State Fragility, Non-State Armed Groups, and the Privatization of Violence in the Anglophone Conflict in Cameroon

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Abstract

This paper examines the ways colonial legacy and post-independent socio-economic, political, and cultural drivers of fragility, favored the emergence, operation, and fragmentation of armed non-state actors in the Anglophone secessionist conflict in the Republic of Cameroon. The dual accession of colonially partitioned Cameroon (French Cameroon in January 1960, and British Cameroon, in October 1961) and poor management of the unification of the two laid the basis of the current secessionist armed conflict. The postcolonial state attitude in Cameroon remains characterized by exclusivist policies such as socio-economic, political, and cultural marginalization of minorities that in turn favored the build-up and spread of secessionist ideologies and eventually the emergence of non-state armed groups. This article also examines the privatization of violence in the current Anglophone Cameroon secessionist armed conflict. It proposes to examine the role that ideological and political divergence among warlords based in Western countries and who command and sponsor armed groups in Cameroon, plays in such privatization.

This paper argues that the inability of the state to find a sustainable political solution to a historical problem led to the proliferation of ideologically divided armed groups and the privatization of violence. This study shows that as the Anglophone separatist conflict persists, some armed non-state actors have resorted to criminal activities such as kidnappings for ransom, rape, racketeering of business owners, drugs, arms, fuel, and cocoa trafficking. This transformation has given way to other forms of armed groups responding either to the logic of private actors with no clear political intention or even to dismantling commanding actors based in the diaspora. The fragmentation of armed non-state actors in the anglophone conflict has exacerbated violence privatization which in turn has incessantly led to human rights violations and narrowed eventual peace prospects.

Keywords: State Fragility, Anglophone conflict, Armed Non-State Actors, Violence Privatization, and Peace Talks

Introduction

The emergence and proliferation of separatist movements in post-independent African states resulted from historical vicissitude, exacerbated by exclusivist state policies. Exclusivist policies promote regional development inequalities, political and economic marginalization, and limit access to equal opportunities. Governments with exclusivist institutional set-ups lose legitimacy, and the very nature of the particular nation-state itself becomes illegitimate in the eyes and hearts of a growing plurality of excluded citizens (Rotberg, 2002). These environments have been fertile grounds for varied non-state armed movements and specifically what Charles Tilly (2008) has conceptualized as collective violence—the instrumental use of violence by people who identify themselves as members of a group(whether this group is transitory or has a more permanent identity) -—against another group or set of individuals, in order to achieve political, economic, or social objectives (Zwi et al., 2002).

The cropping and proliferation of armed non-state movements in Africa and specifically in Cameroon is strongly linked to the governing authorities' neopatrimonial attitudes and exclusive institutions. Unfortunately, the latter has contributed in provoking radical movements which have in turn exposed the state to vulnerability and fragility. One of the main characteristics of contemporary conflicts and violence dynamics in Africa is the increasing privatization of violence. The number of armed non-state actors engaged in wars and violent conflicts has decidedly increased during the last two decades, many of which have been secessionist movements (Wulf, 2007). Armed non-state actors such as warlords, militias, rebels, paramilitary groups, and gangs fight for their own political or economic interests (Lewis, 2022).

Violence privatization in the context of secessionist conflicts is a threat, capable of failing a state. This is because the advantages and profits enjoyed by warlords are generally far better than what they receive in order to cease fire or engage in peace talks. The territorial control, political command, and local legitimacy enjoyed by separatist movements make them allergic to any form of return to normalcy. In fact, rising separatist agitation has carried with it growing challenges, both for governments seeking to retain control of their territory and citizens within states facing such challenges (Lewis, 2022). In Anglophone Cameroon, self-identified "Ambazonians" have engaged in violence and kidnapping campaigns targeting noncombatant citizens. Separatist conflict with a privatization perspective can last for decades and render the state unable to meet the welfare and security needs of their populations as a result of war investments that do not favor socio-economic development. At the same time, government affirmation of its sovereignty backed by the slogan of "no negotiation with terrorist groups" further compounds the prospects of peace-talks (ICG, 2023).

It is against this background that we examine the nexus between exclusivist policies, armed non-state movements, and the privatization of violence in the context of the Anglophone separatist conflict in Cameroon. We argue that the historical legacy coupled with postcolonial exclusivist government policies have driven the rise of the separatist movement and the privatization of violence. In turn, this undermined the prospect of an imminent return to peace and normalcy in the two English-speaking regions. To have a clear understanding of the question at stake, the paper is structured into five sections. Section One offers an overview of the Anglophone Separatist Conflict in Cameroon. Section Two conceptualizes violence privatization. It establishes the nexus between state fragility, intra- and inter-gang criminal networks and violence privatizations. Section Three dwells on the typology of actors involved in the exercise of private violence. Section Four examines interactions amongst the various factions and ideologies of non-state armed groups in the theater of Anglophone war. It investigates the infighting among these groups for territorial control and legitimacy over who is the real commander of separatist armed groups in the area of study. Section Five analyzes violence privatization and its implications on future peace negotiations in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon.

1-Background to the Anglophone Separatist Conflict in Cameroon

Today's separatist armed conflict in Cameroon's anglophone regions remains one of the most researched questions in the past few years in fields of history, political sciences, and law (Nyamnjoh, & Konings, 1997; Kaushal, 2020, Annan et al, 2021; Pelican, 2022; Beseng, Crawford, & Annan,2023). The multiplication of scholarly works on the anglophone conflict is partly due to the outbreak of ongoing violent armed conflict between government forces and factions of separatist armed groups in the English-speaking Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon. Without replicating what early studies have already researched on the historical background to the Anglophone separatist, this section of the paper is essentially based on the transformative phases of the anglophone conflict which started as a political crisis and developed into an armed conflict. Given that the conflict is ongoing, weemphasize the first two phases of the war. But before delving into the phases of the Anglophone war conflict in Cameroon, it is important to note that the Anglophone crisis, today a full war, is in part a classic problem of a minority, which has swung between a desire for integration and a desire for autonomy, and in part a more structural governance problem (ICG, 2017). This conflict shows the limits of centralized national power and the ineffectiveness of the decentralization program that started in 1996. The weak legitimacy of most of the Anglophone elites in their region, under-development of the region, tensions between generations, and patrimonialism are problems common to the whole country. But the combination of bad governance and an identity issue could be particularly tough to resolve.

According to J. Galtung, the main stages of conflict include latent conflict, confrontation, crisis, outcome, and post-crisis (Galtung, 2000). Even though most conflicts go through these different stages, they often jump back and forth, as unresolved issues may lead to additional confrontations and crises. Protracted conflict, in particular, may not easily fit a linear model, nor will conflict in urban areas, in many cases (Ibid). Given the nature of the conflict and its current stage, this paper explores J.Galtung's first four stages of conflict—latent conflict, confrontation, crisis, and outcome—to understand its dynamics and development.

On October 11, 2016, lawyers from the Northwest and the Southwest went on strike. Their demands were deliberately ignored by the Justice Ministry. Their demands related to the justice system's failure to use Common Law in the two regions. The lawyers demanded the translation into English of the Code of the Organisation for the Harmonisation of Business Law in Africa (OHADA) and other legal texts. They criticized the 'francophonisation' (Kaze, 2021) of Common Law jurisdictions, with the appointment to the Anglophone zone of Francophone magistrates who did not understand English or the Common Law, and the appointment of notaries, to do work done by lawyers under the Common Law system. This was followed on November 20th by the teachers strike. They organized a rally against the lack of Anglophone teachers, the appointment of teachers who did not have a good command of English, and the failure to respect the 'Anglo-Saxon' character of schools and universities in the Anglophone regions (Kaze, 2021). Several thousand people joined teachers to express grievances ranging from the lack of roads in the North West to the marginalization of Anglophones. The police and the army violently dispersed the demonstrators, severely beating several people, and arresting dozens of others, and shooting dead at least two people.

In response to the degrading social atmosphere, the government of Cameroon dispatched the Prime Minister to listen and find a solution for teachers and lawyers who had constituted themselves to a consortium. Unfortunately, no deal was reached between the Prime Minister and his delegation and the members of the consortium. On November 21st, 2016, a local radio newscaster sparked a popular movement that was later referred to as the 'Coffin Revolution'. The radio broadcaster known as Mancho Bibixy went to one of the busiest roundabouts in the city of Bamenda in the North West and symbolically stood in a coffin criticizing the government for the socio-economic and infrastructural negligence of the North West region. This event was followed by a student protest at the University of Buea in the South West on November 28th, 2016. Among their grievances were the failure of the government to remit education grants for students in their final year and the insistence of the university administration that all students must pay a fee to check

their results at the university's online portal system. The government reaction to these manifestations was arrest and detention.

Both students of the University of Buea and members of the consortium were arrested and charged with crimes of revolution, insurrection and public disorder. By mid-2017, it seemed that the arrest or radicalisation of more moderate voices in the Anglophone movement led the remaining leaders of the Anglophone groups towards shifting goals, from the reinstatement of federalism to full secession from Cameroon and the creation of an independent Anglophone State (Roxana, et al., 2019). By October 2017, a number of secessionist groups formally declared the Anglophone regions independent, renaming the region "Ambazonia" (Nna-Emeka Okereke, 2018). Historically, "Ambazonia" is derived from Ambas Bay, considered to be the natural boundary of the former Republique du Cameroun and Southern people of Cameroons. The name was created in 1984 by a group led by FonGorji Dinka, who declared the Republic of Ambazonia an independent state that would have comprised all Anglophone Cameroon regions, North West and Southwest regions of Cameroon (Jeter, 2023). Since this declaration, secessionists and government forces have violently clashed across the Anglophone territories, both between government and separatist forces and between rival separatist forces.

II-Conceptualizing violence privatization

Since the first half of the twentieth century, states have experienced shifting patterns of violence (Tilly, 2002). During the century's second half, civil war, guerrilla and separatist struggles, and conflicts between ethnically or religiously divided populations increasingly dominated the landscape of collective violence (Ibid). Between 1950 and 2020, civil wars killed 6000 civilians in Cameroon (HRW, 2023), half a million people or more in countries suchNigeria, Afghanistan, Sudan, Mozambique, Cambodia, Angola, Indonesia, and Rwanda. Over the century as a whole, the proportion of war deaths suffered by civilians rose startlingly. According to one estimate, they rose from 5 percent in World War I to 50 percent in World War II, all the way to 90 percent in wars of the 1990s (Chasterman, 2001).

When analyzing the use of force in the context of modern politics, Max Weber's understanding of the state is generally the starting point (Avant, 2005, Penski, 2018). Weber (1946) defines the state as an entity that successfully claims a monopoly over the legitimate means of violence in a given territory. Using this understanding, it is generally assumed that the power to provide security resides within the state, who is therefore the only legitimate provider of it to a given population (Avant, 2005). Thus, non-state actors' use of violence is commonly conceived as a threat to the current system of sovereign states (Krause and Milliken, 2009).

Peace and development in any given society is tied to the degree of stability of the state and government. Fragility is one main danger that has been responsible for the multiple woes African states have experienced since independence. Indeed, poor governance, economic crisis, unemployment, climate change, and violent armed conflicts have significantly contributed in capturing and rendering African states vulnerable to aggression. The combination or co-occurrence of these problems has been qualified by LSE-Oxford Commission on State Fragility as the "fragility syndrome" (A. Hoeffler, 2019). The World Bank noted that fragility or fragile situations can be said to be periods when states or institutions lack the capacity, accountability, or legitimacy to mediate relations between citizen groups and between citizens and the state, making them vulnerable to violence (World Bank, 2011).

Sovereignty and legitimacy are consolidating and affirmative characters of a state; when they are undermined states are prone to fragility. Legitimacy is a particular quality conferred upon a social or political entity by those who are subject to it or part of it, thus granting it authority (Bellina, 2009). State legitimacy concerns the very basis on which state and society are linked and by which state authority is justified; it is about a vision of what the authorities and the community are about, and are to do. The formation of a legitimate state presupposes that citizens take the state as the ultimate political authority. However, states in fragile situations are characterized by their inability to regulate the basic parameters of everyday practices, and by the failure to be seen as the overarching authority within the territory. When state institutions are not in a position to claim, with

reasonable success, a monopoly on the legitimate violence, and a strong impact over social relations, they lack institutionalized authority and social support. State fragility is thus intimately related to ineffective and poor connections with society.

The emergence of insurgent groups, a consequence of state fragility, has contributed in several cases to challenging the sovereignty and legitimacy of African States (Okechukwu, 2023). State fragility characterized by the low level or absence of the governance has led to the ineffective supply of public service(s) responding to the nation's citizens living in the geographical territory as well as an inability to maintain security for alleviation of threat by crime, rebellion or insurgency (Zartman, 1995).

Vulnerable or weak states are fertile grounds for the emergence of armed groups or non-state armed actors. In a fragile context, states and non-state armed groups tend to compete for legitimacy. In such a situation, they establish their authority through persuasion including through the use of propaganda as well as coercion to generate legitimacy from people within its boundaries. Indeed, where no overarching authority can punish those using violence for political means, all politics is likely to become violent (Zachary, 2010). In the situation of the Anglophone conflict, this situation enabled some separatist groups to find common cause with moderates without any change in either group's underlying ideologies.

According to Tatsuo (2009), structures of state fragility also multiply at least three ways which include: (1) a situation under absence of legitimacy of government, such as in the case of Somalia, but with a legitimated political entity with autonomous armed group as well as with comparatively small-scale armed groups; (2) low level of legitimacy of government contested by armed groups, for instance, Liberia before 2003; (3) comparatively lower-middle level of legitimacy of government, which is not invaded in most of the territory including the capital, but a part of the state territory is governed by some armed groups, for instance, Indonesia before 2005, or Sri Lanka and Colombia in 2009.

Penski (2018) argues that in early modern Europe, violent non-state armed groups used to have some utility for monarchs and rulers. Force used by different groups was a product in the market, as these groups could be hired as mercenaries to fight wars on behalf of kingdoms or other entities (Thomson, 1996; Davey, 2010, Penski, 2018)). However, because of the lack of allegiance and loyalty to specific entities, these groups became less useful to rulers and ultimately were perceived as threats. Eventually, this perception and the need of domestic pacification led to the formation of standing armies that were loyal to one single state (Kaldor, 2012). According to Thomson (1996), the abolition of non-state violence was, thus, also a result of the interests of rulers, and not of the society itself. After the consolidation of states, violence and the provision of security were thought to have shifted from being provided by the market, to being provided authoritatively by state institutions (Thomson, 1996). In short, according to Kaldor (2012: 22), there were a series of new distinctions that characterized the newly formed European states, which had significant implications for the relation between the state and non-state actors.

Contemporary violent non-state actors have exponentially grown in number, importance, and capabilities in modern conflicts (Sabastian, 2022). According to Tilly (1975), states emerge as by-products of warfare, due to the organizational complexities "wielders of coercion" have to master (Jüde, 2022). Consequently, when meeting the challenge of organizing warfare, armed movements should also develop an advanced organizational structure comparable to that of a state (Bereketeab, 2007). Analyzing armed movements in violent conflict instead of states in war lowers the level of abstraction and facilitates grasping the generative process that links war with the emergence of statehood (Jüde, 2022). Considering that European studies on war and state formation cover centuries-long periods, focusing on such movements and examining whether they develop according to the prediction of the bellicist account is more appropriate when analyzing current conflicts involving much shorter periods (Jüde, 2022). As captured by Spruyt (2017) the bellicists account for higher levels of warfare and create more centralized, higher-capacity states. Such states in turn are prone to war. "The central claim of this approach [the bellicist approach to state building] is that wars are a great stimulus to centralizing state power and building institutional capacity" (Spruyt, 2017)

From this perspective, wars have formative effects whenever violent non-state actors become highly institutionalized and develop a state-like organization. However, conflict have no formative effect when this institutionalization is absent. There is a great variety in armed movements: some indeed become states within states during conflict, for example, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka or the Eritrean Liberation Front, yet others, such as the Revolutionary United Forces of Sierra Leone remain a band of armed militias spreading primarily violence and terror instead of establishing a proto-state (see: Abdullah and Muana, 1998; Radtke, 2009). This was the case with the *Resistencia Nacional Moçambicana* (Mozambican National Resistance) RENAMO, a post-independent armed group that emerged in Mozambique just one year after the country gained independence in 1976 (Nilsson, 2023)

The main organizational challenge wielders of coercion must tackle is ensuring a sound economic base since recruiting and equipping fighters as well as sustaining them and their relatives is a resource-intense endeavor (Tilly, 1992). State organization develops as a by-product of warfare since it is a prerequisite of obtaining the means for war if these organizational efforts cannot be circumvented. While Tilly's wielders of coercion had little opportunity to escape the resource imperative when they wanted to go to war, today's wielders of coercion have plenty. Organizing economic reproduction is easy when there are precious resources or international rents available, or when this requirement is outsourced to intermediaries like traditional authorities. Linking insights from the taxation-rents with the bellicist theory—warfare imposes incontestable burdens in terms of human suffering and economic expenditure, the long-term effect is beneficial, as warfare signals the birth pangs of the high-capacity state (Spruyt, 2017) —there are three main modes to ensure the economic reproduction of an armed movement: (1) rents, (2) indirect extraction/revenue collection via intermediaries, and (3) direct extraction/revenue collection by the coercion organization itself (Jüde, 2022).

Ultimately, the privatization of violence, driven by the prevalence of insecurity and the commercialization of core state functions, has significantly transformed the physiognomy of modern conflicts. According to Wulf (2007), violence privatization, occasionally also called commercialization, includes—willingly or unwillingly—giving up part of a state's authority in exercising the monopoly of violence. However, it is worth mentioning that not all privatized violence is commercialized. This can be justified from the standpoint of Tilly's argument that collective violence resembles the weather: complicated, changing, and unpredictable in some regards, yet resulting from similar objectives and causes variously combined in different times and places. Getting the causes, combinations, and settings right helps explain collective violence and its many variations.

The privatization of violence is largely a consequence of a state's inability to provide security for its citizens (Defort, 2013). The presence of non-state armed groups in the case of Anglophones in the Republic of Cameroon is not an exception. Fragile states often lack the capacity to enforce order and maintain a monopoly on violence, commonly competing with non-state armed groups for dominance. The "law of Omerta" reigning among the population as it is the case in the Anglophone conflict has complicated the efficiency of security defense forces (Amnesty International, 2023). Citizens that have denounced separatist fighters have either been kidnapped for ransom and/or tortured to death (Amnesty International, 2023).

According to Mair (2003), there are four ideal types of privatized violence: criminals, terrorists, warlords and rebels. They share a willingness to use violence in order to attain their objectives. They differ in their objectives, target groups, and the geographic scope of their use of violence as well as in their relation to the state monopoly on the use of force. In very general terms, these four ideal types could be classified according to these criteria:

1) Warlords and criminals are guided by economic objectives; terrorists and rebels by political ones.
2) The main target groups of violence exercised by rebels and criminals are other organs of force —official security forces, such as the police and the military, or competing rebel groups and criminal gangs—while terrorists and warlords predominantly direct their use of force against unarmed civilians.

3) The geographic scope of the warlords' and rebels' use of violence is usually limited and aims at the consolidation of control over a certain territory. Transnational organized crime and international terrorism act on a global scale, if with a limited territorial base.
4) Warlords and rebels try to replace the state monopoly on the use of force by their own monopoly, while the use of force by terrorists and by organized crime coexists with this state monopoly or rather requires it.

The actors of violence sketched here are, as already mentioned, ideal types, artificial constructs which rarely present as neatly in reality. Moreover, most of them have multiple identities. Depending on an observer's attitude, interests and motives, one and the same person can be regarded as a criminal, terrorist, warlord, or rebel.

Wulf (2007) classified actors involved in the privatization of violence into two groups. The first type is the bottom-up privatization, in which representatives of the state system are occasionally accomplices. In the North West and South West, these non-state actors, who can also be classified as "violence entrepreneurs", create a situation of insidious insecurity (Wulf, 2007). They are often the cause for chaotic or lawless situations or even the collapse or failure of states, and are directly responsible for the loss of the state monopoly of violence. This can be explained historically—the state monopoly of force emerged in the mercantilist period; individuals were forced to give up their weapons; private armies were dissolved and war entrepreneurs ran out of business due to the creation of standing mass state forces. Today, neither the monopoly of force nor the existence of national armed forces is conceptually questioned. But outsourcing of military functions willingly or not, reduces the state's role in exercising the monopoly of force (Tilly, 1990).

The second type of privatization is top-down which is deliberately planned and implemented by governments. The aim is to outsource traditional military and state functions to private companies. They offer a wide range of services: they work for armed forces in war, but also for non-state institutions such as international agencies, humanitarian organizations in post-conflict societies, for governments in their fight against rebels or insurgents as well as for multinational companies. The boom in private military companies in recent decades, and more generally the privatization of security, entails the danger of undermining the state monopoly of force (Wulf, 2007). A number of governments enforce this process, while experimenting with the still yet-to-be proven argument that the private sector is more efficient in the area of military missions as well. Within the framework of this study, reference shall be made to the first category within the context of the Anglophone conflict in Cameroon.

III-Taxonomy of Separatist Forces in the Area.

Violence privatization is as old as the state itself (Penski, 2018). Since the end of the Cold War, European and American decision-makers have tended to consider conflicts in apparently 'unimportant' countries as none of their business (Mair, 2003). This was partly changed by September 11th. Suddenly, the Global North realized that state failure, authoritarianism, cultural disintegration, social deprivation and economic hopelessness are not only tragic developments for the have-nots in the Global South but also affect the haves in the Global North.

In the contemporary world, the danger with putting the emphasis on terrorist threats is the that any form of private violence is classified as terrorism. This is done negligently by many governments, notably in Cameroon as seen by its Terrorism law (2014) because politicians are not willing or able to differentiate; calling rebels and oppositions movements terrorists serves to justify their repression and can generate additional resources to do this job more effectively (Mair, 2003).

With the increasing proliferation of terrorist movements, drug dealers, cybercriminals, secessionist movement, and transnational mercenary groups, state authority and sovereignty has been strongly de-monopolized. Violence privatization is a serious indicator of state fragility and absence of the role of law. The consequences are always very disastrous for the population who are supposed to be protected by the state. Since 2017, the cropping up of non-state armed groups spotted in several parts of North West and South West Cameroon has challenged the state's monopoly of violence.

One of the main features that characterizes the insurgency in the North West and South West is the multiplicity of insurgent groups both at the operational and leadership level. Inter-insurgent fighting is another major issue that has contributed towards diluting their common purposes which is fighting for secession to create "Ambazonia". It is important to note that the main militias operating in the region are: the Ambazonia Defence Forces (ADF); Southern Cameroons Defence Forces (SCRF); Southern Cameroons Restoration Forces; Red Dragons; Bafut Seven Karta; Manyu Ghost Warriors; Amberland Forces; Amberland Quifos; Amberland Marine Forces; Manyu Ghost Warriors; Menchum Falls Warriors; Tigers of Ambazonia; Warriors of Nso; White Tigers; and Vipers. The number of fighters in each of these groups is estimated to range from around a dozen to more than 500 (Bang and Balgah, 2022). The major confrontation within militia groups was the clash between ADF and SCRF in 2020. Clashes between these separatist groups led to the death of at least six fighters, with one of the groups allegedly abducting close to 40 rebels of another camp (Kindzeka, 2020). At the leadership level, there exist serious disagreements among several anglophone self-proclaimed political organizations, all based in the diaspora. The main opposing ones include, "Interim Government" whose leadership is based in the United States and the Ambazonia Governing Council (AGC), with leadership based in Norway (ICG, 2017). The Cameroonian government has reported that in December 2018, the ADF and Tigers Separatist armed groups battled over control of areas around the city of Batibo in the Northwest (Ben Ahmed, 2018).

This logic of the Anglophone conflict fits Charles Tilly's (1985) famous claim that "war made the state and the state made war". Just like Tilly, who argues that states were created unintentionally through a process of war, extraction, and protection, separatist armed groups in the Anglophone regions operate through the same logic. To finance their fight for independence, they had in the past created modes of extraction, or taxation, that could eventually become institutionalized and form relations of power among a population.

Today, there exist two ghost rival governments with members both living within and outside of Cameroon claiming political control and governance of the territory. The AGC, led by Dr. Cho Ayaba, is based in Norway (Ngala, 2022). Conversely, the Interim Government of the Federal Republic of Ambazonia (IG) was formed after the arrest and extradition from Nigeria to Cameroon of its main leader, Seseko Ayuk Tabe, alongside nine others in January 2018. As a matter of fact, Sisiku Ayuk Tabe, head of what is known as the "Ambazonia government," and nine other leaders were arrested in January 2018 in Nigeria's capital, Abuja, and forcibly returned to Cameroon, in an extrajudicial transfer denounced by the United Nations Refugee Agency as violating the fundamental principle of non refoulement – the practice of not forcing refugees or asylum seekers back to a country where they risk persecution, torture, or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment (HRW, 2019). The forced return of the 10 leaders was also declared illegal by a Nigerian court in March 2019. With their arrest, an "Interim Government" was formed by other Anglophone activists to replace the "Ambazonia Government"

Since the installment of the Interim Government, there has been a serious political leadership struggle, corruption, and embezzlement allegations. The two rival governments, AGC and the IG, both have operational armed forces fighting on the ground and because of the constant political leadership struggle between the AGC and the IG, both often ordered their troops to confront each other to claim territorial control and authority in some parts of the North West and South West where there is no government military presence (Kindzeka, 2020).

Militia groups operating in the North West and South West can be classified into two main categories. The first are the armed wings operating under the political command of the two rival governments, the AGC and the IG, and the second category are independent militia groups who finance their operations through kidnappings and racketeering. It is extremely difficult to know the exact number of armed groups operating in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon as new ones keep cropping up. However, there are hundreds of militia groups in the North West and South West, the few listed above are the most active and radical, whose military actions have attracted widespread public attention.

IV-Determinants and Manifestation of Violence Privatization in the Anglophone War

Due to the constantly shifting situation on the ground, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about the relationships between insurgent organizations, especially given that many groups have only existed for a few months or years. Nevertheless, a general outline is attainable. Among the many insurgent groups operating in the North West and South West, two are most influential: the AGC and the IG. The recurrent disagreements between the IG and the AGC can be explained by two factors; political leadership struggle and economic motivation.

The first manifestation of inter-insurgent conflict within the Anglophone conflict in Cameroon has to do with political leadership struggle between two opposing claimants to government known as the AGC and the Interim government. Both have leaders based in Western countries, have often conducted military acts carried out against government security forces and the civilian population. Worst still, there exists intra-leadership conflict within organizations. This is the case with the Interim Government with different factions each claiming absolute legitimacy and command over ground forces or militia groups in the North West and South West (Fru, 2022) .

The AGC and the IG have constantly accused each other of conniving with government authorities to slow their operations or make impossible their struggle for a separatist nation. Some separatist militias have been neutralized because of shadow governments' power tussle and its manifestations on ground fighters (Bang and Balgah, 2022).

Moreover, since 2017, the political wing of the Anglophone insurgent groups has imposed Mondays as lock-down days. Every Monday, all businesses are closed and movement restricted. Special events like the National Day (20th May) and Youth Day (11th February) are prohibited from taking place. In fact, the local population is forced to boycott all government manifestations and activities.

Again, since the outbreak of the armed conflict in the Anglophone regions, many schools, especially in the peripheries, have been shut down on instruction of the political wings of the insurgencies. These measures instituted by both separatist governments have generally been reinforced or rendered effective by militia groups that kill, kidnap or torture defaulters. Both separatist governments have contested locked down days imposed by their rivals. In detention camps operated by separatist groups, citizens "arrested" for diverse reasons are judged and sanctions passed. These sanctions vary from the payment of ransom and eventual release or simply summary execution

Despite shared interests, Anglophone separatist groups in Cameroon have tried and failed to unify. Leaders of militant organizations met several times to examine the possibility of joining forces. Each, however, claimed popular support from Cameroon's Anglophone community and proved unwilling to cede power, ultimately preventing the organizations from unifying under a single banner.

Economic incentives have also contributed to the exacerbation of violence privatization in the North West and South West. Since most insurgent groups lack financial resources, they have resorted to kidnappings and racketeering to finance their operations. Since the beginning of the conflict, several separatist movements have proliferated in the affected regions. According to the Global Organized Crime Index (2023), the majority of separatist armed groups in the North West and South West have become involved in illicit and criminal activities, some factions have effectively transformed into mafia-style groups, engaged primarily in smuggling and extortion. These groups are involved in a variety of criminal activities including drug trafficking, arms trafficking, kidnapping, hijacking, money laundering, and the illegal fuel trade. Kidnap for ransom is increasingly prolific in the North West (GOCI, 2023).

The military wing of the AGC known as the ADF has been noted for frequently conducting politically motivated kidnappings as part of its fight for independence, it also reportedly takes hostages for ransom in order to raise funds. Ransoms usually amount to between 100,000 to 1,500,000 CFA francs ($170-$2,500) (Reliefweb, 2019).

The ADF's use of kidnapping triggered a major breach with the Interim Government when the self-proclaimed Ambazonian Minister of Communication, Chris Anu, publicly condemned a Ayaba Cho Lucas, the political leader of the AGV, in April 2018 for the his

group's abduction and possible assassination of a Cameroonian government official, Animbom Aaron Ankiambom (Mapping Military Organisations, 2019). Inter-insurgent fighting both at the political and operational level has complicated the conflict. This has contributed to undermining the prospects for a successful secessionist agenda. However, the state of the Anglophone conflict, especially with a multitude of conflicting militia groups and divided political leadership based in the diaspora, constitutes a fueling factor that might potentially complexify the resolution of the conflict. This has been the case in recent years during the failed Swiss and Canadian Peace Talks. In 2022, secret negotiations between the government of Cameroon and commanding leaders representing diverse armed separatist groups met in Switzerland to engage in peace talks. Astoundingly, on September 13, 2022, the Cameroonian government rejected Swiss mediation to resolve the Anglophone Crisis in favor of continued military operations against Anglophone militant separatists (Regional Overview, 2022).

In the same vein, on 20 January 2023, Canada's foreign minister, Mélanie Joly, announced that the two sides had agreed to start peace negotiations (ICG, 2023). The announcement raised hopes that there might be a way out of the grinding seven-year conflict in Cameroon's two Anglophone regions, the North West and South West. For months, Ottawa led secret "pre-talks" that seemingly helped the two sides overcome key hurdles to initiating a formal dialogue. Shortly after Joly's comments, Anglophone leaders issued a joint statement affirming their commitment to participate in negotiations with Canada's facilitation (ICG, 2023). But three days later, Cameroon's government brushed aside Canada's efforts, denying that it had asked a "foreign party" to broker a resolution to the conflict.

At the same time, Swiss and Canadian peace talks were characterized by infighting among several self-proclaimed, all-diasporic, separatist leaders abrogating the legitimacy to talk or negotiate on behalf of the people of the North West and South West regions with the government(ICG, 2023)

V-Prospectives of Violence Privatization on Prospect Peace Measures in Cameroon

The possibility of political perfection is perennially doubtful, but many commentators consider democracy as the only legitimate answer (Evans, 2001). No country is perfect and none can claim to be completely "democratic". When we look around the world, we can identify countries on the verge of democracy but not quite there or countries that have been there but collapsed, and others that are doubtful to say the least. The situation in Cameroon is dire for obvious reasons. Cameroon is diverse in ethnic, religious, political and socio-economic terms.

The ruling party in most African states has deployed state resources at their disposal to instigate and encourage divisions within the ranks of opposition parties to profit from their chaos and disarray in order to remain in office (Morlino, 2004). To achieve this, those in power violate the privacy of their opponents. The Social Democratic Front (SDF), the leading opposition party since 1990, has been sidelined since the 2018 presidential election in its stronghold in the North West and South West (Fokwang, 2020). In other words, election capture does not leave room for opposition parties to fight another day.

There is evidence that the dress up game of peace is now a thing of the past in Cameroon as the government can no longer fake adherence to liberal standards. For Partisi (2019), the real divide is between rich and poor. If you want people to break out of their echo chambers, focus on poverty. This simply means that while democracy is a public good, self-interest is critical to its vitality. Winston Churchill, in his assessment of the enduring conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, established that "there is no worse mistake in public leadership than to hold false hopes soon to be swept away" (cited in Morgenthau, 1951,p.148).

Conclusion

Seven years into a deadly separatist conflict in Cameroon's English-speaking regions, hopes of finding a negotiated settlement seem more distant than ever as both the government and secessionist rebels dig in. The complex situation in the regions has been

compounded by violence privatization that has only distanced the prospects of eventual peace. Even if the government accepts peace negotiations, the infighting among diaspora-based separatist leaders will compromise peace talks given the deep-rooted privatized violence and spoils of war it has generated both for warlords on the ground and separatist leaders abroad. Today, the spoils of war may outweigh incentives for peace in Cameroon as the dynamics of privatized violence have changed with the growth of a lucrative "war economy", typically involving kidnapping and the broader extortion of the civilian population. The largely diaspora-based separatist leadership, initially key to raising funds and buying weapons, has seen their influence slip as fighters increasingly turn to homegrown sources of revenue. Their political clout has also been diminished by constant internal feuding. That lack of control over fighters has encouraged violence privatization and lawlessness. The political and economic spoils of the war have reduced the incentive to find a negotiated settlement.

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