ФІЛОСОФІЯ ТА ПОЛІТОЛОГІЯ В КОНТЕКСТІ СУЧАСНОЇ КУЛЬТУРИ

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THE ROLE OF THE US IN FINDING A SOLUTION TO THE CURRENT ANGLOPHONE CRISIS IN CAMEROON

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Abstract

The Anglophone Crisis is a conflict in the Southern Cameroons region of Cameroon, part of the long-standing Anglophone problem. The purpose of this study is to analyze the origin of the Anglophone problem in Cameroon. Equally, to identify and analyze the causes of the present Anglophone crisis in Cameroon and the role of the US in finding a solution to the crisis. Research method was based on analyzing policy documents of US, Cameroon and the separatist of the Anglophone regions. Following up latest developments of the crisis was another main method used in the study. In September 2017, separatists in the Anglophone territories of Northwest Region and Southwest Region (collectively known as Southern Cameroons) declared the independence of Ambazonia and began fighting against the Government of Cameroon. Starting as a low-scale insurgency, the conflict spread to most parts of the Anglophone regions within a year. By the summer of 2019, the government controlled the major cities and parts of the countryside, while the separatists held parts of the countryside and regularly appeared in the major cities.

The war has killed approximately 3,000 people and forced more than half a million people to flee their homes. Although 2019 has seen the first known instance of dialogue between Cameroon and the separatists, as well as a state-organized national dialogue and the granting of a special status to the Anglophone regions, the war continued to intensify in late 2019. The February 2020 Cameroonian parliamentary election brought further escalation, as the separatists became more assertive while Cameroon deployed additional forces. While the COVID-19 pandemic saw one armed group (SOCADEF) declare a unilateral ceasefire to combat the spread of the virus, other groups and the Cameroonian government ignored calls to follow suit and kept on fighting. With the enormous pressure by the US on the Cameroonian government, the government of Cameroon has not yet heeded the call to stop fighting with the rebels of the Anglophone regions.

Keywords: US, Cameroon, Anglophone Crisis, Protest.

Роль США у пошуку рішення поточної англомовної кризи у Камеруні

Анотація

Досліджено кризу між англомовним та франкомовним населенням в Камеруні. Розкрито генезу англомовного конфлікту серед населення Камеруну з позиції історичного минулого країни та вимог сторін конфлікту. Доводиться, що англомовна криза в Камеруні пов'язана не лише колоніальним минулим, адміністративними змінами, але й боротьбою за владу у суспільстві, також вагомим чинником у розвитку кризи виступає політика уряду, який перетворився на одну із сторін конфлікту. Здійснюється спроба визначити ступінь втручання США у внутрішні справи Камеруну та роль Сполучених Штатів безпосередньо у врегулюванні англомовної кризи. Визначено інструменти, які Сполучені Штати використовують для врегулювання камерунської англомовної кризи

Ключові слова: США, Камерун, англомовна криза, протест.

Introduction.

The Anglophone problem in Cameroon has been a topic of research for a while now. Few scholars have embarked on analyzing the Anglophone problem in Cameroon. For example, the scholar T. Abiem wrote about the Anglophone Marginalization in Cameroon. In his work, he analyzed factors of the marginalization of Anglophones in Cameroon [1]. Also, Professor Anyangwe C. wrote on the betrayal of the people of Southern Cameroons (Anglophone regions) by the UN, UK and other international Organizations by not putting pressure on the government of Cameroon to respect the rights of Anglophones [5]. Equally, the authors DeLancey M. W. and DeLancey M. D. analyzed the history of the Republic of Cameroon from the reunification of West Cameroon (Anglophone regions) with East Cameroon to form a federal state and later to a unitary state [8]. Furthermore, scholars Lee A and Schultz K. A. analyzed the British and French colonial legacies in Cameroon and how these two different cultures have played a big role in the Anglophone problem [13]. The theme; “The Role of the US in Finding a Solution to the Current Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon” is first of its kind to analyze the role played by the US in finding a solution to the present Anglophone crisis. The study is based on past researches, policy documents and present development surrounding the Anglophone crisis.

To understand the dynamics, the current political crisis and violence, it is necessary to know the genesis of the Anglophone crisis, which began in October 2016 with demands for the restoration of a two-state federation and later calls for an independent Anglophone State. Cameroon was a German colony before World War I. Following the defeat of the Germans during World War I and the Treaty of Versailles, Cameroon was divided between a French and a British League of Nations Mandate. The French mandate was known as Cameroun, and comprised most of the former German territory. The British mandate was an elongated strip of land along the border of Colonial Nigeria, consisting of Northern Cameroons and Southern Cameroons. This territory was organized as British Cameroons [13]. The British administered the territories through indirect rule,

allowing native authorities to administer the population according to their own traditions. In 1953, the Southern Cameroons delegation at a conference in London asked for a separate region. The British agreed, and Southern Cameroons became an autonomous region with its capital still at Buea. Elections were held in 1954 and the parliament met on 1 October 1954, with E.M.L. Endeley as Premier [8].

The United Nations organized a plebiscite in the region on 11 February 1961 which put two alternatives to the people: union with Nigeria or union with Cameroon. The third option, independence, was opposed by the British representative to the UN Trusteeship Council, Sir Andrew Cohen, and as a result was not listed. In the plebiscite, 60% of voters in the Northern Cameroons voted for union with Nigeria, while 70% of voters in the Southern Cameroons opted for union with Cameroon. The results owed partly to a fear of domination by much larger Nigeria. Endeley was defeated in elections on 1 February 1959 by John Ngu Foncha. Southern Cameroons became part of Cameroon on 1 October 1961 as “West Cameroon”, with its own prime minister [15].

In 1972, however, former President Ahidjo altered the structure of the union by abandoning federalism and transforming the country into a unitary state known as the United Republic of Cameroon. By 1984, President Paul Biya changed the name to La Republic du Cameroon, which was the original name of the French-administered East-Cameroon. Some opposition Anglophone elites interpreted this change of name as an act of secession from the spirit of the Union between the two Cameroons, and amounted to forced assimilation of Anglophone identity. Several attempts by sections of the Anglophone population to resist what they considered to be the erosion of their unique identity have lingered on since the 1972 alteration of the political structures and processes and especially since the 1984 change of name, which was contested in the courts by leading Anglophone elites [5, p. 108-111].

Research Question.

From the introduction above, one can identify a real problem, the Anglophone issue started after the abolition of two state Federation in Cameroon. The real question then comes up;

What are the causes of the present Anglophone crisis in Cameroon and what is the role of the US in finding a peaceful solution to the crisis?

Results and Discussion.

The causes of the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon has been analyzed below: Criticisms of the Centralized State. Majority of Anglophone elites strongly criticize the Centralized form of the state. Anglophones are calling for a federal form of the state while the government prefers a centralized state. Prior to 1972, Anglophones in Cameroon enjoyed the privileges of a federal state as the Anglophone regions (West Cameroon) had its own prime minister, house of chiefs and parliament to take decisions regarding the Anglophone regions. The federal state was abolished by the government in favor of a centralized state. This caused the Anglophone majority to criticize the government.

Equally, the transfer of decision-making centres to Yaoundé, far from the Anglophone population and their problems is one of the major causes of the present Anglophone crisis. After the change of the form of state from federalism to a centralized state, the post of prime minister of West Cameroon, the house of chiefs and parliament were all abolished. All decision making centres were moved to Yaounde (capital) as all decisions of governance started coming from the capital as a result of the centralized state.

Also, failure to respect commitments to equitably take into account the institutional, legal and administrative cultures and traditions inherited from the former administering powers contributed to the present crisis. The central government of Cameroon failed to protect the legal and administrative cultures and tradition of the Anglophones as French speaking teachers, lawyers and judges with little or no knowledge of English were transferred to the Anglophone regions. Disrespect of bilingualism in the public sector, although the Constitution makes French and English two official languages of equal status. Many Anglophones saw this as an attempt to assimilate them with the French culture and tradition [1].

The current crisis began on October 6, 2016, the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium, an organization consisting of lawyer and teacher trade unions in the Anglophone regions,

initiated a strike [4]. Led by Barrister Agbor Balla, Fontem Neba, and Tassang Wilfred, they were protesting against the appointment of Francophone judges in the Anglophone regions. They saw this as threatening the common law system in the Anglophone regions, as well as part of the general marginalization of Anglophones [2]. The strikes were supported by peaceful protests in the cities of Bamenda, Buea and Limbe. The activists demanded protection of the law system of the Anglophone regions, and opposed the civil law system used by the Francophone magistrate replacing the common law system. They asked for several laws to be translated into English, and that the common law system should be taught at the University of Buea and the University of Bamenda [2].

The Cameroonian government deployed security forces to crack down the protests. Protesters were attacked with tear gas, and protesters and lawyers were allegedly assaulted by soldiers. Throughout November 2016, thousands of teachers in the Anglophone regions joined the lawyers' strike. All schools in the Anglophone regions were shut down. Two weeks into the protests, more than 100 protesters had been arrested, and six were reported dead. Unconfirmed videos released over social media showed various violent scenes, including the beating of protesters by policemen [12].

In January 2017, the Cameroonian government set up a committee to initiate a dialogue with the lawyer activists. The lawyers refused to talk, demanding that all arrested activists be released before any dialogue. The lawyers submitted a draft for a federal state, and the government responded by banning their movements altogether. The protesters were now openly regarded as a security threat by the Cameroonian government, and more arrests followed [16]. The government also implemented an Internet blockade in cities across the Anglophone regions. The government crackdown on the protests contributed to mainstream separatist movements. In September 2017, Ambazonian separatists began to take up arms against the government [11].

In early September, 2017, the Ambazonia Governing Council (AGovC), a separatist movement established in 2013 through the merger of

several groups, formally deployed the Ambazonia Defence Forces (ADF) in Southern Cameroons. On September 9, the ADF carried out its first military action, attacking a military base in Besongabang, Manyu. Three Cameroonian soldiers were killed in the attack, while the ADF claimed their soldiers managed to return to base unharmed [3]. Throughout September, separatists carried out two bombings; one targeting security forces in Bamenda, and another targeting police officers. While the first bombing failed, the second injured three policemen. On September 22, 2017, Cameroonian soldiers opened fire on protesters, killing at least five and injuring many more [3].

On October 1, 2017, the Southern Cameroons Ambazonia Consortium United Front (SCACUF), an umbrella movement consisting of several independence movements, unilaterally declared the independence of Ambazonia. This declaration was followed by mass demonstrations across the Anglophone regions. The separatists strategically chose this date, as it is the anniversary for the unification of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons. SCACUF would later transform itself into the Interim Government of Ambazonia (IG). Sisiku Julius Ayuk Tabe was elected by SCACUF to be the Interim President of Ambazonia. Several months into the war, the IG would reject the idea of an armed struggle, preferring instead a diplomatic campaign and civil disobedience [10].

The Cameroonian Army moved into the regions in force to fight the separatists and quell the demonstrations. Throughout the day, at least eight demonstrators were killed in Buea and Bamenda. The Cameroonian military also reinforced the Nigerian border, and on October 9, it claimed to have stopped “hundreds of Nigerian fighters” from crossing into Cameroon [14].

The United States has been putting pressure on the Cameroonian government to find a solution and end the current Anglophone crisis in the country. According to the U.S. Department of State’s Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2017, Cameroonian forces carried out arbitrary killings, disappearances, torture, violations of freedom of expression and unlawful detentions in harsh prison conditions [20]. In 2018, the

United States formally accused the Cameroonian Army of carrying out targeted killings [19]. In November 2018, following the death of an American missionary, the US Department of State issued a statement urging both sides to cease all attacks on civilian targets. The United States also condemned the “systematic intimidation based on ethnic and religious affiliation” in Cameroon [22].

In February 2019, the United States decided to cut military aid worth of \$17 million over Cameroon’s human rights record, as well as withdrawing Cameroon’s invitation into the State Partnership Program [17]. The United States Africa Command leader, General Thomas Waldhauser said the lack of transparency in the investigations into human rights violations by government soldiers could have a major impact on their ability to support Cameroon’s counterterrorism efforts and challenged Biya to show greater transparency [21]. In March 2019, Secretary for African Affairs Tibor P. Nagy called on the Cameroonian government to take more decisive action to solve the Anglophone Crisis, to grant autonomy to the Anglophone regions, and to release political prisoners.

At an informal discussion at the UN Security Council in May 2019, the United States again criticized the Cameroonian government [6]. On May 16, 2019, Tibor Nagy accused the Cameroonian government of doing “nothing” to solve the conflict. Nagy also stated that he did not believe that Ambazonian independence was a realistic option, and that the United States recognized the territorial integrity of Cameroon [6]. In July 2019, the United States House of Representatives passed resolution 358, calling for the reintroduction of a federal system in Cameroon and for the Government of Cameroon and armed groups to respect the human rights of all Cameroonian citizens, to end all violence, and to pursue a broad-based dialogue without preconditions to resolve the conflict in the Northwest and Southwest regions [9]. In October 2019, President Donald Trump cancelled a trade deal with Cameroon, citing human rights abuses. Cameroon was removed from a trade program that allows African countries to sell goods to the United States on a duty-free basis, citing “persistent human rights

violations” The decision comes as U.S. officials accuse the Central African nation of extrajudicial killings and unlawful detentions amid conflicts that have displaced more than a half-million people over the past two years [18].

Conclusion.

It is abundantly clear that the majority of Anglophones in Cameroon had grievances with the central government because of the abolition of the two state federation in Cameroon in 1972. Some Anglophones felt marginalized and didn't want the English culture to be eradicated in favor of the French culture. The role of the US in finding a solution to the Cameroon's Anglophone crisis has done little to persuade the government of Cameroon to stop fighting with the separatists in the Anglophone regions of the country. The Cam-

eroonian government has rejected the proposed US solution for the return of a federal state of governance as it was before 1972 when the federation was abolished by the former president of Cameroon. The current president Paul Biya has proposed some few constitutional changes that come short of the return of federalism. Federation would've bring peace to the restive Anglophone regions of Cameroon as the majority Anglophone people wants a return to federalism. The international community (EU, AU, UN etc) has done very little in finding a solution to the crisis until date. The crisis is still going on and nobody knows when the fighting between the government troops and the Anglophone separatists will come to an end. A peaceful solution is needed in the current Anglophone Cameroon crisis.

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