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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### THE SENSITIVITY OF CULTURAL IDENTITY: A FOCUS ON CAMEROON

**\*Emmanuel Ayodeji Ekundayo**

Department of International relations, European university of lefke, Northern Cyprus

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#### ABSTRACT

Arising ethnic and cultural conflicts has become an important phenomenon that has drawn the world's attention. The political insensitivity of leaders and negligence has caused a lot of civil unrest. This paper focuses on the complexity and sensitivity of culture and how it defines people's identity. It explains the interdependence of culture and society and how a society is stratified into majority groups and minority groups. This research further gives a list of various problems minorities face in a society and the legal instruments that protects the rights of minorities. The second chapter of this research gives the salient signs by the government to assimilate Anglophone Cameroonians and the current actions by the government. It also includes the results of the just concluded presidential elections in Cameroon and lapses that influenced the result. It further discusses the legal document that protects minority rights both international and adopted national rights. Literature review of cultural identity and the importance of language to culture is been considered. A methodological analysis was further carried out using a sampling instrument of one on one interview with randomly picked Cameroonians which helped to deduced certain conclusions and recommendations.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Culture has long been a subject of discuss as far back as the 19th century. This could be ascertained with Tyler's definition of culture. Tyler defines culture as a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (Tyler, 1870). In recent times, there have been several definitions of culture by various scholars. Culture is defined as a collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one category of people from another (Hofstede, 1984). Therefore, culture is the way of life of a person or group of persons, distinguishing them by giving them an identity that defines and forms a society. The sensitivity of cultural identity cannot be measured. Cultural identity plays a major role in the buildup of every individual in a given society. It gives a sense of belonging no matter any level of development or civilization. Most government have ignored or downplayed the importance of cultural identity which has resulted to protests, violence, break-offs and unresolved conflicts. A large number of victims are those who have been categorized as minorities who are seen has small or an insignificant fraction of the general populace.

Several groups or societies who categorize themselves as majority is either based on population, technological advancement, economic growth, financial accumulation, social development, geographical size, etc. These attributes give them a sub-conscious notion of superiority thereby seeing others as inferior which could lead to discrimination, oppression, suppression, imposition and eradication which could also be termed as genocide. This assertion is justified by the UNESCO definition of Genocide as contained in Article 2 of the convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948);

*Any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.*

Most governments do not pay much attention to the cultural diversity in the society they govern. This minority groups are majorly used mostly in the game of politics to achieve power and economic benefits. The importance of protecting every cultural group in a given society no matter their size is of great essence, giving them equal/fair opportunity in the society

**\*Corresponding author: Emmanuel Ayodeji Ekundayo**

Department of International relations, European university of lefke, Northern Cyprus.

which plays a major role with respects to their fundamental human rights thereby fostering peace and security in the society. There are several things that give every individual an identity. This identity is defined as; “*people’s concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others*” (Hoggs and Abrams, 1988)

This could either be in dressing, food, customs and traditions, religion, arts, physical outlook, language etc. Language seems to be the most pronounced and the comfort zone of an individual especially when he or she identifies a second party that shares the same language identity with him or her. The element of language was one of the major things that became of utmost concern to the Southern Cameroon when it was been tampered with which triggered the peaceful protest that later became violent. Studies have shown that it is the most important symbol of culture because it helps to interpret and develop all other elements of culture. Michael Kilman (2017) believes language is culture and culture is language. Kilman claims that every culture has its own history and this history sometimes might not be comprehended properly without the language of that culture being attached to it. This makes language and culture inseparable. The influence of language in defining the identity of a person or group of persons is more complex than just speaking or understanding a language. It translates into every other aspect of culture and other sectors of life e.g. political, educational, socio-economic etc. Every language has a source and gives a background historical detail of a society. It could be influenced by external forces depending on if accepted or rejected. If accepted, whether by force or voluntarily, it gives the individual a different identity. During the colonial era, the colonial masters imposed their culture on various countries at that time. Major players were the British, French, Spanish, Portuguese; Saudi Arabia formerly known as Arabic Peninsula and these cultures has defined several other cultural identities of people and societies. It’s not always the same as the origin because most existing societies at that time had a way of life (culture). The imposition of a new culture doesn’t automatically eradicate the pre-existing culture but modifies it in some aspects. Most societies try to balance the two unconsciously but a large part of their indigenous culture is still cherished and protected. This identity is something no society or person is ready to loose especially in this present era where the democratic system dominates the world and people have a choice to either accept or reject any other culture.

Taking Cameroon as a case study, a bilingual country with diverse cultural ethnic groups but ironically divided instead of united by their colonial inherited lingua-franca, “Language”. A country with a population size of close to 25 million people with 20 percent of the total population as Anglophone (English Speaking) and the other 80 percent Francophone (French Speaking), has been plunged with several civil unrest. On the 1st of January, 1960, the Francophone part of Cameroon gained independence from the French government while on the 11th of February, 1961, the Southern part of Cameroon which was under the British colonial rule voted in a referendum to merge with the francophone part of Cameroon. The two parties came to an agreement at the Fouban conference which took place from the 17th-21st July, 1961, to honour certain terms and conditions of their union. The agreement between the two parties was legalized at the Yaounde Tripartite Conference which was held from the 2nd to 7th of August, 1961, before merging on the 1st of October, 1961.

Some of the terms and conditions of the Fouban conference which is embedded in the 1972 and 1996 Cameroon constitution have been constantly breached by the Cameroon government giving an indication that the government is trying to eradicate the cultural identity of the Anglophone Cameroon thereby imposing the cultural identity of the Francophone Cameroon on the Anglophone. These actions by the government seemed to have been a salient move by the government long before now but became evident in 2016 till date.

**Aim and objectives:** The aim of this study is to portray the cultural down-play and negligence of political leaders in Cameroon who govern plural states (consist of more than one ethnic group) without being sensitive to the havoc and mayhem this can cause. The study is guided by the following objectives

- To give a historical background to the crisis
- To establish the importance of cultural sensitivity giving it a priority
- To establish how political and economic sectors are interconnected with the cultural sector thereby revealing the need for equal attention for all the sectors
- To articulate and provide necessary steps to be taken in-order to have a peaceful co-existence in a plural state like Cameroon.

#### **An overview of insensitivity of cultural identity in Cameroon**

##### **Salient signs by the government to assimilate the Southern Cameroon**

The imposition of Federal inspectors of Administration on the Prime Minister of the Anglophone Cameroon as early as December, 1961 gave signs of annexation instead of integration. The adoption of a one-party system in 1966 by the then president Ahidjo, went against the agreement of their unification which further threatened their political liberty in governance. The change in the system of government from federalism to a unitary system of government in a national referendum on the 20th of May, 1972 which was orchestrated by the then president Ahmadou Ahidjo and was never opposed due to fear of safety. This meant that power was centralized at the center as against decentralization. Though ironically, majority vote came from the Anglophone part of Cameroon which was based on their ignorance and manipulation that it was for their own benefit. Though in 1996, it was changed back to a federal system due to the agitations of the Southern Cameroon. From 1961-1975, the Cameroon flag initially comprised of three vertical colours, green which stands for vegetation and rich forest, the red standing for unity, independence and national sovereignty, the yellow symbolizes the sun which depicts happiness and prosperity and two five-pointed golden stars on the green which symbolizes the Anglophone and the Francophone Cameroon. But on the 20th of May, 1975, it was changed to one five-pointed yellow star at the center of the red in response to the change of government into a unitary system of government.

##### **Current Actions by the Cameroon Government**

- Imposing French judges in a common law court which adjudicate the Southern part of Cameroon, thereby

making French the official language in a common law court. The Southern part of Cameroon had been practicing the common law which they inherited from their British colonial masters. The common law judicial system was part of the agreed terms and conditions when they opted to join the Francophone part of Cameroon. This was confusing and disturbing as many of their lawyers presented their cases in English to a French speaking judge.

- The dispatch of French teachers to the southern part of Cameroon where English language is dominant, making it difficult for student to comprehend. The language of instruction for the educational facilities in the Southern part of Cameroon was English Language. This was also part of the agreement plan of the Fouban Conference which stated the marriage between the Anglophone Cameroon and the Francophone Cameroon.
- The government supposed bilingual institutions are administered by French speaking administrators who viciously discriminate against the English-speaking students. The Anglophone students are unable to express themselves especially at the administrative offices when administrative personnel insist, they speak the French language or are asked to leave the office. They are forced to look for French speaking students to help them communicate with the administrative staffs.
- Public gazette being published in French language alone with no English version for the southern Cameroon. This sends a message of marginalization, making the Southern Cameroonians feel left out of the country's polity.
- Head of State public address in French alone with no interpretation in English. The president address is being spoken in French with no English interpretation thereby portraying a wrong image that shows the Anglophone Cameroonians are not part of his government.
- Public office holders are majorly from the francophone region and carry out their duties in French neglecting the Anglophone citizens.
- Unequal distributions of natural resources of which majority of it are highly deposited in the Southern part of Cameroon but are channeled to develop the Francophone part of Cameroon leaving the southern part undeveloped.
- Change in the celebration date when the Anglophone region of Cameroon merged with the Francophone Cameroon from 1st of October to 7th of October. The 7th of October, 1960 was when the Francophone Cameroonian got their independence and 1st of October, 1961 was when Anglophone Cameroonians got their own independence.
- The presidential pronouncement of the 7th of October, 2018 as the date for elections amidst the crisis in the Anglophone regions which led to the boycott of elections by many Anglophone Cameroonians and Francophone Cameroonians. There was a high level of tension, intimidation and insecurity which even led to the withdrawal of the only female presidential candidate (Edith Kahbang Walla) in the 2018 presidential elections in Cameroon.

- Government increases the application fee for presidential aspirant from 5 million FCFA to 30 million FCFA.

The analysis of the Cameroon election is illustrated in Table 1. All this shows the insensitivity of the Cameroon government of the cultural identity of the Anglophone Cameroon.

**International Conventions on Minority Rights:** The adoption of resolution 47/135 by the United Nations General Assembly on the 18th of December, 1992 which was based on the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and inspired by the provisions of article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, has been adopted by several regional organizations like the European Union imbedded in the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the African Union (AU) which Cameroon is a member also includes minorities rights in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfares of the Child (ACRWC). Constitutional Rights that protects the minorities embedded in both the 1972 and 1996 Cameroon constitution breached by the Government are stated below. Part 1, Article 1(3), states that "The official languages of the Republic of Cameroon shall be English and French, both languages having the same status. The State shall guarantee the promotion of bilingualism throughout the country. It shall endeavour to protect and promote national languages.

The preamble of the Cameroon constitution, which attaches his constitution to the fundamental freedoms embedded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Charter of the United Nations and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Right is bound under 25 principles which consist of;

- The State shall ensure the protection of minorities and shall preserve the rights of indigenous populations in accordance with the law;
- No person shall be harassed on grounds of his origin, religious, philosophical or political opinions or beliefs, subject to respect for public policy;
- The freedom of communication, of expression, of the press, of assembly, of association, and of trade unionism, as well as the right to strike shall be guaranteed under the conditions fixed by law
- The Nation shall protect and promote the family which is the natural foundation of human society. It shall protect women, the young, the elderly and the disabled;

The Southern Cameroon agreed to join the Francophone part of Cameroon in 1961 on the basis of integration not annexation (taking over a territory by force) or assimilation (adapting to the culture of a dominant group). The Francophone part of Cameroon were to honour the Anglophone inherited English Language, their educational system and their common laws which had defined their identity and formed part of their history which they had to protect. But the present government had broken the terms of their agreement that joined them together and had violated the Anglophone Cameroon rights. This all started with the Southern Cameroon lawyers and unions protesting against the violation of their rights and identity which is backed by law.

This brought about several arrest and escalated to several killings of armless civilians by the government, military assault which includes rape on defenseless women, children, elderly and disabled people. It translated to several actions by the Anglophone Cameroonians who decided to militarize themselves most especially the youths (Ambazonian Defense Forces), encourage school boycotts for children, promote weekly Ghost Town operations every Monday in which people are asked to stay indoors, abduction and killing of government officials and military officers etc.

**Reviewing studies on cultural identity:** In recent years, there have been a number of researchers that have examined the subject cultural identity. Many scholars from various disciplines ranging from humanities to social sciences have used the concept cultural identity both in academia and outside academia. Cultural identity refers to a self-identification of an individual to a formal or informal group or society that share the same beliefs, knowledge, values, attitudes, traditions, and ways of life (Kim, 2002). Though this definition is restricted to individuals and not group of people but can be extended to a larger group.

The historical transmission of values and knowledge between generations is a vital feature that characterizes the cultural identity of individuals or group of people. Though identity is seen as a re-occurring process, confined within certain cultural image, yet, individuals or group of people play a significant role in projecting this image. This is supported by a Josselson, a psychologist who describes identity as neither having a particular structure nor context but an egoistic mindset that determines individuals experience (cited in Ennaji, 2005: 22). According to Ennaji, language and identity are directly linked together which is also connected to their cultural heritage and values. This means a disregard of any sort on the language of an individual or group of people, is a threat to their identity. The close relationship between language and identity is evident when members of a particular community who share the same linguistic traits, enjoy certain favourable attitudes among themselves (Fisherman, 1977).

Furthermore, the link between language and culture is beyond just being one of the elements of culture but serves as a vehicle that interprets and expresses culture. The symbolic role of language among all other cultural elements is that it is the first identity of every individual used for socialization even as a child. That is why language is seen as an important element for identity building.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Research design:** This research is focused on understanding the root cause of the Cameroon crisis, their agitations and their future hopes. A qualitative approach is being deployed in this research which consist of a one on one interview mechanism.

**Participants and sampling process:** This research focused on a homogeneous population which was targeted at people from the Anglophone region of Cameroon. These were participants who had to flee the country for the fear and safety of their lives through educational purposes in European University of Lefke.

**Sampling Size:** The total number of six Cameroonians from the Anglophone region were interviewed which comprised of 4 males 2 females.

**Sampling Technique:** This four Cameroonians were picked randomly out of the six while the other two were picked purposefully based on their strong and physical involvement in the Cameroon crisis as one is a force deserter and the other a political influencer in the Anglophone region.

**Participant Categorization:** The political influencer is (Participant 1), the force deserter is (Participant 2), and the other four participants are regarded as (Participant 3,4,5, &6)

### Questions asked?

- What was the root cause of the crisis?
- Where these problems existing before the escalation?
- What triggered the escalation?
- What is your accepted solution to this crisis?

**Data analysis:** The generated data were analyzed using thematic analysis.

### Data presentation

**Question 1:** What was the root cause of the crisis?

**Based on the above question, participant 1 stated that:** The root of this crisis was the sudden change in the judicial system from a common law system we were used to, to a civil law system of the French judicial system and also in the educational sector as well whereby French teachers who couldn't communicate in English were sent to Anglophone schools in the Anglophone region to teach them. The lawyers started the protest because the judicial system was confusing for them and then teachers joined.

**Supporting this claim, participant 2 remarked that:** The whole problem is just attached to the recent change the government carried out most especially in the Anglophone region which they were not used to and wanted it to return back to what they were used to which was the British system they were used to.

**Additionally, participant 3 expressed that:** I have a small sister who goes to school and after she comes back from school, she will complain she does not understand what the teacher taught her in school. I was confused and was concerned for her because I know her to be very good academically but I thought it would get better until I heard the lawyers were on strike and the teachers had joined also. It was then I knew how serious it was.

**Furthermore, participant 4 noted that:** During my undergraduate program, I will go to a staff office for some administrative assistant. The officer will not answer you if you can't speak French. So, I have to find someone who can speak French to help me interpret for the officer before he will respond. We are not used to the French system, why will Biya impose it on us?

**In line with the question raised, participant 5 acknowledge that:** When a government change a system you are already used to and defines who you are, He (Biya) should expect revolt. The root cause of this crisis is the imposition of the French system on us. That is not who we are. We were colonized by the British and we voluntarily accepted to join Cameroon based on certain conditions which this Biya's government has broken. He should have it in mind that he is not God.

**Table 1. The Cameroon presidential election of 2018**

Candidate	Party	Votes	%
Paul Biya	Cameroon People's Democratic Movement	2,521,934	71.28
Maurice Kamto	Cameroon Renaissance Movement	503,384	14.23
Cabral Libii	Univers	222,020	6.28
Joshua Osih	Social Democratic Front	118,706	3.36
Adamou NdamNjoya	Cameroon Democratic Union	61,220	1.73
Garga Haman Adji	Alliance for Democracy and Development	55,048	1.56
FranklineNjiforAfanwi	National Citizens' Movement of Cameroon	23,687	0.67
Serge EspoirMatomba	United People for Social Renovation	19,704	0.56
AkereMuna	Now!	12,262	0.35
Invalid/blank votes		52,716	-
Total		3,590,681	100
Registered voters/turnout		6,667,754	53.85

## Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities

Adopted by General Assembly resolution 47/135 of 18 December 1992

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming that one of the basic aims of the United Nations, as proclaimed in the Charter, is to promote and encourage respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion,

Reaffirming faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small,

Desiring to promote the realization of the principles contained in the Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as other relevant international instruments that have been adopted at the universal or regional level and those concluded between individual States Members of the United Nations,

Inspired by the provisions of article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights concerning the rights of persons belonging to ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities,

Considering that the promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities contribute to the political and social stability of States in which they live,

Emphasizing that the constant promotion and realization of the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, as an integral part of the development of society as a whole and within a democratic framework based on the rule of law, would contribute to the strengthening of friendship and cooperation among peoples and States,

Considering that the United Nations has an important role to play regarding the protection of minorities,

Bearing in mind the work done so far within the United Nations system, in particular by the Commission on Human Rights, the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities and the bodies established pursuant to the International Covenants on Human Rights and other relevant international human rights instruments in promoting and protecting the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities,

Taking into account the important work which is done by intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in protecting minorities and in promoting and protecting the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities,

Recognizing the need to ensure even more effective implementation of international human rights instruments with regard to the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities,

Proclaims this Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities:

### Article 1

1. States shall protect the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity.
2. States shall adopt appropriate legislative and other measures to achieve those ends.

### Article 2

1. Persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities (hereinafter referred to as persons belonging to minorities) have the right to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, and to use their own language, in private and in public, freely and without interference or any form of discrimination.
2. Persons belonging to minorities have the right to participate effectively in cultural, religious, social, economic and public life.
3. Persons belonging to minorities have the right to participate effectively in decisions on the national and, where appropriate, regional level concerning the minority to which they belong or the regions in which they live, in a manner not incompatible with national legislation.
4. Persons belonging to minorities have the right to establish and maintain their own associations.
5. Persons belonging to minorities have the right to establish and maintain, without any discrimination, free and peaceful contacts with other members of their group and with persons belonging to other minorities, as well as contacts across frontiers with citizens of other States to whom they are related by national or ethnic, religious or linguistic ties.

**Article 3**

1. Persons belonging to minorities may exercise their rights, including those set forth in the present Declaration, individually as well as in community with other members of their group, without any discrimination.
2. No disadvantage shall result for any person belonging to a minority as the consequence of the exercise or non-exercise of the rights set forth in the present Declaration.

**Article 4**

1. States shall take measures where required to ensure that persons belonging to minorities may exercise fully and effectively all their human rights and fundamental freedoms without any discrimination and in full equality before the law.
2. States shall take measures to create favourable conditions to enable persons belonging to minorities to express their characteristics and to develop their culture, language, religion, traditions and customs, except where specific practices are in violation of national law and contrary to international standards.
3. States should take appropriate measures so that, wherever possible, persons belonging to minorities may have adequate opportunities to learn their mother tongue or to have instruction in their mother tongue.
4. States should, where appropriate, take measures in the field of education, in order to encourage knowledge of the history, traditions, language and culture of the minorities existing within their territory. Persons belonging to minorities should have adequate opportunities to gain knowledge of the society as a whole.
5. States should consider appropriate measures so that persons belonging to minorities may participate fully in the economic progress and development in their country.

**Article 5**

1. National policies and programmes shall be planned and implemented with due regard for the legitimate interests of persons belonging to minorities.
2. Programmes of cooperation and assistance among States should be planned and implemented with due regard for the legitimate interests of persons belonging to minorities.

**Article 6**

States should cooperate on questions relating to persons belonging to minorities, inter alia, exchanging information and experiences, in order to promote mutual understanding and confidence.

**Article 7**

States should cooperate in order to promote respect for the rights set forth in the present Declaration.

**Article 8**

1. Nothing in the present Declaration shall prevent the fulfilment of international obligations of States in relation to persons belonging to minorities. In particular, States shall fulfil in good faith the obligations and commitments they have assumed under international treaties and agreements to which they are parties.
2. The exercise of the rights set forth in the present Declaration shall not prejudice the enjoyment by all persons of universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms.
3. Measures taken by States to ensure the effective enjoyment of the rights set forth in the present Declaration shall not prima facie be considered contrary to the principle of equality contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
4. Nothing in the present Declaration may be construed as permitting any activity contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations, including sovereign equality, territorial integrity and political independence of States.

**Article 9**

The specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system shall contribute to the full realization of the rights and principles set forth in the present Declaration, within their respective fields of competence.

Contrary to the aforementioned comments, participant 6 held a strong conviction that:

The root cause of this problem is the Anglophone leaders who are not ready to see Cameroon as one. They came up with so many ridiculous requests when the government called for dialogue and they knew the government could not solve all this problem. So, they decided to synthesize people against the government asking for secession which they will never get.

Based on the above comment, it can be deduced that the root cause of the Cameroon crisis was the change in the judicial and educational system in the Anglophone region.

**Question 2:** Where these problems existing before the escalation?

**Based on the above question participant 1 stated that:**

Yes, but they were not as evident as it was when the crisis started. Though there had been some little protest before now but not too serious

**Supporting this claim, participant 2 remarked that:** These problems were existing. People talked about it and sometimes they protested about it.

It wasn't violent. They were all peaceful protest and most times the government called for dialogue.

**Additionally, participant 3 expressed that:** They (problems) existed but I guess we all just endured it without complaining.

**Furthermore, participant 4 noted that:** Of course they all existed just that we were too comfortable with these problems and people didn't feel that concerned as long as it was not really affecting them.

**In line with the question raised, Participant 5 acknowledge that:** They (problems) were all existing and we have been making our grievances known to the government but it looks like they have been taking us for granted and that is why this time around we are not going to stop until they give us what we are asking for.

**Though diplomatically, participant 6 took a more general stance:** Let's be sincere and realistic, every country or societies have its own problems even the United States (USA) also have its own issues and they try to solve it peacefully. So also Cameroon also have its own problems which the government has been doing its best in tackling these issues but

some people are trying to take advantage of this for their own selfish ends which is very bad.

Based on the comments raised on the aforementioned question 2, findings show that these problems existed before the escalation but was not approached seriously in unison.

**Question 3:** What triggered the escalation?

**Based on the above question participant 1 stated that:** What triggered the whole crisis was after the consortium who represented the aggrieved Anglophones of Cameroon were arrested based on the allegation by the president that they were promoting secession and the president refused to dialogue with them again, we marched to the streets on 22nd of September, 2016 to protest for the release of our leaders and also that our demands presented to the government should be met. It was a peaceful protest which we got approval for from the government only for soldiers to shoot at us and killed some Anglophones. We had no choice than to defend ourselves by picking up arms like cutlasses, local made guns just to defend our people from being slaughtered like chickens.

**Supporting this claim, participant 2 expressed that:** I was in the force but not at the scene. When we heard that there was an order by superior authorities to disperse the crowd but I thought it was just firing of tear gas to disperse the crowd but I later heard it was life shooting where my people were killed. It was devastating for me because it could have been my sister or any of my family members been killed by my own colleagues but I couldn't voice out because in the force you obey the last order irrespective of who is involved.

**In addition, participant 3 responded that:** The government told soldiers to shoot at defenseless people who were just protesting peacefully. I guess we couldn't help it anymore, so we had to fight back.

**Furthermore, participant 4 noted that:** The government sent soldiers to kill our people even on the 1st of October, 2016 which happened to be our independence day when we got our independence from the British. It was just a peaceful protest and Anglophones were killed by the government soldiers. That alone is enough to trigger violence.

**In line with the question raised participant 5 argued that:** If a government send soldiers to kill you and your family members even women and children, what do you expect? You expect us to look and fold our arms waiting until we are all killed and Anglophones won't exist again? We are not cowards; we are not fools. We know our rights and we will defend it.

**Contrary to other affirmative replies participant 6 subjectively said:** Though maybe Biya shouldn't have asked the soldiers or force to shoot at the protesters or we don't know whether it was meant to just scare them away. I can't say really because I wasn't there at the scene where the shooting took place but they (Anglophones) also can't claim they also didn't attack the force men. You can't really say who or what triggered the violence. Everyone has his/her own story. Based on the aforementioned comments to question 3, It shows that the arrest of the Anglophone leaders by the government and the violent shooting of unarmed civilians by the armed forces

during the peaceful protest, provoked the escalation of the conflict.

**Question 4:** What is your accepted solution to this crisis?

**Based on the above question, participant 1 categorically explained that:** We are all tired of Biya and his corrupt government. Even the Francophones of Cameroon are also tired of Biya's government. He should first step down and hand over power to Kamto who we all know won the election if not that Biya rigged the election. Also, we trust Kamto because of his diplomatic skills and we know he will be able to resolve these issues amicably. It is true that we are asking for secession but we know the United Nations won't grant it to us but even if we don't get an independent Ambazonia state, we should be able to get a federal system of government where the resources of Cameroon will be shared equally since 80% of Cameroon's resources are deposited in the Anglophone region, all our leaders imprisoned will be released unconditionally and those in exile will be able to come back home.

**Supporting this claim, participant 2 indecisively stated that:** So many people have been killed in this crisis. I have lost best friends and colleagues. That was why I had to dissent the force. We all have lost loved ones. Let us just find a way to resolve this crisis and I think Paul Biya should step down and let someone else rule because I don't think the Anglophone will be able to forgive him for all the atrocities he has committed against them.

**Additionally, participant 3 expressed that:** France would have mediated this issue long before now and even Nigeria betrayed us by handing over our leaders to Paul Biya to be imprisoned. This issue as gone too far but I think if Biya steps down or resigns, maybe the new government can make amends.

**In line with participant 2, participant 4 responded that:** Truth be told, I don't know at all. Maybe if all our leaders who have been imprisoned by Biya and maybe most of our request are met including Biya stepping down, then maybe it can solve the crisis or pave way for a solution.

**Furthermore, participant 5 took a firm stance stating that:** Total secession nothing more and all our leaders released to us. We don't want to be part of Cameroon again. We have everything in place. A government who is operating in exile, a capital called Buea, a military force of our own fighting Biya's military and winning and to crown it all 80% of Cameroon's resources are on our land. Let them free us; we don't want to be Cameroonians again.

**Contrary to views of other participants, participant 6 claimed that:** We are one Cameroonians and this issue can be resolved peacefully if only both parties stop the violence and call for a truce. Then they can all sit on a round table to dialogue and most especially the Anglophone representatives should come up with reasonable demands that won't jeopardize the whole process.

Findings to question 4 suggests that there are 3 different Anglophone group of people who want different things. Majority wants a federal republic system of government where the resources is being shared equally with the full restoration of the British system of law and education which defines their identity and the resignation of the current president and his cabinet. The second category wants full secession from

Cameroon as an independent state of Ambazonia while the third category wants a full republic where all Cameroonians practice one system of government.

The last category seems to be very few and are either part of the government or enjoying certain benefits from the government.

### Conclusion

The aim of this study is to demonstrate the insensitivity of the political leaders towards the cultural identity of people with a focus on Cameroon. In this regard it was found that the root cause of the violent crisis in Cameroon is attributed to a change of system which threatened the Anglophone people of Cameroon's existence, cultural identity and their history. It was mostly attributed to the judicial system and the educational system. Further findings show that these problems existed before the escalation but was not approached seriously in unison. It was also shown that the arrest of the Anglophone leaders by the government and the violent shooting of unarmed civilians by the armed forces during the peaceful protest, provoked the escalation of the conflict. Additional findings suggest that there are 3 different Anglophone group of people who want different things. Majority wants a federal republic system of government where the resources is been shared equally with the full restoration of the British system of law and education which defines their identity and the resignation of the current president and his cabinet. The second category wants full secession from Cameroon as an independent state of Ambazonia while the third category wants a full republic where all Cameroonians practice one system of government. The last category seems to be very few and are either part of the government or enjoying certain benefits from the government. Conclusively, the continuous disrespect and neglect of cultural diversity and identity by governments, organizations, private parastatals or individuals in our present society. Irrespective of their classification as minorities or majorities, this will always steer up racial discrimination and conflict. We need to begin to pay more attention to the sensitivity of people's cultural identity and promote the peaceful co-existence of cultural diversity with respect to every single element.

### Recommendation

Based on the issues raised in this study, the following recommendations are proffered;

- Restore back the common law courts with English speaking judges in the Southern part of Cameroon. This should be done with an assurance that the judicial system of the country will be able to act independently and efficiently without any interference and influence from the executive or legislative arm of government.
- Restore back English speaking teachers to schools in Southern part of Cameroon. The teachers should be encouraged to learn the French language so also teachers from the francophone region should also learn the English language. There should be an inclusion of both languages (French and English) in their educational curriculum.
- Encourage bilingualism in public and administrative offices of the government. This should be one of the

criteria for employment into such institutions so as to create an easy means of communication with an effective and efficient dispatch of duties.

- Provide equal opportunities to both the Anglophone and Francophone part of Cameroon. Both regions should be given access to equal opportunities so as to avoid any notion of marginalization.
- Encourage and promote bilingualism in both regions (Anglophone and Francophone). It should NOT be enforced but encouraged by providing various incentives which should include promotion requirements to top public offices, military ranks, other non-commissioned security agencies etc.
- Public address, gazette and other forms of publications should be done both in English and French language.
- The government should at every point in time respect and recognize the cultural identity of both the Anglophone and Francophone part of Cameroon not by mere words but also by action.
- There should be an immediate halt to the militarization of the region. This should be accompanied with the release of the political stakeholders of this crisis most especially the 47 southern Cameroon leaders who were handed over to the Cameroon government by the Nigerian government when they tried seeking asylum in Nigeria.
- Destroyed homes most especially in the southern Cameroon region should be rebuilt so as to give easy resettlement for the Internally Displaced Persons who were affected by this crisis.
- The government and regional leaders should structurally be accountable to the people of Cameroon from the federal government to the district level and then to local level.

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