

"The Anglophone Problem and the Secession Option in Cameroon"

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The Anglophone problem can be defined as the desire of the inhabitants of former British Southern Cameroon (present-day Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon) to assert their identity on an equal basis with the Francophone, in the political, economic, social and the cultural life of the Cameroon nation (Ngoh, 2004). This research paper attempts to analyze the historical antecedents which led to the emergence of an Anglophone problem in Cameroon with emphasis on the Anglo-French partition of the territory in 1919 and the constitutional arrangements which took place in Cameroon at post-independence. The paper argues that the term 'Anglophone' is increasingly becoming ambiguous: especially as the term in the present context is exclusive, at a time when the term is emerging increasingly as one without borders (Ndobegang, 2005) and also considering the fact that the British Southern Cameroons was administered as part of the Eastern Region of Nigeria between 1922-1953 one can arguably state that its culture was Anglo-Nigerian.

The study identifies the major actors and steps taken by the Anglophones to internationalize their problem. It navigates into the formation of Anglophone pressure groups like the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), Southern Cameroons People Organization (SCAPO), and Cameroon Anglophone Movement (CAM) among others and their shift from a two state option to that of total independence of Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon. It also discusses the ramifications of this crisis as it threatens the national integrity of the nation and how the Bakassi Peninsula[1] crisis has accentuated the increase clamor by the Anglophones to secede from the Republic of Cameroon. By and large, the paper identifies the major implications of these movements in state-building and assesses how some Anglophone pressure groups have found a new expression in internationalizing their plight through the internet. The study holds that cyber nationalism has created an effective tool of networks of resistance to Biya's government policies and has increased momentum for the secession option.

[1] The Bakassi Peninsula is rich in oil and gas deposits and there was a bitter dispute over the years between Cameroon and Nigeria over its ownership. This conflict was only settled by the International Court of Justice which ceded the Peninsula to Cameroon. The Peninsula is found in the Ndian Division which is located in the Southwest region of Cameroon.