Understanding the State of Fragmented Nation-building in Cameroon

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Abstract

Cameroon is a complex ‘nation’ composed of two colonial polities—British West Cameroons and French East Cameroun—whose questionable ‘birth’ by way of UN plebiscites has resulted in linguistic, cultural, and economic cleavages. Cameroon is however not unique in the web of postcolonial African narratives, for the awakening of Africans to the stark reality that their freedom could not be handed to them by the very forces that aimed to extract the resources of their lands and the labor of their bodies to oil the world capitalist machine was met with attempts at psychological disarmament by the colonizer, the violent elimination of leaders who championed the collective interest of the populace, and their replacement by coopted leaders who preferred semi-sovereignty and riches to liberation and poverty. The divisive politics engineered by the Cameroonian state has led to the politicization of identities, resulting in a fractured polity separated by linguistic nationalisms. State power is deliberately exercised over the masses to their own detriment, as local elites are coopted by the state and national problems are placated by clientelism. These constructed and politicized identities have engaged Cameroonians in cognitive falsities distracting them from the social and economic erosion occurring right before their eyes.
Introduction

An assessment of the postcolonial state in Africa reveals a scatter plot of successes and failures along different axes of ‘progress’ as defined in the post-Enlightenment neoliberal world order, such as nation-building, good governance, and economic development. In the mid-twentieth century, a set of ill-formed nation-states arose around the African continent out of the ashes of colonialism. The lasting colonial imprint on the African continent most visibly derives from the fact that in large part, the frontiers and national identities of these states were constructed at the Berlin Conference in 1884, where European imperialists carved out territories on the map of Africa over which they would exercise influence and extract resources through the subjugation and oppression of native peoples. These nation-states which we today refer to by names such as Cameroon, Sudan and Nigeria, can be seen as historical accidents; yet, they have become entrenched in the international political order.

The arbitrary boundaries of these states and the divisive nature of identity politics within remain current realities that must be confronted and rectified in order to break from detrimental colonial legacies that continue to preclude equitable development and the accordance of equal rights for all ethnic and linguistic groups that reside within these borders. The socio-economic and political conflicts deriving from failed nation-building have been quite devastating in many African countries, most tragically in Rwanda, which experienced the horrific genocidal slaughter of Tutsi and moderate Hutu in 1994, costing the lives of an estimated 500,000 to 1 million Rwandans. On July 9, 2011, in Sudan decades of civil war between northern Sudan and southern Sudan culminated to a historic referendum through which South Sudan, the youngest nation on the African continent, was born.

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1 Verpoorten (2005), 332
In Cameroon, over 50 years of political repression, economic marginalization, and cultural and linguistic exclusion by the ruling regimes have resulted in the heightened expression of divergent sentiments of nationalisms, namely Anglophone nationalism—claim to an Anglophone identity and subnational consciousness\(^2\)—and Cameroonian nationalism—conscious identification with the nation-state of Cameroon. The case of Cameroon is peculiar, unique, and instructive for this analysis of nation-building and governance in postcolonial Africa. Cameroon harbors one of the most complex colonial histories, marked by the rule of three European powers—Germany, Britain, and France. Upon decolonization, Cameroon was faced with the difficult challenge of integrating groups of different ethnic backgrounds and colonial inheritances into a “nation.” Tactfully managing these different identities remains an ever-pressing challenge today and a necessary imperative, as Cameroon’s success or failure hinges on redressing pertinent regional, linguistic, and ethnic cleavages.

However, it is critical to realize that in spite of the lasting internal tensions, Cameroon remains one of the few African countries whose leaders have never been deposed by military coup or by civilian elements. Internationally, Cameroon is regarded as one of the most stable countries in Africa. In the public space, an all-encompassing sense of being Cameroonian emerges around the national football team—*Les Lions Indomptables* (The Indomitable Lions), where a consciousness of being Cameroonian and the existence of a “Cameroonian way” surfaces. In urban centers such as Yaoundé and Douala, linguistic cleavages are dissolving amongst youth as they create their own lingua franca—Camfranglais (a mixture of French, English and Pidgin English)—which has come to be regarded as a new symbol for Cameroonian identity.\(^3\) As these examples demonstrate, the fragmented state of nation-building in Cameroon,

\(^2\) Jua and Konings (2004)
\(^3\) Simpson (2008)
and in many other African countries, cannot be simply understood through simplistic binary lenses which perceive identities as rigid, therefore necessitating the separation of conflictual identities into smaller national entities. Rather, these identities and their political implications have been constructed out of a series of social and historical factors. Hence, by understanding that identities such as Anglophone or Francophone are not innate, but rather historically situated, we begin to understand that the current state of affairs in Cameroon is by no means natural and that the identities that produce these conflicts are not essential and inviolable.

Therefore, by using a political sociology approach, I aim to situate the current state of nation-building in Cameroon in its historical and social roots by examining the processes of state formation, the modes of governance, and the distribution of economic resources and political power amongst different actors. Critically, this analysis will elucidate that while linguistic and cultural differences are salient in Cameroon, they are not intrinsically divisive: instead of molding an exemplary African state that approaches the historical burden of colonialism in a more positive and inclusive manner so as to foster balanced development, identities have been manipulated in such a way as to create imaginaries of essential difference between different identity groups for the achievement of political ends.

The Creation of Modern Cameroon

The history of the Cameroonian peoples is heavily complex, shaped by consequential experiences with external forces and the negotiations of internal agents. Cameroon is often referred to as “Africa in miniature”; a phrase that holds within it many idealistic notions about the beauty of cultural pluralism, but which on the other hand implies the negative realities of sometimes antagonistic intergroup relations. What Cameroon is or what it represents cannot be
categorically determined; however, in this postcolonial African nation-state lies many possibilities and potentials shaped by histories of social, political, and economic circumstances.

Cameroon has vast histories that predate the colonial experience, which unfortunately cannot be fully covered here. However, like most African nations, its trajectory into the contemporary era was largely determined by European colonialism. Cameroon has three colonial experiences: namely German, French, and British; of which the latter two have left a permanent socio-political imprint. The country was informally known as part of the British Empire from 1827 due to intensive economic relations between the British and the Duala—a small but politically influential ethnic group that inhabits the coastal town and major port city of Douala. By the nineteenth century, the Duala controlled the slave, palm oil, palm nuts, and ivory trade in this region. The heavy British influence in Cameroon is evidenced by the fact that Pidgin English was the lingua franca in the region throughout that period. Given this established relationship, it was quite unexpected when the country came under German tutelage in 1884. The Duala chiefs had on several occasions appealed for Queen Victoria make Cameroon a British protectorate. However, on July 16, 1884, Cameroon was annexed by the Germans as they successfully convinced Duala kings Akwa and Bell to establish the territory as a German protectorate known as Kamerun. The British envoy arrived a few days too late on a similar mission to sign a treaty with the Duala kings.

As implied by the fact that German control of Kamerun emerged as an agreement between two parties, the territory was not legally defined as a colony. While the territory was

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4 Fanso (1999)
5 Joseph (1977), 15
6 Ibid., 19
7 Ibid., 20
8 Gros (2003), 2
given de jure protectorate status, it was a de facto colony. The Germans governed Kamerun through indirect rule, especially in the north where centralized political authority, dominated by Muslim lamidos (statesmen) and marabouts (religious leaders), predated colonial rule.\(^9\) German control of Kamerun like that of all other imperialists was motivated by the desire to acquire and extract economic resources. As such, German rule exploited the agricultural potential of the coast and the hinterlands through the development of large commercial plantations. This colonial experience was marked by forced labor, the expropriation of African lands, an economy dependent on the exportation of cash crops such as rubber, palm oil and cocoa, and single-track railroads to facilitate the transport of cash crops from production centers in the interior to export points on the coast.\(^10\) The colonial subjects pushed back against the violent rule and exploitative policies of the Germans, notably the Duala who became extremely resistant after the Germans attempted to expropriate lands around Douala.\(^11\)

The German protectorate reached its end at the outbreak of World War I in 1914.\(^12\) The 30 years of German administration in Cameroon were fundamental to the development of Kamerunian nationalism. The lived experience of repression under German rule birthed the idea of being a “Kamerunian” amongst peoples of various ethnic groups and regions.\(^13\) Additionally, the Germans largely established the country’s international boundaries and set up institutions of administration upon which other colonialists would eventually control Cameroon.\(^14\)

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\(^9\) Ibid., 1-2
\(^10\) Ibid.
\(^11\) Ibid.
\(^12\) Fanso, 282
\(^13\) Joseph, 20
\(^14\) Ibid.
visible vestige of German rule is the infrastructure built, which includes railways, ports, bridges, government buildings, and telephone and telegraph wires.\textsuperscript{15}

In September 1914, British and French forces seized Douala. They succeeded in expelling the Germans in 1916, after which the territory was divided disproportionately between the two imperialist nations.\textsuperscript{16} On March 4, 1916, 10 percent of Kamerun was given to Britain, while control of the remaining 90 percent went to France.\textsuperscript{17} It is important to note that henceforth Douala became part of French East Cameroun. The British thereupon withdrew from Douala, which they had occupied from 1914 to 1916.\textsuperscript{18} The Cameroons, composed of French East Cameroun and British West Cameroons, came under official League of Nations mandates in 1922. Given its relationship with the Cameroons prior to the twentieth century, it is a wonder why the British did not fight to possess more of this territory during the Scramble for Africa. As advanced by Jean-Germain Gros, it is plausible that the British were more interested in southern and eastern Africa, where they gained an abundance of contiguous territory from Egypt to Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) after taking over the former German-ruled Tanganyika (Tanzania).\textsuperscript{19} The British also possessed the neighboring territory of Nigeria, which was larger and more populous than British Cameroon. Evidently, the British did not have much interest in expanding into the Cameroons, especially because British West Cameroons contained most of the previously established German plantations.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{15} Joseph, 21
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Gros, 3
\textsuperscript{18} Joseph, 24
\textsuperscript{19} Gros, 3
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
British preoccupation with other territories was visible in their approach towards the governance of the British Cameroons. For all administrative purposes, British West Cameroons was treated as part of British Nigeria. On June 26, 1923, the British divided the territory into northern and southern sections.\(^{21}\) The northern part of the territory was tied to the administrations of three separate provinces of Northern Nigeria, while the southern part was integrated into the administration of Southern, later, Eastern Nigeria.\(^{22}\) The British were not very invested in developing the Cameroons, thus their involvement was limited and indirect. In terms of infrastructure and economic advancement, there was very little British investment in the Cameroons. While they expanded cocoa production for export, it paled in comparison to French investment in East Cameroun and British investment in Nigeria. British economic policy in West Cameroons was geared towards appropriating formerly German-owned plantations and developing them to produce cash crops for the international market. Towards this end, the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), which continues to operate today, was created and headquartered in Victoria (today Limbe).\(^{23}\) The lack of economic development in the British Cameroons led to bitter complaints from the subjects and a yearning for the ‘good old days’ of German colonialism, as the subjects arrived at a stage where they looked past the violence of German rule and rather focused on the infrastructural development realized under German tutelage.\(^{24}\)

On the other side, the French resisted the designation of East Cameroun as a League of Nations mandate for they wanted no oversight from the international community and aimed to

\(^{21}\) Ibid.  
\(^{22}\) Fanso, 282  
\(^{23}\) Gros, 4-5  
\(^{24}\) Ibid., 4
permanently maintain the territory as part of their empire. France did not adhere to the Article 22 of the Treaty of Versailles, which laid out the terms under which territories were to be governed under the League of Nations mandates.\(^{25}\) The primary tools of the French administration were brute force and assimilation. The French sought to exploit to the maximum level the economic potential and wealth of the territory. Building upon the German foundation, they expanded banana, cocoa, and coffee production further into the interior into previously unexploited areas.\(^{26}\) Forced African labor, the practice previously pioneered by the Germans, was used to work these plantations and to build railways and roads, enabling transport from the interior to the coast. *Indigénat*, a legal code pertaining to persons of ‘native status’—otherwise referred to as *sujets* (subjects) rather than *citoyens* (citizens)—permitted the French to impose summary disciplinary punishment. Camerounians were therefore subject to punishment for arbitrary offences as deemed fit by colonial administrators.\(^{27}\)

The crux of the French colonial project was assimilation. The French administration aimed to integrate acquired territories into its empire by “civilizing” Africans and converting them into French men. Along these lines, it is important to note that even after the Cameroons came under German tutelage, Pidgin English remained the lingua franca, employed as the main language of their Administration throughout the territory for trade, at churches and in schools.\(^{28}\) Gravely, the dawn of French rule led to the erasure of Pidgin English as an officially recognized language in the majority of Cameroun. The French insisted on teaching their language even to children during their first few years of schooling. In many ways, this was a linguistic tragedy that

\(^{25}\) Ibid., 4
\(^{26}\) Ibid.
\(^{27}\) Joseph, 26
\(^{28}\) Ibid., 20
would later have significant implications for identity formation and the construction of Kamerunian nationalism. Disregard for the value of African institutions and customs was observable in the manner in which chiefs in southern Cameroun were integrated as functionaries in the French local administration, “thereby transforming their authority…from that based on local traditions and institutions to one deriving from the power of the colonizer.” Chiefs used their authority in a corrupt and inequitable manner, often asking for more than the required tax and pocketing the difference, imposing upon Camerounians from other clans in an unfair manner, and forcing more men than demanded by the French administration to work on plantations. This system gave rise to numerous inequities and abuses. Such corrupt uses of power and transgressions of authority by Africans are rooted in the fact that their powers were externally derived. Traditional systems that balanced power in locally legitimate ways were overridden by the interests of colonialists in using local vessels of authority to exploit the territory’s human and natural resources. Unable to tolerate this oppressive system, many Camerounians fled to the British Cameroons or away from Cameroun into neighboring territories.

Irrespective of the methods of rule or the political aims of the colonial project, one thing was certain—the logic of all colonizers was to impose their authority so as to build a lucrative extractive economy, integrating the Cameroons into the world economy as a producer of cash crops. Before 1945, Camerounians were not accorded any political rights. Repressive

\[29\] Ibid., 26
\[30\] Ibid., 27
\[31\] Gros, 5
administrative practices led to growing resistance to French rule in the colony. As in the British Cameroons, this struggle allowed the harshness of German colonial rule to fade from memory.\textsuperscript{32}

From 1938 to 1945 there was a fight between Germany and France over Cameroun, as German propaganda aimed to convince Camerounians who were nostalgic of the years under German rule that the territory should be returned to Germany.\textsuperscript{33} Many Camerounians who had achieved notable success under German rule were discriminated against under the French.\textsuperscript{34} Additionally, in comparison to the physical infrastructure constructed during the 30 years of German rule, the French accomplished significantly less.\textsuperscript{35} Due to the insecurity felt by France, for the first time, in 1937/8 French colonial administrators allowed the formation of a Camerounian ‘public opinion’ to speak out against the return of German colonial rule to the Cameroons. They were strategic in picking a group of Camerounians who were “unwedded to the German past and thoroughly imbued with French ‘civilization and culture.’”\textsuperscript{36}

World War II resulted in a change in status of the colonies from League of Nations mandates to United Nations trusteeships, albeit under the same administrative authorities. The French at first refused to place Cameroun under the new Trusteeship system, but relented in the face of pressure from the United States and other Western governments.\textsuperscript{37} The transition to the Trusteeship system meant that France as an overseer of a UN trust was bound to article 76 of the organization’s charter, which stated that all UN trust territories were to be administered in such a

\textsuperscript{32} Joseph, 21
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 39
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 21-22
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 40
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 75
way as to prepare them for independence.\textsuperscript{38} However, France had other schemes through which it intended to maintain its colonies as integral tools to sustain the development of the metropolis.

The post-war period saw increasing resistance against colonial rule from subjects, particularly by non-ethnically affiliated nationalist parties such as the \textit{Union des Populations du Cameroun} (UPC), the \textit{Bloc Démocratique Camerounais} (BDC), and the \textit{Union Sociale Camerounaise} (USC), among which UPC posed the greatest challenge to colonial rule in the Cameroons.\textsuperscript{39} Throughout the 1950s a series of political movements and moments critically shaped the Cameroons, molding its political form and setting it on a path that has largely remained unchanged into the 21\textsuperscript{st} century. This decade was a time of awakening for the majority whom the colonial system abused more than benefited, but concurrently it was a time of acquiescence for the coopted elite who aspired to become citizens of the French Republic. The difference of ideology among Camerounians would consequently define the way in which the territory was decolonized. As stated by Richard Joseph, in a gathering on April 10, 1948, a group of “trade unionists and radical intellectuals, as well as a section of moderate nationalists, recognized that only a coherent political organization would enable Camerounians vigorously to pursue their collective interests.” They stood in opposition to the conservatives and moderates who were “content to indulge in personalized and ethnic politics—and, in fact to persist in this practice throughout the post-war decade.” These Camerounians united to form UPC which declared its purpose as: “to group and unite the inhabitants of the territory in order to bring about…the consolidation of the Cameroun people into a federation by implementation of a policy of rapid democratization and the emancipation of the people exploited by colonial

\textsuperscript{38} Gros, 6
\textsuperscript{39} Fanso, 286
firms…” Importantly, UPC was also fighting against the force of more than 1,700 colons (settlers) controlling politics and the economy. The colons were opposed to the extension of political rights to Africans and sought to entrench their political power in the territory in a manner similar to that of the settler population in South Africa. In rejection of all maneuvers to keep Cameroun subservient to French interests, UPC aimed to reunify the Cameroons and gain independence from their respective colonizers by the mid-1950s. These objectives were mainly supported by the Bassa, the Bamiléké and the Duala. Led by Ruben Um Nyobe (a Bassa), the UPC quickly gained political prominence and increased its adherents across the territory, thereby becoming a threat to the Administration. Given the escalating Cold War context, UPC was also threatening to the Western Bloc as the movement received military training and support from various communist groups, including the inter-territorial party of French Africa, the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA), and the French Communist Party (PCF). UPC waged a relentless militant and violent struggle against colonialism that was not only a threat to colonial rule in Cameroun, but in all French Equatorial territories. This made Cameroun unique in that it was one of the few French colonies whose independence was not won by completely peaceful means.

During the years of the nationalist struggle for independence and reunification, the German name Kamerun for the ‘Cameroons’ was resuscitated as an expression of nationalist sentiment and as means of unifying Anglophone and Francophone Cameroonians under one
common struggle.\textsuperscript{45} The UPC formed strong links with politicians in the British Cameroons during this period. Around the same time UPC became active in French East Cameroun, in 1947 Dr. Emmanuel Endeley formed the Cameroon Federal Union (CFU), the first political organization in the British Cameroons. Its main goal was to establish the British West Cameroons as an autonomous region within the Nigerian Federal Government. To this end, CFU allied with the French Cameroun Welfare Organization, an organization consisting largely of Duala emigrants from French Cameroun who were advocating reunification of the Cameroons. In 1949, at the Kumba Conference of the Cameroon National Federation (CNF), Endeley’s new organization, a resolution was passed supporting the idea of reunification.\textsuperscript{46}

Unity among Kamerunians and organized political action to radically thwart the colonial regime posed a significant threat to French authority in the political and economic affairs of Francophone colonies. As expressed by Frantz Fanon, “They [the colonizers] discover that violence is atmospheric, it breaks out sporadically, and here and there sweeps away the colonial regime.”\textsuperscript{47} Fanon’s assertion implies that were the militant and uncompromising methods of the UPC allowed to take root in the Cameroons, the ideas would inevitably spread to neighboring territories, thereby dismantling the colonial regime through violent revolutions. Such was the case with the growth of the UPC movement. French administrators viewed the UPC insurgency as highly influential to events transpiring in Algeria. As referenced by Kristen Harkness, Martin Atangana argues the outbreak of the Algerian revolution in 1954 was “‘a gangrene whose spread had to stop immediately. It was essential for the French authorities that the request of independence by the UPC should not create a precedent in Black Africa.’” As such, according to

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 21
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 188-9
\textsuperscript{47} Fanon (2004), 30
Harkness, “Negotiation with the UPC, let alone political inclusion, carried with it the risk of setting expectations for the Algerian insurgents…”48 Aware of this potential, the French sought by all means to suppress this movement of conscious Africans who had arrived at the fundamental epiphany that their freedom could not be handed to them by the very imperialists who sought to completely strip them of their humanity and turn them into machines of capitalist extraction.

Heightened resistance likely prodded France to invest more in Cameroun during the post-war period as a means of abating opposition. French investment in Cameroun was supported by the Investment Fund for Economic and Social Development (FIDES in French), which was established for the development and modernization of France’s overseas territories. Cameroun was highly favored in the disbursement of these funds, as reflected by the fact that from 1947 to 1954, 80 million French francs were spent in Cameroun, a sum that surpasses what was spent in the rest of France’s equatorial colonies (Chad, Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon, and Oubangui-Chari (The Central African Republic)) combined. It is important to highlight that the majority of these funds were spent to extend and modernize the port of Douala, expand the railways, extend the road network between Douala and the hinterland, and build more storage facilities. France designed the port to serve as the entry point for the landlocked colonies of Oubangui-Chari and Chad.49 Evidently, the port was a very important economic investment for France in the region, vis-à-vis maintaining Cameroun and other Equatorial colonies as territories of extraction. In

48 Harkness (2012), 137-8
49 Gros (1995), 113
addition to the economic investments, in the 1950s French authorities invested in social welfare through greater investments in healthcare, education, and other social programs.\textsuperscript{50}

The French had hoped to sway public opinion in their favor through the economic investments. However, the UPC movement continued to spread swiftly across the region. Deeply offended by the ideas and increasing clout of the UPC, the French resorted to brutal suppression of the UPC. In the struggle to thwart UPC’s campaign, they also formed alliances with Camerounians attracted to the personal benefits to be accrued by colluding with the Administration. In 1946, the constitution of France established the French Union which allowed for the political representation of its colonies. Cameroun was represented in the Assembly of the French Union and in the French National Assembly, even though Camerounians were not granted citizenship. Additionally, the Representative Assembly of Cameroun (ARCAM) was created, although its powers were subservient to French authorities. In 1952 ARCAM was replaced by the Territorial Assembly of Cameroun (ATCAM) which allowed for greater African representation and powers.\textsuperscript{51} In 1956 the National Assembly in France passed the \textit{loi-cadre}, which aimed to make Cameroun more autonomous from the metropolis, although not grant the colony independence.\textsuperscript{52} Critically, these assemblies were prime spaces for grooming Cameroun’s post-independence leaders, but also for disposing of those regarded as traitors to the French colonial project of “modernizing” Africans. The radical ideas of the UPC did not make entry into these assemblies as UPC was excluded from political processes by the colonial administration.

\textsuperscript{50} Joseph, 107-8; Gros (2003), 5
\textsuperscript{51} Gros, 6
\textsuperscript{52} Le Vine (1964), 158
UPC stood in stark opposition to French rule: while the UPC’s main aim was to “create a nation out of the different peoples of Cameroun, the policy of the French was the now classic one of using the particularism of the African peoples to hinder this work of the nationalist party.”

The French used tactics of manipulation which capitalized upon ethnic and regional differences as a means of separation. In the north, the Fulani (the ethnic group of Cameroon’s first post-independence president Ahmadou Ahidjo) allied with the Administration to halt the penetration of the UPC. It is important to reflect on the fact that before 1945, Camerounians possessed no political rights. However, with the creation of local assemblies from 1946 onward, many Camerounians were made to feel as though they too could equally take part in the decision-making processes that determined how their territory was governed. However, as has been already discussed the formation of these political spaces served the interest of the French. The French reacted to the growth of the UPC by encouraging the formation of other movements opposed to the principal objectives of the UPC and by openly corrupting the electoral process, thus making it impossible for any UPC candidate to ever win an election to the local assembly.

In large part, other than UPC, BDC, and USC, the political parties that proliferated across Cameroun with the opening of political spaces were anti-UPC and advocated assimilation into the French Union. Evidently, by according some sense of humanity to Camerounians, particularly those who were enamored by the idea of becoming ‘French men,’ France sought to appease colonial subjects and contain radical revolutions. Frantz Fanon impeccably captures this logic in *The Wretched of the Earth* in the passage below:

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53 Joseph, 174
54 Ibid., 173
55 Ibid., 31
56 Fanso, 287
57 Ibid., 176
During this struggle the colonists and the police force are instructed to modify their behavior and ‘to become more human.’ They even go as far as to introduce the terms “Sir” or “Ma’am” in their relations with the colonized…In fact the colonized gets the feeling that things are changing…The colonized subject is upgraded and attempts are made to disarm him psychologically and, naturally with a few coins…The colonized subject is so starved of anything that humanizes him, even if it is third rate, that these trivial handouts in some cases manage to impress him. 58

Hence, the façade of changing relations between the colonizer and the colonized is powerful. The seeming recognition of their humanity weakens the psychology of moderate politicians and completely captures those already sympathetic to French rule. They begin to perceive that there is space for Africans to collaborate on equitable footing with their colonizers. In fact, the notion of integrating Cameroun into the French Union becomes so appealing to their self-interested pursuit of power, that they readily colluded with the colonizer to better execute his strategy of divide and conquer. Consequently, “the violent, unanimous demands of the revolution, which once lit up the sky, now shrink to more modest proportions.” 59

A similar sequence of manipulation unfolded with regard to the Camerounian leaders hand-picked by the French to steer the Cameroons on a pro-French path of decolonization. UPC’s vehement demand for immediate independence and reunification of the Cameroons led to French actions to silence the UPC after 1954. However, this reaction rather inflamed than quelled UPC’s momentum. The organization continued to expand throughout the territory while its rivals had stagnated. Estimates show that by the end of 1954, UPC membership consisted of

58 Fanon, 89-90
59 Ibid., 90
about 10,000 active militants, 20,000 card-owning adherents and at least 80,000 sympathizers.\textsuperscript{60} Clashes between the UPC and French authorities led to extreme violence from May 1955, resulting in the banning of UPC and its subsidiary organizations on July 13, 1955.\textsuperscript{61} This forced its leaders to flee exile in the British Cameroons or organize guerrilla movements underground.

These tensions led to the end of France’s utopian vision to make another France out of Africa. Its new imperative was “selecting a leader who would guarantee a continued preferential economic and political relationship with France after independence.”\textsuperscript{62} By design, anti-UPC Andre-Marie Mbida was appointed the first pre-independence prime minister of Cameroun in May 1957. He was chosen by the French because he appeared as moderate and reconciliationist.\textsuperscript{63} However, in less than a year it was evident that he was not fit to steer Cameroun towards independence. His personality and uncompromising attitude, particularly maintenance of the unpopular position that Cameroun was not ready for independence and rejection of the unification idea antagonized his political friends and enemies alike. Consequently, on February 17, 1958 Mbida was forced to resign as prime minister by Jean Ramadier, the French high commissioner.\textsuperscript{64}

Ahmadou Ahidjo, former president of the Cameroon Assembly and head of the \textit{Union Camerounaise} (UC) was thereafter appointed prime minister. Ahidjo seized this opportunity to establish himself as a credible leader in the eyes of the French by expressing support for immediate independence and adherence to pro-French policies in Cameroun. Ahidjo’s willingness to pander to French interests is evidenced by the negotiations between himself and

\textsuperscript{60} Joseph, 239
\textsuperscript{61} Tokougang (2003), “Nationalism, Democratisation, and Political Opportunism in Cameroon”: 428; Faso, 287
\textsuperscript{62} Takougang, 428
\textsuperscript{63} Le Vine, 157
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 163-166
French authorities in 1958 which resulted in Ordinance No. 58-1375, which gave the Cameroun government and legislature full autonomy over most internal matters, but conversely guaranteed French control of the monetary system, defense and foreign affairs. Also, initially unsupportive of UPC’s reunification program, Ahidjo embraced the idea upon his ascension to power in order to appeal to other groups who backed the ideas. With this moderate, French-backed independence agenda, French East Cameroun, henceforth *La République du Cameroun*, became independent on January 1, 1960 with the UN approved revocation of France’s trusteeship.65

Reunification of the Cameroons soon followed the independence of French East Cameroun. The UN resolutions prior to independence in 1960 largely determined the method of reunification. On March 13, 1959, the UN General Assembly adopted the following resolutions: the first stated that upon the independence of French East Cameroun on January 1, 1960, the trusteeship over the British Cameroons would also cease. The second determined that the future of the British Cameroons would be determined by separate referenda held in the northern and southern parts. This meant that Anglophones would not gain independence on their own right, but through UN-organized plebiscites and by virtue of the decisions reached by other colonial entities. The faithful plebiscites were held on February 11, 1961 where the British Cameroons were given only two options: join Nigeria or integrated into the *République du Cameroun*. There was no third option to gain independence as a separate nation. Accordingly, British northern Cameroon voted to become part of Nigeria, while British southern Cameroon opted to reunify with the newly independent *République du Cameroun*.66

65 Gros, 6-7; Takougang, 429
66 Gros, 8
Tasked with organizing the reunification of the Cameroons, John Ngu Foncha, prime minister of British Cameroons from 1959 to 1961, and Ahidjo agreed to hold a constitutional conference at Foumban from July 17 to 21, 1961. The Foumban Conference was the very first gathering of Anglophones and Francophones to layout serious guidelines and put into place a structure of governance for the new Cameroon since the idea of reunification became a nationalist slogan in the 1940s.\textsuperscript{67} Foncha advocated for a loose federation with a British-style parliamentary system at the center, while Ahidjo proposed a highly centralized federation with a strong president at the center. Ahidjo had the upper hand in determining the outcome of this conference, especially due to French support. The merger completed on October 11, 1961 with the birth of the Federal Republic of Cameroon under a two state system: The Federated State of West Cameroon (Anglophone) and the Federated State of East Cameroon (Francophone), with Ahidjo as president and Foncha as his vice president.\textsuperscript{68} What emerged was not a true federation as envisaged by the Anglophones, but a highly centralized system of government and administration with strong executive powers.\textsuperscript{69}

This configuration established the enduring preponderance of the French neocolonial agenda in Cameroonian political affairs and economics, which unsurprisingly, given the colonially-defined cultural differences, today manifests socially as the dominance of Francophones over Anglophones and relatedly, the marginalization of Anglophones in political and economic spaces. As argued by Gros, “…the way radical nationalism was handled…has shaped politics in post-colonial Cameroon. Inflexibility, prevarication, obstruction, secrecy, and violence have been the typical responses of Cameroon’s elite to popular demand for greater

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{67} Fanso, 288-9
\item \textsuperscript{68} Susungi (1991), 72-3
\item \textsuperscript{69} Konings and Nyamnjoh (1997), 209
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
democracy, transparency, equitable wealth distribution, and independence vis-à-vis France.”

Unfortunately, the abuses of power engineered by the French and adopted by their Cameroonian allies resulted in the suppression of legitimate leaders and impeded the spread and entrenchment of radical anticolonial self-consciousness. This ultimately resulted in the creation of a nation reflective not of the interests of common men, but that of competing elites.

It is thus essential to realize that the fragmentary nature of nation-building in Cameroon derives from the manner in which the ruling class has capitalized upon the colonial identities of Cameroonians. Such behavior stems from the culture of political opportunism or “politics of the belly” that pervades the state in postcolonial Africa. Consequently, as will be demonstrated in the sections that follow, the collusion of French neocolonial interests and elite aspirations to power have led to the astute politicization of identities which has been detrimental to the social, economic and political development of the Cameroonian peoples.

**Questioning the Nation and Nationalism in Postcolonial Africa**

The nature of decolonization and the manner in which postcolonial elites have molded the nation-state, as well as the disillusionment of the masses with current socio-economic realities have created significant doubts about the viability of the concepts of nation and nationalism in Africa. As argued by Crawford Young, across the African continent, the parameters of the postcolonial state were determined by the degree of cooperation between coopted elite and departing colonial powers in planning for decolonization, the role of settler

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70 Gros, 7
71 See Bayart (1993)
communities in regulating the local economy and politics, and the availability of alternative templates for the evolution of African polities.\textsuperscript{72} These circumstances created a rocky foundation and inauthentic template for the governance of most postcolonial African polities.

With the exception of a few countries such as Algeria and Guinea-Bissau whose decolonization was defined by liberation through armed struggle, the majority of African nations won their independence through negotiations in which they in many ways conceded to continued economic and political interventions in their territories from the colonizers. Therefore, independence simply meant recognition from the international community of their territories as sovereign nation-states. However, these new states did not delink from the metropolis. Upon decolonization, most of these states elected to permanently maintain the map lines carved by colonialists as the borders of their new nation-states. In hindsight, it is quite easy to dispute the sensibility of this decision on the part of independence leaders given the observations of several scholars that the nation-state is a failed project in postcolonial Africa.\textsuperscript{73} Plausibly, it might have been better for African states to revert to their pre-colonial political entities or dissolve all the lines on the map and start anew with locally-grounded processes of identity formation and statehood. Even so, the process of reconfiguring identities and boundaries would be necessarily influenced by their colonial past. From the outset, African nationalists were cognizant of this problem: anticipating the political tensions that would arise from the colonial map of Africa, the “1945 Pan-African Congress in Manchester denounced the artificial divisions and territorial boundaries created by the Imperialist Powers” as “deliberate steps to obstruct the political unity of the West African peoples.”\textsuperscript{74} However, at the time of decolonization, independence leaders

\textsuperscript{72} Young (2012), 87
\textsuperscript{73} Cahen (1999); Ndlovu-Gatsheni et al (2013); Englebert (2009)
\textsuperscript{74} Quoted by Young, 89
were constrained in their ability to reconstruct the frontiers of African states. Because the
sovereign power of African states stemmed from an exogenous entity, namely the United
Nations, claims of colonies to the right to self-determination were structured by ‘international’
norms which preferred maintenance of the boundaries configured by colonialists. By the time
most colonies were gaining independence in the late 1950s and the 1960s, “normative discourse
became defined by states rather than political movements, raison d’état dictated the supremacy
of existing territorial divisions.”75 This is telling as to the distribution of power within the
international system, for it means that the authoritative language of the colonizer against which
the colonized fought paradoxically continued to determine the level of freedom to which
Africans could aspire. African colonies were not the authors of their independence; therefore,
with a few exceptions76, Africans were constrained to European-created structures of
international jurisprudence to which they were already subservient by default of their integration
into the international system through the colonial experience.

The momentum of nationalist movements also informed the emergence of territoriality.
The imperative to effectively break from the shackles of colonialism necessitated the “utilization
of the territorial frame within which the institutions of domination operated.”77 Therefore, the
negotiated sovereignty of postcolonial states was based on their territorial integrity, as arbitrarily
determined decades earlier by European imperialists. On the other hand, in cases where
nationalist movements were violent and threatened the ability of colonialists to negotiate the
decolonization process “the colonizer replies with the strategy of containment—respecting the

75 Young, 90
76 Ibid., 91-92
77 Ibid., 90
sovereignty of nation.” Thus, speedy independence was forced onto colonized peoples in order to prevent another Algeria. The principle of territoriality appealed to the withdrawing colonial powers as it was rooted in the bureaucratic framework of the colonial project and provided a familiar framework for neocolonial pursuits. As such, newly independent African states would face difficulties breaking loose from their colonial masters. Furthermore, the colonial partition of Africa was enshrined in 1963 with the creation of the Organization of African Unity (now the African Union) which took “a strong stand against revising borders or dividing states, in order to accommodate ‘sub-national’ claims.” Conclusively, the imperatives and rules of decolonization resulted in the emergence of territorial integrity as the defining feature of postcolonial African nationalism.

Before going further, it is instructive to consider the following question: what is a nation? The words nation, nation-state and nationalism till this point have been used unsuspiciously as though they constitute a de facto, naturally understood state of being universal to all human societies. However, the reality of postcolonial Africa informs us otherwise. Nationalism, like all other ideologies that construct the foundation upon which people’s lives are given greater meaning, is an ideology born out of the vast imaginaries of the human mind and the cultural particularities of the Europeans peoples’ imaginations. The origins of this ideology thus require critical consideration in order to understand its failures across the African continent.

What we call a nation is a political form produced by “a complex set of circumstances and purposes exclusive to Europe, and also to its American offspring.” Therefore, as Benedict

78 Fanon, 31
79 Young, 90
80 Ndlovu-Gatsheni et al, 295
81 Manent (2007), 24
Anderson argues in *Imagined Communities*, “nationality, nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind.” These concepts were developed out of social and political conditions that crystallized in Western Europe towards the end of the 18th century resulting in the creation of the nation-state as an ideological umbrella legitimizing the communalization of disparate groups and their arrangement into a single political constellation. A nation is “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.” It is limited because the “word ‘nation’ itself suggests it is first of all defined by her ‘children’ being born on her soil.” Hence, there are finite boundaries demarcating the division between her children and other members of the human race who belong to other nations. Additionally, “It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.” Therefore, as a socio-cultural concept, nationality is grounded within the particular social circumstances of the people linked to the imaginary. In their minds, they live in union with each other and experience their nation, not as an ideology but as a genuine cultural space as legitimate as kinship or religion.

Importantly, national consciousness originated in Europe at a time when the Church and its claims to universality were being questioned in the civic realm. The erosion of religious certainties required a reconceptualization of life that gave meaning to human activities on earth without seeking validation from a higher being. A series of interconnected factors such as the invention of the printing press, the Protestant Reformation, and the primacy of capitalism

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82 Anderson (1991), 4  
83 Manent, 23  
84 Ibid., 6  
85 Ibid.
culminated to define the 18th century as the age of Enlightenment and Revolution. Out of these socio-political processes, the national imagination developed as the most powerful secular tool to rationally justify political aims in the name of a people. The nation is consequently imagined as sovereign because in denying the universality of religion and accepting that people from different nations are indeed different, Europeans saw the sovereign state as the most legitimate instrument for the pursuit of their national dreams.\textsuperscript{86}

Careful reading of the origins of the nation in Europe demonstrates that the presumably authentic and purposeful development of nationalism experienced by Europeans in the 18th century was by no measure paralleled in Africa during the haphazard configuration of “nation-states” following decolonization in the mid-twentieth century. This does not imply that Africans do not exhibit any nationalist sentiments towards their states. Pertinently, the origins of a Cameroonian nation can be traced back to the emergence of Kamerunian nationalism under the oppressive experience of German rule. It can be extrapolated from Cameroon’s case that with the exception of Ethiopia, African nationalism developed in reaction to external forces of oppression rather than from the long, complex process of nation-building in Europe in which the interplay of capitalism, technology and intellectualism was essential to the emergence of nationalism. It would however be an error to discount the existence of a particular thread of nationalist consciousness in African states, for as stated by Crawford Young, “Without the popular mobilization inspired by the ideology of nationalism, independence would never have come.”\textsuperscript{87} Understanding African nationalism as born out of revolt, Fanso argues that the set of circumstances particular to Africa indicate that nationalism found in Africa is political

\textsuperscript{86} Anderson, 7
\textsuperscript{87} Young, 100
nationalism. He characterizes African nationalism as “any movement or struggle by any people as groups, or as individuals to identify with their new states or countries and to secure their freedom from alien rule or domination and decide on a scheme for their own government.” 88 Due to the nature of the nation’s conception, the groups and individuals contained within its boundaries perceive themselves as belonging to the nation irrespective of whether they share the same language, the same aspirations or have a common political character. 89 They most strongly identify with the brutality of the colonial experience.

Extrapolating from Fanso’s characterization, it can be determined that African nationalism springs from the anticolonial struggle. Unfortunately, it is yet to overcome colonialism. Its aspirations and developmental capacity have been limited by many endogenous and exogenous factors, including but not limited to territoriality, the unmitigated pluralisms within the boundaries of postcolonial states, and inadequate economic development. The concepts of nation and nationalism are problematic in Africa not because the ideology is utterly relativist. On the contrary, Anderson speaks to the durability and universal viability of these concepts, arguing that “once created they became ‘modular,’ capable of being transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to a great variety of social terrains, to merge and be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations.” 90 The problems of the postcolonial nation-state lie in the fact that the conditions co-created by the departing colonial administration and the new African elite were not ideal for the blossoming of nationalism in Africa.

88 Fanso, 283
89 Ibid.
90 Anderson, 4
In comparing postcolonial Africa to Enlightenment Europe, it is evident that many preconditions necessary for the nation-state to develop as domestically legitimate and with an accountable framework for governance were lacking in Africa. While nationalism is considered a modular ideology that can be transplanted into different cultural environments, the historical circumstances were not ideal for the transplantation of this particular cultural artefact to the African continent. The transformative socio-cultural processes were dissimilar. Firstly, while societies in Europe were reconstructing their conceptualization of the self to encompass a larger community of peoples, drawing closer those who live faraway and weakening the grasp of localism; under over six decades of colonial subjugation, the local identities of Africans became more entrenched through the divisive tactics used by colonial administrators to force Africans to compete against each other for the crumbs of the parasitic capitalist machine. The African peoples were subjugated and commoditized to the extent that they misplaced their sense of self and faced the destruction of local socio-cultural constructs that regulated and gave meaning to their existence in the pre-colonial era. Under colonial domination, with the external alteration of their personhood, Africans looked for validation of their humanity not from the self or their neighbors near and far, but from the colonial master who had turned their labor into a commodity.

Secondly, European nationalism is grounded in the belief that human beings have the agency to shape and define their environment. In this construct, a community of people, not superhuman forces, define reality. Europeans were able to arrive at this stage because their social environment encouraged critical public discourse, and the spread of ideas was facilitated by the printing press, which traversed regional frontiers and allowed for events transpiring in one

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91 Manent, 29
locality to be common knowledge in another. Such human agency was never permissible for the African peoples prior to independence. As illustrated with the case of Cameroon, the colonial administration by all means curtailed anticolonial political movements from gaining widespread following and influence. By pauperizing Western-educated African elite, they purposely prevented true nationalist consciousness from taking root. Africans also lacked the technologies that enabled the spread of knowledge to vast and remote areas across the continent. The production and spread of knowledge was critical to developing a community with common ideals and aspirations in European nations. In Africa, severe limitations on the spread of such news were erected by colonialists out of fear that revolutionary violence would dissolve the colonial regime. Continuing into the 21st century, Africans have not succeeded in molding a transformative self-consciousness that breaks from the antinationalist structures of colonialism. Instead, locally credible attempts to create a nation-state responsive to the needs of Africans are continually circumscribed by the neocolonial manipulation of African states.

Lastly, the economic preconditions for the development of the nation-state in Europe were and continue to be mostly absent in Africa. Capitalism arose from a distinct set of social, cultural, economic, technological, and legal conditions that crystallized in Europe during in the 18th century. It is crucial to recognize the fundamental changes in man’s conception of himself, his relation to property and the relations of production which led to the Industrial Revolution were not realized out of a natural process, but through, “a long and arduous process of education.” The political theories developed during this age help elucidate the processes through which the preconditions for the birth of nationalism in Europe were realized. Critically, John Locke’s Second Treatise of Government elucidates the Western understanding of modern

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92 Weber (1930), 15
man upon which capitalism is predicated. According to Locke, reason is the law in the state of nature which dictates man to act in his self-interest. Locke states that all men are in a state of equality “wherein all the power and jurisdiction is equal, no one having more than another…that creatures of the same species and rank, promiscuously born to all the same advantages of nature, and the use of faculties, should also be equal one amongst another without subordination or subjection…” Because all human beings are purported to be born into the same conditions, no one can claim authority over another. Man has only the right to exercise authority over himself because “everyman has a property in his own person.” Deriving from this intricate combination of reason, the supposed equality of men became normalized in Europe. Also, man’s supposed possession of property in himself propelled him to improve his conditions by mixing his labor with land, thereby transforming the land from its original state to a profitable possession. Max Weber’s The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism demonstrates the means through which the spirit of capitalism was invoked in citizens. Weber argues that the development of capitalism in the West was a very calculated ideological process through which politically influential personalities were able to effect monumental changes in the conduct of individuals, eventually culminating in gravitational economic and political alterations in the functioning of Western societies. Through the Protestant Reformation, labor moved from being performed as a means to an end, to being performed as an absolute end in itself—a calling. Similarly, in The Great Transformations, Karl Polanyi demonstrates through a series of historical analyses, the stages through which the land and labor were subjected to the needs of the industrial society.

93 Locke (1980), 8
94 Ibid., 15
95 Ibid., 19
These texts demonstrate the complexity of the sociopolitical processes through which the particular cultural artefacts that make up the body of the modern nation-state were birthed.

A mere glance at the condition of African polities since independence quickly reveals the disparities in the character of the African nation-state as compared to its European counterparts. More importantly, the very existence of colonialism signifies that the rights of particular kinds of people were not natural and inalienable as claimed by Locke. Evidently, Africans and other “less developed” peoples were not seen as “creatures of the same species and rank.” To justify the rational, self-interested pursuits of Europeans, Africans were stripped of their humanity. Africans became barbarians who needed to be “modernized” by White Saviors. Irrespective of whether precolonial African philosophies conceptualized Africans as possessing property in themselves, the ideals of self that might have informed the natural development of African societies were violated by the colonial experience which entailed the dispossession of their personhood. Africa’s lands were developed by colonialists not for the purpose of national development, but to fuel the capitalist engine propelling the development of Europe’s new political and economic landscape. For over a century, Africans have been manipulated to respond to the needs of the world capitalist economy, which has not only exploited their lands and resources, but their labor and minds. Africans do not have full autonomy over their economic resources; hence, while the continent possesses most of the world’s resources, it has not been able to exploit them for the proper benefit of its own peoples. Today, the flow of resources remains the same—“We continue to ship raw materials, we continue to grow produce for Europe and pass for specialists of unfinished products.” The postcolonial elite have not invested in the development of local industries, and their Western allies are quite content with
the preservation of Africa “as a conveyor belt for capitalism…” 96 In the aftermath of independence, Africa remains steeped in the currents of an extractive world economy.

As it stands, Africans do not share the same or similar imaginaries and experiences that allowed for the development of the nation-state in Europe. Despite the historical misfortunes of the continent and the failure of authoritarian African regimes since independence to promote national unity, guarantee human rights and foster economic development97, Africans have become more attached to the postcolonial state with the passing of time. Young believes a significant explanation for the persistence of the postcolonial state lies in “the crystallization of a territorial attachment that belongs to the ideological genus of nationalism.”98 Therefore, these states continue to exist because their citizenry prefer that they do. It should be added that nationalism has been strengthened by the statist system of the international order. Once self-determination is achieved, with a few exceptions, the international community does not allow for the borders of states to be revised. As expressed by Ndlovu-Gatsheni et al, “International law recognizes no ‘right to self-determination’ for the purpose of unilateral secession from an existing nation-state.”99 Therefore, citizens of these states are limited in the actions they can feasibly undertake to guarantee their rights. Recognizing the constraints on their agency, the masses more so aspire to make governments responsive to their socio-economic and political needs.

Problematically, the locally-rooted national imaginaries inspired by liberation movements have been corrupted by the very forces of colonialism and the aspiration of African elites to the

96 Fanon, 100
97 Ndlovu-Gatsheni et al, 299
98 Young, 299
99 Ndlovu-Gatsheni et al, 294
personal privileges of power. Additionally, one of the key domestic factors inhibiting the desire of many Africans to achieve national integration within territorial outlines of their sovereign states is the lack of credible commitment from national leaders to address the deep issues that stem from the cultural plurality of African polities. The lack of common language and common ethnic identity are obstacles to national unity; however, cultural plurality is not necessarily inimical to nationalism. The greatest obstacle to the development of nationalism in postcolonial Africa is that these states built on colonial architecture “were not also designed to address the second phase of National Liberation that is to create a people who are not divided or excluded by colour, ethno-linguistic origin, linguistic characteristics, religion or gender.” The radical nationalists who fought for independence were excluded from government, while politicians sympathetic to the neocolonial ploys of departing colonizers and possessing no intentions to fulfill the promises of the nationalist struggle were strategically placed into positions of power. Indisputably, the ruling elite of the postcolonial state has mostly succeeded in perpetuating the suffering of their populations at large by colluding with colonizers to pursue their self-interested aims. Samuel Moyn argues that Western-educated African elite such as Senegalese politicians Mamadou Dia and Leopold Senghor “understood that the result of nationalism would be to sever the old colonies from the wealthy metropole and leave them free and sovereign but poor and isolated. So they entertained various schemes and experimented with different visions of federalism that would preserve the relationship of the old imperial territories with metropolitan France…” This calculus on the part of Senegalese postcolonial leaders can be extended to the larger pool of African leaders since the dawn of independence. Modes of governance based on personal rule, patronage, ethnic alliances, and violence are dominant in Africa. Rather than foster

100 Ibid., 301
101 Moyn (2015), 147
equitable national development, the sovereign power of the state has been used to extract resources to sustain the lavish lifestyles of “Big Men.”

To an observable degree, in articulating and implementing political aims on behalf of the nation, “Europeans have made the nation and state coterminous and there is an enduring desire of African leaders to likewise foster national imaginary.”\textsuperscript{102} However, in the hands of African politicians, nationalism has become rhetoric used to legitimize illegitimate state actions under the pretext of fostering nation unity and development. The selfish aspirations of the elite, upheld by the global neoliberal agenda override the imperative to resolve cultural issues, foster equitable economic development, and promote an open political atmosphere. The challenge of nation-building in Africa lies in deconstructing the international and domestic power structures that legitimize and perpetuate the paradoxes of the postcolonial nation-state.

**Cameroon: An Examination of ‘National’ Development in a Fractured Polity**

Cameroon’s historical experience and the abusive use of power by its post-independence leadership have resulted in its current crisis of legitimacy. Following over fifty years of renewed manipulation along ethnic, regional, and linguistic lines, the citizenry—both Anglophone and Francophone—have become disillusioned with the Cameroonian nation-state. As with many African states, already in a state of fragility upon independence, the ‘nation’ has been multiply fractured due to the intentional cultivation of a postcolonial ruling class more responsive to the neocolonial agenda of departing colonialists than to the needs of its domestic constituency; the concurrent desire of national leaders to consolidate power in order to enjoy the fringe benefits of

\textsuperscript{102} Gros, 87
the destructive global capitalist system in which Africa is deeply enmeshed; and lastly, the willingness of regional elite to be coopted into the circles of the clientelistic state. Resultant is the use of state power to support the selfish pursuits of politicians, often to the detriment of neglected groups. In the Cameroonian polity, this behavior has entailed the extensive politicization of identities as a means of excluding some from sharing in the limited economic resources of the state. Pertinently, the marginalization of Anglophones with respect to culture, politics, and economics has given rise to the “Anglophone problem,” described by Piet Konings and Francis Nyamnjoh as the rise of Anglophone nationalism due to feelings of marginalization by the Francophone-dominated state. While the perceived marginalization of Anglophones in certain spaces is a legitimate problem, one must exercise caution in determining the roots, hence its solutions. As such, it is important to note that yet on the basis of identity, Anglophone elites and other identity groups have sometimes cajoled or threatened the ruling regime through tactics of their own in order to gain access to the sovereign power of the state, which they subsequently use at the regional level to exert local command and extract economic resources for the maintenance of their own patronage networks.

The development or perhaps underdevelopment of the nation and nationalism in Cameroon is deeply marred by a plethora of contradictions and misuses of authority, such that one must wonder whether this ‘nation’ remains but a mere ideology, a figment of political imagination. Michel Cahen’s assertion that “the state does not create the nation” should be taken seriously, particularly in consideration of current realities in Cameroon and other postcolonial African nation-states. However, given the historical circumstances leading the

103 Konings and Nyamnjoh
104 Ibid., 207
105 Cahen, 151 (translated from French)
construction of these nation-states, and the external structures reinforcing their continued existence, we must be realistic in our assessment of the postcolonial nation-state and accordingly, propose attainable alternatives to the deplorable state of affairs. Entertaining the fantasy that at this stage in world history, all fifty-four African states could dissolve themselves and go through the slow process of reconfiguring their boundaries based on locally legitimate ethnic and linguistic lines is an unfeasible ideal. With particular attention to Cameroon, I plan to elucidate the impediments to nation-building in African polities by locating the failures in their socio-political and historical context. The analysis that follows seeks demonstrate that the skillful use of power by political elite is at the crux of national fragmentation in Cameroon. Therefore, Cameroonians and Africans at large must not primarily focus on secessionist manifestations; rather they must challenge the arbitrarily derived power of the state and stop the illegitimate uses of state power to undermine the aspirations of the masses.

Cameroon’s current predicament stems from the manner in which the nation-state was formed. Because the process was externally determined, not locally cultivated, departing colonialists implanted an elite governing class that was not invested in working with the common people to build the state and shape it to serve local needs and values. Their “love and taste for high standards and luxurious life-style, which mimicked the colonial masters…” and “direct ‘importation’ of European political systems with non-equivalent socioeconomic and cultural conformity to African realities” came at a high cost to the masses. As Joy Asongazoh Alemazung argues, new “class colonialism” was simply the replacement of white administrators with black elite. This predicament has had significant and lasting consequences for the

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106 Alemazung (2013), 55-56
107 Ibid, 55
Cameroonian state, particularly in light of its ties to France, which have endured into the 21st century. It is therefore instructive to examine more closely the final stages of decolonization as a point of entry into the woes of national development in Cameroon since independence.

Given the circumstances surrounding the construction of the Cameroonian nation, there were consequential divergences in the cultural and political development of the two colonial territories that today compose the Republic of Cameroon. Under British rule, Anglophones progressed towards the nationalist ideal in a much different manner. Neglect of the British West Cameroons by its colonizers was an asset for its social development as compared to the experience of people in French East Cameroun. They experienced more freedom in identity formation, as they were not forced to assimilate into the British national imaginary and made significant progress towards self-governance prior to independence. Southern Cameroonian had never seen themselves as “Nigerian” even after decades of being governed as a part of Nigeria. There were profound ethnic differences between the people of Southern Cameroon and their neighbors in the eastern region of Nigeria. Additionally, their previously developed Kamerunian identity was a more salient part their being, thus Anglophone nationalists fought to assert their identity and separate from Nigeria. In 1954, British West Cameroons was accorded quasi-regional status, but British Northern and Southern Cameroons were never combined into a single administrative unit. Many Anglophone nationalists strove for both the British and French Cameroons to be reunited as before the partition of 1916. However, reunification was a contentious idea, as in the 1950s a political struggle unfolded between the two major parties in the British Cameroons. The Southwest based Kamerun National Congress (KNC) led by

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108 Fanso, 285
109 Susungi, 58
110 Ibid.
Emmanuel Endeley and the Northwest based Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP) led by John Ngu Foncha envisaged different political futures for the British Cameroons. At the outset, Endeley joined John Ngu Foncha to form the KNC, advocating autonomy for the British Cameroons and reunification with French Cameroun. Later however, Endeley changed his political views, advocating integration with Nigeria as it would grant Cameroonian self-rule without having to undergo the violence of guerilla movements in French Cameroun. In reaction, Foncha broke from KNC to form KNDP, championing the cause of secession from Nigeria and eventual reunification with la République du Cameroun.\(^\text{111}\) Given the competing viewpoints on the nature of independence, the authenticity of the reunification idea can be questioned for it at times seemed to be more of a strategic maneuver for both Anglophones and Francophones to achieve their separate goals by overpowering the colonialists. According to Richard Joseph, referring to the submission of memoranda by the UPC and CNF (Endeley’s party) to the UN in 1949 demanding reunification of the two Cameroons, the idea of reunification was used at this time as a strategic means to achieve the goal of each party; respectively establishing the British Cameroons as the autonomous region of Southern Cameroons and gaining independence for French Cameroun.\(^\text{112}\) Therefore, given the political dynamisms of these negotiations, it is fair to enquire whether there was a genuine desire among the publics of the two Cameroons to reunify. It seems however that out of the violence of UPCs radical nationalism, which as earlier noted received widespread adherence and sympathy in both Cameroons, a true sense of national consciousness was taking root among Cameroonian.

\(^{111}\) Konings and Nyamnjoh, 211  
\(^{112}\) Joseph, 189
Problematically, however, the real impact of that nationalist spirit will never be clear because the UN organized plebiscites in 1959 did not give Anglophones the full opportunity to determine their faith. Deriving from the international community’s assessment that Anglophone independence was not a viable option, the British Camerons were not given the option to establish their region as a nation independent from both Nigeria and French Cameroun. This was also the fault of the Anglophone politicians who could not arrive at a consensus on the territory’s future. The conflict between the parties of Endeley and Foncha continued into the eve of the UN plebiscite. As argued by Joseph Takougang, “rather than clearly articulating an agenda that was critical to the political stability and economic prosperity of the territory, each party focused on the campaign issue that it thought would give it the political advantage and opportunity to control the instruments of power at independence.”

Hence, the Anglophone consciousness and culture developed under British rule did not materialize into its own nation-state. History has it that Northern Cameroon voted to unify with Nigeria and Southern Cameroon voted to reunify with French Cameroun. Hence, on October 11, 1961 the Federal Republic of Cameroon was born.

The state in Cameroon had in fact preceded the nation: the two were certainly not synonymous. According to Erika Harris, “The state is a legal concept; it describes a definite territory and denotes the aggregation of political and administrative institutions.” To make the state coterminous with the nation, Pierre Manent argues “The specific work of the nation is to join and as it were to fuse the brute fact of birth with the free adhesion of the heart and mind.”

To achieve this ideal, the task of post-independence leadership in Cameroon was (and remains)

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113 Takougang, 433
114 Harris (2009), 13
115 Manent, 23
“to render the boundaries of the nation congruent with those of its governance unit.”\textsuperscript{116} However, it was only a matter of time before the post-independence leaders of Cameroon would reveal themselves to be crooks more interested in maintaining ties to the metropolis than building national culture.

Barely seven months after Ahidjo became prime minister of pre-independence Cameroun, in September 1958, UPC leader Reuben Um Nyobe was murdered by a government patrol in a hideout near his village. Traumatized and discouraged by the granting of power to the Ahidjo government and the slaughter of their leader, by the end of that month more than 3000 guerrillas laid down their arms and accepted a government amnesty. A number of these UPC militants known as the rallié upicistes, notably Theodore Mayi Matip, Nyobe’s former lieutenant, were allowed to run for election to the Cameroun Assembly. This marked the first time that UPC was allowed entry into formal political processes in Cameroun. This turn of events caused a division of the UPC into legal (coopted) and illegal (violent) sections, the latter of which was led by Felix-Roland Moumie. Much like his predecessor, Moumie was assassinated by French agents in Switzerland in 1960.\textsuperscript{117} As expressed by Fanso, “The irony had taken place: those who had fought and shed blood for independence were out; those who least expected to be in power had achieved it and were in.”\textsuperscript{118} Cameroon’s post-independence leaders traded total independence for neocolonialism. Henceforth those who continued to fight against French domination and the Government, “as factions of the UPC did for many years, would be regarded and treated as terrorists and enemies of the country rather than as nationalists fighting

\textsuperscript{116} Harris, 5
\textsuperscript{117} Joseph, 344; Fanso, 288
\textsuperscript{118} Fanso, 289
for the liberation of their country.”\textsuperscript{119} The possibility of deriving a positive outcome from the burden of colonialism by attempting to make the nation congruent with the state was sabotaged from the outset by elite whose minds were in Europe even while their feet stood on African grounds.

Many of the cultural problems that have persistently confronted the Cameroonian ‘nation’ presented themselves early on at the Foumban Conference in 1961. The radical nationalists who would have clarified the nationalist aspirations of the two groups were missing. Language, the greatest unifying element among people, was a crucial part of understanding missing at this gathering of Anglophones and Francophones leaders. Hence the validity of questioning whether the two groups in fact understood what they each meant by reunification and independence.\textsuperscript{120} From a linguistic and anthropological perspective, language is one of the most crucial determinants of thought, and words are not transparent even to the native speaker. Further, words do not have the same meaning or connotations across languages. The language barrier posed difficulties at the conference because the two delegations could not engage in direct dialogue with each other. They had to rely on a translator to interpret French and English texts.\textsuperscript{121} Evidently, there were linguistic barriers to constructing a governance structure and plan for nation-building amenable to both Anglophones and Francophones.

As previously mentioned, by virtue of their different colonial experiences, Foncha’s and Ahidjo’s delegations aspired to different modes of government. In 1954 the British government granted the Southern Cameroons a limited degree of self-governance by granting the region its

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 292
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., 291
own legislature (the House of Assembly) separate from the Federation of Nigeria. By 1957, the elected membership to the House of Assembly had climbed from 13 to 26. The House of Chiefs contributed to decision-making in the Assembly by considering proposed legislation and forwarding their resolutions to the House of Assembly. As stated by N.N. Susungi, the House of Chiefs came out of recognition of the important role traditional rulers played in grassroots governance. The opening of political decision-making to Africans in the British Cameroons was markedly different from the direction of political development in French Cameroun. Starting in 1946, the French had rather sought to incorporate Camerounians into the French Republic by allowing the meager representation of one or two hand-picked leaders in the French National Assembly. Due to their political experience, French Camerounians did not have exposure to meaningful popular representation in law-making. Pressures for popular representation took root in the UPC movement; however, as earlier examined, the UPC was brutally repressed by French authorities.

The fundamental obstacle however was not the existence of these cultural differences, but how the differences were mitigated, if at all. At independence, the bargaining power on the terms of the constitution was in favor of Ahidjo’s delegation, as most clearly reflected by the minority status of Anglophones in terms of size and population. The Anglophone region comprised only nine percent of the total area and about a quarter of the total population of the Federal Republic of Cameroon. The Anglophone delegation arrived at the conference with a loose set of ideas for the constitution and unprepared to strategically negotiate against Ahidjo. By then, Ahidjo had already consolidated enough power in his year as president to manipulate

\[122\] Susungi, 59-60
\[123\] Ibid., 60
\[124\] Konings and Nyamnjoh, 209
the political process to his advantage through unrestrained use of his presidential powers. Ahidjo came not to collaborate, but to impose his vision of Cameroon’s future. His proposals derived from the 1960 constitution voted on by Eastern Camerounians which was modeled after the French Fifth Republic. This Gaullist-style constitution was characterized by a strong executive and a weak legislature.\textsuperscript{125} Since Ahidjo sought to maintain a very centralized government, he was not keen on allowing the constitution go back to voters in West Cameroon because he anticipated the Anglophones would ally with the Bamilékés and upset the political balance which was necessary for him to maintain power.\textsuperscript{126} Therefore, Ahidjo aimed to arrive at an affirmative decision at the constitutional conference. With Anglophones unable to negotiate on equal footing, the federal constitution of 1961 “provided Ahidjo with even more power and authority than the 1960 constitution of La Republique du Cameroun had given him, thereby handing him the opportunity to create single-handedly the Cameroon he envisioned.”\textsuperscript{127}

The Foumban constitution divided power among a federal president, vice president, ministries, a national assembly and a judiciary.\textsuperscript{128} As Prime Minister of West Cameroon, Foncha retained as much autonomy as he could for the region. However, his clout in the administration would diminish as Ahidjo continued to amass power. The constitution also enshrined bilingualism to express that French and English would be recognized as official languages in Cameroon. Federalism, while ideally adopted to preserve the bi-cultural nature of the nation and to grant both linguistic groups equal representation in political decision-making, did not come to fruition in Cameroon. Ahidjo used the ongoing UPC ‘insurgency’ as a bargaining chip to

\textsuperscript{125} Takougang, 431  
\textsuperscript{126} Susungi, 71  
\textsuperscript{127} Takougang, 434  
\textsuperscript{128} Gros, 64
demand more executive powers within the federal system. What actually emerged from the constitutional conference was a strong presidency based in Yaoundé. Ahidjo would make use of his constitutional powers to coopt his political friends and enemies into the clientele state, reign in his opposition by extending his patron-client distribution network, and at times eliminate his opposition through the use of force.

Certainly, the decision on the part of Ahidjo to essentially import France’s constitution without local adaptation was purposeful and strategic. It’s important to re-iterate that many of Cameroon’s post-independence leaders were not convicted nationalists; they were opportunists interested in creating institutions from which they could benefit. The constitution was the highest formal institution, but adherence to the rights which it accorded Anglophones was contingent on the willingness of the executive to build an equitable society. Institutional means would be used by Ahidjo and his successor (Paul Biya) to “perpetuate the hegemony of Francophone over Anglophone Cameroonians” in order to consolidate power. In the subsections below, I will examine the political development of Cameroon since the adoption of the Foumban constitution in 1961 and dissect the barriers to nationalism by looking intently at the politics of language and identity, patronage, political exclusion, and economic marginalization.

Language, Bilingualism, and Barriers to Socio-Economic Mobility

Officially, Cameroon is a bilingual country, but one can plausibly make the argument that it is for all public purposes a monolingual nation. Bilingualism was enshrined into the
Constitution of Cameroon on September 1, 1961, which recognized English and French as official languages of the state, according them equal status in every sphere of national life. Constitutions recognition of both languages implies that Cameroon’s post-independence leaders were invested in truly integrating the two cultural and linguistic groups that had elected to unify as one state. Hence, while all Cameroonians would not speak a common national language, they could construct a common political character through mutual respect for each other’s identities.

The emotional connection of citizens to the official languages is vital to our discussion of nationalism in Cameroon because language is at the center of Cameroon’s identity crisis. More than any other factor, the “linguistic groups have ended up identifying themselves with the two European languages so much that the relationship between the two languages has become a source of both linguistic and political conflict.” Cameroon is a diverse country with approximately 250 ethnic groups and indigenous languages. However, socially and politically, the official languages are more prestigious and most widely used across the country. Due to the fact that no indigenous language has a large enough population of speakers or is powerful enough to impose its language throughout the country, indigenous languages have never played any significant role in issues of national identity. The most widely spoken languages in Cameroon are English, French, and Pidgin English. As earlier discussed, Pidgin English was the lingua franca in Cameroon prior to the arrival of the Germans, not only in the coastal areas but also in the hinterland. Under German rule the popularity of Pidgin English increased widely. The popular status of this language however ceased with the arrival French colonial rule and its

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131 Tande (2009), 3
132 Simpson, 200
133 Minority Rights Group International
134 Simpson, 201-202
accompanying assimilation project. The French colonial administration promoted the learning of the French language as early as primarily school, and rewarded the adoption of French culture by Africans. Under the policy of assimilation, the use of Pidgin English was banned in French Cameroun. Plausibly, the French saw British influence, in any form, within their territory, as a threat to their colonial project and the consolidation of the French colonial empire in Africa. The British on the other hand did not push the West Cameroons to assimilate to British culture in such a forceful manner. Although Standard English was the language of instruction in schools, Pidgin English was not banned. Having already recognized the importance of language in building nationalism, one observes that by the time of independence, the divergent language policies in the two territories eroded the common linguistic grounds upon which Anglophones and Francophones could have identified. This is one of the legacies of colonialism that has considerably shaped the political sphere and delineated “acceptable” public culture in the postcolonial state, often to the detriment of the minority linguistic group.

Given the contentious nature of national identity, President Ahmadou Ahido publically reaffirmed the importance of bilingualism in Cameroon in his 1987 speech in which he stated the following:

Bilingualism, which is guaranteed by the constitution, and which I am personally committed to develop, is an original aspect of our national responsibility. This being so it is our duty to preserve it in our desire to maintain national unity. It should therefore be unequivocally stated that, if national unity has to be achieved with due consideration for the diversities which enrich our national personality, there is no doubt that we must

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135 Ibid, 202
discard any sectarian feelings whether regional or linguistic. In fact, our aim is not to juxtapose cultures but to give birth to an authentic Cameroonian culture, based on our past heritage.\textsuperscript{136}

Ahidjo’s statement on national bilingualism is quite eloquent and certainly captivating to the heart and minds of the minority. The masses sensed from the national leader a desire to foster a national culture reflective of the great diversity of the Cameroonian nation and equally representative of its dual colonial heritage. Unfortunately, however, the official policy of bilingualism has not been translated into the lived experience of Cameroonians and political rhetoric, as exemplified above, is the extent to which the notion of bilingualism reaches at the national level. Reluctance or disinterest on the part of the Francophone-dominated state has precluded effective implementation of this policy.

The demographic imbalance and lack of state commitment to realizing bilingualism has led to the cultural dominance of Francophones over Anglophones. Public space is more occupied by the French language than by the English language. For example, 90 percent of print media is in French; 65 percent of radio and TV programs are produced in French and 35 percent in English.\textsuperscript{137} Writing in 2006, Cameroonian blogger Dibussi Tande complained of the absence of a fully bilingual website for the Presidency of the Republic.\textsuperscript{138} Furthermore, government publications are not always translated into English, and when translated they are performed in a careless manner, sometimes rendering the translations inaccurate or incomprehensible. According to Tande, many Francophone government officials demonstrate a blasé attitude

\textsuperscript{136} Atechi (2015), 77  
\textsuperscript{137} Simpson, 199  
\textsuperscript{138} Tande, 3
towards their negligence of Anglophones and linguistic infractions. For example, in response to complaints about the translation of a government-sponsored clean-up campaign slogan originally written in French and inaccurately translated into English in the 1990s, Yaoundé Urban Council officials simply said: “le message passe quand même.” The unwillingness of government officials to make greater efforts to integrate English into public space is obstructive. The domination of the French language in Cameroon is to a certain extent unavoidable because 80 percent of the population in contained in French-speaking provinces, while native English-speakers only comprise 20 percent of the population. This could however be rectified with concerted efforts by the government to make bilingualism a reality of national life.

The above examples detailing the dominance of French in public space demonstrate that official language policy has not positively transformed the daily lives of Cameroonians. Anglophones are more exposed to French than Francophones are exposed to English in the public space. Anglophones are thus better able to communicate in French than Francophones can communicate in English. To be a civil servant in Cameroon it is an absolute requirement that one possesses the ability to communicate fluently in French; however, the opposite stipulation does not apply with regards to English. English is often regarded by Francophones in the administration as a nuisance. Government officials in English-speaking regions barely make an effort to speak English, while their Anglophone counterparts in French-speaking regions tend to demonstrate complete command of the French language. This is telling as to the distribution of political power in Cameroon, for it renders quite visible which group possesses more power to shape the social and political realms. The larger implication of the difference in bilingual

\[^{139}\text{Ibid.}\]
\[^{140}\text{Simpson, 199}\]
knowledge is that Francophones are not compelled to learn English; therefore, they do not come to equally value Anglophone culture and its contributions to the nation-state.

The unequal status of language and identity in Cameroon has significant implications for the educational, economic, and political endeavors of citizens. It has structured access to opportunities in a manner that has often prevented Anglophones from accessing privileged positions in the state, the military, institutions of higher education, and other formal economic opportunities. The dominance of French in the political and economic landscape is especially telling with regard to entry into the civil service and the military. French is the medium of instruction at l’Ecole Normale d’Administration et de Magistrature (ENAM) and at l’Ecole Ministère Interarmées (EMIA)—institutions at which all of the nation’s civil servants and military personnel are trained.¹⁴¹ In order to enter into these schools, aspirants have to be well versed in French as the examinations are set in French and then translated into deplorable English.¹⁴² Even if an applicant could manage to pass the exam by taking the English version, it would be nearly impossible to learn the material once enrolled since the curriculum is mostly in French.

The dominance of French at the administrative and military levels has filtered into all levels of society, particularly education. Over the decades, parents of Anglophone children have been forced to send their children to French-medium schools so they could compete on equal grounds with their Francophone peers for opportunities in the public and private sectors, as well as simply to prevent their children from encountering linguistic barriers to learning at the university level. Problematically, Anglophone regions and Francophone regions have maintained

¹⁴¹ Atechi, 80
¹⁴² Simpson, 209
distinct systems of education at the primary and secondary levels, styled after those of their colonial masters. However, at the tertiary level, English and French identities are brought together under one educational system that favors the French language. Until 1992, the only state university in the country was the University of Yaoundé, where 99 percent of the courses were taught in French. The only courses taught in English were those in the Department of English. During the 1990s when the country was experiencing severe economic downturns, some elements of the language policy were implemented. Thus in 1992, University of Buea, located in the Southwest province, was inaugurated as the first English-medium institution of higher education in the country. While this signaled progress towards bilingualism, it is a minor accomplishment when examined in light of the overall economic and political configuration of the country along linguistic lines. The educational system continues to be biased towards the French language. Therefore, while more English-medium vocational schools and private universities have been erected since the 1990s, public educational institutions are still dominated by French. The most challenging aspect of the bilingual education is the failure to integrate the British and French-derived educational systems and make out of them something more applicable to the Cameroonian circumstance. Putting aside the fact that it is professionally advantageous for Cameroonians to possess multilingual abilities in order to compete for career opportunities on a global scale; it is imperative for Cameroonians to possess the ability to fluently communicate with each other in both national languages. The failure of bilingual policy to translate into the lived experience of Cameroonians is rooted in educational systems, on both the Anglophone and Francophone sides, that preach particularism rather than multiculturalism. Speaking from personal experience, while attending a ‘bilingual’ primary school in Buea,

\footnote{Atechi, 81}
Cameroon, all courses other than French were taught in English. The opposite would be true for students who attend ‘bilingual’ schools in French-speaking regions. Students are not taught to express themselves fluently in subjects as varied as history, philosophy, and politics using both national languages. By the time they arrive at the tertiary level of education, their understandings of these subjects and perspective on education have been so heavily shaped by their primary language of instruction that they face extreme difficulties integrating themselves into spaces where the language of instruction is unfamiliar.

The reality of ‘bilingualism’ in Cameroon is exemplified by an article from The Post newspaper referenced by Tande entitled “French Frustrates ASMAC Anglophone Students.” The article discusses the plight of English-speaking students attending the Advanced School of Mass Communications at the University of Yaoundé. According to The Post, “‘Only 3 of the 42 permanent lecturers in the Advanced School of Mass Communication, ASMAC, are of English expression. Over the years, English-speaking students in ASMAC just like other higher education institutions in Yaoundé receive lectures almost exclusively in French.’”¹⁴⁴ As such, the practice of monolingualism is a learning barrier for Anglophones whose prior educational experiences have been almost exclusively in English. As Tande argues, this situation is illustrative of the fact that official bilingualism in Cameroon ends at political theory. He states that this is the “real Cameroon” where English-speaking Cameroonians are “treated like inconvenient step-children who are barely tolerated.”¹⁴⁵

Returning to Ahijo’s statement on the importance of bilingualism, it should be clear that the “commitment” of politicians to change the circumstances surrounding language in Cameroon

¹⁴⁴ Tande, 3
¹⁴⁵ Ibid.
is artificial. As has been demonstrated, language has become a tool for exclusion across different spheres of life. The privileged position of the French and the abhorred presence of English have erected mental barriers to the creation of a linguistically integrated educational system. If language were not politicized people would not harbor feelings of resentment towards their second language. Instead, they would regard the bicultural status of the country as socially enriching and economically beneficial. As advanced by Tande, “The simple truth is that as much as Cameroonians obsess about national unity and nationhood, those in charge rarely go out of their way to ensure that the political clichés become reality…”146 Conclusively, national leaders have not used the tools at their disposal to foster an environment of inclusivity. However, the dominance of French, if properly addressed in educational, political, and economic strata by the government could mitigate feelings of cultural marginalization on the part of Anglophones.

Economic Marginalization

At the inception of the Federal Republic of Cameroon, biculturalism and bilingualism were officially affirmed as principles of the Cameroonian people in order to facilitate the socio-economic integration of the two linguistic groups.147 However, following decades of rule under Francophone-dominated regimes, Anglophones have often been economically marginalized within an environment that has continually favored Francophones. Francophone interests have often overridden those of their Anglophone counterparts, leading to unbalanced regional development.

146 Ibid
147 Ibid
Ahidjo’s political rhetoric was grounded in the ideology of nation-building. He claimed that the unitary state would promote balanced development by erasing the ethnic, linguistic and regional divisions engendered by political parties. An assessment of economic development across the different regions of Cameroon suggests the opposite has occurred. The English-speaking parts of Cameroon contribute 70 percent of the country’s natural resources.\textsuperscript{148} In addition, 40 percent of Cameroon’s foreign exchange earning comes from the Southwest, but the province has not been allowed to flourish.\textsuperscript{149} The wealth of the western provinces should come as no surprise: a review of the partition of territory between Britain and France shows that Britain possessed the territory with the most resources. However, the post-independence governments have not significantly invested in the infrastructural development of Anglophone provinces. With the transition to the unitary state in 1972, all customs clearing agencies in the Tiko and Victoria\textsuperscript{150} seaports developed under British rule were moved to the Douala riverport. The state also moved the Mamfe riverport to Kribi, Campo, and the Garoua riverports. Hence in a short period of time economic infrastructure was moved from West Cameroon to East Cameroun. The Tiko, Victoria, and Mamfe ports had played vital roles in the export of crops such as cocoa, palm oil, palm kernel and timber by the National Produce Marketing Board (NPMB). Tiko and Victoria were also essential to the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) for the export of produce such as tea, banana, rubber, palm oil and palm kernel. Instead of exporting CDC cash crops through the Tiko and Limbe ports which were closest to the plantations, the government determined that CDC crops would be exported through the Douala port. This economically unsound decision on the part of the government is problematic because not only was the Douala

\textsuperscript{148} Susungi, 93
\textsuperscript{149} Gros, 82
\textsuperscript{150} Note: Victoria and Limbe are used interchangeably in this paper
riverport farther than those in the Southwest, it is 50 kilometers from the Atlantic Ocean and has spots that must be dredged to enable merchant ships to reach Douala. Presumably, in order to take economic power out of Anglophone hands, the government preferred to spend millions of francs dredging the Douala port yearly. In assessing this situation, it is important to make note of the fact that Douala has historically served as the entry point to Cameroon and neighboring central African countries. Prior to the arrival of Germans, the Duala people established trading relations with the British at the port of Douala. Also, the establishment of Douala as the main center of economic activity during French colonial rule predisposed the post-colonial administration to preserve Douala as the economic center of Cameroon. Hence, the problem does not necessarily lie in the fact that the main port exists in Douala, but that the decision to further develop Douala came at the expense of the underdevelopment of Victoria. If the government were invested in even regional development and acted in a more economically sensible, instead of politically motivated manner with regards to the export of CDC produce, it would have equally invested in the modernization of the Victoria port.

The government continued to marginalize Anglophones by moving the headquarters of the NPMB from Victoria to Douala, and changed top management from Anglophones to Francophones. The restructuring of the NPMB along linguistic lines kept Anglophones from controlling economic resources by privileging the employment of Francophones or requiring Anglophones to speak French to work within spaces in which they had been previously dominant. The decline of the economy of the Southwest turned what were once industrial towns into ghost towns as businessmen followed suit by moving to Douala or completely shutting down

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151 Gros, 76
152 Ibid
their operations. In the 1970s, the first commercial discovery of oil occurred in Limbe, and in 1976, the National Refinery Corporation (SONARA) was incorporated into government. With that, the exploitation of oil began in Cameroon. However, the ongoing exploitation of oil in Limbe has not benefitted the locals. They have been excluded from the resource wealth by the dominant Francophone elite. Mostly Francophones gained employment in SONARA, and the corporation operates almost exclusively in the French language, even though it is located in an Anglophone province. It can thus be determined that as economic establishments have moved east, Francophone provinces have seen more national investment in their development while resourceful Anglophone provinces have rather seen the underdevelopment of their regions.\textsuperscript{153} This has provoked feelings of resentment and marginalization among the Anglophone population, particularly in the Southwest.

With the removal of industrial establishments from the Southwest, Douala became the economic capital of Cameroon. Susungi posits that the transfer of economic power was due to fears that Anglophones would secede from the nation if they amassed enough power, thereby depriving the state of the natural resources which sustain its commodity-based economy.\textsuperscript{154} The persuasiveness of this argument lies in the fact that economic power directly translates into political capital, especially in a political environment like that of Cameroon where the lines between the public and private sectors are blurred. Government control of the private sector effectively guarantees a monopoly on state power, as financial capital can only be accessed through collusion with the state.\textsuperscript{155} Hence, by actively excluding Anglophones from the

\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., 76-82  
\textsuperscript{154} Ibid., 99  
\textsuperscript{155} Arriola (2012)
economy, the Francophone-dominated regimes have sought to protect and prolong their stay in power.

**Political Opportunism**

Cameroon is among the group of African states that have not been classified as “failed” since gaining its independence. The country is regarded as relatively peaceful and an importance force of stability in the central African region. There have been no successful coup attempts. The only domestic military threat to the regime was the attempted coup in 1984 allegedly planned by the first President of the Republic, Ahmadou Ahijo, in which presidential guards attempted to overthrow President Paul Biya\(^{156}\). In addition, movements of some Anglophone political groups to secede from the nation have been repressed by the regime and received no international recognition or support. Thus, Paul Biya’s semi-authoritarian regime has maintained a firm grip on the political climate, managing to depict Cameroon as an exemplary post-colonial African polity. However, with some probing into the workings of government and an assessment of public opinion, the appearance of stability dissolves. Cameroon’s political environment is marred by the sometimes dysfunctional self-interested behavior of its incumbents, who have turned the government into an instrument for rent-seeking. The polity is plagued by a culture of political opportunism sustained by a deeply entrenched system of neopatrimonialism and repression of dissent. It is important to stress that the pursuit of rents is not an exclusively Francophone behavior in Cameroon. Anglophones are equally involved in this game of political manipulation which has been detrimental to state-building, stifled the growth of the private sector, repressed

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\(^{156}\) Lewis (1984)
civil society, and fundamentally sabotaged the nation-building project. In fact, the rent-seeking behavior of the Anglophone elite has normalized the attitude of Francophone elite towards Cameroon’s cultural problems, particularly the state’s reluctance to address the roots of problem. Overall, the cooptation of politicians into the state and the complacency of government officials have permitted deplorable state behavior to remain unchallenged.

Soon after independence, the design and true purposes of governance in postcolonial African states began to reveal itself to the citizenry. Nevertheless, despite their illegitimacy among the masses, the authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes of Cameroon’s rulers continue due to the collusion of domestic politicians enticed by the possibilities that lie in accessing power and neocolonial exigencies for the installment of regimes loyal to France. Within a year of establishing the Federal Republic of Cameroon, the federal structure of governance began to disappear. As stated by Takougang, by 1962 Ahidjo had “succeeded in establishing a de facto one-party state in East Cameroon by either co-opting many of his political enemies into his administration and the UC or forcing them into political oblivion.” He would use the same tactics on West Cameroonian politicians “who were eager to sacrifice their political conviction of creating a strong and equal partnership between the two states on the altar of the political opportunities they could procure from the establishment of a single-party state.” 157 The political strategies of Ahidjo eventually resulted in the abrogation of the federal constitution of 1961 and the dawn of the “de jure” one-party state in Cameroon in 1972. The one-party state is often decried by scholars of Cameroonian politics as the beginning of “systemic marginalization, discrimination, exclusion and denial” of the English-speaking minority “in effective participation

157 Takougang, 434
and power sharing." While the transition to the one-party state plausibly marked the beginning of Anglophone marginalization, analyzed in strictly cultural terms this historical event lends itself to imaginaries of Fracophones acting as a unified coalition to suppress Anglophones in political and social space. However, this manner of thinking is to say the least flawed, as none of the linguistic groups are unified coalitions acting against each other. Further, it elides the fact that within an undemocratic regime such as Ahidjo’s, social agency is monopolized by the state: state behavior structures the masses, not the reverse. Thus, the public has limited ability to shape the activities of the state; rather, they are galvanized by the state, many times to their own personal detriment, on the basis of their colonial identities rather than by personal conviction. The state politicizes the masses against each other, but it does so in overtly depoliticized manners. Hence, it is easy to be blind to these innately political acts, and instead perceive them as suggesting the irreconcilable nature of identities within the polity. Given the politicization of identities and the concurrent politicization of social and economic spaces, it is instructive and useful to analyze the processes through which Cameroon arrived at its current mode of governance. Only through an introspective examination can one make sense of the political dynamics that inform political, economic, and social relations.

The federal system was established with Ahidjo serving as President of the Republic, and Foncha as Vice President while simultaneously serving as Prime Minister of West Cameroon. Through a series of political maneuvers engineered by Ahijo, and political games in which Anglophone politicians engaged, Ahidjo moved Cameroon from a federal to a unitary state. Ahidjo had always favored a centralized system of governance, a preference that could be attributed to his political training by the French and the fact that he came from the northern

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158 Susungi, 30
region of Cameroon, where centralized authority predated colonialism. Acting as agents to impending change, not bystanders, in 1962 Endeley and Foncha partook in negotiations with Ahidjo to determine their roles in the nation’s future. Ironically, Endeley who had strongly opposed reunification suddenly lent his support to Ahidjo’s call for a single national party “because it could potentially provide political opportunities for the CPNC and other minority parties in West Cameroon to return to influence and be represented in government.” To upend Endeley, Foncha quickly followed by initiating the signing of an alliance between the UC and the KNDP on April 27, 1962. Takougang posits that this served in the interest of Ahidjo and Foncha because it “not only prevented each of the two parties from organizing a branch of the party in each other’s state, but also prevented them from forming an alliance with opposition parties in each other’s territory.” The final stages of the move towards the one-party state came with the removal of Foncha from the position of Prime Minister on May 13, 1965 through the implementation of a clause in the federal constitution that stated no one person could simultaneously hold the position of prime minister and vice president. Faced with this decision, Foncha chose to maintain his position as vice president under the impression that it presented the best opportunity to acquire more authority. However, Susungi suggests that it was a rather powerless position that would lead to the marginalization of Anglophones. Following Foncha’s departure from the prime ministry, there was an internal struggle between KNDP leaders over whom to put in the position of prime minister of West Cameroon. The power

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159 The Cameroon People’s National Conference (CPNC) was formed in 1960 by a merger between Endeley’s KNC and N.N. Mbile’s Kamerun People’s Party
160 Takougang, 434
161 Ibid., 435
162 Fanso, 292
163 Takougang, 435
164 Susungi, 73
struggle was between Solomon Tandeng Muna and Augustine Jua, both supporters of the federal structure. Eventually Jua was elected by the party to become prime minister, creating a rift within the party. Disenchanted, Muna strategized to upset Jua by forming an alliance with the CPNC. To prevent the defection of some CPNC leaders, Jua offered them positions in his administration. \(^{165}\) Ahidjo’s plan to create a unitary state undoubtedly profited from the internal disagreements between leaders of West Cameroon. The formation of the one-party state was followed by the removal of Jua as prime minister, who remained the only staunch advocate of states’ rights.

In the midst of this political struggle, Ahidjo convincingly played his role as the national mediator, arguing that federalism threatened national unity and that “multipartyism was divisive, un-African and economically detrimental to good governance and development.”\(^{166}\) He thus convinced all existing political parties to dissolve on September 1, 1966 to form the Cameroon National Union (CNU), thereafter the only legal party in the nation.\(^{167}\) In 1967, Ahidjo organized undemocratic elections in the West Cameroon House of Assembly, resulting in the unconstitutional replacement of Jua by Muna in 1968. Evidently, the larger part of the Anglophone elite found it more politically beneficial to become part of Ahidjo’s clientele. In 1970, Ahidjo unconstitutionally removed Foncha from the position of vice president and unconstitutionally replaced him with Muna. It should be recounted that under the federal constitution no individual could legally hold the positions of prime minister and vice president simultaneously. Apparently, exceptions to the constitutions were made for individuals loyal to

\(^{165}\) Takougang, 435  
\(^{166}\) Gros, 65; Takougang, 435  
\(^{167}\) Gros, 68
the regime. These political maneuvers demonstrate that Cameroon’s leaders were more interested in the personal benefits of power than the collective purposes for which independence was fought.

With all obstacles to the dismemberment of the federal structure removed, Ahidjo quickly moved to replace the federal structure with a unitary state. He swiftly organized a referendum on May 20, 1972 to allow Cameroonians to voice their opinions on the matter. Official counts show that 99.9 percent of Cameroonians voted to approve the dissolution of the Federal Republic. Ahidjo issued a presidential decree on June 2, 1972, formally announcing the United Republic of Cameroon. According to Tata Simon Ngenge, “The advent of the unitary state began another new chapter: presidential dictatorship following the total dismantlement and (or) emasculation of countervailing institutions…” The constitution eliminated the vice presidency, the prime ministry and cabinets of federated states, the state legislatures, and the West Cameroon House of Chiefs. Ngenge states that the 1972 constitution disposed of the territorial and institutional provisions guaranteeing the minority rights of West Cameroonians. All power was transferred to the presidency and the National Assembly. In reality, “most, if not all, powers resided in the president,” including those previously exercised by the dissolved bodies of government. Muna was installed as President of the National Assembly, therefore temporarily retaining his powers and position as the president’s closest visible collaborator. Furthermore, Ngenge argues that Ahidjo added bilingualism to the 1972 constitution simply to appeal to Anglophones. In so doing, he shifted attention away from mounting “opposition to his rule in the East to the

\[168\] Takougang, 436
\[169\] Ibid.
\[170\] Gros, 65
\[171\] Takougang, 436
national problem of Anglophones and Francophones, whereby the two culturally diverse groups looked upon him as a referee.”

In sum, Ahidjo’s unilateral decision to effect change of the nation’s governance structure by establishing the unitary constitution marked the beginning of presidential rule.

To protect his monopoly on power, Ahidjo filled the National Assembly with a list of faithful militants. As is common practice among authoritarian leaders, the military was made up of his own co-ethnics from the north. Upon ascending to power as prime minister of East Cameroun in 1960, at a time when there was no existing Cameroonian officer corps, Ahidjo constructed an army and Presidential Guard based on “coethnic recruitment and extensive patronage benefits.”

It is also worth noting that in 1961, 69 percent of Cameroonian army officers were French, and as late as 1971, a majority of senior officers were still white French men. This loyal military played a key role in maintaining the stability of the Ahidjo regime, and continues to play an important role in protecting the current regime. In line with his hegemonic tactics, the 1972 constitution engineered separation amongst the West Cameroonian peoples by dividing the region up into two provinces: The Northwest and the Southwest. This has since exacerbated tensions and prevented coalition building between leadership from the two Anglophone provinces. This split dates back to the battle between Endeley’s KNC and Foncha’s KNDP for political influence in the post-independence government. Since Foncha’s ascension to power in 1961, Southwesterners perceive Northwesterners as more dominant socio-economically.

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172 Gros, 67
173 Ibid, 68
174 Harkness, 136
175 Ibid., 141
176 Gros, 71
and politically. These perceptions provoke strong resentment and an enduring rift between the two provinces.  

Ahidjo consistently used his constitutional powers to manipulate the political process to his favor. Suddenly, in 1975, it was in Ahidjo’s interest to reinstate the prime ministry, whose function he had earlier eliminated on the basis of it ‘superfluous’. Paul Biya, a Francophone and ethnic Beti from the south region of Cameroon, became Ahidjo’s prime minister. By virtue of a constitutional amendment in 1979, Ahidjo removed the possibility of President of the National Assembly, then Solomon Tandeng Muna, from being the constitutional successor the President. The President groomed Biya to become his constitutional successor. This strategic maneuver was plausibly motivated by Ahidjo’s plan to maintain a pro-French government in Cameroon. By establishing himself as the undisputed leader of Cameroon, Takougang argues that “Ahidjo was not only willing to adhere to the agenda advocated by France, but he was very skillful in exploiting the thirst for power and privilege by politicians in East and West Cameroon and by the ruthless use of force and intimidation to silence political challengers.”

Ahidjo paved the way for a transition of power to Paul Biya in 1982. Upon his resignation in November 1982, Paul Biya, his prime minister and constitutional successor, ascended to the presidency. Hastily, Biya abolished the post of prime minister, the position through which he became president. Biya continued in the footsteps of his predecessor and moved to quickly consolidate his grip on power. He changed the name of the country in 1984 from the United Republic of Cameroon to the Republic of Cameroon, a change that elicited

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177 Konings and Nyamnjoh, 212
178 Fanso, 293; Gros, 69
179 Takougang, 437
180 Fossungu (2013), 61
strong protests because the latter was the name before unification and a sign to Anglophones of the state’s plan to “francophonize” Anglophones.\textsuperscript{181} Anglophones argue that the name change effectively ignored the bicultural nature of the state.

Biya governed the country by continuing with the manipulative and oppressive tactics pioneered by his predecessor. Notably, the Beti ethnic group has been disproportionately favored by Biya, evidenced by its increasing claims on state resources.\textsuperscript{182} Governance has been characterized by the cooptation of many political leaders willing to sacrifice their commitment to social change for an opportunity to gain access to power. An opportunity for change was once more compromised by politicians’ desire to exert influence irrespective of its effects on the general population. Throughout the 1980s, Cameroon remained a one-party state under the Biya regime. In 1985, Biya replaced CNU with the Cameroon Peoples Democratic Movement (CPDM) as the only legal party.\textsuperscript{183}

The domestic legitimacy of the Biya regime began to erode within years of taking power. Even before the introduction of democratic governance, disenchantment with the regime gained voice through civil society and in then illegal opposition parties. The Social Democratic Front (SDF), a key opposition party led by its charismatic chairman Ni John Fru Ndi was launched on May 26, 1990 in defiance of the government ban on political parties. The rally to launch the SDF resulted in the killing of six Anglophones by government forces, though the Government denies responsibility.\textsuperscript{184} Such use of force against civilian demands for better governance has been often been the response of the Biya regime to dissent and calls for fundamental changes. After decades

\textsuperscript{181} Konings and Nyamnjoh, 213
\textsuperscript{182} Ibid., 213
\textsuperscript{183} Takougang (2003), “The 2002 Legislative Election in Cameroon 1992... “: 52-53
\textsuperscript{184} Konings and Nyamnjoh, 214
of repressive rule, a number of factors culminated in the 1990s resulting in the opening of
departmental political space and the dawn of democratic governance in Cameroon and across the African
continent. The end of the Cold War and the deepening economic crisis of the 1980s signaled the
extension of Western liberal ideologies to the South. Domestic frustrations, visible in the
eruptive protests of civil society organizations in the 1990s were also crucial for drawing the
attention of the Cameroonian state to the erosion of its credibility under the repressive
authoritarian regime. Groups such as students at the University of Yaoundé and workers’ unions
emerged as the main critics of the regime. Domestic disaffection and immense pressures from
Western nations and financial institutions to institute democratic political reforms and respect for
human rights forced Biya to legalize multiparty democracy on December 19, 1990.

Many observers believed that the dawn of multiparty democracy would lead to the
demise of Biya’s regime. However, Biya was determined to “control the pace and process of the
change.” Local attempts in the 1990s to truly redress the issues of governance and tackle the
underlying cultural issues negatively affecting Cameroonians were effectively silenced by Biya.
From 1991 to 1992, opposition movements spearheaded “Ghost Town” (Villes Mortes)
campaigns which called for the public to immobilize the economy by boycotting stores and
offices, refusing to pay taxes, and blocking transportation, in an attempt to force the authoritarian
regime to implement political reforms. Following the example of many Francophone African
countries at that time such as Benin and Chad, the opposition called for a Sovereign National
Conference (SNC) so as to ensure that the process of democratization was locally engineered and

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185 Nkwi (2006), 95
186 Takougang, "Nationalism, Democratisation, and Political Opportunism in Cameroon": 437
187 Ibid.
188 Konings and Nyamnjoh, 215
responsive to the needs of the people. Cognizant of the consequences of such conferences in many other Francophone African states, Biya maneuvered his way out, arguing that “such a conference was irrelevant since the constitution already allowed legal pluralism.”\textsuperscript{189} Showing little tolerance for civil society support of the opposition in 1991, the regime banned civil society organizations for supporting the Ghost Town campaigns and calls for the SNC.\textsuperscript{190} With Cameroon’s local economy nearly crippled by the Ghost Town campaigns, its European ‘ally’ France quickly offered financial support for the regime, thus preventing it from collapsing under the weight of domestic pressures.\textsuperscript{191}

The Biya regime has proved to be unsurmountable, enduring for over three decades due to support from its powerful external and internal colluders. To the dismay of the citizenry, as contended by Tande, “the Biya regime crafted Cameroon’s multiparty law in 1990 with an eye on (opposition) party multiplication and fragmentation as a means to perpetuate the CPDM’s grip on the political process and system.”\textsuperscript{192} Therefore, multipartyism as strategically implemented by the Biya regime is not a tool to guarantee the freedom and rights of the population, but rather a technique through which the regime perpetuates its preponderance of power. Hence, the regime tactfully controls the political process while misleading ordinary citizens to believe they are partaking in processes of political decision-making through routine “competitive” elections. As such, “democracy in Cameroon since 1990 has only gone as far as the political ritual of holding elections, all of which have been marred by gross irregularities and blatant disregard of the fundamental principles of democratic engineering.”\textsuperscript{193}

\textsuperscript{189} Takougang, 437
\textsuperscript{190} Tande, 128
\textsuperscript{191} Takougang, “The 2002 Legislative Election in Cameroon…”: 432
\textsuperscript{192} Tande, 127
\textsuperscript{193} Nkwi, 95
March 1992 marked the first multiparty elections in Cameroon since the creation of the one-party state in 1966. Many Cameroonians and international observers expected that the elections would signal a monumental shift in the style of governance in Cameroon, convinced it would culminate in the demise of the Biya regime and CPDM as the dominant political party in the country. SDF and its chairman John Fru Ndi were considered as the most viable alternative to the regime and were expected to preside over the collapse of the Biya regime in the October 1992 presidential elections.194 Within a few years of its birth, SDF had become the most popular party in Cameroon, gaining support across ethnic, linguistic and regional lines.195 In a controversial turn of events, President Biya won the 1992 presidential elections. The elections are generally considered to have been rigged in order to preclude SDF from ascending to the political dominance. Joseph Takougang observes “that Biya’s incumbency and his ability to manipulate the political process, including the fact 11 of the 13-member Vote-Counting Commission were either members of the ruling Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement (CPDM) or from the president’s ethnic group, might have contributed to his victory in the October 1992 presidential election.”196 Again, at a time when the domestic constituency denounced the legitimacy of the regime and many Western nations found the conduct of the elections reprehensible, France openly expressed support for the outcome of the election.197 France feared SDF because victory by Fru Ndi, an Anglophone, might have deprived France from its economic dominance in Cameroon if Fru Ndi decided to forge a closer relationship with other Western powers such as Britain.198 More than just illustrative of the manner in which the

194 Tande, 134
195 Tande, 134-5
196 Takougang, “Nationalism, Democratisation, and Political Opportunism in Cameroon”: 437
197 Takougang, ”The 2002 Legislative Election in Cameroon...”: 432
198 Ibid.
Cameroonian electoral process is riddled with corruption, the 1992 presidential elections reveal the fundamental challenges of multiparty democracy in Cameroon. Rather than rallying around one candidate to challenge the powerful incumbent, five individuals backed by different opposition parties aspired to the presidency. Each opposition leader was more interested in accessing power by becoming president, than in changing the regime. In addition, neocolonial influences effectively blocked the advent of people-led democracy.

The pursuit of elite privileges by opposition politicians has been advantageous to the Biya regime for he has capitalized on ethnic, linguistic, and regional cleavages among the opposition by further encouraging fragmentation and factionalism through awarding opportunists in the “opposition” with political appointments integrating them into CPDM. Observably, coalition building among the opposition has become a more difficult task since the liberalization of the political arena in 1990. As a consequence of this pauperization of the opposition, genuine political competition in Cameroon has diminished, resulting in the further entrenchment of the Biya regime. As of June 2007, the number of registered political parties in Cameroon was a staggering 207. In a nation of about 250 ethnic groups, this implies that about every ethnic group can mobilize politically to align itself with the CPDM in the interest of taking its share of the national pie. With the passing of each election cycle the opposition has been further delegitimized due to its increasing fragmentation. By corruptly using his institutional powers and rewarding the fragmentation of the opposition, Biya has won every presidential election since 1992 and has reconstituted Cameroon into a de facto one-party state.

199 African Elections Database
200 Tande, 126
Unquestionably, institutional means have been used by Ahidjo and Biya to manipulate the political process to champion the abuse of power over fundamental and necessary changes to the role of government vis-à-vis its citizenry. The misuse of economic resources to fuel patron-client relationships has led to the corrosion of the private sector and the decay of principled governance. Evidently, the individuals Ahidjo and Biya funneled into state positions were not exclusively Francophones or their co-ethnics. They were also Anglophones equally interested in eating a piece of the national cake, and seemingly content with placating public distress through clientelistic relations enabled by their access to state resources. Publically, governance in Cameroon is characterized by false promises and elaborate state programs to forge national unity and realize even regional development. Cameroon’s leaders have however failed to deliver on these illusive promises because confronting the real issues destabilizing the country is not the primary objective for which they were strategically placed into positions of power.

The Local Distresses of the Hegemonic State

The semi-authoritarian state in Cameroon has had far-reaching effects on the daily lives of ordinary citizens. Its ability to manipulate its adherents has not been limited to its ploys with political elites from different regions vying for influence in the state and access to economic resources. The realm of thinkability as to what is “acceptable” public conduct has greatly expanded. On the other hand, the realm of thinkability on feasible social change has been severely narrowed by the cooptation of varying groups into the state, and subsequently the extension of corrupt practices to local circles. Cameroon is steeped in a destructive cycle of contradictory state practices, at once repressive yet offering numerous opportunities for the
politically savvy and entrepreneurial minded to exploit the system to their benefit. This mode of governance has rendered everyone complicit in the protraction of the regime.

Government reliance of strategies of cooptation and repression has precluded imperative political, economic and cultural restructuring of the state. It has rather effected complacency and elicited opportunistic behavior among citizens. Under the unitary system new divisions, subdivisions, and districts were erected, supposedly with the aim of bringing the administration closer to the people and to enable government to account for local peculiarities. Therefore, all important government services became centralized in the administrative capital, Yaoundé. This system has proved to be quite inefficient and corrupt, as people from across the country have had to come to Yaoundé to resolve simple issues and procure minor documentation. This is not to say that these corrupt practices would not have or did not indeed emerge under the federal system. As already discussed, under the federal system politicians were equally entranced by the privileges of power. However, given that for the majority of its existence, Cameroon has been governed under a unitary structure, the practice of corruption has been more so documented under this mode of governance. For example, the salaries of most, if not all government employees across the country are managed in Yaoundé. Therefore, to process the necessary paperwork to receive their salaries, civil servants are required to travel to Yaoundé. The centralization of government services has facilitated the practice of prebendalism by creating multiple levels of corruption beginning with the central authority and their cohorts, trickling down to family members, friends and colleagues of those with direct access to the state. Appointments to the numerous positions that came with the centralization of state services were based on ethnic favoritism. The civil service has also become abysmally corrupt and

201 Gros, 71
inefficient. According to Ngenge, Cameroonian social scientist Mr. N. Nfor observes bribery and corruption serve everyone’s interest: “the citizens are forced to accept bribery and corruption as a norm of the society as one after the other comes to realize that, that is the only means by which one can survive, as each comes to realize that in the society there are no rights left for those at the bottom.” For example, it has become a normal part of life in Cameroon that to get paperwork processed, one has to bribe the officials in the respective government office(s). Hastening the process requires even more money. The irony of this is that the processing of documents is not in any real sense of the word “hastened.” Due to the fact that some of these civil servants are poorly paid, they make up arbitrary rules and add unnecessary steps to their services so as to elicit an unofficial salary by demanding bribes from ordinary citizens. Hence, in order to avoid going through these multiple steps, people bribe officials to “hasten” the processing of their documents. As illustrated by this example, many without direct access to public institutions or status cleverly extract the benefits of state power by acting as intermediaries between the state and people. These intermediaries can be official employees or just entrepreneurial minded individuals posing as state officials. This is quite common at airports where travelers are put through a series of hurdles by agents making monetary demands regarding documentation needed to enter or exit the country. Visibly, corruption, “far from becoming a cog in the Cameroon administrative wheel, became its grease.” Today, corruption and bribery have become common practices at all levels of society.

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202 Ibid.
203 Ibid., 72
204 Englebert, 89
205 Gros, 72
Lastly, the opening of political space in the 1990s allowed Anglophones to more openly express their grievances with the Francophone-dominated state, which they blame for the lack of significant development in Anglophone regions.\textsuperscript{206} Feelings of marginalization on the side of English-speaking Cameroonians have led to “the increased assertion of the ‘Anglophoneness’ or the Anglo-Saxon colonial and cultural heritage…”\textsuperscript{207} In response to their perceived exclusion by the state, Anglophones called for a return to the federal system in 1991 at the Tripartite Conference.\textsuperscript{208} They followed this by holding the All Anglophone Conference (ACC) in Buea in March 1993. The Buea Declaration listed the grievances of Anglophones and resolved that Cameroon needed to return to federalism.\textsuperscript{209} The conference failed to have nation-wide impact because of the polarizing manner in which it presented the issue, blaming the “wicked francophones as a whole for the plight for poor anglophones…”\textsuperscript{210} No matter the case, Biya’s regime was unprepared to address the resolutions of the ACC. Met with the government’s refusal to address the proposals, the Anglophone Standing Committee created by the ACC and the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) moved the discussion from federalism to secession. While these groups have assumed a more extreme position, SDF has been rather ambivalent towards calls for a return to federalism, rather emphasizing the devolution of powers and decentralization.\textsuperscript{211} SCNC calls to secede seemingly demonstrates commitment to ending the “Anglophone problem”; however, we must be keenly aware that the search for power among Anglophone leaders and the enduring tension between Southwesterners (the birth region of the SCNC) and NorthWesters (the birth region of the SDF) over influence in the state often overrides

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{206} Sunsungi, 96
\bibitem{207} Simpson, 208
\bibitem{208} Konings and Nyamnjoh, 218
\bibitem{209} Ibid.
\bibitem{210} Ibid.
\bibitem{211} Ibid., 216
\end{thebibliography}
their seeming desire to exist as an independent nation. With regard to the plight of the Anglophone minority, Pierre Englebert argues “the ‘modern’ elite of a marginalized region refuse to challenge the state that discriminates against them. Instead, they demand the increased decentralization of its sovereignty so as to occupy its local offices and reverse the erosion of their local status by their Francophone competitors.” Thus according to Englebert, excluded Anglophones are moved to act in the name of their marginalization due to their desire to access state power so they can exert local command, not by conviction that the cultural issues faced by the Cameroonian nation-state are irreconcilable. Given the centralized nature of the Francophone state, some of these elites find themselves deprived due to the Francophone or ethnic bias in the staffing of state agencies. The influence of SCNC has remained quite measly due to government repression of its activities and the different imperatives of different Anglophone elite. Since 1996, the systematic appointment of a Southwesterner to the post of prime minister has visibly quelled resistance to Biya’s rule by Southwestern elite. Also, the South West Elites’ Association (SWELA) chose to ally with the regime “in exchange for access to local dominant positions and an endorsement of their semiautonomy agenda by the government.” As has been characteristic of Biya’s rule, the extension of patronage benefits to disaffected elites quickly assuaged their grievances towards the government. The policy of arbitrarily providing Anglophones access to state power through the allocation of prestigious positions in the state or their incorporation into higher circles of patronage has simply encouraged competition among these elite. Most importantly, it has prevented Anglophones from seriously addressing their

\[212\] Englebert, 109
\[213\] Ibid.
\[214\] Ibid., 109
treatment within the nation-state and precluded unified mobilization of Cameroonian against the repressive state which mistreats both Anglophones and Francophones.

**Conclusion**

The fractured state of nation-building in Cameroon derives from an amalgam of political, economic, and social factors, both internal and external to the polity. Over 50 years following independence, it is quite evident that the independence negotiated by uncommitted nationalists in the 1960s was not freedom for the people, but an overtly nonviolent state of oppression normalized by the international system. Cameroon’s post-independence leaders, strategically selected, educated and trained by their colonizers were effectively taught to be subservient to the imperialistic goals and neocolonial impulses of the colonizer. Colonialism did not depart the African landscape; it became entrenched through the transmission of colonial authority to an elite class one would like to have presumed loyal to their constituents due to their common heritage and experience. However, in reality these postcolonial elite have proved to be far removed from the sufferings of their constituents. They have colluded with imperialists to perpetuate conditions of poverty, abuse, and neglect in their domestic environments. What is most striking and disheartening about this state of affairs is that the elite seem to be unable to find their authentic selves, for they are steeped in imaginaries in which they inwardly identify as belonging to the nations of their colonial masters, rather than to the nations they helped construct on the continent in which they were born.

Cameroonianians and Africans in general are thus left in a paradoxical situation, severely debilitating to the mind and spirit, which with the passing of each day further weakens their
strength to challenge the oppression. The masses struggle to identify the roots of leadership failings, the roots of poverty, the roots of failed nation-building, and the roots of their continued enslavement to a system that thrives from the exploitation of their lands, bodies, and minds. To find these roots we must challenge the Eurocentrism that engulfs our lives; starting from the systems of education, structures of governance, legal systems, and economic doctrines. We must question the histories we were taught, we must reject educational systems that persistently aim to convince us the white man is Africa’s “savior,” and we must question dogmas that aim to “modernize” Africans. Locating the roots of the problem has become insufficient, for it has only allowed the masses to identify the historical sources of their plight, but has not enlightened them on how to challenge the domestic manifestations of their historical burdens. The roots of the problem have spread far beyond one identifiable source. The parasitic system has found willing colluders who have become complicit in the suffering it unravels. As such, it is insufficient to continue blaming only its European instigators without also challenging the domestic cohorts propagating the system within African nation-states. There are a multitude of imperialistic and oppressive forces concurrently perpetuating a system meant to fail Africans. The coopted African elite at this stage is cognizant of their role in the maintenance of this system, though they are seemingly unwilling or severely constrained in their ability to transcend it.

The colonial and elite-engineered nationalism found in Africa has severely narrowed the realm of the politically thinkable. It has produced compliance with the neoliberal world order, allowing the continuation of dysfunctional nation-states. Perplexed and manipulated, the public has become so absorbed in the local tensions stemming from this system that they only locate themselves within the limited realm of their particular sufferings and fail to understand that their plight does not itself stem from ethnic, linguistic or regional antagonisms. They thus rely on their
national leaders to act as referees. These leaders gleefully accept this task, and skillfully manipulate the game by regulating its plays and galvanizing the different groups against each other. As argued by Ngenge, the roots of the “Anglophone problem” or simply said, Cameroon’s failed nation-building “are mainly institutional and economic, having to do with how state power is exercised in a fractured polity and how state power is used to benefit one group to the detriment of the other.”\textsuperscript{215} In this fractured nation-state, national problems are placated with the cooptation of opposition into the state’s clientele circles, the use of force to silence dissent, and government control of financial resources.

Pertinent to the further fragmentation of the state, the channeling of Anglophone elite into the state without redressing cultural issues allows Cameroon’s identity crisis and its socio-economic consequences to go unaddressed. Anglophone elites often resort to their linguistic and regional identities to make claims to systemic marginalization by the state and their consequent subjection to unbalanced regional development. On the other hand, Francophone elites rely on tactics that elicit fear of Anglophones by referring to them by such names as “\textit{les enemies dans la maison}.” As expressed by Nantang Jua, such naming “galvanizes Francophone public opinion against the other with who he may even share common experiences such as exclusion from public space.”\textsuperscript{216} The politicization of these identities therefore engages the public in cognitive falsities which seek to convince them that their publically expressed identities are an innate part of their being, therefore essential and divisive in nature. This national politicking has resulted in lower levels of economic and social development. As stated by N.N. Susungi, the “struggle has lowered the collective intelligence of Cameroonians because more energies are put toward

\textsuperscript{215} Gros, 61
\textsuperscript{216} Gros, 89
neutralizing each other than working for the collective goal." To distract Cameroonians from the social and economic corrosion happening before their eyes, politicians have galvanized the public to spend more time fighting against each other than collaborating to overthrow the destructive regime and building an authentic locally legitimate system of governance that exists for the benefit of the people.

Hence, the effect of these tactics is to blind Cameroonians to the fact that their real enemy is the system. At once, the government purports to be interested in building national unity through official policies such as the legalization of multiparty democracy and the enshrinement of bilingualism into the constitution. However, such policies are only a façade to blind citizens to the actual dealings of the state which prioritize the preservation of Cameroon’s political-economic relationship with imperial powers and the self-interest of elite over the collective interest of the Republic. Even politicians who might have entered the political arena in order to push for systemic changes soon realize they are faced with only two options: joining the corrupt circle of power or resolving themselves to oblivion. Cameroon’s predicament cannot be fundamentally attributed to ethnic, linguistic or regional misunderstandings. Rather it stems from the dynamics of the international political-economy, Cameroon’s positionality within that system, and the manipulation of power by domestic elite. The national manifestations of Cameroon’s disadvantaged position within this world system acquire ethnic, linguistic and regional dimensions due to the biased manner in which the elite partition the state’s limited economic resources.

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217 Sunsungi, 102
James Ferguson rightfully stresses the need for “re-moralization” of political discourse at the national level. He states that “It will not be sufficient to combat ‘corruption’ in government without asking the larger question of whether the very aims and purposes of state rule are not corrupt.” In aiming to re-legitimize the postcolonial nation-state, we must not only critique and seek to change the “corrupt” behavior of African elite, but at once give great attention to the formidable financial institutions and development agencies such as the IMF, World Bank, USAID, and Western governments such as those of France and the United States governing Africa from without. Essentially, African governments like that of Cameroon are confronted by an absence of alternatives in a world system that disadvantages them due to the fact that its survival depends on the very exploitation and continued destabilization of the African continent.

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218 Ferguson (2006), 86
219 Ibid., 87
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