Colonial Legacies and (In)security in Africa: A
Cameroonian Civil War Perspective

Ngwang Roger

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Ngwang Roger

School of Global Studies, University of Sussex – United Kingdom

Email: ngwang.roger@yahoo.com

Abstract

Background: This article systematically analyzes the extent to which British and French colonial legacies influenced the outbreak of the Cameroonian civil war. Drawing on a theoretical argument that associates the likelihood of civil war with the tensions that arise from the challenges of state formation and state-building, this article revisits the process of state formation in Cameroon and argues that the Cameroonian civil war is an artifact of conflicting British and French colonial legacies.

Purpose: This research aimed at examining the link between the British and French colonial legacies and the Cameroonian civil war.

Methodology: This study was desk research. Secondary data sources like journal articles, databases, newspaper articles, blogs, monographs, and other internet materials were consulted. These materials were subjected to content validity before being considered and analyzed qualitatively in the study. Tilly's warfare theory on modern state formation was used as an explanatory tool to deepen the understanding of the links between war and state formation and to better appreciate the impact of British and French colonial legacies on the processes of state formation and state-building in Cameroon.

Findings: This paper demonstrated that although governance crises heightened tensions between British and French Cameroons, conflicting British and French colonial legacies constitute the root cause of the civil war. Anglophones have been disgruntled with the relatively low rates of investment in the Anglophone regions, political marginalization, the domination of the French language over the English language in official matters nationwide, and the 'frenchification' of the Anglo-Saxon education and judicial systems.

Unique Contribution to Practice and Policy: This article suggests that it is necessary for peacebuilders and policy experts to address colonial factors when designing policies aimed at resolving the Cameroonian civil war. Dealing only with governance crises without addressing the colonial roots of the problem runs the risk of relapse to conflict in the future. Also, because the British and French colonial legacies are at the center of the crisis, there is a need for Britain and France to revisit their terms of relations with Cameroon, galvanize global resources, and harmonize efforts to influence and foster the resolution of the conflict.

Keywords: *Civil war, colonial legacies, governance crises, peacebuilders, policy experts, state-building, state formation.*

Introduction

Colonialism has left its footprints across the African Continent in the economic, political, and socio-cultural spheres. Colonial values have altered African history and have shaped African thought, politics, and socio-cultural development. Abundant literature has been written on the positive and negative impacts of colonialism on African development (Alemazung, 2010; Heldring & Robinson, 2012; Hrituleac & Nielsen, 2011; Igboin, 2011), but the primary purpose of this research is to focus on the link between colonial legacies and civil wars across the continent. By revisiting the process of state formation in Cameroon (a League of Nations mandated territory and later a UN trust territory under Britain and France), this article argues that the Cameroonian civil war is an artifact of conflicting British and French colonial legacies.

Although some scholars have attributed civil wars on the African continent to governance crises and the failure of state institutions to manage crises (Dan-Woniowei, 2020; Msabaha, 1991; Nyong'o, 1991), colonial legacies have left many states with both internal and external dynamics that have structured their systems of governance. For instance, in the internal spheres, some states strive to control and assimilate minorities to create a coherent nation-state, a practice that often results in self-determination conflicts (Mbanaso & Korieh, 2010). As such, it can be argued that the direct rule and assimilation practices inherited from the French by the francophone-dominated government of Cameroon have greatly influenced the Cameroonian system of governance, and this accounts for the grievances raised by Anglophone Cameroonians who were more acquainted with the British system of indirect rule as well as its cultural, education and legal system.

This research argues that it is necessary for peacebuilders and policy experts to address colonial factors when designing policies aimed at resolving the Cameroonian civil war and calls on Britain and France (whose exported systems and ways of life constitute the backbone of the crisis) to revisit their terms of relations with Cameroon, galvanize global resources, and harmonize efforts to influence and foster the resolution of the conflict. The article draws on insights from secondary data to reveal the differences between Cameroon's British and French colonial legacies. It unpacks the specifics of the grievances raised by Anglophone Cameroonians in the cultural, education, and legal realms, as well as their claims of being marginalized. The article reveals how and why the demands for change made by Anglophone Cameroonians over the years had been ignored by the government, thereby resulting in the 2016 sit-down strike action organized by Anglophone lawyers, and later joined by teachers. The joint strike action was met with a fierce pushback by the forces of law and order, leading to the degeneration of the crisis into a violent conflict.

Colonial Legacies, De-Colonization, and State Formation as the basis of Conflict in Africa

Warfare theories on modern state formation are central to this essay because they highlight the role and interplay between military development and warfare in the process of state formation. Tilly (1985) argued that 'war made the state, and the state made war' by drawing insights from the process of European state formation, which was characterized by wars wielded by rulers to ensure control over their territories and resources, thereby leading to the development of strong militaries, police forces, courts of law and tax bureaucracies as observed in contemporary European societies. Successful war-making meant defeating external enemies and using force to eliminate or disarm domestic rivals (leaders of militias or warlords), thereby enhancing the concentration of coercive power in the hands of the ruler (Tilly, 1986). This logic suggests that when war is present in the process of state formation, as observed in European history, states are more likely to eliminate

domestic rivals and develop strong institutions. While many scholars have found evidence in Tilly's thesis not only in the consolidation of European states but also in the development of the Indian, South Korean, and Taiwanese states (Dincecco et al., 2020; Herbst, 1990), others have argued that Tilly's theory of state formation does not account for Korea and Japan as these states weren't prone to any intense security threats (Huang & Kang, 2021).

Warfare as a process that created states with strong institutions in Europe has instead been destructive in other parts of the world (Sørensen, 2001), especially in Africa, a continent ravaged by civil wars and the systematic destruction of statehood. Herbst (1990) argues that there is little justification for believing that warfare will produce strong institutions in African states because fundamental changes in economic structures and societal beliefs are very difficult to initiate when a state is not subjected to an intense external threat. African countries characterized by no external threats, inward-looking militaries, colonially imposed boundaries, and weak political authorities have been prone to intrastate rather than interstate wars as observed in European history (Herbst, 1990; Sørensen, 2001). Jones (2008) argues that histories of colonialism, decolonization, and state formation are central to the current condition of structural crisis in many of Africa's neocolonial states. It has also been argued that the direct rule system of governance imposed by colonial states in Africa resulted in the reinforcement of authoritarianist, hierarchical and divisive features of pre-colonial systems while undermining pre-existing democratic tendencies (Mamdani, 1996). Again, apart from the authoritarianism that is rooted in colonial practice, the politicization of ethnicity observed in many contemporary African States did not stem from African tradition but is rooted in the colonial articulation of culture and power (Mamdani, 2003).

The process of state formation in Africa departs from that in Europe and does not fit Tilly's thesis because the kinds of wars fought across the African continent are more inward than outward-looking and have instead had severe destructive effects on African statehood and institutions. Colonialism played a central role in Africa's process of state formation as it was shaped by Western support for some brutal and corrupt dictators who remained in power for decades, leading to uprisings that usually degenerated into violent conflicts with fierce military brutality (Jones, 2008). These discussions suggest that colonial legacies are still very much alive in the system of governance observed in many contemporary postcolonial African states and that this heritage partly explains the numerous internal struggles observed across the continent. However, this does not mean that all civil wars on the continent result only from colonial legacies; governance crises and state institutions' inability to manage crises have also been the basis of civil wars in Africa (Dan-Woniowei, 2020; Msabaha, 1991; Nyong'o, 1991). What is relevant here is to appreciate the links between colonial legacies and the poor governance structures and institutions that emerged during the process of state formation in Africa. The colonial factor is thus relevant when considering attempts to address conflicts in Africa because the roots of many post-colonial African conflicts can be traced back to the period of state formation, comprising intertwined colonization and decolonization processes (Achankeng, 2013).

Many scholars have argued that the series of conflicts perpetrated across the African continent is a ripple effect of its colonial past (Ake, 1985; Cohen, 1995; Okoyo, 1977; Thomas, 1994). Okoyo (1977) argued that the political instabilities witnessed in most African states were born out of colonial history and are artifacts of colonial legacies. Cohen (1995) similarly asserted that the causes of Africa's internal conflicts are rooted in its colonial past, de-colonization, state formation processes, and the crisis of nation-building. He argues that the bases of conflicts experienced

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across the continent is a result of the problematic ethnic, regional diversities, gross inequities in power relations, and the uneven distribution of national wealth and development opportunities orchestrated by colonial masters. These problems were passed on to the post-colonial African society through a flawed process of decolonization which led to the birth of (in)dependent African states with weak institutions and poor governance structures prone to conflict. Although it has been argued that such colonial influences were responsible for the recurring instability, bad governance, and conflicts in Africa (Cohen, 1995), it is essential to acknowledge that other African states like Ethiopia and Liberia that were never colonized have also witnessed instability, suggesting that not all issues of bad governance, instability or conflict stem from colonialism. However, broad literature suggests that most conflicts across the African continent can be traced back to colonial legacies, so the need for colonial analysis remains pertinent when considering options for conflict resolution in Africa (Cohen, 1993).

Okoyo (1977) argues that the African political class simply inherited the political leadership system crafted by colonial powers, based on authoritarian and military rule. He opines that colonialists' main interest was to empower a group of people who would serve the interests of the metropole to the detriment of Africans, resulting in a class of rulers that can be described as 'Lame Leviathans' – leaders who wielded an iron fist on their populations but remained subservient to the metropole. This scenario is still very much alive on the continent today as most African leaders, especially those of former French colonies, have retained the politics of power and violence and have continued to impose such on their people (Achankeng, 2013). Colonial rulers monopolized the means of coercion and used divide and rule strategies to intensify class, tribal and religious divisions, thereby enabling them to secure power and authority for more extended periods (Okoyo, 1977). These arguments suggest that colonial rule undermined democratic values in Africa as authoritarianism and bad governance were the modus operandi.

Hence, colonial rulers handed over the baton of command to an African leadership that adopted the same functional mode as the colonizers. This explains why the leaders of most post-colonial African states still govern through autocratic practices and always strive to cling to power even against the wishes of their citizens. This has often led to the proliferation of uprisings, military coups, and wars of self-determination. Although most conflicts in Africa are generally viewed as having their roots in colonial rule and decolonization processes, it is relevant to note that these processes vary from case to case across the continent. This essay is limited to examining the process of state formation in Cameroon and the divergent colonial practices by the metropole. It analyzes the link between colonial legacies and the ongoing Cameroon civil war – a war born in 2016 out of the grievances of British Southern Cameroonians who claim to be marginalized by the francophone-dominated government and political elite of Cameroon.

The Political Evolution of Cameroon from a Colony to a Modern State: A Brief Recap of the Divergent Colonial Practices

The process of modern state formation across many African countries didn't commence in a vacuum. Upon the arrival of the metropole, chiefdoms with primary institutions of governance were already prevalent throughout pre-colonial Africa (Eldredge, 2018). Chiefs had power and control over their subjects who didn't contest the control of territory (Eldredge, 2018). Before the arrival of the metropole in Cameroon, several chiefdoms and villages already existed, with paramount autonomous chiefdoms consolidating authority over minor groups while small chiefdoms existed as smaller units within a federation. Governance was either through the

segmentary (hereditary), acephalous (rule based on physical strength, wealth, and wisdom), or centralized systems (Nkwi, 1979). The precolonial history of Cameroon includes the activities of the Portuguese, Dutch, and the early British traders who settled along the coastal strip of land occupied by the Dualas for trading purposes, with the country's name origin being attributed to the fifteenth-century Portuguese explorer Fernao do Po who named the river Wouri as 'Rio dos Cameroes' which means 'river of prawns' (Ngoh, 1979).

The process of modern state formation in Cameroon is complex because, at different moments, the territory existed as a German colony and then as mandated and trust territories to Britain and France under the League of Nations and the United Nations respectively. With the Germans being ousted at the end of World War I, they surrendered the territory to Britain and France. Britain and France partitioned the colony into two parts which they separately governed under the mandated and trusteeship arrangements of the League of Nations and the United Nations, with Britain taking control of around only one-fifth of the surface area and France the remainder (Nzume, 2004). As such, Anglophone Cameroonians (former British Southern Cameroonians) constitute the minority in modern Cameroon, occupying just two of the ten regions in the country. French Cameroon gained its independence on January 1st, 1960, while the territories administered by the British (British Northern and Southern Cameroons) were later given the option to attain independence either by joining the Federal Republic of Nigeria or the Republic of Cameroon (French Cameroon). The third possibility of obtaining independence as an entity on its own was not given (Nzume, 2004). While British Northern Cameroons voted to join the Federal Republic of Nigeria, British Southern Cameroons gained independence on October 1st, 1961, by joining the Republic of Cameroon through a plebiscite that the UN organized on February 11th, 1961 (Nzume, 2004). Thomas (1994) argues that the United Kingdom failed to nurture British Southern Cameroons to statehood and rather hastily promoted its unification with French Cameroon without ensuring constitutional guarantees to ensure its protection in the union. However, Cochrane and Afungang (2019) argue that the vote to join French Cameroon as a federated state was a way of maintaining the identity of Southern Cameroonians within the union and never a vote for annexation or surrender of sovereignty to French Cameroon. Both entities first existed as highly centralized federations and later officially united to become the United Republic of Cameroon on June 2nd, 1972 (Stark, 1976).

Both countries inherited different dimensions of colonial practices, which included differences in legal systems (common vs. civil law), dichotomies in colonial rule strategies (indirect vs. direct rule) as well as differences in education systems (Anglo-Saxon vs. French system) and labor policies (paid vs. forced labor) (Lee & Schultz, 2011). The British administration in Cameroon was based on the indirect rule system, which respected native traditions and allowed native chiefs, 'headmen', and the educated elite to perform most executive and judicial functions (Chiabi, 1997; Rubin, 1971). Contrarily, the French administrative policy in Cameroon was based on assimilation and integration practices reducing the autonomy and authority of the German-era chiefs and regarding them as 'pétit bureaucrats' who could be hired and fired at will (LeVine, 1964; Rubin, 1971). It has been argued that the British indirect rule system left in place traditional authorities who could coordinate inhabitants for enhanced community-level participation and development (Fonchingon & Fonjong, 2003), while the assimilatory practices in French Cameroon resulted in fewer and less active local and community associations (Geschiere, 1995).

Cameroon retained both the British common law and the French civil law systems practiced previously in British Southern Cameroon and French Cameroon, respectively (Anyangwe, 1987). This research does not dwell on comparing the common and civil law systems because a vast literature on the divergence and convergence of both legal systems already exists (Dainow, 1966; Pejovic, 2001; Stein, 1991). However, key differences include the fact that in the common law system as practiced in Cameroon, judicial opinions and traditions are relevant in making decisions, while in Cameroonian civil law, decisions are based entirely on codified legal instruments with less autonomy being granted to judges, whereas investigating magistrates enjoy greater autonomy in the investigation of crimes (Lee and Schultz, 2011). Also, the British abolished the labor tax that the Germans imposed on the natives of British Southern Cameroons and rather recruited workers and offered them cash wages which empowered them to pay their taxes. Contrarily, in French Cameroon, labor tax was reimposed on the native populations, with workers being unpaid and maltreated, leading to a death toll of about 60 per thousand workers (LeVine, 1964).

The education and religious systems the British and French practiced weren't similar either. The British encouraged the missionary groups (predominated by protestants) that were already active in German Cameroon and allowed them to monopolize education and social provision, explaining the large number (almost 90%) of students who enrolled in mission schools in British Southern Cameroons, while only two-thirds of students attended mission schools in French Cameroon which favored the Catholic Church over the Protestants (Johnson, 1970). The metropole spread their language, systems of education, and culture to the natives. British Southern Cameroonians speak English, are accustomed to the Anglo-Saxon system of education, the common law system, and have remained oriented towards the British way of life. In contrast, French Cameroon, which is french-speaking, is oriented toward the French culture, education, and legal system (Lee & Schultz, 2011). These discussions suggest that although both entities merged to become the United Republic of Cameroon under a firm policy of centralization, the entities clung to their respective colonizer's culture, language, education, and legal system.

Colonial legacies and the Cameroonian Civil War

The process of state-building in Third World countries has had many unfavorable effects on communal groups, especially the minorities, thereby resulting in a long-term increase in communal rebellion experienced across these countries. Gurr (1993) argues that cultural identity, inequalities, and historical loss of autonomy significantly contribute to the articulation of the grievances of minorities. As such, poverty, loss of autonomy, discriminatory practices, and resentments about restricted access to political positions all constitute issues that leaders cite to drive rebellion and separatist demands generally. It has been argued that the utility of nonviolent communal protests is high in long-established democracies while rebellions and violent demonstrations are common in autocracies, and that some states undergoing the democratization process have succeeded in accommodating communal conflicts while others have failed (Gurr, 1993).

The Cameroon civil war was born out of the unaddressed long-term grievances expressed by the British Southern Cameroonians since independence. These grievances resulted in the 2016 protests that degenerated into violence in 2017 due to the coercive retaliation by government forces. Whether Cameroon is autocratic, democratic, or in the democratization process does not constitute the scope of this research. What remains pertinent is to establish the links between colonial legacies and the Cameroonian civil war. The next section of this essay unpacks the specifics of the grievances raised by Anglophone Cameroonians in the cultural, educational, and legal realms and

their resentments about restricted access to political positions. This section also throws light on the reasons why the demands for change raised by Anglophones weren't pacifically resolved but rather degenerated into a violent conflict.

Background to the Cameroon Civil war

The Anglophone crisis that degenerated into violence in 2017 can be traced back to the country's colonial history and complex matrix of governance crises. The merging of two territories that variedly experienced British and French colonial rule and inherited different cultural legacies, languages, education, and legal systems; and contrasting levels of subsequent economic development constitute the basis of the crisis. Both entities agreed to form a federal state in 1961 with the Anglophone elite proposing a 'loose' form of federation that could ensure equal status, protect and preserve the identity and cultural heritage of both States respectively (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 2004). The Francophone elite disregarded this position and rather opted for a more centralized unitary state, which over the years has made the Anglophones feel 'assimilated', 'marginalized' and 'exploited' by the francophone-dominated government and population – what the Anglophone elite referred to as the 'Anglophone Problem' (Konings et al., 1997).

The transition from the 1961 federal system to the 1972 unitary system is considered by many Anglophones as a firm determination and a well-calculated move to dominate and erase the cultural identity and institutional foundation of the Anglophone minority in Cameroon (Eyoh 1998). Although Anglophones have been protesting openly since the 1960s for their rights to self-determination and autonomy, calling for a return to the federal system, the government has been very reluctant to acknowledge the existence of the Anglophone Problem or to consider such claims, thereby forcing some activists to adopt secessionist positions (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 1997). The Anglophone elite situates the marginalization of Anglophones in the violations of certain provisions of the 1961 federal constitution as well as aspects of political, economic, and socio-cultural domination. Mukong (1990) noted that the violations of certain provisions of the 1961 federal constitution were viewed by many as strategies to assimilate the Anglophone minority. The change of the Federal Republic into a Unitary State through a referendum in disregard of Clause I of Article 47, which prohibits any revision that impairs the integrity of the federation, was highly contested. Also, Clause III of Article 47 laid down the rules for revision of the constitution, leaving no room for amendment through a referendum (Mukong, 1990). After several unconstitutional moves and political maneuvers, the Federal Republic of Cameroon was changed to the United Republic of Cameroon and later renamed the Republic of Cameroon – the name of the former French colony (Mukong, 1990). As such, this reveals an assimilation agenda based on French assimilation and the direct rule system of administration that was inherited by the francophone Cameroonian elite.

The unitary state system led to the loss of autonomy of the Anglophone region with the Anglophones being under-represented in government and confined to inferior roles in the national decision-making apparatus of the state; the neglect of the region's infrastructure as well as the drain of its economic resources and attempts of 'frenchification' by successive francophone regimes all constitute major problems (Konings et al., 1997). It is common knowledge in Cameroon that since independence, Anglophones were alienated from highly sensitive and key ministerial positions like the Ministries of Finance, Territorial Administration, Defence, External Relations, Secondary and Higher Education, except for one Anglophone – Dorothy L. Njeuma who served as Vice-minister at the Ministry of National Education from 1975 to 1985. Since then,

Anglophones were only appointed full ministers at the Ministries of Territorial Administration and Secondary Education in March 2018 following the degeneration of the crisis into violence – an act considered a provocation by some Anglophone elites (Cameroon Post line, 2018). Not only has the post of Director in the civil service been rendered difficult for Anglophones, the government also disproportionately appoints francophone Administrative Authorities (Governors, Senior Divisional Officers, and Divisional Officers) at the helm of the administration in Anglophone regions and installs francophone principals to manage Anglophone schools (Konings et al., 2004). As such, it can be argued that this modus operandi is a direct replica of the system of assimilation and coercion inherited from the French colonial masters who highly centralized power and disregarded the authorities of the educated elite and local chiefs that were once empowered by the Germans and otherwise recognized and respected by the British in British Southern Cameroons.

Konings et al., (2004) also argue that there have been relatively low rates of investment in Anglophone Cameroon and that the region's infrastructure has been neglected, with many Anglophones attributing the country's economic predicament to the embezzlement, corruption, and mismanagement of President Paul Biya's regime. Furthermore, the French system is used to set and evaluate the competitive entrance examination into the civil service making it very difficult for Anglophones to compete with Francophones on an equal basis, thereby pushing many intelligent and talented Anglophone youths to travel overseas for greener pastures (Konings et al., 2004). Culturally, the French language and system are dominant over the English language and Anglo-Saxon system. 'Frenchification' is evident because all institutions, bureaucratic and administrative practices, and other aspects of public life across the entire territory, including the Anglophone zones, operate in the French language and system (Konings et al., 2004). The non-respect for the English language has remained a way of life in Cameroon, with French being prioritized in government offices, courts, the military, the police, prestigious state institutions, billboard communications, and the setting of public exams.[1]

The colonial history and the system of governance in Cameroon as highlighted unpacks the root causes of the Anglophone problem which finally degenerated into violence following a strike action that was organized by the lawyers and teachers to protest the 'frenchification' of the Anglo-Saxon education and judicial systems. Lawyers pointed to the fact that the French language and procedures were already being imposed in Anglophone regional courts and that Francophone magistrates and judges were being routinely transferred to these courts, whilst teachers were protesting that Francophone teachers who didn't even understand English were also being transferred to Anglophone schools under the premise of fostering national integration (Kouega, 2018). The strike action was met by coercion (by the forces of law and order) and led to the arrest of several prominent Anglophone legal practitioners, teachers, and others at the forefront of the strike actions, leading to the creation of the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium

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[1] This is an observation by the author of this paper. He is a Cameroonian who earned a first degree in Political Science and Law from the University of Buea (Anglo-Saxon University). He later obtained a Master's degree in International Relations from the International Relations Institute of Cameroon (IRIC), which is a top national and unique institution specialized in the training of Cameroonian Diplomats. While at IRIC, he witnessed how the French language dominated at the Institute which is supposedly bilingual on paper. Out of approximately 40 courses, only one was taught in the English Language. While English-speaking students, most of whom barely understood the French language, were allowed to answer French set questions in English, they then submitted them to lecturers themselves largely novices in English. This academic limitation constituted a great source of frustration to the learners whose first language was English.

(CACSC) which had as its major objective to coordinate strike actions and negotiate with the government on behalf of the aggrieved Anglophone population (International Crisis Group, 2017).

Several negotiations between the Consortium and the government failed and the government later banned the Consortium and arrested some of its leaders – an action which pushed many Anglophones to adopt a secessionist position (Journal du Cameroun, 2019). Strike action was then coordinated through the internet, with new European-based leaders calling for outright resistance and total independence – leading to the creation of the interim government of the Republic of Ambazonia, an outcome of the October 2017 Southern Cameroons Ambazonia Consortium United Front (SCACUF) meeting that took place in Nigeria (Okereke, 2018). The interim government has continued to call for retaliation against government forces and the respect of ghost towns in the Anglophone regions. Several secessionist militias have continued to emerge, with bloody battles being fought between them and government forces. Arbitrary arrests, beheadings, kidnappings, maiming, ambushing, burning of houses and schools, killing of students and children, and massive displacements all characterize the Cameroon civil war (Cameroon Anglophone Crisis Database of Atrocities, 2020).

Konings et al., (1997) argue that the form of state to be adopted in Cameroon has remained the most contentious issue of the crisis with some people propounding for the adoption of a decentralized unitary state, others prefer federalism and the 'extremists' for secession. After being hesitant to acknowledge the existence of the Anglophone problem for several years, the government finally recognized the pertinence of the problem and has undertaken several important measures in an attempt to quell the crisis. These include, among others, the withdrawal of some Francophone teachers and magistrates from Anglophone Cameroon, the creation of the common law section at the National School of Administration and Magistracy, the creation of common law departments at Francophone universities, and the granting of provisional authorization to Anglophone lawyers to act as notaries in Anglophone regions (Cameroon Tribune, 2017). The National Commission for the promotion of bilingualism and multiculturalism[2] which was bestowed with the mandate to foster respect for the equal status of French and English and to strengthen the multicultural character of the country was also created. As tensions continued to rise, the government finally convened the Grand National Dialogue which led to the adoption of several recommendations aimed at resolving the crisis (Cameroon Tribune, 2019). Some of these recommendations included the granting of special status to the Northwest and Southwest regions, the roadmap to accelerate the decentralization process, the modalities for the return of refugees and internally displaced persons, as well as further guidelines and frameworks for managing the educational and legal systems (Cameroon Tribune, 2019).

The National DDR Committee that was created by presidential decree to disarm both ex-Boko Haram fighters in the North of Cameroon and the separatist militias in Anglophone Cameroon has not succeeded in silencing the guns in the Anglophone regions because the prerequisite to any disarmament process is a negotiated peace or ceasefire agreement and not a presidential decree (Fotso, 2019). The fact that the war is still ongoing is a clear indication that it can't be resolved through a state-centric approach as adopted by the Cameroonian political regime which still clings on to its sovereignty and centralized power similar to the practice of French colonial rule.

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[2] Decree 2017/013 of 23rd January, 2017 on the creation of the National Commission for Bilingualism and Multiculturalism.

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Conclusion

The colonial encounter and the process of state formation in Cameroon have had numerous consequences on the practices of the post-colonial state. Not only did the metropole introduce different languages, cultures, education, and legal systems, their systems of administration also varied. The British system of indirect rule allowed British Southern Cameroons chiefs to enjoy autonomy and authority unseen under the French system of assimilation that was inherited by the political elite of French Cameroon, which now seeks to control and assimilate the Anglophone minority to create a coherent nation-state with power entirely centralized. Although governance crises also heightened the tensions between English and French Cameroons, the civil war is to a great extent a consequence of conflicting cultural, education, and judicial systems bequeathed to Cameroon by France and Britain from their colonial rules. The fact that the system of governance adopted by the Francophone-dominated Cameroon government is a replica of the French system of direct rule suggests to a great extent that the Cameroonian civil war is an artifact of colonial legacies.

Hence, there is a need for peacebuilders and policy experts to consider the relevance of the colonial factor when designing policies aimed at resolving the crisis because dealing only with governance crises without addressing the colonial roots of the problem runs the risk of relapse to conflict in the future. Also, because the British and French colonial legacies are at the center of the crisis, there is an urgent need for Britain and France to revisit their terms of relations with Cameroon, galvanize global resources, and harmonize efforts to influence and foster the resolution of the conflict.

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