”<sup>69</sup> The Consortium on the other hand blamed the Government and said “the Ad-hoc committee created has not achieved anything” and the “Government does not want to move the process forward” and argued that the Consortium was ready to dialogue and solve the problem but Government seems to be engaged in other priorities.<sup>70</sup>

As observed by many Anglophones, the State of Cameroon used intimidation as a weapon instead of dialogue but the CACSC stood on a two State

<sup>64</sup>The Guardian Post, No. 1072, Thursday December 8, 2016, 3.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid

<sup>66</sup> Harmony Bobga was the President of North West Lawyers' Association, a member of the steering committee of the Cameroon Common Law Bar Association and equally one of the advisers of the Consortium.

<sup>67</sup>Mutanga, 52years Barrister, interviewed at Bamenda Commercial Avenue, 12/12/2019.

<sup>68</sup>The Post, No. 01789, Monday, January 16, 2017, 4.

<sup>69</sup>President Paul Biya's end of year address to the nation of Cameroon 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016.

<sup>70</sup>Consortium Press Briefing January 6, 2017.

Federation which was popular<sup>71</sup> and the State through the governments' spokesman Isaa Tchiroma used the media to fan flames of hatred by insisting "that the form of the State cannot be changed" thus prepared the stage for Government use of force in these parts of the country (North West and South West regions).<sup>72</sup> The Government of Cameroon used force and militarized the two English speaking regions and the CACSC called on the Government to withdraw the thousands of troops especially in Bamenda, Buea and Kumba. According to a press release from the CACSC at some moments, during discussions, the Minister of Higher Education ordered that the military be locked in the room of the ongoing discussions just to intimidate the members of the Consortium.<sup>73</sup> It was alleged that the Government through the chairperson of the Ad-hoc Commission instead struggled to manipulate the process when he had a meeting with the teachers and this exacerbated tension with the call for intensive "ghost towns." In December 2016, Paul Ghogomu said "dialogue could only be possible if the teacher's first call off their strike action". To the CACSC it was provocation. According to an executive member of CATTU, "the money I saw on the table during one of the meetings was what I have never seen in my entire life as a teacher".<sup>74</sup> To her, this diluted the extent to which the talks could be genuine because the money was to intimidate Consortium members.

According to some respondents, the Government resorted on the use of force, intimidation and the non respect of engagements that were subtle and

philosophical. Some went on to say that the discussions on Friday January 13, 2017 between the Consortium members and the Government were ruined (that night) due to social media gossips. Ngoh in his book *Cameroon 1884- Present* says that the population of Bamenda was misled through rumours on the social media that the CACSC members were held hostage and forced to sign the awaited resolutions.<sup>75</sup> According to Tata,

We were in the conference room and almost concluded to call off the strike though Tasang did not see himself calling it off when some personalities dashed into hall from rumours on social media that we were held hostage to sign the document. The rumour was a false alarm masterminded by some individuals to set in confusion which they did.<sup>76</sup>

Tata went further to say that when the crowd outside the Governor's office heard this armed with bibles, started singing and praying.<sup>77</sup> Brinkman in his "Dream and Agency during Angola War of

<sup>71</sup> The Guardian post No 41 Monday 11: Tuesday 12, May 2016, 3.

<sup>72</sup> Consortium Press Release No. 4 of 16 December 2016.

<sup>73</sup> Consortium Press Release No. 9 of 28 December 2016.

<sup>74</sup> Margret Akwi, 46years, Executive member of Cameroon Teachers' Trade Union, interviewed at Ntamulung, 6/01/2020.

<sup>75</sup> Ngoh, Cameroon 1884-present, 393.

<sup>76</sup> Simon N.Tata, the University of Bamenda Teachers Association (SYNES) president at the time and who became a member of the meetings called because the Prime Minister P. Yang asked the University of Bamenda to be part of the discussions since Buea was involved and most of what was in the grievances concerned the University with training schools for teachers(ENS and ENSET).

<sup>77</sup> Idem

Independence”<sup>78</sup> mentioned singing and prayers in the days of Angola civil war and this was the same scene outside the hall of discussion. Confusion erupted, police ordered for the block of roads to Upstation because of the large crowd and the population misinterpreted it for an attack. According to the Post, calls and text messages went out for the block of major entrances into Bamenda town and City Chemist Round About.<sup>79</sup> The Voice News paper reported that at mid night, John Fru Ndi of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) Party and Ben Muna of Alliance for Democracy bashed into the conference room of the Governor’s office<sup>80</sup> only to realize it was false information. But the streets were already full and the reaction “seemingly caused police to open fire”<sup>81</sup> and tension mounted beyond control either by the Consortium or the Government. The Post equally wrote that acts of violence that night caused arrest and shooting and four youths were seriously wounded around Ntarikon area.<sup>82</sup> According to Stephen T,

“...I got a forwarded message on my phone that my brother and friends of the Consortium were under pressure from the Government, I immediately started running towards Up-Station Bamenda just to meet another large crowd at Finance Junction. The crowd was also moving to Up-Station with chants like ‘we no gree oh, we no go gree...’ and by the time I arrived the Governor’s entrance there was no space to pass due to the crowd but my brother later told me it was not easy with

them in the meeting but they refused to call off the strike...”<sup>83</sup>

This scenario resulted to a ruined deliberation and the opportunity of handling the problem was eminently frustrated and produced other results. The legality of the Consortium to function was questioned and despite the confusion; they operated until it was banned on Tuesday January 17, 2017 together with the Southern Cameroon National Conference (SCNC).<sup>84</sup>

To many respondents, the leaders of both sides did not go into the negotiations with an open mind and given the fact that these leaders had the interest of their people to protect, did not consider the outcome. Some argued that if the Consortium and the Government tactfully looked at the angle from which they approached their problems, the argument of force and the force of argument could not have had a place in their discourse. The lack of political will to solve the problems and accept suggestions spoiled the discussions and thus a glimmer to the armed conflict.

### THE CONSORTIUM AND ITS RAMIFICATION

During the period of deliberations, in an effort to show proof of some seriousness and an expression of a will to do more if the Consortium respected their own end of the bargain, the Government made strenuous efforts and carried out some of the demands of the Consortium; but to many Anglophones who thought the Consortium was the only forum that could handle the Anglophone grievances soon saw their hopes dashed when Tuesday January 17, 2017 turned into a

<sup>78</sup> Brinkman Inge, “Dreams and Agency during Angola’s war of independence” in *African Dynamics, Struggle Beyond Structure Social and Historical Trajectories of Agency in Africa* (ed) Mirjam de Bruijn, Rijk Van Dijk, Jan-Bart Gewald (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 73.

<sup>79</sup> The Post, No. 01789, Monday, January 16, 2017, 3.

<sup>80</sup> The Voice, Issue 180, Wednesday, October 9, 2019, 2.

<sup>81</sup> E. Akoegbe 36 years Commandant de Brigade in charge of anti gang unit NWR by telephone interview 19/12/2019.

<sup>82</sup> The Post, No 01789, Monday, January 16, 2017, 3.

<sup>83</sup> T. Stephen, 50 years, business man and a relation to Wilfred Tasang, interviewed at Bamenda Commercial Avenue 18/12/2019.

<sup>84</sup> The Post, No. 01790, Friday, January 20, 2017, 2.



day of destruction, arrest and torture in several towns of the English speaking parts of Cameroon.

The Government addressed some of the grievances of the teachers and lawyers such as the release of some Anglophone leaders arrested, creation of a Polytechnic for the English subsystem of education, admission of students into the University of Buea and Bamenda as set by applicable regulations, provided the English version of the OHADA Uniform Acts and the Cameroonian Penal Code, established a Common Law Bench at the Supreme Court of Cameroon; appointed English speaking Magistrates to the post of President of the Judicial Bench at the Supreme Court; integrated and promoted Magistrates throughout the country which took into account their mastery of the two official languages.<sup>85</sup> The government announced in December 2016 the recruitment of one thousand bilingual teachers,<sup>86</sup> promised two billion francs as grants to private schools among other things.

In another frantic effort to ensure the pacification of the Anglophone community, the Government created the National Commission of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism<sup>87</sup> under Peter Mafani Musonge as coordinator by Decree No. 2017/013 of 23 January 2017 read over the 5pm bilingual broadcast over Cameroon Radio Television (CRTV).<sup>88</sup> The commission was to report and propose recommendation on the protection and promotion of bilingualism and multiculturalism to the president of the Republic...<sup>89</sup> Nico H. said; “even a hundred of such commissions will

not do a thing except there was peace, justice and reconciliation.”<sup>90</sup> Though many complained that it had no use in the address of the problems raised by lawyers and teachers, it however was a step by government to calm down some other English speaking Cameroonians.

In spite of the efforts made to address Consortium grievances which were embedded in the teachers and lawyers concerns, many Anglophones still were vexed with the fact that, the Government did not resolve the problems as tabled to them (State). The Consortium condemned all acts of violence and equally cancelled all 11 February and 20<sup>th</sup> May celebrations in former West Cameroon while they called on a sit in strike and the Government to clear the streets of uniform men.<sup>91</sup> Violent reactions erupted in Bali where the Divisional Officer Divine Kamera was asked to leave his office and return home.<sup>92</sup> The State Counsel of Bali was locked up in his office, together with his staff. On Tuesday January 17 2017 at 5 o'clock a communiqué over national news banned the Consortium and SCNC.<sup>93</sup> The arrest of Agbor Balla and Fontem Neba a few minutes after the ban increased violence in Buea around Malingo Junction and barricades raised.<sup>94</sup> Government use of water cannon, tear gas and gun shots only irritated the angry mob who charged into the streets to block the transfer of Consortium leaders to Yaoundé. Ngo Bakang described the scene in the following words;

**I was around Pres Hostel  
entrance when a crowd ran into**

<sup>85</sup> Ngoh, Cameroon 1884-Present, 424.

<sup>86</sup> International Crisis Report. Cameroon Anglophone Crisis at Crossroads: Africa Report No. 250, 2 August 2017, Translated from French, 12.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid

<sup>88</sup> The Guardian Post, No. 1096 Yaounde, Thursday January 26, 2017, 3.

<sup>89</sup> Cameroon Tribune, No 11270/7469, Tuesday, January 24, 2017, 4.

<sup>90</sup> The Independent Observer, Issue No. 102, February 23, 2017, 9.

<sup>91</sup> Consortium Press Briefing, 17 January 2017.

<sup>92</sup> The Post, No. 01789, Friday January 20, 2017, 3.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid

<sup>94</sup> The Voice, No. 155, 3.

the street accompanied by a good quantity of tear gas shot by the police to disperse the huge crowd that was at the junction. Moments later, several gun shots were heard from the police station at the Malingo Junction. And the irony was that many people instead came out and I only had to run for safety when the police started arresting people.<sup>95</sup>

The Consortium discourse stirred up some Anglophones who took the struggle to another level. The fire brand Member of Parliament Honorable Wirba of SDF stole the show when on January 14, 2017 defied the orders of Senior Divisional Officer for Bui and the Divisional Official for Kumbo and held a rally where he “charged the people of Kumbo that as warriors, they were to lead the fight for the liberation of West Cameroon.” He had earlier stormed the National Assembly on 2 December, 2016 and mentioned that “until the last baby and women of West Cameroon are killed, the resistance will continue.”<sup>96</sup> With his T-shirt captioned “I am Wirba” and statements that for fifty five years the sugar has refused to melt<sup>97</sup>, “we will fight and fight and fight...”<sup>98</sup> turned Wirba into a hero among the disgruntled Anglophone community. He became a new revolutionary star in the North West and South West Regions and Government issued a warrant of arrest for him and he had to beg for protection from

the President of the National Assembly.<sup>99</sup> Although it was generally said Parliamentarians have immunity, it could easily be concluded by this situation that those in Cameroon might not have because a parliamentarian could not be begging for protection even to the extent of hiding for fear of arrest.

The arrest of Consortium members sparked condemnation from various quarters. Some Human Rights groups such as the Lawyer’s Right Watch Canada a non-governmental organization with special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the UNO, who objected the arrest of Felix Agbor and co and argued that it was a wrong use of “Criminal Law Powers.”<sup>100</sup> The Social Democratic Front (SDF) party also condemned government in the management of the crisis and the detention of Anglophone Cameroonians.<sup>101</sup> In an interview, Tchiroma said; “people would face consequences of their actions” this buttressed the fact that; there would be more arrests and detention. And after the ban of the Consortium, government launched a man hunt for other Consortium members and Wilfred Tasang following a tip-off ran into hiding<sup>102</sup> and disappeared from public scene for fear of being picked up to join the duo<sup>103</sup> and was rumoured he was in Yaoundé and sought refuge in an Embassy<sup>104</sup> and later fled to Nigeria together with Bobga Harmony. Others became victims of the situation such as Mfor Ndong of the Voice of the Voiceless a journalist was picked up in

Cameroon’s decision to arrest Felix Agbor Balla and other member of the consortium.

<sup>101</sup> Internal Circular Letter of May 7, 2017 issued by Social Democratic Front (SDF).

<sup>102</sup> M. Vubangsi, 41 years journalist interviewed at Ghana Street Bamenda, 18/12/2019.

<sup>103</sup> The Guardian Post, No.1096 Yaounde, Thursday January 26, 2017, 2.

<sup>104</sup> The Post, No. 01790, Friday, January 20, 2017, 2.

<sup>95</sup> Cynthia Ngo’Bakang, inhabitant of Buea interviewed on phone 20/12/2019.

<sup>96</sup> The Post, No.01789, Monday January 16, 2017, 6.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid

<sup>98</sup> The Median, No.219, Wednesday January 18, 2017, 3.

<sup>99</sup> The Horizon, No.322, Yaounde Cameroon, Monday 27 March, 2017, 2.

<sup>100</sup> Lawyers Right Watch Canada was an NGO with special consultative links with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations and condemned the government of

Buea with no connection to the CACSC as reported by the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedom in February 9, 2017. Cameroon National Council on 29 September 2017 condemned acts of violence and called on dialogue and national reconciliation. The United States through Heather Nauert the spokesman of the US State Department decried the “violence”, in the North West and South West Regions; US Congressman Anthony G. Brown in mid 2017 filed a petition with the United State Secretary of State Rex Tillerson to call the Government to show concern and condemned Government brutality. Commonwealth and *La Francophonie* all called on dialogue. Britain, France and Germany raised their concern on peace talks. The Bamenda Provincial Episcopal Conference (BAPEC) as well as the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon strongly condemned the situation and called for peace talks.

Diaspora community became more violent and disturbed delegations from Cameroon sent to talk with them a few months after the Consortium was banned. In Maryland USA, the Ministers’ delegation was stopped from having a meeting. There was violence in Belgium, and in South Africa, the delegation was vandalized. According to Lucas T, “sending such a team out there was a scheme to waste State money when they knew well that they will not be received”<sup>105</sup>In UK and Canada it was unsuccessful. A State of emergency was imposed by the governors of the two regions from 29 September to 3 October 2017 with curfew, restricted movements, and gatherings of more than four people.

Internet connection was shut down<sup>106</sup> for a period of three months in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon which according to some Government officials was a threat to “peace”. To some, it was a means for character destruction, destabilization of public opinion and it misled many Cameroonians. The internet through the social media was the rallying point for those who wanted change especially at the helm of the Government as pointed out by some Cameroonians. As someone remarked, “internet was gone for three months nothing changed we switched to other connections it was reconnected on April 20, 2017 we still did not have a change.” But it should be noted that the mayor of Buea Ekema Patrick thanked President Biya for internet restoration.<sup>107</sup>

There was victimization and intimidation of people on the social media especially those who supported the Consortium stance for Federation. And Fontem Neba quickly pointed out that, “because of this, those who stood for Federation will no longer talk of it even on the social media.”<sup>108</sup> This made some activists to pipe down for fear of being tracked especially as the police and military searched phones on daily basis.<sup>109</sup> There were threats of life equally as Consortium members were accused to have “educated the public about injustices being done to Anglophones in Cameroon.”<sup>110</sup> A threat on Fontem’s life was on the social media to this effect together with that of other diehard Anglophones. Archbishop F. Esau remarked that; “the government cannot handle the problem with arrest, detention bullets and tear gas”<sup>111</sup>thus

<sup>105</sup> Lucas Ntang, Tasi 75years, retired member of Cameroon Parliament interviewed at Ntamulung 14/01/2020.

<sup>106</sup> The Voice, No. 155, 3.

<sup>107</sup> The Post, No 1146, Tuesday April 25, 2017, 3.

<sup>108</sup> <https://www.journalducameroon.com/en/consortium-disown> tasangwilfred reiterates-stance-federation/Agbor Nkongho, accessed , 27/12/2019.

<sup>109</sup> The Post, No. 01789, 7.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid

<sup>111</sup> The Guardian Post, No. 1076, Wednesday 14, 2016, 2.



intimidation and militarization instead incited more violence.

Ghost towns (Countri Sundays) were intensified by the Consortium though it was banned, the people still respected their orders. The ghost town of 9<sup>th</sup> January 2017 was the most severe with the entire North West and South with no school open and streets were shut down.<sup>112</sup> A business man in Bamenda said;

**We have understood that the Government would not take the consortium serious and would not solve the problem fast so in support of the course, we shut down our shops during the days of ghost towns as fixed by our leaders though the days were many and it weighed down on us economically. Though we suffered, it was a good sacrifice.<sup>113</sup>**

The above statement shows proof that the business community was in solidarity with the Consortium though it had economic repercussions on them. Another said;

**The ghost towns were effective because each time there was to be a ghost town, we were informed through the social media and we bought food and other items and**

**stocked at home. And if I was to travel to buy, I rescheduled my trip and it did not affect my business life in any way though there were many of such ghost towns called such as the Mancho Bibixy.<sup>114</sup>**

This also confirmed the above statement that social media was a means through which the Consortium circulated their information. In fact, ghost towns continued ceaselessly in the entire Anglophone territory.

As a result of the failed discussions between the Government and the CACSC, some Anglophones settled that their children would not attend school and political elites of the Anglophone extraction made fruitless campaigns on back to school as many schools closed their doors. On Mondays in observance of ghost town calls by CACSC no school dared to open its doors. Statements from some high profile politicians such as; “we owe our children a duty and our utmost responsibility is to educate them” did not make a change to the school situation. Senators, Parliamentarians and members of Government from South West known as “Living Force” also called on teachers to stop the strike to enable parents send children to school.<sup>115</sup> In another effort by Government, Minister Ngalle Bibehe issued a statement in January 19, 2017 to Regional Delegates of secondary school in the Anglophone regions to put in all efforts for school

<sup>112</sup>Life Time, Vol. 11, No. 00153, February 4, 2019, 5.

<sup>113</sup>Peter Ngwa, 56 years business man, Bamenda main market interviewed at main market 18/12/2019.

<sup>114</sup>Walters Achu, 42 years businessman, Bamenda interviewed at Ntamulung quarter Bamenda, 21/12/2019.

<sup>115</sup>The Guardian Post, No.1096 Yaounde, Thursday January 26, 2017,2.

resumption on Monday January 23, 2017.<sup>116</sup> The Post quoting a UNESCO representative wrote; “The right to strike should not impede the right to attend school.”<sup>117</sup> Many children did not go to school in the two Anglophone regions and some parents sent their children to Yaounde, Douala, Bafoussam, Loum and other towns in French Cameroon.

Total insecurity seized the people of the North West and South West regions when the Consortium and the SCNC activities were banned by Minister Rene Emmanuel Sadi of Territorial Administration and Decentralization with the motive that, “their activities were liable to jeopardize the security of the State.” This was in relation to Tchiroma’s declaration in a press conference shortly before the banning order that “the Head of State has affirmed without any ambiguity that the unitary form of the State is intangible and Cameroon is one and indivisible and shall so remain.”<sup>118</sup> What a paradox, the leaders whom the Government negotiated with to put an end to the strike action were labeled “terrorists” and terror took over the country as troops flooded the towns and every nook and cranny was invaded by the troops with armored cars “manned by soldiers armed to the teeth” a kind of situation Mukete described in his work *My Odyssey: The Story of Cameroon Reunification*.<sup>119</sup> Water tankers paraded the streets as the Government tacitly declared a state of emergency in the two Anglophone regions.<sup>120</sup> The situation reached fever height and some Anglophones seek means for self-defense as horror swept across the North West and South West areas. According to Munjo A.,

Many people who had hoped that the Consortium will bring a solution to the crisis were stormed with the ban and the rapidity with which troops took position in Buea, Bamenda town and their actions took the struggle to a more radicalized stage which became more frightful even to the troops.<sup>121</sup>

Homes were invaded, property looted by soldiers, torture and indiscriminate arrests without warrants increased in the towns of Bamenda, Kumba, Mamfe, Kumba, Santa, Kumbo and others. Awuro Esthela was arrested and taken to Yaounde, Abonge Eric was picked up at “Big Brother bar” at Commercial Avenue Bamenda and ferried to Yaounde where he spent nine months in detention in *Secretariat D’etat a la Defense* (SED). In March 2017, Pen Terence was bundled up at mile four Nkwen Bamenda by security forces and taken to Yaounde. It was estimated that by 1<sup>st</sup> October 2017 over 500 persons were arrested.<sup>122</sup> The poor suffered a great deal and blackmail due to enmity stepped in and no one was safe. Taxis, motorbikes, the major streets and quarters became insecure.

## CONCLUSION

This paper exposes the view that Government inability to quickly handle the problem of the teachers and lawyers resulted to the formation of the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium on 6 December, 2016 which became the canopy under which all

<sup>116</sup> Ibid,3.

<sup>117</sup> The Post, No. 01790, Friday, January 20, 2017, 2.

<sup>118</sup> The Post, No 01790, 2.

<sup>119</sup> V.E Mukete, *My Odyssey: The Story of Cameroon Reunification* (Yaounde: Eagle Publishing, 2013), 187.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid

<sup>121</sup> Munjo Anembong, 60years, retired senior journalist, interviewed in Bamenda, 09/01/2020.

<sup>122</sup> Amnesty International Estimate, 13 October 2017.

Common Law Lawyers and various Teacher's Trade Unions operated. The hanky panky game between the Government and the Consortium where mistrust, dishonesty and threats became instruments for settlement for the two groups only nursed a breeding environment for the Anglophone diaspora and those termed by the government as secessionists to take advantage and finance the already crippling situation. Their entry worsened the already bad situation and their demands through the Consortium angered the State and it took wrong decisions. The Ad-hoc committee refused to entertain talks on the Federal System and the release of all Anglophone detainees linked to the crisis. This paper from this point, affirms that the poor management of the crisis from the start to include dialogue and failure to listen to the voices of the people and international community; and the out law of the Consortium laid the foundation of armed struggle in Anglophone Cameroon. The paper found out that insecurity gripped the people and some schools in the two Anglophone Regions closed their doors. Though some grievances were looked into by government, it did not satisfy the Consortium. This paper further argues that crisis management had lapses on both parties; the Government and the Consortium. The crisis was a hard pill for the Government to swallow and through the various narratives, the Consortium grievances were unresolved and the Anglophone population looked up on the Consortium. Peace became a "scarce commodity" dialogue could have been a remedy in the face of the deep mistrust but genuine dialogue was absent. This paper thus maintains that the Government of Cameroon and CACSC were the actors that could have solved the burning issues at the time but allowed conflict to take central stage. It thus calls the attention of the Cameroon Government and stakeholders to revisit their strategies in handling and addressing problems of the people.

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