Inside the Virtual Ambazonia: Separatism, Hate Speech, Disinformation and Diaspora in the Cameroonian Anglophone Crisis

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Inside the Virtual Ambazonia: Separatism, Hate speech, Disinformation and Cameroonian Diaspora in the Anglophone Crisis

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS
in
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

by Jules Roger SOMBAYE EYANGO
November 20, 2018

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this thesis project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

APPROVED:

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Capstone Adviser

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MAIS Director

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Date

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Date
INSIDE THE VIRTUAL AMBAZONIA:
Separatism, Hate speech, Disinformation and Diaspora in the Cameroonian Anglophone Crisis

Jules Roger Sombaye Eyango

MA 18’ University of San Francisco
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Abstract

This study examines the dynamics of the Anglophone separatist claims in Cameroon, the so called “Anglophone Crisis”. I focus on explaining why the separatist claims reemerged in 2016 after being shut down for about 20 years. It explains how the Anglophone separatist revindications have sustained over time despite the extremely centralized power of the Paul Biya government. This paper first argues that the Anglophone crisis is more than an identity struggle between Anglophone/Francophone Cameroonians, but rather a conflict about historical and institutional grievances, political competition, and regional politics involving the neighboring state of Nigeria.

Second, it verifies the hypothesis that the sustainability of the Anglophone separatist claims relies on the important support of Cameroonians from the diaspora with the contribution of social media. According to this hypothesis, over the years, this diaspora has contributed to strengthen the Anglophone identity and to maintain a mobilization of Anglophone Cameroonians on the ground around the idea of an independent republic, the republic of Ambazonia. This mobilization has been mainly led through the internet space, especially on social media.

Finally, I explain the dynamics of the online mobilization of the separatist Anglophone movements. I argue that this mobilization is achieved through the spreading of hate speech and disinformation on social media platform such as Facebook. I also argue that despite this important virtual mobilization, the Anglophone separatist movements reemerged as unstructured entities, composed of multiple armed groups that don’t necessarily cooperate. Indeed, despite the apparent consensual mobilization around an independent republic of Ambazonia, it is still hard to perceive any homogeneity in the political and military structure of this separatist movement. This fragmentation among the Anglophone people make the political negotiation with the Cameroonian government more difficult to achieve. In addition, I analyze the perception of this mobilization by international media, by doing a content analysis of the coverage BBC and Jeune Afrique.

Existing literature on secession in Africa analyzes secession as identity, religious or ethnic struggles. My study aims to analyze the Anglophone crisis with a different approach which considers the role of the diaspora and the mobilization on internet. It also captures the regional dynamic of the conflict involving the key role of Nigeria.

My research suggests that secession must be examined differently than the way it has been studied by previous scholars. Indeed, previous studies focused on the local and national dynamic of this phenomena, limiting it to the borders of states. My study challenges this approach by showing secession as a struggle that transcends borders, by considering the diasporas and the internet as important actors in the struggle. I suggest embedding separatist movements in the globalized and digitized world in which we live today.

In the final chapter, my study also explores potential measures that have to be taken to handle the crisis. First, it suggests a strengthening of the decentralization guaranteed by the Cameroonian constitution. Second, it encourages the humanitarian cooperation between Cameroon and Nigeria to keep the stability of their common border. Finally, it explains that the Anglophone crisis should also raise the awareness of the international community about the issue of disinformation and propaganda on the internet during conflict, which is one of our modern day’s challenge.
Key words definitions

**Anglophone Crisis:** It is a conflict which opposes Anglophone separatists from the Northwest and Southwest (Anglophone regions) of Cameroon to the Cameroonian government led by Paul Biya. The conflict started in 2016 with a teachers and lawyers protest before becoming a civil war involving killings both from the government and the separatist side. This conflict is an extension of the “Anglophone problem” which started in 1990s with peaceful protests.

**Ambazonia:** Ambazonia is a term derived from the word Ambas Bay, a bay considered to be the natural boundary of the former Republique du Cameroun and Southern Cameroons. The name was coined in 1984 by a group led by FonGorji Dinka, who unilaterally declared the ‘Republic of Ambazonia’ an independent state that would have comprised all Anglophone Cameroon regions, Northwest and Southwest Cameroon. The term was taken up again after the 2016 events by pro-independence actors wishing to reassert their identity and separate the Anglophone regions from the rest of Francophone Cameroon.
“Tolerance is a virtue that makes peace possible”

Kofi Annan

This thesis is dedicated to all the Cameroonians, civilians, soldiers who died since the Anglophone crisis started, as well as the one who are still affected by the conflict.

We are all Cameroonians, no matter our linguistic, ethnic or religious belonging. We must cherish the peace and stability of our beloved country.

United we stand, divided we fall.

****

Ce mémoire est dédié à tous les camerounais, civils, soldats qui sont morts depuis le début de la crise anglophone, aussi bien qu’à ceux qui sont toujours affectés par le conflit

Nous sommes tous camerounais, peu importe notre appartenance linguistique, ethnique ou religieuse. Nous devons chérir la paix et la stabilité de notre pays bien-aimé.

Unis, nous gagnons, divisés nous tombons.
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Special thanks to Mr Ananie Rabier Bindzi, Cameroonian historian and journalist, as well as Hiram Samuel Iyodi political coordinator of the movement NOW for their participation to the study.
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Introduction

The national unity and the stability of African states are often questioned by international observers. Some African democracies struggle to create a single national identity, because of the diversity of their population and their colonial heritage. Secessionism, the withdrawal of a group from a nation-state, is a political phenomenon resulting from the failed projects of national unity that many modern African democracies face today. There are several examples of secessionist movements across the continent, including the independentist claims of the Biafra region in Nigeria, the creation of Somaliland in Somalia, and the birth of South-Sudan. These cases serve as prominent examples of how nation-building can divide a state into multiple fictive or real territorial entities.

Cameroon provides a new case of secessionist struggle in Africa. Since November 2016, this Central African country is going through a crisis linked to separatist claims. Indeed, the movement for Ambazonia, a separatist movement from northwestern and southwestern regions of the country is protesting the Paul Biya government to obtain the independence of these Anglophone regions from the rest of the country. The movement is condemning the marginalization operated by the Biyagovernment towards the English language in sectors like education, employment, and administration. They want to make the Anglophone regions a country named Ambazonia. The situation has escalated quickly, since the separatists started using force. They possess weapons, and they have been held responsible several attacks and killings in cities like Bamenda, and Douala by the Cameroonian government. Moreover, 10 separatist leaders, including Julius AyukTabe have been arrested by Cameroonian authorities in Abuja, Nigeria (Jeune Afrique;2018).

If the separatist issue in Cameroon caught the attention of the international observers in 2016, the Anglophone separatist claims started in the 1990s. The discontent of the Anglophone groups towards the Paul Biya administration expressed violently at the
beginning of the 1990s, but it has been contained for the last 20 years by clientelism, political and bureaucratic maneuvering, repression, and shared imaginaries like nationalism. Moreover, the popularity of the Anglophone movements decreased at the beginning of the 2000s since the CPDM, the party in power gained more popularity (Pommerolle & Heungoup; 2017).

Yet, a puzzle emerges from this fact: Why, despite the loss of popularity of the Anglophone movement and the centralized power of the Biya regime, has the Anglophone separatist movement reemerged and gained newfound influence in parts of the country? How has the movement gained logistical and ideological support?

My thesis draws attention to an under-examined aspect of the secessionist struggle: the Cameroonian diaspora and the role of the internet. This paper first argues that the Anglophone crisis is more than an identity struggle between Anglophone/francophone Cameroonians, but rather a conflict about historical and institutional grievances, political competition, and regional politics involving the neighboring state of Nigeria.

Second, it verifies the hypothesis that the sustainability of the Anglophone separatist claims relies on the important support of Cameroonians from the diaspora with the contribution of the internet and new media of communications. According to this hypothesis, over the years, this diaspora has contributed to strengthen the Anglophone identity and to maintain a mobilization of Anglophone Cameroonians on the ground around the idea of an independent republic, the republic of Ambazonia. This mobilization has been mainly led through the internet space, especially on social media.

I explain the dynamics of the online mobilization of the separatist Anglophone movements. I argue that this mobilization is achieved through the spreading of hate speech and disinformation on social media platform such as Facebook. I also argue that despite an important virtual mobilization, the Anglophone separatist movements reemerged as
unstructured entities, composed of multiple armed groups that don’t necessarily cooperate. Indeed, despite the apparent consensual mobilization around an independent republic of Ambazonia, it is still hard to perceive any homogeneity in the political and military structure of this separatist movement. This fragmentation among the Anglophone people makes the political negotiation with the Cameroonian government more difficult to achieve. In addition, I analyze the perception of this mobilization by international media, by doing a content analysis of the coverage BBC and Jeune Afrique.

My research combines interviews with Cameroonian involved and not involved in the Anglophone struggle. My participants were political activists and former government officers, civil society members, Cameroonian researchers. I also did a content analysis of Anglophone separatist Facebook Groups. On each group I looked at mobilization videos, statements, status and comments. In the final chapter, my study also explores potential measures that have to be taken to handle the crisis. First, it suggests a strengthening of the decentralization guaranteed by the Cameroonian constitution. Second, it encourages the humanitarian cooperation between Cameroon and Nigeria to keep the stability of their common border. Finally, it explains that the Anglophone crisis should also raise the awareness of the international community about the issue of disinformation and propaganda on the internet during conflict, which is one of our modern day’s challenge.

My research challenges the way secession has been studied by previous scholarship. By showing the contribution of the diaspora and the internet in Cameroonian Anglophone crisis, it shows secession as a conflict that transcends the border of the nation state. It suggests that separatist movements have to be embedded in the globalized and digitized world in which we live today. In other words, the Cameroonian case is interesting to this broader separatist literature because it is an opportunity to better understand whether and how
diaspora use / intervene via social media to support separatist movement, and whether and how those strategies are effective.

Cameroon is also an important case of secessionism because it is one of the few countries in sub-Saharan Africa to have known two colonial administrations at the same time (French and British). This complex past, which also involves historical ties with Nigeria, has made the process of state building and nation building difficult. This process is currently experiencing difficulties because of the dissatisfaction of a section of the population of the northwestern and southwestern regions vis-à-vis the Cameroonian state.
Section II: Literature Review

My research aims to contribute to the literature on secessionism on the African continent, and in the world in general. There is an important literature that has explained secessionism in Africa, and in western democracies like Canada. Indeed, if the secessionist claims of the movement for Ambazonia constitute a new challenge for the Cameroonian State, it is not the first case on the African continent. Over the past few years, the birth of new states such as South Sudan and Somaliland has shown that self-determination claims can lead to secession and reshape the political geography of a State or a region (Le Goriellec;2011). There is a significant literature that can contribute to our understanding of secessionism in Africa in general, and in Cameroon in particular. For this purpose, we found the three following bodies of literature relevant for our study: State building in Africa (and in Cameroon); identity and Nation building; Cameroonian socio anthropology.

2.1 State building and secessionism in Africa

The State building in Africa literature can help us understand how the political regime of the State, its territorial organization, and the management of its resources can either lead to secession, or can counter it.

First, this body of literature provides an understanding of the context in which African democracies emerged, and the lacunas that these regimes have today. Indeed, the 1990s marked the advent of democracy in Africa. New economic partnerships with the West have led authoritarian leaders to change their rhetoric. Most economic aid from the international community required the adoption of democratic norms in the aftermath of the cold war as conditionality. The speech of the French President François Mitterrand during the France-
Africa Summit held in 1990 in La Baule was part of this logic. Moreover, the geopolitical change resulting from the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent East Wind also had an influence on the political situation of African countries (Darracq & Magani; 2011). However, despite these important changes, the democratic nature of some African regimes is still contested. Contested elections, suspicions of cheating, violence against civil society, and post-election armed conflict are dramatic events that seem to be repeated after every election in recent years (Gueye; 2011). The most recent example of this democratic crisis is Gabon. Indeed, during the presidential elections of August 27, 2016, the re-election of President Ali Bongo was challenged by his main opponent, Jean Ping. According to Ping, President Bongo rigged the votes of the district of HautOgooué. In this constituency, 99% participation of the population would have been registered, and President Bongo would have won in this one with 95% of the votes. This instability in the electoral process and institutions that African democracies encounter provide a room for secessionism to occur.

The claims of secessionist movements often denounce a mismanagement of the resources by the state. In the context of Cameroon, understanding how the resources are managed by the state is useful to understand the political and economic context in which the secessionist claims of the movement for Ambazonia occurred. For this purpose, some scholars have tried to understand how the mismanagement of resources can shape the socio-political and economical life of Cameroon. One of the most used theoretical framework to do so is the theory of neopatrimonialism. This theory has been developed by Jean-François Medard, who gave a new form to patrimonialism previously theorized by Eisenstadt (Eisenstadt; 1972). By this term, Medard meant a state practice according to which the ruling classes tend to appropriate the resources of the state and to manage them and consider them as a personal patrimony. This approach has been deepened by some other scholars like Van De WALLE, who developed some terms like presidentialism, that refers to a practice
whereby a man, usually a president, is erected above the law and above all the powers that govern a state. This practice is observed in some regimes in sub-Saharan Africa, where there is a concentration of power at the executive level. This presidentialism gives rise to a status quo at the level of the allocation of important positions within the state, because the president, being above the law, is working to allocate the positions to his entourage. (Van De Walle;2011).

Crawford Young reinforces this connection between the resource management and the instability of the State in Africa in his piece “Crisis in the Contemporary African State”. According to him, the crisis of the contemporary state lies on the growing disillusionment with the performance of the State and the cynicism of the people in many countries about the ruling groups. He also adds that the other dimension leading to state instability is the propensity to overconsumption. For example, Young explains that in 1967, the average fraction of Gross Domestic Products consumed by the African States was less than 15 percent. By 1982, in many states, the figure surpassed 30 percent and in some of them it was substantially higher.

These theories can be applied to secessionism because they suggest that secessionist movements might be a response to the failure of the African state. In the case of Cameroon, these two factors explained by Young apply because the Anglophone crisis is in part due to a cynicism vis-à-vis the Biya government and the ruling elite, as well as the economic crisis that prevails in the country (Young;1994).

Furthermore, the literature on state building in Africa provides an understanding to how the colonial heritage can contribute to the birth of internal conflicts in African States. Some scholars have looked at the impact of the colonial administration heritage on the African post-colonial States. Following this idea, in Debating Secession and The Recognition of New States in Africa, Ian Spears explains how the configuration of frontiers of African
States played in their instability and can contribute to secession. For instance, Spears argues that unlike European States which had their boundaries changed over time for optimal efficiency, newly independent African States kept the same borders. This stagnation of the borders favorited the creation of states unable to deal with ethnic differences (Spears; 2004). Achille Mbembe has explained that the instability of some African post-colonial regimes is due to a lack of rupture with the colonial rule heritage (Mbembe; 2000). The conflict between the Anglophone regions of Cameroon and the State seems to be a relevant case to illustrate this theory. Indeed, this crisis is linked to the British and French colonial heritage. For example, the claims of the movement for Ambazonia include the access to the practice of English language in education, to a common law juridical system, which have both been instituted by the British during their administration period. In addition to this, looking at how the colonial administrations in Africa have drawn the frontiers on the continent is also relevant for our study.

In a more concrete way, secessionism in the countries of the horn of Africa has also been explored by the above-mentioned body of literature. Sonia LE Gouriellec (2011) analyzes the birth of Eritrea, South Sudan and Somaliland. She explores the internal processes that led to the Birth of these States. LE Gouriellec argues that cases of secession have three similar characteristics: they include distinct communities, a territorial dispute, and a cause of discontentment. The author also argues that language and religion are two factors that strengthen identities and encourage people to perceive themselves as different while they are living in the same community. She explains that this strengthening of identity through language or religion can be an obstacle to the building of a consensual imagined community, that Anderson (1991) theorized. She also looked at the question of recognition of these three new States by the international community. She explains that since the recognition of a State relies on the existence of a population, a government, a territory but also the approbation of
the international community, the creation of some states such as Somaliland remain problematic because these requirements are not met (Le Goriellec; 2011).

If State building in Africa literature provides us several useful thoughts, we can also draw some important arguments from the identity and nation building literature in general. This body of literature help us understand how the absence of a single national identity and the existence of multiple ones in some states can lead to some rights claims for minorities. It also can provide some significant writings that explore how states create institutional mechanism to deal with the multiple identities in its territory.

2.2 Nation and identity building

In order to understand the roots of the Anglophone crisis and its dynamics, we need to explore how the Francophone and Anglophone identities have shaped and influenced nation building in Cameroon. In his piece *The Roots of the Anglophone Problem: Language and Politics in Cameroon*, the author Eric.A. Anchimbe has explained the impact of the existence of these two linguistic identities on the Cameroonian national identity. According to Anchimbe, how quickly the Anglophone crisis happened can be explained considering the long history of “Anglophonism” and “Francophonism”. He argues that Anglophone and Francophone constitute two colonially constructed opposing groups and that the policies of the Biya government have contributed to strengthen this opposition. The mutual tolerance or intolerance between these two groups was also shaped through the educational and juridical policies (Anchimbe; 2018).

Moreover, the literature on nation and identity offers an overview of ethnic conflicts in African States. For example, Pierre Englebert and Kevin C. Dunn (2014) have discussed the origins of ethnic conflict in African States. They identified the three approaches in which one could analyze and define ethnic conflict, especially in Ethiopia. They argue that ethnic
conflict, can exist on, or be examined through three theories, namely, Primordialism, Instrumentalism and Constructivism. Yet, Engelbert and Dunn explained that ethnic conflict cannot be separated from African politics (Engelbert & Dunn; 2014). They write: “Many problems, from corruption to conflict, tend to be attributed to ethnic polarization. The reality is formidably more complex. Yet there is no denying that ethnicity, in all its ambiguity, lies center-stage in African politics…”

Still, talking about the relation between African politics and ethnic conflicts, Reno (1998) uses the theory of warlordism to analyze the role of weak states and warlord politics, in both creating and perpetuating ethnic violence, especially in African nations. He discusses how governments and leaders can control the wealth and resources in African nations, thus, controlling the resources distribution between the different ethnic group. When it comes to matters of governance, the neoliberal agenda and generating wealth trumps the need to advance public welfare and the needs of civil society.

Canadian literature on nation and identity building is also useful for our study, since as Cameroon, the nation building in Canada is in part around bilingualism (French/English). Following this idea, Wayne Norman has explored these questions by showing how federalism helps Canada to maintain an equilibrium between its Anglophone provinces and the Quebec (Norman; 2006). This research is relevant for Cameroon since the country is trying to find institutional mechanism to accommodate the Anglophone minority of the Northwestern and Southwestern regions. In the same vein, in his book Politics in the Vernacular, Will Kimlycka (2011) also addresses the questions around minorities, the rights, and situations of ethno cultural groups in Western democracies. It presents the role of the State institutions in the protection of these rights.
Despite having some relevant thoughts coming from the identity and nation building literature in general, we still need to look at the writings about the identities in the Cameroonian context.

2.3 Cameroonian socio-anthropology literature

The body of literature on Cameroonian socio anthropology has explored the different ethnic divisions, as well as the relationship between the Anglophone and the francophone populations of the country (Nyamnjoh & Rowlands; 1998). Nyamnjoh and Rowlands looked at how ethnicity shapes the political associations and belonging in Cameroon. Furthermore, this body of literature also explored the first claims of the Anglophone regions towards the Cameroonian government from the 1970s to the 1990s (Konings; 1996). Konings explains that it was not until the political liberalization process of the early 1990s that part of the Anglophone elite began openly organizing in a variety of associations and pressure groups to press claims for self-determination and autonomy. Moreover, he examines the role that the chieftaincy has played in these struggles for autonomy. During the era of federalism, Anglophone chiefs were allowed a large measure of autonomy. After the unification of 1972 the political elite of Cameroon tried to integrate chieftaincy into the State apparatus in a subordinate position.

2.4 Internet and mobilization literature

The mobilization on the internet is an important part of the Anglophone crisis. For this reason, the literature on the interaction between the internet and political mobilization is useful for our study. Following this idea, Eric Anchimbe has studied how the francophone/Anglophone division was manifested on the blogosphere. Taking the case of blog forum, Anchimbe analyzed how these two identities were strengthened in that forum, using inclusion pronouns such as “we”, “our”, “ours”, “us”, ourselves and exclusion
pronouns. This study could serve as an important base for my research since it shows evidence of the use of the internet as way to affirm the Anglophone identity in Cameroon and potentially mobilize Anglophones around the idea of a Republic of Ambazonia.

Understanding the role of the internet in social movements in general can be useful as well for our analysis. Following this idea, Fekete and Barney (2013) studied how the distribution of information technologies and the internet have democratized the public debate in the Arab world. It analyzes how the availability of internet and social media led to the Arab spring, or the revolution 2.0. The framework provided by this study is useful for our analysis since it can help us understand how the availability of social media and internet has democratized the debate about secession among the Anglophone opinion.

Although these bodies of literature provide us a frame to analyze the emergence of secessionism in Africa in general and in Cameroon in particular, we still find some gaps to understand the dynamics of the Anglophone separatist claims. Indeed, we want to explain the variations of the sustainability and the reemergence of these claims despite a centralized power of the Biya regime. In this study I will examine the component of the network of these claims, the role of the diaspora in the rises and falls of the movement, especially in the context of the access to internet.

The following sections first show why Cameroon is a particular case of secession in Africa, as well as why it is more than an identity struggle between Anglophone and francophone populations. In order to explain that, I made a process tracing of the Cameroonian state that put in evidence the institutional grievances that led to the conflict. The process tracing method consist in tracing back the turning points, the major events and important dates of the history of Cameroon that contribute to establish the current situation.

2.5 Cameroon: A New and Exceptional Case of Secession in Africa
Cameroon is a new and exceptional case of secession in Africa for several reasons. First, it is one of the rare states to have undergone such a complex colonial experience. The country has been first colonized by Germany in 1884. After World War I, following the Paris peace conference of 1919 Cameroon becomes a territory of the league of Nations and is placed under the protection of France and Great Britain. The two colonial powers divided the territory in two parts with two different systems of administration.

![Figure 1.1 Map showing the territorial evolution of Cameroon and its Anglophone region, from the German colonization to nowadays (Human Rights Watch;2018)](image)

Unlike Nigeria, Somalia or Sudan, Cameroon is the only African state that has been split into two territories ruled by two different colonial powers at the same time, and to have
been reunified after independence. It is the only state where secession comes from this initial split. This split also involves strong historic ties with Nigeria, which has played an important role in the sociological, geographical and political configuration of the Anglophone regions today. Moreover, unlike the previous case of secession on the continent, secession in Cameroon is not based on ethno-religious cleavage. Indeed, it is based on the linguistic heritage left by the French and the British rule. After being adopted by the Cameroonian constitution as the two official languages, English and French became strong identities that shaped the feeling of belonging of Cameroonians. In other words, the Anglophones and Francophones constitute two colonially determined and language-based opposing groups. Cameroonians feel they must fit into one or the other and defend its values (Anchimbe;2018). The opposition between is one of the main axes of the Anglophone crisis today.

In the Anglophone regions as well as in the francophone regions, these two linguistic identities are superimposed with other indigenous ethnic identities that have their own indigenous language. Anthony Ndi, a Cameroonian author and scholar demonstrates the different ethnic groups in the Anglophone regions.
Yet Cameroon still has much in common with other cases of secession in Africa. Indeed, as in the previous cases, there is a struggle over resources that is also part of the conflict in Cameroon, mainly around oil. In fact, regions where secessionist movements operate have important oil fields. One of the important aspects of the Anglophone separatist claims is that the inhabitants of these region don’t benefit from the exploitation of this oil. This was the same situation with Nigeria during the Biafra war. The “Biafrais” wanted secession to have the control over oil in the region (Figaro; 2017).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>ethnic issue</th>
<th>religious issue</th>
<th>resource distribution</th>
</tr>
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<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia (Somaliland)</td>
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<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sudan (South Sudan)</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Eritrea  yes   yes   yes
Cameroon (Ambazonia)  No   No   yes

Table 1.1 Comparative table of the different cases of secession in Africa

Section III: Conflict history and process tracing of the Anglophone claims

Separatist claims in Cameroon develop from deep historical grievances. Indeed, there are key moments in the history of the Anglophone regions, formerly known as Southern Cameroon, that can explain why some Cameroonians from these regions do not feel belonging to the Cameroonian nation today. In this section, I explore the events and critical junctures that fueled the feeling of marginalization among Anglophone Cameroonians.

First, I argue that Southern Cameroonians chose to reunify with the French Cameroon following the UN plebiscite in 1961, not because of a desire to join the French Cameroon, but rather because of the discontentment of its people towards the British administration, and the influence of Nigerians in the region (Konings;2005). Second, the choice of reunification was not satisfying for Southern Cameroonians either since it didn’t give them the autonomy they were supposed to have in the federal republic of Cameroon. They felt “trapped” by the Ahidjo administration (Ndi;2013). Finally, since Paul Biya’s rule, the feeling of marginalization increased because of 35 years of unsatisfying policies and constitutional mechanisms, clientelism and the centralization of power.

To trace back these important events, I gathered information from Professor Anthony Ndi’s book entitled Southern, West Cameroon Revisited 1950-1972, which combines historical data, including the testimonies of Malcolm Milne, former Deputy Commissioner in Southern Cameroon. I also examined several journal articles from sociologist Piet Konings,
specialist in political change and regionalism in Cameroon, with a special attention on the Anglophone regions.

**The 1961 Referendum: Southern Cameroons Facing the Cameroon / Nigeria Dilemma**

The first element that fueled the Anglophone discontentment is traced back to the British colonial rule, between 1919 and 1961. Previous and current scholarship on the Anglophone crisis overlook the dynamics of the British colonial administration in the Anglophone Cameroon, and the context in which Southern Cameroons chose to reunify with French Cameroon instead of joining Nigeria as Northern Cameroons did. During this administration, the British didn’t consider the boundaries between Cameroon and Nigeria that they were also ruling. This way of administration led to a conflict of interests between Cameroonian and Nigerians especially in Southern Cameroons (Konings;2005).

Indeed, the absence of boundary between Nigeria and the British Cameroons allowed Nigerians, in particular the Igbo tribe to immigrate into Cameroon, and to settle and to take over some sectors of the economy. The Igbo developed enterprises and imposed themselves in the commercial sector. However, this dominance of the Igbo was not well received by the Southern Cameroonians. They dominated the trade market in local food stuffs and imported goods, palm oil industry, transportation. They took over the economies of cities such as Kumba, Tiko, Limbe. in the 1950s the Igbo also worked in important local industries such as the Cameroon Development Cooperation and Pamol. At that time, the Igbo constituted respectively 25-30 percent and 80 percent of the working force of these societies (Konings;2005).

This domination of Nigerians was not well received by Southern Cameroonians. According to Konings: “the Igbo became the victims of verbal and physical attacks by frustrated local inhabitants and were told to return home. They were accused, usually fancifully of every vice under the sun: bribery, corruption, narcotics etc. (Konings;2005 -
Moreover, they also felt dominated politically by the Nigerians who seemed to be a more important colony for the British. Moreover, in response to this Nigerian domination, the Southern Cameroonian started to ask for more representation in the Nigerian administration. The British authorities responded to their request by giving them a regional status among the Nigerian federation. However, with this status, the political autonomy of Southern Cameroons was limited. If they felt dominated economically by the Nigerians, they also started to have this feeling politically. They considered they were second-class citizens in the eyes of the British, and that Nigeria was the favorite territory of the colonial power. This configuration created by the British administration made gave the impression that Nigeria was the ruling colonial power in Southern Cameroons (Konings;2005).

This increase of marginalization of Southern Cameroons in the British colonial empire created an Anglophone Cameroonian nationalism, and a divided opinion regarding the future of the territory. When time came for southern Cameroonian to choose to join either Nigeria or Cameroon, they chose Cameroon because it was a way to regain their sovereignty and resist Nigerian domination in the region. At that time, Anglophone leaders in favor of the reunification followed the wind of nationalism that leaders like Um Nyobe instigated in the French Cameroon to gain independence. In 1961 following the referendum organized by the United Nations, Southern Cameroonian voted to join French Cameroon in a federal republic, while Northern Cameroons stayed with Nigeria. By making this choice Southern Cameroonian were convinced that under the federal republic of Cameroon, they could retake control of their economy and resources. They would be emancipated from the British, their colonizer and from the Nigerian Igbo domination in the region. This strategic choice shows that the desire to constitute a single nation with the French Cameroon, to go back to a single common nation seemed not to be a priority at that time. However, this choice would give rise to more discontentment a few years later (Ndi;2013).
In 1961, everything was set for the reunification between French Cameroonians and Southern Cameroonians into a federal republic in which Southern Cameroons could have the autonomy that Nigerian domination didn’t allow them to have. In July 1961, a constitutional conference was held between the delegates of French Cameroon, led by the president Ahmadou Ahidjo, and the delegates of Southern Cameroons led by the Prime Minister of Southern Cameroons, John NguFoncha. In the Anglophone opinion, this conference is considered as the foundation of the marginalization of the former Southern Cameroonians under the republic of Cameroon. It is considered as a trap made by Ahidjo and its delegates that would lead to a more centralized power of the French Cameroon government, and an increased marginalization of the Anglophones (Ndí;2013).

Indeed, during this conference, Ahidjo came with an already made constitution that ensured him to keep centralized power despite the federal configuration of the state. Moreover, according to Anthony Ndí, the British were supposed to make sure the Anglophone leadership obtained a convenient agreement to preserve their autonomy at the end of the conference. However, since they were still disappointed by the choice of the Southern Cameroonians to join Cameroun, they failed to that task. Ndí says: “It comes out that the British actually masterminded, coordinated and executed their plot to the desired end since they succeeded in ensuring that Southern Cameroon was finally transferred not to Foncha or an agreed federal body as stipulated by the United Nations but directly into the firm grips of the Ahidjo regime, which eliminated all chances of autonomy” (Ndí; 2013).

The result of this “trap” was quickly perceived in the following years, since the federalism in Cameroon was more centralized than it was supposed to be. Ngoh (2011)
qualified the Cameroonian state of that period as a “centralized federation”. Moreover, Konings adds: “federalism has not allowed parity about their cultural heritage and what they regard as their English-speaking identity. It turned out to be a transitional phase of the total integration of the English-speaking region into a highly centralized unitary state”. (Konings;1995).

In 1972, the federation of Cameroon will disappear to be replaced by a unitary decentralized state. In fact, “Between 1966 and 1970 the ground work for the unitary system was laid and in 1972 a referendum was held to decide on the transformation of the Federal Republic into a unitary state, the United Republic of Cameroon” (Tiewa& Vudo;2015). A referendum was organized by the Ahidjo government in 1972 to vote in favor or against a new constitution that was changing the Cameroonian state from a federal to a unitary state. Some Anglophone activists challenged the conditions in which the vote occurred. They argue that the referendum violated the of the federal constitution that prohibited any revision without an approval from most deputies from the federated state of west Cameroon. They go further by adding that the climate of terror of the Ahidjo regime did not favor an open debate regarding this new constitution and this new form of the Cameroonian state (Tiewa& Vudo;2015).

At the end of the day, like during the British colonial rule, the Anglophone leadership and population ended up unsatisfied, subordinated and with a feeling being second-class citizens. However, the feeling of marginalization of the Anglophones increased in the 1990s, fostering the creation of more radical Anglophone movements such as separatist movements.
In the 1980s, globalization and the effect of the structural adjustment plans caused the Anglophones to worry about their economy. The francophone Cameroonians elite dominate in politics and in the economic sector. For instance, the main petroleum enterprises, the SONARA that is in the Anglophone regions in Limbe is ruled by a francophone. The Anglophones feel that their economy will be affected by these important changes and, by the dominance of the francophone elite. In 1985, an important Anglophone lawyer Fon Gorji Dinka has been arrested after pointing out this new form of marginalization and calling for the independence of the Southern Cameroons, for the birth of Ambazonia\(^1\).

In the 1990s, a wind of political liberation blows on the African continent. This also takes effect in Cameroon. This context gave the occasion to many Anglophone political parties and associations to be created. The Social Democratic Front is created in 1990 with

\(^1\)Ambazonia is a term derived from the word Ambas Bay, a bay considered to be the natural boundary of the former Republique du Cameroun and Southern Cameroons. The name was coined in 1984 by a group led by FonGorji Dinka, who unilaterally declared the ‘Republic of Ambazonia’ an independent state that would have comprised all Anglophone Cameroon regions, Northwest and Southwest Cameroon. The term was taken up again after the 2016 events by pro-independence actors wishing to reassert their identity and separate the Anglophone regions from the rest of Francophone Cameroon.
John Nfuru Ndi as president. The party became quickly popular in the Anglophone regions, and all over Cameroon. In the 1992 presidential elections, the SDF realized a score of 86.3% in the Northwest and 51.6% in the Southwest. This score shows the popularity of this party in the Anglophone regions. The victory of the CPDM was highly contested this year. The Anglophones considered it as a stolen victory, and that increased their anger.

Moreover, still following this era of political liberalism, several radical movements emerged. The Ambazonia movement was one of them. Other groups such as the Cameroon Anglophone Movement (CAM), the All Anglophone Congress (AAC) also emerge and are promoting federalism rather than secession (Konings;1996).

In 1993, all the different Anglophone movement and associations reunited as a single conference to submit some to the Cameroonian government. Moreover, the association of this movement will also mobilize the international community. They submitted requests to the UN, to raise awareness about their situation. They tried to rally the Anglophone countries to their cause so that they could advocate for them and put pressure to the Biya government. However, their requests never had response (Konings;1996).

Having traced the origins of the Anglophone claims, we understand what the grievances of the separatist movement are and in partly why it is more than an identity struggle. The claims evolved over time and reemerged in different context every time. In the next section, I will develop in which context the Anglophone claims reemerged in 2016 and present the actors this new form of the conflict engages.

3.2 Conflict Mapping of the Anglophone Crisis:

3.2.a Conflict Context and Complexity
The Anglophone crisis must be understood on various levels. Although the origins of the Anglophone separatist movements and claims are traced back between the 1970s and the 1990s, they reemerged in a precarious socio economic and political context in Cameroon. In an interview with the magazine Sputnik, Achille Mbembe underlines the social and political precarity in which the crisis occurs. He says: *This Central African country faces a triple threat. In the Far North, his troops are still engaged in a bitter war, despite notable successes, against Boko Haram terrorists* (Sputnik online; 2018). He adds that as a border of a Central African Republic struggling to regain its stability after the civil war, the East of Cameroon suffers the repercussions of the clashes, still ongoing, between different Central African armed groups.

In addition to the security matters, there is an important social crisis. Social services are less efficient, and the unemployment rate has increased over time (Sputnik;2018). Yet, because of this context, the Anglophone crisis engages multiple actors with different interest at the local, regional and international level. First at the local level, this crisis occurs while Paul Biya has already totalized 35 years of power. The political status quo created by his long rule has had important political and economic consequences that encouraged the escalation of the conflict. Moreover, with 2018 elections, the crisis represents an important electoral issue for Biya’s party, the CPDM, as well as for its opponents.

At the regional level, the crisis in the Northwestern and Southwestern regions involves Nigeria which is also affected by the crisis, as a border country to Cameroon. Nigeria is also an important factor in the history of the Anglophone Cameroon because a part of this region, the former Northern Cameroon, joined the country following a referendum organized by the UN in 1961. Since the conflict started, the separatist leaders have been arrested in Abuja. The Nigerian authorities reaffirmed their will to help the Cameroonian government fight separatism. Cameroon and Nigeria are also cooperating to fight against
Boko Haram. The terrorist group has extended its influence in the Extreme North of Cameroon.

Finally, at the international level, France USA and the UN already stated their positions about the crisis and are also worried about the transition of power in Cameroon. The following conflict mapping further develops the context in which separatist claims reemerged in 2016. It shows the contemporary actors to consider in the development or resolution of the conflict, and the interests of these different actors.

3.2.b Conflict Parties

A. Primary:

According to Wher (1979), the Primary parties of the conflict are the one whose goals are, or are perceived by them to be, incompatible and who interact directly in pursuit of those respective goals. Where the conflict parties are organizations or groups, each may be composed of smaller units differing in their involvement and investment in the conflict. In the case of the Anglophone crisis, the primary parties are the Ambazonia separatist movements and the Cameroonian government.

Ambazonia separatist movements: The Anglophone separatist claims reemerged in 2016, following the lack of actions from the government towards the peaceful manifestations of Anglophone teachers and lawyers. It has important support among the diaspora. According to the website of the movement, there are about 2 million Ambazonians in the diaspora. If the separatists seem to be in favor of the creation of a Republic of Ambazonia, the opinion is fragmented through different movements. The following are the one that have been identified.

The Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) is the historical political party that advocates for the creation of the Republic of Ambazonia. The party is the main platform of
the Ambazonia movement. The SCNC is currently ruled by Dr Sako Ikome Daniel, since the former leader, Sissuku Ayuk Tabe has been arrested in Abuja, and is still detained in Cameroon (Africa News;2018). Since 1995, this political party has been prohibited by the Cameroonian government since it advocates for secession. The party joined its forces with the Southern Cameroons Ambazonia Consortium United Front. This other group is in favor of pacific negotiations to obtain independence. However, it is hard to say that the party did not use violence since the beginning of the conflict. In his first address as new leader, Dr Sakome announced that it was time for the movement to promote self-defense, therefore allowing the movement to use armed methods for claims. Sakome said:

“We are therefore going to work to accredit and embrace all self-defense and security groups that will endorse our IG rules of engagement. I will be reaching out to all in the days ahead,”
(Africa News;2018)

![Figure 3.1: Julius Sisiku Ayuk Tabe; separatist leader arrested in Abuja, Nigeria. Behind him, the Ambazonia flag (Jeune Afrique; 2018)](image)

**The Ambazonia Recognition Collaboration Council (ARCC)** Ruled by Cho Ayaba and Ebenezer Akwanga, two former syndicalist students of the university of Buea in exile, this group assembles multiple armed self-defense groups, such as the Ambazonia Defense Force
(ADF), Southern Cameroons Defense Forces (Socadef). These groups claim to be the authors of several attacks in the region. They also tried to ally with other self-defense groups of the region such as the Tigers of Ambazonia, the Ambazonia Restauration Army, Ambaland Forces. Regarding the way, the group operates, Ayaba said:

“We have a block defense strategy: every village, every group of young people can stand up for Ambazonia, and we will be ready to help them”

(Jeune Afrique;2018)

**Cameroonian government (CPDM):** The Cameroonian government is against secession. For the president Paul Biya, the Anglophone separatists are outlaws, terrorists. In an interview, talking about the Anglophone separatists, Biya claimed that “Cameroon is victim of a group of terrorists that pretend to be an independentist movement” (Jeune Afrique; 2018). Since the beginning of the crisis, the reaction of the Biya government evolved, allying at the same time political and military solutions. Following the manifestations of October 2016 of the teachers and lawyers, the government had responded by creating a commission for multiculturalism and bilingualism and by nominating some Anglophones at strategic administrative positions. However, the consecutive failures of negotiations, the multiplication of attacks in the region quickly made the government engage the army in the conflict. Moreover, since the protests increased in the region, the response of the government to demonstration became increasingly violent. According to Human Rights Watch, government security forces responded abusively to the demonstrations in large cities like Buea, Kumba, including the use of live ammunition against protesters, killing over 20 people wounding scores of civilians and arresting hundreds (Human Rights Watch; 2018). Since the beginning of the conflict, soldiers, civilians, clergy members, activists have been victim of the fight between the government and the separatist armed groups. Recently, Videos have emerged
from the region, some purportedly showing families being massacred, others detailing the
experience of a woman who claims to have been raped in government custody, and others
documenting beatings and humiliation (Mail & Guardian; 2018).

The Biya government and the CPDM is also worried about the influence of the Anglophone
crisis on the coming elections. Indeed, the instability of these regions discredits Paul Biya,
who has officially declared his intention to run for one more term as president. The
opposition also use his incapacity to manage and handle the crisis to encourage the people to
vote for a new president in the presidential elections of October 7th. In early 2018, the
opposition has described Biya’s state record as “chaotic” (Africa News; 2018).

B. secondary:

The secondary parties of the conflict are the one who have an indirect stake in the outcome of
the dispute but who do not feel themselves to be directly involved. As the conflict evolves,
the secondary can become primary and vice-versa. (Wehr;1979)

Nigeria:

Nigeria is an important factor in the conflict for many reasons. First, as we mentioned earlier
this country has strong historical ties with Cameroon. Indeed, since the beginning of the
British colonization, there has always been a lot of migrations and trade between Nigeria and
the Anglophone region. Since the beginning of the conflict, these migrations and trade
dynamics have been deeply affected. Indeed, the biggest traders in the region, originally from
Nigeria, who have traditionally run in the region went back to their home country for safety
reasons. Moreover, victims of the conflict are also fleeing to Nigeria. According to the
UNHCR, the numbers of Cameroonians seeking asylum in Nigeria has doubled since mid-
January. About 20,000 refugees have been registered in some states such as Cross River,
Taraba, Benue, Akwa-Ibom. The Nigerian government is against the presence of separatist on
its territory. Indeed, the government has manifested his non-approbation of the Anglophone
separatist movement by arresting about 40 separatists on its soil on January 2018 (Africa News; 2018). The position of the Nigerian State is understandable since it has been struggling with separatism in the Southeast part of its territory, with the secession of the former “Biafra” republic, which shared a border with the Anglophone region. The instability of the Anglophone regions and the proliferation of criminal armed groups at across this border could recreate an instability in Southeast Nigeria. Recently Ben Ayade, the Governor of the Cross-River State in Nigeria expressed his concerns about the instability that the Anglophone crisis brings in Nigeria. He claimed that: “80 percent of security issues we are dealing with is a result of the war just by our borders”. There is an influx of persons into Nigeria through over 27 illegal routes, who smuggle in goods of different kinds, sell them and use the money to acquire arms, recruit our young men and women and use them as machineries to fight back home,”

However, Ayade complained about the lack of assistance of the Nigerian government to face the humanitarian and security challenge in the Cross-River State. According to the latest UNHCR report, ninety-five per cent (95%) of the asylum seekers have no more than three days of food. Most families are down to one meal per day. The coping strategies people are using are themselves risky. The implication of Nigeria is certainly important to consider for the future developments of the conflict. If Nigeria and Cameroon are currently cooperating to put an end to the threat of Boko Haram in the far North, they must intensify this cooperation for the stability of the frontier between the Anglophone regions and the management of the crisis. In the last chapter of this essay, we will further develop in the final chapter of this essay. We will explore what have already been done by the two countries, what are the obstacles of this cooperation, and what kind of routes and solutions could emerge from such a mutualization of efforts.
Figure 3.2 Map of the former republic of Biafra, established by secessionists in Southeast Nigeria in the 1960s (Le Figaro;2017)

Opposition political parties: SDF, PDF, CRM

In the context of the upcoming presidential elections of October 7th, some political parties of the opposition can be considered as actors in the evolution of the Anglophone crisis. Indeed, we identified here 3 main political parties that took a stand about the conflict in the Anglophone regions. Our interest in these political parties also relies on the background of their candidates, which involves historic ties with the region, its people and its surroundings.

Social Democratic Front (SDF):
Founded in 1990 in Bamenda, this political party was created following the Anglophone frustration towards the dominant francophone political elite, and the era of political liberalization of the 1990’s. Formerly ruled by the charismatic leader John Fru Ndi, this party has always been the direct opposition to the CPDM. The SDF used to be the main defender of the Anglophone claims. However, with time, some Anglophones claimed that the party became more a national party than an Anglophone party. Since the beginning of the conflict the SDF has been putting pressure on the Biya government to break its silence and to adopt a dialogue with the Anglophone protesters. Nonetheless, the party is against the secession of the region. Following the election of its new president Joshua Oshi who is also candidate at the national presidential election of October, the party affirmed thinking about federalism to put an end to the Anglophone discontentment.

On November 26th, 2017, John FruNdi met with the president of the Anglophone civil society consortium, AgborBalla, Simon Munzu and Prince Ekosso to discuss about potential peaceful solutions and to create a national dialogue. As the main opposition party to the CPDM, the SDF do not hesitate to point out the Biya’s incapacity to handle the crisis. The discontentment of the Anglophone over the years and the reemergence of the crisis is one of the main arguments the party uses to discredit the current administration. As we mentioned earlier in our process tracing of the Anglophone grievances, the popularity of the SDF has always been at its summit when Anglophone claims emerged. However, it will be interesting to know if there is a certitude that such a phenomenon reproduces for the upcoming presidential elections.

**The People’s Development Front (PDF)**

The PDF is a new party in the Cameroonian political landscape. This is initially a movement named NOW which brings together civil society associations and other political parties. Its president and candidate are Akere Muna is originally from the Anglophone regions and is the
son of a former Prime minister of the Anglophone region, Salomon Tabeng Muna. Anglophone lawyer and figure of the fight against corruption, he kept a long distance from politics, but decided, at age 65, to embark on the race. Akere Muna has great influence abroad, thanks to his experience at Transparency International, where he was vice-president, or to his former positions as president of the Pan African Lawyers Union (UPA) and of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the African Union. (Jeune Afrique; 2018)

As the other opposition political parties, the PDF is worried about taking down the Biya government and the system it established. Its candidate Akere Muna has expressed its will to focus on the fight against corruption, unemployment and clientelism. Moreover, the candidate also shared its concern about the transparency and the viability of the upcoming elections. He stated that he wanted to have at least 15 members of his team in each of the 30000 polling stations in order to ensure the fairness of the vote (Jeune Afrique; 2018)

The Anglophone crisis have a meaning for Akere Muna. Indeed, coming from the Anglophone regions he positions himself as the candidate who is more able to understand the Anglophone claims. In an interview with Jeune Afrique, Muna said “The only person that can handle the secessionists is an Anglophone president”. The candidate clearly positioned himself against separatism, and as Joshua Oshi, the candidate of the SDF, he is in favor for a national dialogue to solve the conflict.

**The Cameroon Renaissance Movement (CRM)**

Founded in 2012 and led by Maurice Kamto, a former CPDM member and government officer, the CRM is relatively popular in the West Cameroon. Former Minister of Justice (2004-2011), Maurice Kamto, eminent law professor is known to have overseen the settlement of the dispute between his country and Nigeria over the Bakassi peninsula. Few times after its creation, the party expressed its concerns regarding the Anglophone claims and the tumultuous relationship the Anglophone population had with the Cameroonian
government. Unfortunately, according to Kamto, the government did not listen to the alarm bell of the MRC, and in November 2016, the "Anglophone crisis" broke out. Since the outbreak of the crisis, the President of the Republic, which, by the Constitution, is the embodiment of national unity, guardian of the Constitution, guarantor of the integrity of the territory, the permanence and the continuity of the State, should have gone to the Regions concerned to reassure the population, to listen directly to their demands in order to provide the most appropriate solutions to their malaise in the Nation. As the other opposition leaders, Kamto uses the incapacity of Biya to handle the crisis as a strong argument to discredit him and his government. As solutions to solve the crisis the CRM proposes to create a political delegation which includes clergy members, traditional chiefs, and parliament representatives who will have for mission to establish a dialogue between the population of the Anglophone regions and the government.

As we can see the major opposition parties and political leaders have a common goal which is to put an end to the rule of Biya. They are all for the creation of a national dialogue in order to manage the conflict. After the release of the official date for the elections, the some of the opposition leaders mentioned their intention to make a coalition to be able to take down the popularity of the CPDM. However, these intentions have not been concertized with actions yet. Recently asked to build an opposition coalition with Maurice Kamto (CRM) and Akere Muna (PDF), the candidate Joshua Osih, native of Kumba preferred to decline. (Jeune Afrique; 2018).
Figure 3.3 List of the official candidates for the presidential elections of October 7th

C. Interested third parties:

The interested third parties are the one who have an interest in the successful resolution of the conflict. In the context of the Anglophone crisis we can identify the UN, the US, the UK as some fitting in that category.

International community.

The Anglophone crisis clearly caught the attention of the international community. From the beginning of the crisis, the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres manifested his concerns about the situation in the region. He has called for the government to initiate a national debate and look at the deep roots of the problem. Guterres has said the UN is against secession and
that the integrity and the unity of the territory is important. Moreover, this position of the UN is understandable since according to Sonia Le Goriellec\(^2\), even if the international community recognizes the right to self-determination, it usually prefers political autonomy rather than secession when separatist claims occurs in a state. Nonetheless, in the case of Cameroon, the UN is also against secession because the organization wants to respect the outcome of the plebiscite it organized in 1961, which was the reunification of the Anglophone Cameroon with the French Cameroon.

*The United States* also stated its position and concerns regarding the conflict. Indeed, the US firmly condemned the human rights violations\(^3\). The country also urged the Cameroonian and Nigerian authorities to adhere their obligations under international law to refrain from forcible returns to asylum-seekers back to their country of origin, especially the asylum-seekers currently in Nigeria. In early May 2018, the US ambassador in Cameroon expressed his concerns about the reaction of the government in the crisis. He denounced a "policy of targeted killings", "arrests without access to a lawyer, the family or the Red Cross", as well as the existence of "villages burned and looted by the government" in the English-speaking area. The ambassador also denounced, the violence of the separatists, stressing the "killings of gendarmes, kidnappings of officials and fires of schools" (Jeune Afrique; 2018).

The US have interests that the instability in Cameroon might compromise. Indeed, since 1960, the United States and Cameroon are working closely in important fields such as that address democracy and governance, regional security, environmental protection, health, and

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\(^3\) US State Department website: https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2018/02/277988.htm
economic development. The two countries are also commercial partners and have signed free trade agreements such as the Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT)\(^4\).

The US is not the only country to express its concerns about the Anglophone crisis. The conflict has also caught the attention of the United Kingdom. The issue has been raised in the House of Commons by MP Jessica Morden, who has traveled in the region. She expressed her concern about the situation of the refugees fleeing in Nigeria. The minister for Africa, responded by reaffirming the position of the UK, which is to promote dialog in the conflict as well as the end of violence in the region (Africa news; 2017)\(^5\). Some British companies have an interest in the stability of the Anglophone regions. Indeed, in 2015, the energetic group Tower Resources has signed a partnership with the National Hydrocarbons Society to share the benefits of the oil exploitation of the Rio Del Rey Basin, around the southwestern region of Cameroon.

Finally, a couple of NGOs are on the field trying to put pressure on the Biya government to stop the violence occurring in the region and to protect people’s Human rights and propose peaceful solutions. Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, International Crisis Group are a couple of them.

We can observe that among the international community, secession is not an option. The stability and the dialog are proposed as solutions for two reasons which are the respect of territorial integrity, human rights and peace promoted by international law, and the protection of some economic interests in the regions.

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\(^4\) Office of the United States trade Representative website: https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/africa/cameroon

Section IV: Research design, methodology and case selection

The aim of my research is to study two overlooked aspects of the Anglophone crisis, which are the role of the diaspora and the internet. Indeed, the existing knowledge on the problem focuses on the fight between the Anglophone and francophone identities, and the role of the Cameroonian government in this struggle. If the role of the diaspora and the internet has been mentioned in many news articles about the problem, scholars haven’t fully explored these major aspects of the conflict. My study analyze the organizational relationship between the diaspora and the protest groups on the ground. It is an attempt to verify if there is a link between the mobilization on the internet led by the diaspora and the actions of the different groups currently protesting in Cameroon.
The overall of my research combines interviews of Cameroonians originally and non-originally from the Anglophone region, an immersion in the Facebook sphere of the Anglophone separatist movements, and a content and discourse analysis. The goal of this research methods was to verify the two hypothesis that guide my research:

1) The Anglophone separatists’ movements receive an important support from the Cameroonian diaspora, which helps them sustain over time

2) The internet is a bridge between this diaspora and the forces that are fighting on the ground, ensuring the communication, and the logistical support needed.

Also, by allying the interviews to my immersion in the internet sphere of the movement my goals were to compare the narratives on the ground to the one on the internet social media.

4.1 Interviews

The interviews of my research were conducted face to face. In case a participant could not meet, a phone interview was made. The face-to face interviews were made in public spaces, namely coffee shops, work offices, universities, hotel lounges. I conducted the interviews among the Cameroonians living in the country and the one from the diaspora living outside the country. The interviews were conducted in Cameroon in cities like Douala, Yaoundé, Buea and in the United States in San Francisco and the Bay Area. My interview participants were man and woman that are at least aged 21. I reached out to my participants using a snowball method, in other words, by taking contact with one that could connect me to others.

Since the topic is currently sensitive in the country, I made my participant read a consent form that was clearly explaining the purpose of the study and that guaranteed that the data I will collect will be used exclusively for the purpose of the study, and that their identity will be protected. Yet, some of the participants leaving outside the country were not exposed to any risk of deportation since they have another nationality and they legally beneficiate from the protection of the country they live in. Nonetheless some of my participants manifested the
will to have their identity revealed in the study, so that their voices and opinions about the conflict could be heard. Moreover, since I couldn’t go in Buea (in the Anglophone region), because I was not in possession of a Cameroonian national identity card, I hired a PhD student of the university of Buea to whom I sent my questionnaire and who did 3 interviews in the city for me. He followed the rules of procedure I established for my research and that I mentioned earlier in this section. He audio-recorded the interviews so that I was able to verify the procedure was clearly followed and that the participants genuinely stated their willingness to contribute to the study.

Using open-ended questions the following themes were discussed: a general introduction of the participant, and his background, his perception of the crisis in general, of the diaspora, the Anglophone political mobilization, and the internet in the conflict. With their written and verbal consent, the interviews were audio-recorded in order to preserve the accuracy of the responses. The interviews lasted approximately one hour. Some of my participants accepted to be audio-recorded, others choose to have an informal conversation during in which I could take notes to gather relevant elements and quotes from the conversation.

After realizing my interviews, I transcribed them and did a content analysis of the transcripts. Indeed, in each transcript I categorized the statements of my participants into the following themes: Diaspora, Internet, armament, funding, military organization, political organization, fragmented organization, cohesive organization, government’s reaction, other

The goal of this categorization was to identify if my participants could validate or invalidate the hypothesis that the separatist’s claims were supported by Cameroonians outside the country and from where. I also wanted to capture if they have a sense on how the movement is organized and which role the internet plays in that structure. How can they be in possession of weapons? How do they coordinate their operations on the field? Is there a link between the
propaganda on social media and the actions of the armed groups on the field? Who are the main leaders and movements?

**Findings**

My participants were from different backgrounds. I conducted semi-structured interviews with key informants with specialized knowledge of the Anglophone crisis. They included journalists, activists, and other members of civil society working on peacebuilding and other efforts in Cameroon. Some had English as first language, others had French as a first language. Some were originally from the Anglophone region, some were not. Some were directly politically involved, some others not. From all the 10 interviews I conducted, 6 participants accepted to be audio-recorded and provided me relevant elements regarding my hypothesis. Without revealing further details that could help identify my participant, I provide below this is an explanation of each profile because the positionality and the background of each participant matters to understand his/her opinion about the crisis.

**Participant 1:** Is a francophone Cameroonian who lives in Douala. He went to college in Nigeria and in the Anglophone region. He travels constantly between Nigeria and the Anglophone regions. He seemed to have an important knowledge of the area. Because of his work, he can hear about the crisis in his daily life. Following this idea, he did a lot of field investigation regarding the conflict. He is not for secession.

**Participant 2:** Is a francophone Cameroonian, originally from the French side of the country who used to live in Canada for studies, but who went back to Cameroon for professional reasons. His experience and knowledge of the crisis is based on the situation he lives as
member of an opposition party, and on his conversations with his close friends. He is not for secession.

**Participant 3:** Is an Anglophone Cameroonian researcher, who was born and raised in the Anglophone region, but who lived in Yaoundé, in the francophone side of the country for his studies. His knowledge of the conflict comes from his personal experience. He is for a pacific secession.

**Participant 4:** Is an Anglophone Cameroonian born and raised in the Anglophone region. He has always lived in the Anglophone region, more precisely in Buea. He is claims to be in favor of secession, but through a democratic way.

**Participant 5:** Participant 5 is an Anglophone Cameroonian born in the Anglophone region, living in the francophone region in Douala. he is not for secession, despite having lived he is for federalism.

**Participant 6:** Is an Anglophone Cameroonian born and raised in the Anglophone region. He is for a peaceful secession

**Participant 7:** is a francophone Cameroonian who was born and raised in Yaoundé but who studied in Buea. He is not for secession

**Participant 8:** is also a francophone Cameroonian, was also born and raised in Yaoundé, never left the city and is against secession.

**Participant 9:** Is a francophone Cameroonian historian. Born and raised in Douala in the francophone region. He is against secession
Participant 10: Is a francophone Cameroonian born and raised in the Est region on the francophone side of the country. He is against secession.

The interview questions asked can be found in the following table. During the conversations I also asked some follow-up questions depending in the responses of the participants that are not on the sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview questions sample</th>
<th>Relation with Cameroon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) From which region/province of Cameroon are you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Is English or French your first language?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Political engagement and perception the Anglophone cause:**

4) Do you have any political engagement inside or outside the country related to Cameroon? If yes, tell me more about it.
5) How did hear about the Anglophone crisis? And what do you think about the current situation?
6) What do you think about the conflict and how does it influence your daily life?
7) Do you support the independence of the Anglophone regions? why?
8) Do you have any relatives in these regions?
9) Are you familiar with the history, structure, and organization of the movement for Ambazonia? Can you explain?
10) Have you ever heard about a support from Cameroonian outside the country to the separatist cause?

**Communication strategies**

11) Since the beginning of the crisis, we have seen a couple of internet cuts in the Anglophone regions. According to you, what is the role of the internet in the Anglophone struggle?
12) yes, which one?

13) Do you have any alternatives to communicate with the people in the Anglophone regions or the movement for Ambazonia?

Multiple themes were discussed during the interviews, however I put an emphasis on the role of the diaspora and the internet during the conversations. This diagram is a breakdown of
these different themes. It shows how many conversations covered each theme, and how I coded the different themes in my transcripts for more efficiency.

![Diagram showing the themes discussed during the interviews]

**Figure 4.1: Diagram showing the themes discussed during the interviews**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>First language</th>
<th>For secession?</th>
<th>from the NW/SW?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participant 2</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1.a The Diaspora

Only 40% of my interview participants tend to be sure about the support of the diaspora and its role as principal actors of mobilization around Anglophone separatism. However, within the 60% left, nobody totally denied the idea. Some participants preferred to skip the question because of a lack of information, or just said they were not aware about it. In the range of participants who recognized the role of the diaspora, they seem to all agree about their role in the virtual mobilization on social media. For instance, for participant 1, the role of Anglophone diaspora is to operationalize the existence of the virtual Republic of Ambazonia. They make Ambazonia exist on all social media, Facebook, WhatsApp etc. (participant 1 interview; 15:20)’’.

During our conversation, he mentioned that Cameroonians in the US, the UK, and in Nigeria tend to spread hatred messages on social media, disinformation in order to encourage population on the field to join armed groups and fight for the independence of the
Anglophone region. Giving an example to prove his statement, he declared: “they send manipulated videos of UN peacekeepers in Buea, and all, but we know the UN peacekeepers do not arrive at Buea without resolution. When we look at WhatsApp conversations, they announce a lot of things that do not exist, and that's what motivates all the small groups on the ground waiting for the reinforcements (Participant 1 Interview; 16:30)”

However, according to him, despite the virtual mobilization they achieve, they remain disconnected to the reality of the field. Some Cameroonians outside the country improvise themselves as military chiefs without even knowing about military strategy, or without knowing the composition of the groups they motivate.

I didn’t identify any language expressing hesitation, or doubt in the statements of participant 1 regarding involvement of the diaspora. He seemed convinced of his affirmations. Moreover, he positionality as an investigative journalist during the crisis seemed to give him legitimacy to make such declarations.

Participant 2 also confirmed the tendency of Cameroonians outside the country to support separatism and seemed to have an insight of what motivates their “radicalization”. During a trip in Washington D.C this participant encountered and discuss with several Anglophone Cameroonians living in the area and realized how much the opinions were in favor of separatism, in favor of the creation of the Republic of Ambazonia. He says: “In February I went for personal reasons in Washington D.C and took the opportunity to prepare the visit Me Akere Muna who visited in May. And that's where I realized how much our diaspora was really radicalized, for the secession. (Participant 2 Interview; 20:36)
I followed up on this statement by asking why, according to him the opinion of the diaspora seemed to be radicalized and according to him, the ignorance and increasing violence of the government towards the Anglophone protesters: “The speech I've heard that has come back even now is to say that the first leaders who were imprisoned were moderate people who preached federalism, who spoke out in dialogue. The government did not want to open the door to a reflection on the organization of the State, to put these leaders in prison and thus those who remained in prison succeeded in radicalizing the local populations”. (Participant 2 interview; 21:00).

According to him, the radicalization of some Anglophone Cameroonians living outside the country is due to a frustration towards the government, that is intensified by the killings. He argued that Today these brothers of the diaspora and these local brothers have lost brothers have lost sisters and do not have the impression that the government reaches out to them, and therefore do not find themselves really in this Cameroonian nation.” (Participant 2 interview; 22:08)

However, participant 4 provided more distance regarding the involvement of the diaspora. Using a language reflecting doubts and hesitation, he said:

I think that I don’t have enough proof of that because it is social media that have brought the diaspora supporting the Ambazonia movements, financially, military and so on. But there is many false information on social media. Nothing that I have seen on social media concerning the support of Ambazonia is the true record of what I think is happening. (Participant 4 interview; 15:13)
Even if I couldn’t gather enough evidence regarding the involvement of the diaspora in the Anglophone struggle, due to a limit of time and due, this hypothesis remains important and must be further explore in future studies. As I previously mentioned, even if some participants didn’t respond to the question, they didn’t deny the idea.

4.1.b Disinformation on Social Media

100% of my participants considered that the internet, especially social media such as Facebook, as a core element in the Anglophone mobilization and in the intensification of the conflict. For all of them, the internet and social media are used by separatists to spread hatred and disinformation. Using affirmative sentences, and without any language of hesitation, Participant 4 pointed out the mediatic manipulations, and the fake news about the Anglophone region that circulate on Facebook. For him, The internet has been used as a mean to incite or instigate more riots in the two Anglophone regions. This is in the sense that more often, people can pick pictures of issues that are happening elsewhere and paste it on the internet, making people believe it is happening villages in Cameroon. (Participant 4 interview; 20:16). For participant 2, the use of internet and the mediatic manipulation is not only done by separatists. It is used by the three major parties of the conflict which are the government, the separatist, and the people in favor of federalism. First, the government uses social media to show how the police are attacked. For example, when there is a gendarme who is killed, the government uses social media to show how much they are dealing with secessionist terrorist, barbarians (Participant 2 interview;
On the separatist side, extremists amplify their messages and are especially mischievous to use videos that are not shot in Cameroon. He found videos that came from Rwanda and Cote d'Ivoire that were used to show that the Cameroonian army is killing people. And then in the middle there are the moderates who try to convey a message of appeasement. (Participant 2 interview; 27:00)

For participant 1 internet and social media is a way to inform and coordinate and the secessionists groups. According to him, it is on the social media that they communicate. Fake news is shared through audio messages, video messages through WhatsApp groups, Facebook groups. In the same vein, the shared information helps keep build and maintain the Ambazonian mythology. (Participant 1 interview; 15:15)

Internet and social media have not only served as platforms for the spreading of disinformation. my participant also considered the positive impact of this technology. Participant 4 also considered social media as a tool to raise awareness about the conflict and to alert villagers to leave their villages before they are attacked. It has fostered the dialog between people. People are aware about what is discussed. It has exposed a lot of hidden documents, documents that concern the history of the Anglophones (participant 4 interview; 19:33).

I decided to verify these affirmations about social media by doing an anonymous immersion in separatist Facebook groups. I will present my findings in the next section. Other themes such as the perception of the crisis, the military organization of the movement or the regional dynamic of the conflict also came out of my conversations with my participants.
4.1.5 The Cameroon and Nigeria relations in the Anglophone crisis

Talking about the dynamics of the conflict in general, some participants claimed that the border of the region with Nigeria has always been the ground for high criminality. Participant 1 who conducted investigations in the region claimed that the conflict gave more opportunity to criminal groups to continue activities such as drug and oil trafficking. Indeed, according to this participant, the accessibility and the lack of security at the border between Cameroon and Nigeria is a factor to consider in the increase of killings and kidnappings in the regions. He claimed that probably some criminal groups that are operating between Cameroon and Nigeria are using the Anglophone political struggle to enrich themselves. He said “when the supposed separatists kidnap people, they ask for money to the government. Which political group does this kind of things? You clearly see that some of them are just criminals that try to make money”. He also explained the closeness of south east Nigeria which has faced separatist struggles in the 1960s to the Anglophone region is another factor that the State should take in consideration, because it could play a role in the dynamics of the conflict.

Participant 10, also expressed some concerns about how the relationship between Cameroon and Nigeria plays into the current conflict in the Anglophone region. According to this participant, “You can’t think about handling the Anglophone crisis, and even the future of Cameroon without thinking about Nigeria”. (Participant 10 interview; 17:15) He said that the two countries have always been in territorial conflict in the surroundings of the Guinea Gulf and the Anglophone region because of oil, fight over the Bakassi peninsula is one example of these struggle. He added that if the Anglophone region becomes independent, Cameroon will
lose the control over oil and will be vulnerable in front of the neighboring Nigeria, who could take advantage of this situation in many points.

4.d. Fragmented military and political organization of the Anglophone separatist movement

All Cameroonians supporting the Anglophone separatist movement seem to agree on the idea of the creation of the Republic of Ambazonia. However, the separatist movement seem not to have a single consensual political structure. When asked if they were familiar with the political structure of the movement, Participant 5, 3, 4 and 1 claimed that it was unclear. According to them the leadership is fragmented, and there are multiple small political groups. The different politic groups also seem not to agree on the way to achieve the independence. Some of them are in favor of a political and pacific dialog, and others prefer an armed revolution.

The military organization is also fragmented according to the participants. Indeed, there are multiple armed groups on the ground that seem not to be operating or coordinating together. In addition, participant 1 explained that these groups are not always led by individuals with military experience. He mentioned that they are sometimes led by Cameroonians who live outside the country and who have no sense of what is happening on the ground. He also mentioned that the weapons in possession of the groups are weapons coming from former Niger Delta soldiers or from Cameroonian soldiers dead during assaults. (Participant 1 interview)
I found the declarations of my participants about the organization interesting. Even if they didn’t provide enough insights to have a full knowledge of the dynamics of the movement, these claims must be considered. The fragmentation of the movement could be one of the reasons why the different political negotiations that the movement made with the government over the years have not produced concrete resolutions.

4.2 Facebook groups content analysis

The use of internet in the Anglophone struggle and the Anglophone identity building has been previously studied by Anchimbe. Indeed, in his article *Digital Narratives as Anglophone or Francophone in a Cameroon Online News Forum*, the author describes patterns of belonging to the historical (colonial) linguistic in-group Anglophone and out-group francophone in Cameroon in an online news forum named *The Post Newspaper*. The author focused on the use of eight plural pronouns and how they index in-group or out-group belonging. According to Anchimbe, four of the pronouns, we, our, us and ourselves are used inclusively to create a solid Anglophone in-group through the narration of a common (colonial) history, linguistic background (the use of English) and experiences. The other four, they, them, their and themselves refer predominantly to francophone as an out-group that must be differentiated from the close-knit Anglophone in-group. Achimbe’s study in some way serves us as evidence showing how the internet might have been used to strengthen the Anglophone/francophone division over the years.
Since the beginning of the conflict, the Anglophone separatist groups are spread out on the internet sphere. As Anchimbe, we want to capture the digital dynamics of the conflict and the Anglophone claims. Following Manuel Castell’s theory which states that social movements operate through networks to bring social change. Castells argues that these networks can be constituted by different stakeholders such as the media, I tried to identify the mediatic/internet network of the Anglophone separatist movements and groups. I have identified, 4
principal sectors, of the internet in which the separatist claims are being formulated: The Ambazonia Republic website, ambagov.org, the Ambazonia YouTube Channel, The Ambazonia Facebook groups, and some international media.

For the purpose of this study, and because of the time allowed for it, I choose to focus only on Facebook. Moreover, on this platform, we can find content coming from the other spheres of expressions of the movement previously mentioned above. Indeed, On Facebook, we can find content coming from the YouTube channel of the movement, the websites etc.

Facebook sphere:
A lot of groups have been created on Facebook to support the Anglophone cause, either separatism or more peaceful claims. I aimed to immerse in some of these groups to capture their narratives. As I did for my interviews, my goal was to verify if in the discourse and the narratives we could find any mention to hate speech, disinformation and to the diaspora, for this purpose I made a discourse and content analysis of posts (status, videos, comments) in

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6 https://ambagov.org/pages/scbc-tv
the different groups. Following this idea, I created an anonymous Facebook account, with a new email address. To protect my safety, I did not add any profile picture, I wrote down a fake name that I will not reveal in this study. I did not add any friend, to avoid being traced or associated with someone. To find the groups, I made a research on the platform using the keywords “Southern Cameroons”, “Ambazonia”. As a result, around 50 groups appeared. However, I narrowed the number of groups I will enter to 15. The 15 groups were selected based on the number of members and of posts per days. On the one hand, the groups that had less of 81 members were not selected. Moreover, the group I chose had a post frequency between 6 to 10 per day each. Having selected these groups, I observed and analyzed their contents in order to verify my hypothesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Facebook</th>
<th>Number of members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southern Cameroon-Ambazonia Resistance Front</td>
<td>74255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCNC Official (The Truth of matter)</td>
<td>38429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Cameroon People Organization</td>
<td>17670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Cameroons Teachers Forum</td>
<td>17705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Cameroons Republic</td>
<td>10581</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Cameroons Ambazonia consortium news outlet</td>
<td>7321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Cameroons Cry</td>
<td>7165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Cameroons Forum</td>
<td>7085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Cameroons Ambazonia Family Movement</td>
<td>6120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Cameroons Hashtag Community</td>
<td>5285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Southern Cameroons</td>
<td>3605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Cameroons Freedom Fighters</td>
<td>692</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.2 Table of the selected Facebook groups and their number of members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southern Cameroons Liberation Movement</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Cameroons Civil Defense</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Cameroons Forum</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Findings**

In this section I aim to present evidence of the spreading of hate speech and disinformation on social media in the context of the conflict, as my participant claim during the interviews. I also aim to identify possible elements related to Cameroonian outside of the country supporting the separatist struggle. I first present recent similar studies that show these evidences, and finally I present the findings the evidences coming from an immersion I did in Facebook groups. Since I don’t have the consent of the people on these groups I blurred or
avoided to show the names of the Facebook accounts in the examples I present. I also avoided to show the faces and any information that can help identify people.

4.2.a Hate Speech on Facebook

As my participants claimed, recent studies on social media in the context of the Anglophone crisis have shown an important spreading of hatred speech on Facebook. Indeed, PeaceTech Lab\(^7\) has conducted a research on the online hate narratives during Anglophone Crisis.

After conducting interviews and survey, the researchers identified inflammatory words used on social media that intensifies the conflict between Anglophones and francophone. The report identified words such as: Terrorist, Anglo-fou, Ambazo, Ambazonia, Biafra as the most used and to stimulate hatred on Facebook or twitter.

However, the report does not focus only on the Anglophone narratives, it also focuses on the francophone ones. The aim of this report was to contribute to the fight against disinformation and hate speech on social media in political contexts.

\(^7\) PeaceTech Lab study on social media in conflicts [https://www.peacetechlab.org/lexicons/]
This sample taken from the report shows the hate words mentioned above used in a post. These words are pejorative words towards Anglophones. Anglo-fou is a combination of the words “Anglophone” and “fou”, which means crazy in French. We can also the use of the verb “eliminate” which express an extreme hatred towards Anglophones.

Following the same pattern of analysis, I immersed in Anglophone separatist Facebook groups to track the hate speech and the disinformation on the side of separatists. During this immersion, I noticed that 80% of the groups I examined were using a language of hostility towards the Cameroonian government and towards the francophone in general.

In status posts, and comments I detected a frequent use of words and expression such as “la republique”, kangaroo Justice (referring to the Cameroonian judicial system), Terrorist (referring to the President).
On this post, we can see the use of the expression “La Republique terrorist”. La Republique is a francophone term that Anglophones in favor of separatism use to name the francophone part of the country. By combining this word with terrorist, the author of the post clearly shows hatred towards the Cameroonian government.

Moreover, in most of the groups, I noted that images of the killings, of death bodies were shared. These images some of the images have been censured or reported inconvenient. The sharing of this type of content demonstrate a will to mobilize people around hate. Each time this type of images was shared the authors always claimed that the killers were Cameroonian soldiers. This type of content can stimulate anger towards the Cameroonian government.

4.2.b Fake News / Disinformation / Manipulation

100% of the Facebook groups I immersed in have an important amount of news headlines in their newsfeed. The headlines refer to the Cameroonian government, the UN, the killings on the field, the statements of the Anglophone political leaders. However, this news often come from unofficial news outlets or personal blogs and from the YouTube and TV channel of
“Ambazonia”. I noticed that each news seems to be shared and relayed from one group to another. The most frequently shared news outlets are: Thebopost.com, ambaland.com

I we can also identify videos and Facebook lives coming from the official channel of Ambazonia. When I watched the videos, and news show coming from that channel I notice the use of inclusive language and terms such as: we ambazonians, we Southern Cameroonian, our nation, my people when talking about Anglophones and an exclusive and hostile language such as: La Republique, Biya killer, Kangaroo justice, zombie government, when talking about the Cameroonian government.

Moreover, some videos supposedly showing the support of other nations are also shared. However, these videos do not show any elements that can make us approve their veracity. For example, some videos showing a German speaking person, are shared and described as videos of German activists supporting the independence of the Anglophone region. However, no indicator, no translation for the English or French speaking audience show that the people talking in the videos are talking about the Anglophone crisis or are making statements in favor of the independence of the Anglophone region.

The following picture shows a video that is supposed to show young South Africans supporting the Cameroonian separatist. The videos show young people, speaking English and pledging allegiance to the republic of Ambazonia in front of a blue background. However, nothing indicate they are South Africans, or that the video has been made in South Africa. These people could be Cameroonian, or from another English-speaking country.
4.2.c Diaspora

During my observation I also tried to identify if there is an involvement of the diaspora in the online mobilization and narratives. I noticed that a lot of Facebook lives were made by Cameroonians claiming to be in countries like the US, South Africa, Ghana, France, Uk and many others.

I also noticed that some of the group members who were sharing content were sharing their phone number. I looked at the country codes of these phone number were not from Cameroon.
This image shows the caption at the bottom of a Facebook live made by a Cameroonian, apparently supporting the separatist cause. The country code in Cameroon is +237. However, in this screen capture, we see that the phone number shared has another country code. Most of the Facebook lives aimed for mobilization had a description with phone number. In some videos, the speakers clearly state their current geographic location, making statements such as “we the Cameroonians in the US should stay United if we want the freedom of Ambazonia. Or “It’s been 10 years I am here in Maryland because the Republic has made Cameroon so bad”.

This other image is the caption at the bottom of Facebook live requesting fundraising for the Anglophone cause. One more time we can see that the country code is not +237, but another one.

On the different videos and Facebook lives a large amount of speakers tend to be from other geographic location than Cameroon. The language they use is mostly traducing an opposition against the Biya government, as well as a call for independence of the Anglophone region. However, I noticed that the amount of people that watch these videos is different from one to another. Some are more popular than other. It could mean that some speakers are more influential than others.
Moreover, some videos are also talking about the internal dynamics of the Anglophone movement, which seem to be divided. Indeed, in some videos, the speakers complain about the lack of unity and structure in the different movements. That could explain the plurality of armed groups and leaders in the Anglophone separatist struggle.

4.3 Discussion

My study gathered some evidences that could confirm my two main hypotheses about the sustainability of Anglophone separatist claims in Cameroon which were:

1. The support of the diaspora
2. The use of social media as a bridge between the diaspora and the separatists on the ground

My interviews gave me some evidences and some directions to validate the first hypothesis. However, the concept of the diaspora remains hard to capture and define. In the context of the Anglophone crisis, it is hard to define a precise geographic location from where the support could come from. In addition, it is hard to capture what criteria a Cameroonian use to define himself/herself as a member of the diaspora. Some Cameroonians outside the country prefer not to be defined as member of the diaspora, but only as Cameroonian citizens. Nonetheless, as mentioned earlier, this hypothesis must be further studied among scholars interested by the conflict. The contribution of some Cameroonians outside country shows that, in the era of migrations we are living today, secession goes beyond the borders of a nation-state.
My study showed that the internet had a role in the conflict, and that this tool is more than a bridge for communication. I showed that in the context of the Anglophone crisis, it also helped spread hate speech and disinformation. However, despite these different roles, most of the operations are happening on the ground. Internet and social media itself do not constitute the core of operations, even if it helps achieve a mobilization and spread multiple type of narratives that can influence the conflict.

Finally, during the discussions, I tried to understand how my participant were affected by the conflict and how they perceive it in their daily life. Surprisingly, the francophone participants living in the francophone regions in cities such as Yaoundé, Douala explained that they only feel the crisis because of media, but not on their daily life. However, Anglophone participants who live either in the francophone or in the Anglophone region affirm feeling the crisis and being victims of discrimination even before the conflict started. Participants 3 who studied in Yaoundé mentioned the discrimination he was victim at the university because of his language. Participant 4, 5 and 6 also claimed to have grown up in a marginalization towards Anglophone. I concluded that the perception of the conflict could change depending of the background of my participants. The francophone participants who were born in the francophone region and who have never been in the Anglophone side declared not really feel there was a conflict in their daily life. The Anglophone who lived in the Anglophone region as well as the one who lived in the francophone side affirmed feeling the conflict, even years before in intensified in 2016.
4.4 Limits

Despite the its methodological rigor, my study has important limits. First, gathering data about the conflict was not easy, because the question around secession in Cameroon remains taboo and protected by Cameroonian authorities. I couldn’t engage more participant to my study because some people I contacted were afraid of a political backlash. In addition, the time frame I was allowed for this study did not give me the opportunity to look for other alternatives.

Moreover, being in contact with hate speech and violent content on social media was a challenge. I had to limit the content I analyzed, to protect myself.

Having explored the dynamics of the Anglophone mobilization, it is important to test its impact in the public debate. For this purpose, in the next section we will test how some international media perceived this mobilization, and the conflict in general. We chose to analyze two mainstream media which are Jeune Afrique and BBC.

4.5 The mediatic impact of the Anglophone separatist mobilization: a content analysis of BBC and Jeune Afrique coverage

The Anglophone caught the attention of international mainstream media. Then, I found interesting to analyze the western media coverage of the conflict. More precisely, this section focuses on analyzing the media coverage of the former colonial power in Cameroon: France and Great Britain. The main goal is to test if the British media coverage tend to present the
Anglophone regions (regions Great Britain used to rule during colonization) as oppressed and marginalized by the government as the separatists are claiming, and if the French media tend to be less supportive of this opinion. This section presents a content analysis of the French media *Jeune Afrique* and *BBC*.

**methods:**

For the purpose of this study, I chose as sample two major French and British media that are currently covering the Anglophone crisis: *Jeune Afrique* and *BBC*. The articles were collected online, on the websites and Facebook pages of each of those media. We looked at the coverage between March 2017 and April 2018. Indeed, even if the crisis began in 2016 with corporatist revendications led by Cameroonian Anglophone teachers and lawyers, we chose this time frame since the conflict became violent during that period. Moreover, the separatist movement undertook important protests such as the symbolic declaration of independence within this time period. The reactions of the Cameroonian government also intensified during that time frame.

I used a sample of 30 online articles, 15 articles for *Jeune Afrique* and 15 for *BBC Africa*. Articles were found and select using keywords such as “Anglophone crisis”, “Anglophone Cameroon”, “separatists Cameroon”, “Northwestern Cameroon”, “Paul Biya”. To make the gathering easier, and to have an overview of the chronology and the narratives of the articles, I classified them on an excel sheet.

After collecting our articles, we did a content analysis of each of them and I pulled out the language used in these articles when they talk about the Anglophone separatists. For each media I tried to identify the number of sentences referring to *marginalization* and *oppression* to see if the coverage depicted the Anglophone separatists as marginalized and oppressed as they claim to be. I also looked at the number of sentences *danger* and *law breaking* to see if
the language of these media depicts them as dangerous or outlaws such as the Cameroonian government do.

However, despite MY methodological rigor, it is important to mention that the results of our study cannot be generalized for many reasons. Indeed, there are other British and French media covering the crisis, such as the guardian, France 24, The Telegraph, Le monde. due to the time allowed for this study, I didn’t have the possibility to look at all of them.

Findings: Neutrality or dissimulation of biases?

Based on my findings, it would be hard to say that one of the two media promote more the discourse of marginalization built by the Anglophone movements or the discourse of threat on national security promoted by the government. Indeed, in both media, the discourse seems to be balanced.

Jeune Afrique

In Jeune Afrique, the sentences related to marginalization/centralized power were appearing a little bit more than the one about threat to national security. The articles I choose were long articles. On the 15 articles, we found 24 sentences explicitly talking about marginalization/centralized power, while we found about 20 sentences referring to threat to national security.

I identified as sentences associated with the theme of marginalization/Centralized power as the one talking about the Cameroonian government and that contained words such as “discrimination”, “interdiction”, “repression”, “marginalization “, “suffering”, “minority”, centralized, authority, dictatorship.

Despite this result we can’t really affirm that the discourse of Jeune Afrique tend to align with the discourse of the separatists. Indeed, we noticed that there is an important use of quotation marks and of the passive voice in the sentences associated to the marginalization of the Anglophone regions or to the centralization of power of Paul Biya. For example, in this
sentence of the article of 11/28/2017: “Since the beginning of 2018, many English-speaking politicians have been denouncing "arbitrary acts (killings, house demolitions)" of the Cameroonian army in English-speaking areas.” there is a use of quotation marks on “arbitrary acts”. We suppose that the writer of the article wants to be careful about taking position or condemning the acts of the Cameroonian army, even if he/she is talking about its wrongful actions.

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<tr>
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<th>marginalization/centralized power</th>
<th>Threat to national security</th>
<th>Number of articles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jeune Afrique</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
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Table of the themes in the articles

Moreover, we also looked at the headlines of each articles to see how many of them was directly fitting into our two themes we choose as variables. We found that, in contrary of the content of the articles, the headlines tend to refer directly to the threat to national security in majority, some tend to refer to marginalization/centralized power while some others seem neutral.

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<th>Threat national security</th>
<th>neutral</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jeune Afrique</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table of the articles’ headlines

This result makes it more difficult to assume that Jeune Afrique is promoting either the threat to National unity/security, or the one of marginalization/centralized power. Yet as we saw
previously with content of the article, we also notice a use of quotation marks, especially it comes to talk about the Anglophone separatists and how the government accuse held them responsible of some acts. For instance, in the following headline: *Anglophone crisis in Cameroon: a policeman killed by "secessionists"*, there is a use of quotation on the word secessionist. It looks like the author is careful about associating the killing of the policeman with secessionists.

In conclusion, according to the results we gathered, we can’t really say if Jeune Afrique is supportive of the discourse of separatist about *marginalization* and the *centralized power* of the government. The discourse seems to be balanced regarding each side’s claims.

**BBC**

As we mentioned in the introduction of this study, the hypothesis we were trying to verify was if the discourse of the British media was more aligned with the one of the Anglophone separatists. The articles of BBC were short articles and contained less sentences than the one Jeune Afrique. What we found as result is that the discourse in BBC is way more balanced than in *Jeune Afrique*. As we explained in the previous section, we tried to look at the sentences related to *marginalization/centralized power* that we associate with the separatist discourse. On the 15 articles, we were just able to identify 14 sentences that explicitly referred to this theme while only 12 of them were referring to the *threat to national security*.

Yet, as in Jeune Afrique there is an important use passive voice when it comes to talk about the either the actions of the separatists or the one of the governments.

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Moreover, as we did for Jeune Afrique, we looked over the headlines of the articles to see what which of these two frames was the most dominant. We found only 3 headlines explicitly referring to marginalization and centralized power: *Cameroonian villager: we are living in fear, Paul Biya Cameroon's "absentee president", Cameroon hold first cabinet meeting since 2015*. The neutral frame seems to be dominant regarding the headlines.

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<th>Threat national security</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
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</table>

**synthesis**

The dominant frame of our analysis in both media seemed to be about the centralized power of the Cameroonian government. Our findings don’t allow us to validate the hypothesis of a support towards the claims of the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. However, we cannot say if Jeune Afrique is supportive or not too. This might be because of the limitations of this study.

Indeed, since we just analyzed the coverage of *BBC* and *Jeune Afrique*, we can only validate the findings our research with this case of study. Moreover, we could argue that maybe our results could have been different if we collected more articles on the issue, choose other French and British media sources or looked at a different time frame.
Nonetheless, we can say that these media play an important role in raising awareness about the conflict. Most of the articles we have looked at contained reports and statements of NGOs working to solve the conflict such as International Crisis Group or Amnesty International. Jeune Afrique and BBC put the spotlight on this conflict.

Section V: Conclusion and Solutions

The Anglophone crisis is happening in an era where social media has been shown to play roles in other civil uprisings. The diaspora / social media and its relationship in the crisis is timely to explore. In other words, the Cameroonian case is interesting to the broader separatist literature because it is an opportunity to better understand whether and how diaspora use / intervene via social media to support separatist movement, and whether and how those strategies are effective.

During my study I gathered significant evidences that verified my two hypotheses to explain the sustainability of the Anglophone separatist movement in Cameroon. I found that Cameroonian living outside the country tend to participate to an online mobilization on Facebook through videos, status and comments. Facebook, as well as other online platforms are more than a simple bridge linking the diaspora and the fighters on the ground. According to my findings, Facebook and other platforms serve to disseminate hate speech and disinformation to encourage people to join and fight for the separatist cause. However, despite this mobilization, the movement seems to be fragmented. The political structure as well as the leadership remains unclear. Moreover, the different armed groups, and movements seem not to be linked.
I also analyzed how this mobilization was perceived by the international media, if the coverage was showing this mobilization as a danger or legitimate. I found the coverage was neutral and tended to focus on the reaction of the government.

Beyond the dynamics of the mobilization, my research gave me insights about the how the conflict involves the Cameroon/Nigeria relationship. Indeed, Nigeria has been part of the history of the Anglophone Cameroon and had an influence on the geographical configuration of the Anglophone region. The conflict affects the two counties since there is an important refugee crisis at the border as well as an intensification of criminality. According to my findings, some criminal groups operating at the border tend to take advantage of the conflict and the separatist mobilization to maintain their activity.

Even if my findings were relevant, the role of the diaspora and social media platforms in the Anglophone separatist mobilization remains to be further explored. Moreover, the diaspora, and social media are not the only actors to consider in the sustainability of the Anglophone separatist movement.

5.1 Secession and International Law in Cameroon

In this chapter, I aim to question if the right of secession could be given to the Anglophone region under international law. I examine the legal frameworks coming both from international law and the Cameroonian constitution that certainly guarantee the right of self-determination to the region but do not consider secession as a primary solution to the issue. This section aims to respond to the following question: at what point do the Anglophone region have the right to secede from Cameroon?
Under international law, secession engages the principle of self-determination. This principle asserts that it is the right of all peoples to freely choose their social, economic, political and cultural future without external interference.” And is protected by several charters and laws. The International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) provide in their common Article 1 (1) that all peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. Similarly, the UN General Assembly Resolution 2625(XXV) adopted in 1970, titled Declaration of Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation Among States in Accordance with the Charter of the United Nations (Declaration on Friendly Relations), declares the right of “all peoples” to self-determination and places a duty on states to respect this right in accordance with the UN Charter.

The article 20 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Right (“ACHPR”) states that “All peoples shall have the right to existence. They shall have the unquestionable and inalienable right to self-determination. They shall freely determine their political status and shall pursue their economic and social development according to the policy they have freely chosen.

1. Colonized or oppressed peoples shall have the right to free themselves from the bonds of domination by resorting to any means recognized by the international community.

2. All peoples shall have the right to the assistance of the State Parties to the present Charter in their liberation struggle against foreign domination, be it political, economic or cultural.”

Despite the apparent institutional instability raised by the crisis, Cameroon has ratified all these principles and incorporated them in its 1996 constitution. Indeed, the preamble of the constitution shows a compliance to the principles of the Charters and conventions of the United Nations, as well as the one of the ACHPR. Moreover, the decentralized form of the state guaranteed by the article 1 of the constitution as well as the recognition of the English language as official language\(^9\) provide a legal framework for the self-determination of English-speaking regions.

The existence of these dispositions in the Cameroonian constitution make secession a debatable option. Indeed, Despite the legitimacy of the Anglophone complaints, secession appears as an option to avoid. The since the beginning of the conflict, the UN and the Cameroonian government have not manifested a will to consider this option as a solution. The establishment of a political dialog between the parties is always encouraged. In addition, the Anglophone opinion in favor of secession remains a minority. A part of the opinion is for the implementation of decentralization, another is for federalism. In the next section, I recommend the strengthening of decentralization an institutional solution.

5.2 A more efficient decentralization

The enforcement and strengthening of decentralization mechanisms seems is the best solution to create an equilibrium between Anglophone and francophone. Indeed, the current decentralization in Cameroon, and some constitutional dispositions are not fully implemented yet. In the current constitution, each region is administered by a governor, who is

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\(^9\)The Cameroonian constitution states in its the Article 1 (2): The Republic of Cameroon shall be a decentralized unitary State

In the section 3, it states: the official languages of the, Republic of Cameroon shall be English and French, both languages having the same status. The State shall guarantee the promotion of bilingualism throughout the country. It shall endeavor to protect and promote national languages.
accompanied by an elected regional council. However, this mechanism is not fully applying. The powers of the governor and the regional council remain limited for political reasons. If the government works to give more power to each region, it will foster the self determination of each region including the Anglophone regions.

However, the constitutional council, which has been created in 1996 and which is the guardian is in charge to verify the constitutionality of such a reform has just been implemented few years ago. It is the right time for this legal authority to reflect how to better implement decentralization.

Federalism and secession represent two risky and radical changes regarding the context. On the one hand the implementation of federalism requires a strong judicial system. Some experts think that adopting this form of state would lead to a failure like in 1961, because of the current weakness of the Cameroonian institutions. The improvement of the current decentralization is a moderate and progressive solution that follows the evolution of the institutions of the country, and that won’t require a brutal change.

5.3 Intensify Cameroon/Nigeria cooperation

Nigeria and Cameroon must continue intensify their cooperation to manage the conflict. Indeed, as previously mentioned, the conflict has involved the two countries because of their history ties, and because of their common border. The two countries, with the help of the UN and the AU must cooperate economically to handle the ongoing refugee crisis. In the long-term Nigeria and Cameroon must find solutions about how to install more security at their shared borders. The upcoming presidential election of February in Nigeria could have an impact on the military and bilateral cooperation of the two countries.

The stability of the region is also important for the economic relation between the two countries. Nigeria represent an important market of consumption that is beneficial for the
Cameroonian economy. In addition, a lot of Nigerian investors have developed economic activities in the Anglophone region, providing employment, and empowering the economic activity of the region. As we mentioned earlier, the crisis has constrained a lot of Nigerian investors to flee the region.

5.4 The fight Against Disinformation and Fake News on Digital Platforms

Based on our findings, we can observe that the Anglophone crisis raises the issue of disinformation, hatred and propaganda on social media in the context of conflicts. Indeed, if the democratization of the access to internet and social media platforms has fostered the sharing of true and verified information, it has also given a room to mediatic manipulation, and to the so called “fake news”. In the context of conflicts such as the Anglophone crisis, as our data show, this fake news tends to serve as a tool to mobilize and encourage people to join different armed groups. Some message such as “The UN to send military forces in the Anglophone Regions” or “Sweden has affirmed its support to the Anglophone struggle” are some examples that we have identified and verified in separatist Facebook groups during our study.

At the international level, the issue of disinformation and “fake news” has been addressed in multiple contexts. On March 3rd, 2017, the United Nations brought together the leading monitors of freedom of expression around the world to issue a Joint Declaration on freedom of expression, focusing on fake news, disinformation and propaganda in Geneva\(^1\). During this gathering, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of opinion and expression David Kaye declared: “Fake news” has emerged as a global topic of concern and there is a risk that efforts to counter it could lead to censorship, the suppression of critical thinking and other approaches contrary to human rights law. In this Joint Declaration, we identify general

\(^{10}\) OHCHR: Freedom of Expression Monitors Issue Joint Declaration on ‘Fake News’, Disinformation and Propaganda
principles that should apply to any efforts to deal with these issues.” Some organizations such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Organization of American States (OAS) and the, and the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR).

Besides this important gathering organized by the UN, several initiatives have been observed. For instance, to fight disinformation coming from Russian media, the European Union has created a special unit called East StratCom Task Force which has located and verified 1,310 cases of misinformation since the beginning of the year 2018.11

In Africa, countries such as Senegal, and Tunisia cooperate with France to address the issue. The Cameroonian government should follow this new agenda and insert the country in the conversation around the fight against disinformation. Private initiatives from the civil society that follow this idea should be encouraged. At the international level, the government should let the doors open for a conversation with enterprises such as Facebook and twitter to collaborate.

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participant 4 interview; conducted in Buea; June 17th
Participant 5 interview; conducted in Buea; June 17th
Participant 6 interview; conducted in Buea; June 17th
participant 7 interview; conducted in Yaounde; June 18th
participant 8 interview; conducted in Yaounde; June 18th
participant 9 interview; conducted in Yaounde; June 19th
participant 10 interview; conducted in Yaounde; June 19th