

An Appraisal of the Major National Dialogue as a Panacea to the Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon

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This paper explores the Major National Dialogue organised by Paul Biya from the 30th of September to the 4th of October, 2019 as a panacea to the Anglophone. The paper also seeks to find out if this dialogue has been the panacea Cameroonians as a whole and the people of Southern Cameroons in particular have been waiting for to end this conflict. This research uses a qualitative research design. This is because the researcher culled information from Jeune Afrique Economie (2019a), Cameroon Tribune, and from Phoenix. Descriptive analysis was used to analyse the collected data. Descriptive analysis is used to get the views of the public whether the Major National Dialogue was really a panacea to the Anglophone crisis. The analysis revealed that there were two opposing opinions on the holding of this dialogue. The government thinks the dialogue was a panacea to put an end to this crisis because there is ongoing construction work in the war zones, and economic activities have witnessed an increase in the regions as the various production units of the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) and Pamol plantations have regained agricultural activities. The Ndawara tea estate now functions without problems. Trans-border trade is on the rise and transportation is fluid, except in the rural areas where the state of the road network is poor to name but these. On the other hand, politicians, political parties like the Social Democratic Front, activists, religious leaders, the affected populations, and Cameroonians at large think that the Major National Dialogue was a monologue and therefore was bound to fail because first, key actors arrested and detained in connection to this crisis were not part of this dialogue. For this reason, they are calling for a genuine and an inclusive dialogue. In addition, they argue that we cannot be talking of peace when fighting is still raging on and people are being killed, houses and schools are being burnt, and people are being kidnapped every day for ransom to mention but these.

Keywords: appraisal, major national dialogue, panacea, Anglophone, crisis, Cameroon

Introduction

The 21st century is plagued by political, economic, and social crises. No country in the world can claim to be at peace. In fact, the world is in chaos. A case in point is the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine and the war between Russia and Ukraine which is affecting the entire universe. In Africa we have war in Sudan because of power brawl. In Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, we have war between the governments of these countries and rebels due to minerals they mine in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Furthermore, Nigeria and Chad are not also free because they too also have a common enemy which is the Boko Haram. We can go on and on. It is worth noting that Cameroon being part of the world is not also free. This is

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because she is going through a series of crises such as the Boko Haram insurgency in the Far North Region and the ongoing war in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon. In all these crises, the only way to get out of them is to initiate a platform for dialogue. According to Patricia Romney (2003),

Dialogue is focused conversation, engaged intentionally with the goal of increasing understanding, addressing problems, and questioning thoughts or actions. It engages the heart as well as the mind. It is different from ordinary, everyday conversation, in that dialogue has a focus and a purpose. Dialogue is different from debate, which offers two points of view with the goal of proving the legitimacy or correctness of one of the viewpoints over the other. Dialogue, unlike debate or even discussion, is as interested in the relationship(s) between the participants as it is in the topic or theme being explored.

Ultimately, real dialogue presupposes an openness to modify the deeply held convictions. (p. 2)

It is in the light of the above definition that on the 10th of September, 2019 President Paul Biya addressed Cameroonians by telling his compatriots that for close to three years the North West and the South West have been going through a crisis that not only jeopardises the safety and wellbeing of the population living there, but also has far-reaching consequences for the national community as a whole.



North-West/South-West: President Paul BIYA convenes Major National Dialogue



Figure 1. Paul Biya addressing the nation.

Source: The Presidency of the Republic, September 10th, 2019.

Paul Biya traces the cause of the crisis and what the government did. For example, government took measures to translate into English of the Organisation for the Harmonisation of Business Law in Africa (OHADA)

instruments which are now available in the two official languages; the creation of a Common Law Section at the Supreme Court to handle appeals filed against the decisions of lower courts in Common Law matters; regarding the training of judicial and legal officers, the creation of a Common Law Section at the National School of Administration and Magistracy. This measure was accompanied by a programme for the recruitment of English speaking pupil judicial and legal officers and court registrars; the launching of the special recruitment of bilingual teachers in secondary schools; at the level of the judiciary, the stay of proceedings against some persons arrested in connection with the demands; the setting up of a national Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism to, among other things, carry out an in-depth review of all the sources of frustration suffered by the people in the North West and South West Regions. Despite the efforts made by the Government, Paul Biya notes that radical movements, mainly inspired from abroad, have exploited and distorted the corporate demands. They have thus hatched a secessionist plan to partition our country. In this regard, they have formed and financed armed groups that have caused untold harm to the population of the North West and South West Regions. The dialogue will therefore rally all the sons and daughters of our beloved and beautiful country, Cameroon, to reflect on values that are dear to us, namely: peace, security, national unity, and progress.

Most media headlines show that all is not well in the world. We read of news headlines of how people are dying in Israel, Sudan, Palestine, and Ukraine on a daily basis, how Boko Haram attacks and kills both civilians and the military in the Far North Region, and how civilians and soldiers also die every day in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon. The origin of the problem that led to the ongoing crisis in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon can be traced from 1914-1916, when the First World War started. When Britain and France defeated Germany in Cameroon in February 1916, they occupied the country and shared it into two, Western and Eastern Cameroon. On July 20, 1919, the League of Nations officially mandated France and Britain to administer the former German colony. On January 1, 1960, Eastern Cameroon (French Cameroun) became independent and on October 1, 1961; after a referendum, West Cameroon (British Cameroon) joined the already independent French Cameroun to create the Federal Republic of Cameroon. This unholy marriage was cemented at the Fouban Conference in July 1961. This union was built under the understanding of a federal system with two states and two separate administrations. The federal system functioned until 1972, when it was abrogated after a referendum. When it was cancelled, a unified system of government was instituted (Awasom, 2020; Bouopda, 2018; Fanso, 1989). In 1984 President Paul Biya changed the name of the country from United Republic of Cameroon to The Republic of Cameroon. Most Anglophones were not happy with the change because it manifested the institutional obliteration of English Cameroon (Koning & Nyamnjoh, 2003). Since then, there have been regular protests in the English-speaking regions, especially every year on October 1, the date of reunification. This problem only became a crisis in October 2016 with the unprovoked harassment of Anglophone lawyers engaged in peaceful protest marches in September 2016 to show their frustrations over the perceived marginalisation of the Anglophone Common Law practice in the country. It could be said that the government decided to handle the situation by cracking down on the people instead of dialoguing with them. This approach changed the course of events and today some people talk of a war and others talk of a crisis going on in the Southern Cameroons. This work stems from the fact that dialogue plays an important role in conflict resolution in that it gives the belligerents the opportunity to air out their grievances and what they want. It also helps them come to a consensus thereby bringing the conflict to an end which firing guns cannot achieve. This paper sets out to examine the major national dialogue organised in Cameroon from September 30, 2019 to October 4, 2019 by

His Excellency President Paul Biya, whether it has helped in resolving the ongoing crises in the Southern Cameroons. This work would be useful to scholars because it is a panacea that demonstrates the kind of genuine dialogue crises managers should engage in so as to resolve a particular conflict once and for all. The objectives of this study are:

- To explore the Major National Dialogue organised from the 30th of September to the 4th of October, 2019 by President Paul Biya.

- To find out if it has helped in resolving the conflict in the Southern Cameroons.

This study is guided by the following research questions:

- Why did President Paul Biya organise a Major National Dialogue from the 30th of September to the 4th of October 2019?

- Has it helped in solving the crisis in the Southern Cameroons?

Review of Literature

Some erudite have conducted research on the use of dialogue from different perspectives and achieved different results. McCarthy and Carter (1994) and Gilmore (2004) carried out research on features of dialogues in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks which they believe they are not satisfactory models of conversation. These dialogues can sound more like interrogations, during which the first speaker asks questions and the second speaker gives complete answers, so that every turn is completely efficient in getting its message across. This, as Carter (1998) suggested, reflects a “can-do” society, “in which interaction is generally smooth and problem free, the speakers cooperate with each other politely, the conversation is neat, tidy, and predictable” (p. 47). Jones and Oakey (2020) also explore dialogues from a corpus of 19th century fiction as a possible model of conversation for use in English as a second or foreign language classrooms. They employ corpus linguistics methods to investigate the extent to which such dialogues contain lexical chunks and conversation strategies. This is then compared to usage in unscripted 21st century conversations, as found in a large spoken corpus. Findings show that there are a number of similarities to modern day spoken language in the chunks used in the 19th century data but also some key differences in how some common chunks function. It is also clear that many conversation strategies are significantly underused in the fictional dialogues. Overall, the study shows that dialogues from fiction have some potential as a model of conversation and could be used to supplement materials offering very contrived dialogues. Some scholars conducted research on dialogue used in teaching foreign learners (Cullen, 1998; Gravett & Henning, 1998; Kaufmann, 2010; Lyle, 2008; Nicol, 2010; Northedge, 2003a; 2003b; Rule, 2004). They demonstrate that interaction with class fellows through dialogue is one of the effective ways to improve speaking skills as a foreign learner at higher secondary level because these learners acquire good vocabulary which enables them to speak fluently (Ur, 2009; Tanveer, Akhter, Awais, & Qureshi, 2021; Akbar, 2018; Sharma, 2018; Elhassan & Adam, 2017; Gudu, 2015). Furthermore, dialogue approaches offer opportunity to demystify the often unspoken expectations within higher education discourses and particularly, its assessments. Dialogue between tutors and students, including talkbacks (Lillis, 2003) and ongoing cycles of feedback (Nicol, 2010), can increase transparency through the assignment production process, something particularly helpful for international students. Dialogue as a constituent resource for dramatic discourse has also been explored by Zheltukhina, Zinkovskaya, Katermina, and Shershneva (2016). The authors indicate that studies of dramatic dialogue as discourse, as a special speech exchange system, are hardly in evidence, even in research of the language of drama. In drama, discourse dialogue is employed as a dramatic resource. The study revealed

that dialogue is viewed as interaction open to enormous variation. Dialogue is operative in drama; speech functioning is complex with its own specificities which are different from those in the literary field.

It is worth mentioning that many studies have been carried out on the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon. It has been studied from the educational perspective (Akame, Crockett, & Awutarh, 2021), geopolitical and rhetorical (Ascone & Renaut, 2019; Ekah, 2019), conflictual perspective (Annan, Beseng, Crawford, & Kewir, 2021; Barrach-Yousefi, 2018; Bang & Balgah, 2022; Kweitsu & Besong, 2019; Ngange & Mokondo, 2019; Nganji & Cockburn, 2019; Nounkeu, 2020; Ketzmerick, 2023; Sawalda, 2020), and linguistic perspective (Tabe & Fieze, 2018; Tchouape, 2019; Ngouo, 2020; Nouhou, 2022). These scholars used different approaches and obtained both convergent (Tabe & Fieze, 2018; Tchouape, 2019) and divergent findings (Ekah, 2019; Ascone & Renaut, 2019). These studies revealed that violence and disruption may have sought educational alternatives through informal learning methods, as well as relocating to neighbouring towns in Southern Cameroons or other relatively sub-urban areas of the Anglophone regions. Nevertheless, Nouhou's (2022) investigation brought new ways of looking at the crisis for the researcher came out with findings that promote peace, social cohesion, and living together from some messages on WhatsApp and Facebook in the ongoing crisis in the Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon.

From the literature above, it could be said that no author whether out of or within Cameroon has examined the use of dialogue in conflict resolution which is the focus of this paper.

Method and Analysis

Data for this study were culled from literature written on the conflict in the Southern Cameroons. The researcher read these works and got information that is needful in this study. Furthermore, the investigator also got information on Phoenix browser, Jeune Afrique Economie, and Cameroon Tribune which captured the views and opinions of religious leaders, politicians, political parties, activists, and the population in the crisis zones. This study uses descriptive analysis. Descriptive analysis is used to get the opinions of the public on the Major National Dialogue organised by Paul Biya and whether it was really a panacea to the Anglophone crisis.

Result and Discussion

As a reminder, this work set out to investigate the Major National Dialogue organised by Paul Biya as a panacea to the Anglophone crisis. The analysis reveals that the government is of the opinion that this dialogue was a real panacea to put an end to the crisis in the North West and South West Regions because of these achievements that were recorded at the end of this major event.

Special Status

At the end of the Major National Dialogue, a few weeks later, an extraordinary session of parliament was organised, with only one item on the agenda: the examination of the draft law on The General Code of Regional Local Authorities. The text promulgated on 24 December 2019 by the President of the Republic was intended to be a revolution in the continued implementation of the decentralisation process. With regard specifically to the two regions of the North-West and South-West, and in accordance with the wishes expressed by the delegates to the Major National Dialogue, a Special Status is granted to the two regions. Beyond the wishes expressed by the participants in the Yaounde meeting, it should be noted that this Special Status is in conformity with the provisions of Article 62 of the Constitution, Paragraph 2. The specificities of these two regions are linked to

language, culture, and even the past in the history of Cameroon. In the law of 24 December 2019, the Special Status of the North-West and South-West is a set of 45 articles. These regions benefit from competences not provided for in the other eight. These advantages include participation in the definition of national public policies relating to the Anglophone education sub-system; the possibility of creating and managing regional development missions and participation in the elaboration of the status of traditional chieftaincy.

Through this Special Status, the two regions can be consulted on issues related to the development of public policy on justice in the common law sub-system, and even their associations with the management of public services located in their territories (JAE 421 HS, 218).

Public Independent Conciliator

Another major achievement of the Major National Dialogue was the creation of the above organ. This organ has as mission, among other things to ensure good relations between citizens and regional and municipal public services. That is, they have as mandate to arbitrate between users of council services and councils concerned where there is a dispute or violation of rights. The deployment of these personalities, in their respective areas of competence, since their appointment on 10 June 2021 by the President of the Republic, is sufficient proof that the expectations of the population are numerous on the ground (JAE 421 HS, 218). Tombe (2022) also opines that from the Major National Dialogue, the country organised its first regional election on December 6, 2020. Today, the eight French-speaking regions of the country have Regional Councils with autonomous powers to pilot local development. In the English-speaking North West and South West Regions, there are Regional Assemblies with powers that touch on same. A unique additive here is the putting in place of Houses of Chiefs unique to what obtained in the former West Cameroon. The North West and South West Regions now have Public Independent Conciliators who are charged with handling conflicts arising from local collectivities. With the achievements this far, many are of the opinion that the recommendations of the Major National Dialogue (MND) are being implemented by the powers that be without reservation.

Bilingualism, Cultural Diversity, and Social Cohesion

This resolution aimed at enhancing the practice of bilingualism in all segments of society through the creation and implementation of programmes starting from preschool ages; enrooting cultural diversity through a strict implementation of regional balance and equitable access to public service and security forces; conceiving and implementing a curriculum on Inter Community Fellowship, Rebuilding Fraternal Trust, and Civic Engagement in an effort to strengthen National Social Cohesion. Pass legislation spells out the equitable use of both official languages in all areas of national life; developing and codifying principles for social dialogue, social cohesion, and living together.

Educational System

The aim of this resolution was to ensure that educational reforms integrate the need to keep the two educational subsystems afloat, buoyant, and futuristic, recognising the unique strengths and specifications of each subsystem, building on the strengths of each one to train well rounded and excellent Cameroonian graduates who will excel wherever they go, ensure that Teachers' Trade Unions should work in collaboration with the government, and regulate the proliferation of Teachers Trade Unions to ensure synergy from the regional to the national level.

Judicial System

- Translate all legal instruments into both official languages and ensure their simultaneous publication in both official languages.
- Take into account the prerequisite of English language proficiency and the mastery of the Common Law Legal System when deploying judiciary staff to the North West and South West Regions.
 - Set up a Law School for training lawyers and all legal practitioners at large in Cameroon.
 - Upgrade the Common Law Section of the Supreme Court of Cameroon into a fully-fledged Legal Branch comprising all sections dealing with specific matters of the Common Law.
 - Improve mechanisms for legal cooperation in view of commencing proceedings to call to book those financing terrorism from foreign countries.

The Return of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons

- The state should set up communication channels for a better deployment of the army and freer movement of the people, as well as take measures for the construction of decent homes for displaced persons.
 - Take measures towards granting general amnesty to foster the return of refugees and internally displaced persons.
 - Proceed to the physical headcount of all displaced persons and come up with an estimate of their basic socio-economic needs (schools, health facilities, accommodation...).
 - Provide “resettlement and reintegration kits” to refugees and internally displaced persons.

The National Commission on the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism

Another success of the Major National Dialogue was the creation of the National Commission on the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism. Today, we can see that the various Cameroonian public administrations are obliged to produce their documents in both English and French and to publish their official documents in these two official languages (JAE 418, 294).

Reconstruction and Development of Conflict-Affected Areas

Presiding at the fourth session of the follow-up committee on August 4, 2022, Prime Minister Joseph Dion Ngute revealed that the President of the Republic in his magnanimity has instructed the Military Engineering Corps to take over construction of the Kumba-Ekondo Titi road which has been interrupted by separatist fighters for years. He added that the same scenario obtains in the Bamenda-Babadjou road which has been conferred to a local company that masters the road. In the same line of thought, Tombe (2022) agrees with the above information when he says that the Presidential Plan for the Reconstruction and Development of the North West and South West region (PPRD-NW/SW) afoot today is a product of the Major National Dialogue. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the implementing partner of this project already recording huge successes across communities in the North West and South West Regions. The plan has started touching on the afflicted fabric in the two English-speaking regions in dire need of reconstruction. Through the plan, in just 18 months, 19 water points have been rehabilitated thereby enabling over 174,000 people to have access to potable water. At a recent meeting, the National Coordinator of the PPRD-NW/SW, Minister Paul Tasong talked of 16 health centres rehabilitated now providing healthcare to 5,451 persons; over 7,000 students and teachers now have access to good learning space with some 22 schools rehabilitated.

Within the same scheme, over 48,000 persons are now being serviced by four bridges also rehabilitated; 8,000 lost documents recovered; over 60 insider mediators have been trained to enhance community peace; 12 social and cultural festivals and events stage to revive social cohesion across the North West and South West

regions; over 126,500 persons have benefitted from some five community centres already renewed. The figures presented also talked of over 2,402 farmers who have received farm equipment and tools; 40 greenhouses erected to boost food production; 53 stores transformed to revive economic activities; 120 young start-uppers trained, mentored, and given funding. He also talked of 47 cooperatives that have received intensive support to enhance agricultural production.

Economic Activities

The Prime Minister also noted that economic activities have witnessed an increase in the regions as the various production units of the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) and Pamol plantations have regained agricultural activities. The Ndawara tea estate now functions without problems. Trans-border trade is on the rise and transportation is fluid, except in the rural areas where the state of the road network is poor. The increase in school enrollment in the two regions and the presence of fresh vegetables in the markets of Yaounde, he added (Cameroon Tribune, 2019). In the same vein Tombe (2022) states that, the Cameroon Development Corporation, CDC, has resumed activities in most of its plantations. This has started placing the country's banana production capacity to what it used to obtain. The central bank of the Central African Economic Community, BEAC, has in one of its recent reports stated that: "Banana production is expected to increase in the second quarter of 2022, benefiting mainly from the maturation of plantations in 2021, and to a lesser extent, the resumption of activities in some plantations of the CDC that stopped working last year due to the Anglophone crisis".

In 2021, when activities fully resumed, CDC rehabilitated 520 hectares of plantations it had abandoned due to the armed conflict in the English-speaking regions. This led to an increase of banana exports in Cameroon by 4.8% in early 2022. Pamol plantations has also resumed activities. Several workers have regained their jobs despite sporadic separatist incursions.

Kumba, the commercial capital of the South West Region, has fully regained steam with businessmen driving in from Douala and beyond to continue business as it was before. Almost all villages now enjoy the traditional market days as it obtained before the armed conflict. Another clear socio economic indicator is the fact that farmers now feel confident, safe, and are engaged in farming more than ever before.

The Creation of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Centres

Presiding at the fourth session of the follow-up committee on August 4, 2022, Prime Minister Joseph Dion Ngute said the amnesty granted to ex-fighters and other institutional reforms taken by the President of the Republic are geared at bringing back lasting peace to the troubled regions. Chief Dr. Joseph Dion Ngute noted that the meeting was taking place at a time when the general situation in the two regions is gradually returning to normal as the populations are denouncing acts of violence against them by separatist fighters. This point is supported by Tombe (2022) when he intimates that the early signs of the Major National Dialogue impact were visible when some internally displaced persons decided to return home early last year. Not long, before the end of 2021, a good number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) have taken back residence in their villages. President Paul Biya, however, has remained committed to address the hurdle. In 2021, the Head of State sent a special consignment of relief material to refugees of the crisis in Nigeria.

Sociocultural and Sports Animation

According to Tombe (2022), another indicator that the situation is improving in the North West and South West regions is the organisation of social gatherings, cultural festivals and manifestations, and sporting activities. Before January 2021, it was a tough condition organising any cultural or sporting activity in most parts of the

English-speaking regions of the country. But since 2021, there has been a significant increase in the number of cultural and sports events. The Coronation of the Fon of Oku, Nkambe, Mankon, Bamendankwe, Kumba, Limbe, and a host of others across the interiors of the North West and South West regions speak volumes of how fast the social climate in these two regions is improving. Not only were such events attended by home-based people only, but many traveled from around and out of the country to live the great moments of communion with their ancestors. Since 2021, the sensation and spirit of village sporting competitions has been rekindled. Holiday football inter-quarter competitions have been taking place in most areas which used to be dreaded yesterday, but are calm today. The usual excitement during holidays in the village shown at football tournaments is gradually bouncing back.

Community Resistance

The most outstanding moment now in the North West and South West regions is the resistance most communities have been putting up against Amba fighters (Tombe, 2022). Places like Mbalangi in the South West Region and Oku in the North West Region are among several villages to have openly said “No” to the atrocities of “Amba boys” and drove them out of their communities.

As much as the government and its ministers are of the opinion that the Major National Dialogue organised by Paul Biya was a solution to the ongoing crisis in the Southern Cameroons, some political parties, politicians, organisations, religious leaders, and the population in the Southern Cameroons believe that this dialogue was not a panacea to end this crisis. According to Africanews.com, one month after Cameroon’s hyped Grand National Dialogue, the prospect of peace in the country’s Anglophone regions is still distant because of these reasons:

According to Blaise Chamango, an activist in Buea, the capital of the South West Region, schools in some districts “remain closed and inaccessible”, while “dead city” protest strikes imposed every Monday by separatist forces have not stopped.

“The population in the crisis zones is still confronted with the same realities as prevailed before the dialogue”, he said.

Several attacks by armed groups have been reported in the past weeks, notably in the North West, reputed to be the more rebellious. In the same line, Soter Agbaw-Ebai with files from Fon Lawrence in Bamenda states that hundreds of Cameroon government troops have gone on a violent rampage in Mbakong, setting alight dozens of homes after five soldiers were killed by Ambazonia fighters on Wednesday 22 December, 2023.

Cameroon Concord News correspondent in Bamenda said the five army soldiers were killed by an explosive device on the Mile 24 road linking Bafut in Bamenda to Wum, the chief town in Menchum Division in the North West Region. Local media houses in Bamenda reported that about 20 homes were torched on Wednesday evening and many innocent Southern Cameroons were arrested in Mbakong.

“Atrocities have resumed strongly in Bamenda”, the North West Regional capital, Cameroon state radio declared last week.

The Anglophone population remains “rather skeptical”, said Chamango, “because they no longer have confidence in the government”.

The country’s opposition leader Kamto argued that peace required “direct talks with the political representatives of the armed groups that control the terrain”.

“The grand national dialogue does not seem to have brought a new and lasting solution to the demands of the Anglophones regarding the form of the state”, Kamto said as he came out of prison.

At the end of August, the most influential separatist chief, Julius Ayuk Tabe, was given a life jail term by a

military court in Yaounde, with nine of his supporters. From jail, he dismissed the dialogue as a “non-event”.

9:16 AM P P P P •

(••) 3G 554 B/S 28



Southern Cameroons Crisis: 5 government soldiers killed in Mbakong

Cameroonconcordnews Dec 22, 2023 [Read original](#)



Figure 2. Showing government soldiers killed in Mbakong.

Source: Cameroon Concord News, December 22, 2023.

Political Parties

Some political parties like the Social Democratic Front think that the government has failed in resolving the crisis in the Southern Cameroons. According to Mimimefoinfos, Dec. 7, 2023, The National Executive Committee (NEC) of the Social Democratic Front Party (SDF) in a recent outing condemns the government perceived failure to address and bring an end to the ongoing crisis in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon.

The condemnation was a key outcome of the NEC meeting held on December 2 in Yaounde. This marked the first NEC meeting chaired by Hon. Joshua Osih since assumed the role of National Chairman of the party. The meeting aimed to deliberate on various issues pertinent to the party on both national and international fronts. On the national stage, NEC deplored what it characterised as the government’s “inability and apparent unwillingness” to implement effective and urgent policies to quell the violence in the North West and South West Regions.

It could be said from the outing of the Social Democratic Front that all is not well in the Southern Cameroons.

5:34 PM P P P P P

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Social Democratic Front condemns Government's inaction in resolving Anglophone Crisis

Mimimefoinfos Dec 7, 2023 [Read original](#)

Figure 3. Showing ongoing burnings in the Southern Cameroons.
Source: Mimimefoinfos, December 7, 2023.

The Church

The church thinks that all is not well concerning the crisis in the Southern Cameroons in particular and the Boko Haram crisis in the Far North Region. According to Cameroon Intelligence Report dated August 17, 2023, calls for peace rang out from churches across Cameroon as well as Pope Francis himself, as Catholics in the Central African country celebrated the Feast of the Assumption on August 15. "The Assumption is a source of great hope for us all", said Veronica Foy, President of the Catholic Women's Association of the Diocese of Buea in Cameroon's troubled Southwest region, where English, rather than the nationally dominant French, is the most widely spoken language. "Before the feast, the CWA went through a nine-day Novena" to pray for a return to peace in the country, she said.

"We pray that she [the Virgin Mary] intercedes for us as individuals, as families, as a community and as a Church to grant our wishes. We are especially demanding that peace be restored in the North West and South West Region, and indeed, across the entire African continent and the entire world", Foy said.

Pope Francis used his August 13 Angelus prayer to note that Cameroon is a nation "still suffering from violence and war".

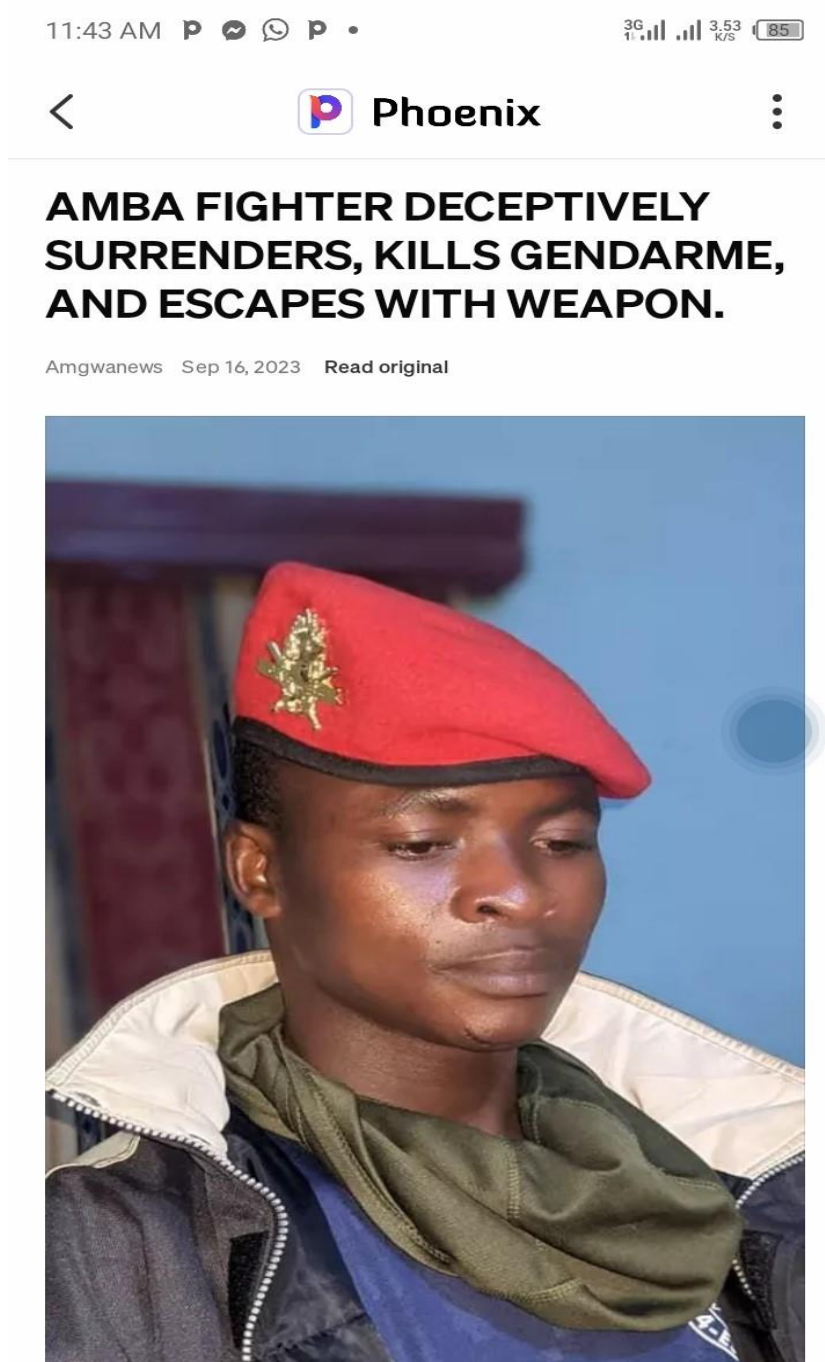


Figure 4. Showing a gendarme killed in Kumbo by an “Amba” fighter.
Source: Amgwanews, September 16, 2023.

“Let us join in prayer with our brothers and sisters in Cameroon so that, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, God may sustain the hope of the people who have been suffering for years and open ways of dialogue to reach harmony and peace”, the Pope said.

In Cameroon’s Kumbo Diocese, the epicenter of separatist violence that pits Francophone and Anglophones against one another, Bishop George Nkuo said if Cameroon’s problems are to be resolved, then the people must

get more involved in shaping the outcomes of various actions. Nkuo said it is the kind of engagement for which Mary is known and honoured. “Mary engaged the people and pleaded with Jesus on their behalf. She accompanied people in crisis and channeled the energy, love and hope of God to them”, Nkuo said in his homily for the Feast of the Assumption. He challenged Christians not to “remain neutral bystanders in the tragedies that unfold before us”.

According to Amgwanews dated September 16, 2023, in a startling turn of events in Kumbo, Bui Division, an “Ambazonian” fighter employed a deceptive tactic, pretending to surrender, only to violently seize a gendarme’s weapon and fatally shoot him.

The assailant then managed a daring escape, making off with the victim’s fire arm. This audacious attack serves as a grim reminder of the persisting conflict in the region and the formidable challenges encountered by security forces tasked with maintaining order and security. This incident underscores the urgent need for a peaceful resolution to the ongoing strife in the area.

Key Actors Involved in the Conflict

Some key actors involved in the conflict think that only negotiations will put an end to the crisis. According to Mimimefoinfos.com dated October 2, 2023, jailed “Ambazonia” leader, Sisiku Ayuk Tabe, has said the ongoing armed conflict in the English-speaking Regions of Cameroon will only end when the government dialogues with separatists. He made the statement in a message delivered on October 1, a day separatists have been celebrating since 2017 as the independence day of the breakaway state of “Ambazonia”.

“The rights of our people cannot be denied or trampled upon forever. Ultimately, the dialogue table is where this bloody problem will be resolved”, said Sisiku.

“[...] with the characteristic nature of our people, we are in self-defense mode as we pursue the international community for a peaceful resolution of this conflict through the dialogue table”.

The Cameroon government it should be noted has repeatedly rejected attempts by the international community to mediate a peaceful settlement of the crisis, insisting that the crisis is an internal problem that Cameroonians can resolve. However, critics of the regime such as the SDF, the population in the Southern Cameroons, and activists say the government has been adopting the wrong approach to the crisis and is supervising the wanton killings and destruction happening in the two Regions.

The Federalists

According to Mimimefoinfos.com dated October 2, 2023, members of the Coalition of Cameroon Federalist Groups and Activists (CCFGA), a civil society group advocating for federalism in Cameroon, say Cameroonians should join efforts with them to explore the possibility of federalism in the country.

The CCFGGA members stated at a press conference on Saturday that they support the creation of a federal government by the people through an election or referendum. The group which existed since 2021 says its primary goal is to bring federalists together and convince Cameroonians that federalism is the ultimate form of government that will lay to rest the socio-political upheavals and governance problems in the country.

“We believe that federalism is the most sustainable solution to the many problems facing our country, Cameroon. This strong belief is articulated in our motto: “One Nation, Federated””, said the CCFGGA’s president, Michael Takie.

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Cameroon's federalists reassert need for federal system of government

Mimimefoinfos Oct 2, 2023 [Read original](#)



Figure 5. Showing federalists.

Source: Mimimefoinfos, October 2, 2023.

The Population Calling on Anglophone Elites to Pressure Government to Resolve the Crisis

According to Mimimefoinfos dated October 8, 2023, English-speaking Cameroonians who reacted to the recent execution of civilians in Guzang have said elites should not just stop at condemning the act, but should pressure the government to resolve the ongoing arm conflict. Residents of Guzang, where separatist fighters publicly executed two men on Wednesday, said their elites and Fons should rise above just condemning atrocities. They aired their frustrations after Mbanyamsig Hansel, brother to the Fon of Guzang, and Aburo Cletus, a petit trader, were publicly shot dead. Also, international lawyer, Barrister Akere Muna, the Fon of Guzang III, and opposition party leader Professor Maurice Kamto have condemned the act.

This study set out to investigate the Major National Dialogue organised by Paul Biya as a panacea to resolve what some people term today as the Anglophone crisis. The analysis reveals that the government is of the opinion that the above dialogue has helped to put to rest the grievances of Southern Cameroonians. This is so because, first, with the special status offered to these regions, they can benefit from competences not provided for in the other eight regions. These advantages include participation in the definition of national public policies relating to the Anglophone education sub-system; the possibility of creating and managing regional development missions and participation in the elaboration of the status of traditional chieftaincy. Through this Special Status, the two

regions can be consulted on issues related to the development of public policy on justice in the common law sub-system, and even their associations with the management of public services located in their territories. Second, the creation of the Public Independent Conciliator which has as mission, among other things to ensure good relations between citizens and regional and municipal public services. That is, they have as mandate to arbitrate between users of council services and councils concerned where there is a dispute or violation of rights.

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Anglophone elites asked to pressure Gov't to resolve crisis

Mimimefoinfos.com Oct 8, 2023 [Read original](#)



By Soulemanu Buba

Figure 6. Showing two people killed in Guzang.

Source: Mimimefoinfos.com/Soulemanu Buba, October 8, 2023.

Third, the Commission on Bilingualism, Cultural Diversity and Social Cohesion spells out the equitable use of both official languages in all areas of national life to name but this. Fourth, it was accepted that educational reforms integrate the need to keep the two educational subsystems afloat, buoyant, and futuristic, recognising the unique strengths and specifications of each subsystem. Fifth, through the reconstruction plan, in just 18 months, 19 water points have been rehabilitated thereby enabling over 174,000 people to have access to potable water, 16 health centres rehabilitate now providing healthcare to 5,451 persons; over 7,000 students and teachers now have access to good learning space with some 22 schools rehabilitated. Within the same scheme, over 48,000 persons

are now being serviced by four bridges also rehabilitated; 8,000 lost documents recovered; over 60 insider mediators have been trained to enhance community peace; 12 social and cultural festivals and events stage to revive social cohesion across the North West and South West regions; over 126,500 persons have benefitted from some five community centres already renewed. Sixth, economic activities have witnessed an increase in the regions as the various production units of the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) and Pamol plantations have regained agricultural activities. The Ndawara tea estate now functions without problems. Trans-border trade is on the rise and transportation is fluid, except in the rural areas where the state of the road network is poor. Kumba, the commercial capital of the South West Region, has fully regained steam with businessmen driving in from Douala and beyond to continue business as it was before. Almost all villages now enjoy the traditional market days as it obtained before the armed conflict. Seventh, another indicator that the situation is improving in the North West and South West regions is the organisation of social gatherings, cultural festivals, and manifestations and sporting activities. The Coronation of the Fon of Oku, Nkambe, Mankon, Bamendankwe, Kumba, Limbe, and a host of others across the interiors of the North West and South West Regions speak volumes of how fast the social climate in these two regions is improving. Not only were such events attended by home-based people only, but many traveled from around and out of the country to live the great moments of communion with their ancestors. Eight, most communities in the North West and South West Regions are putting up resistance against “Amba” fighters. Places like Mbalangi in the South West Region and Oku in the North West Region are among several villages to have openly said “No” to the atrocities of “Amba” boys and drove them out of their communities.

Though the government and its ministers are of the opinion that the Major National Dialogue was a huge success because of the above discourse, political parties, politicians, religious leaders, civil society, and the population in the Southern Cameroons think that this is not true. They say so because the population in the crisis zones is still confronted with the same realities as prevailed before the dialogue such as killing of innocent civilians, the military, burning of houses, schools in some districts “remain closed and inaccessible”, while “dead city” protest strikes imposed every Monday by separatist forces have not stopped. Furthermore, the population is calling on the elites of their regions to pressure the government to solve this crisis. The Social Democratic Front condemned the government’s “inability and apparent unwillingness” to implement effective and urgent policies to quell the violence in the North West and South West Regions. To federalists, the Anglophone problem can only be solved by instituting a federal system of government. To Sisiku Tabe Ayuk, one of the jailed separatist leader, this crisis can only be resolved through dialogue. On the other hand, some religious leaders like Pope Francis think that through prayers and dialogue this crisis can be resolved. It is worth noting that Yaounde has persistently refused the offer of some countries like Switzerland and Canada which have opted to help the government by broking a peace treaty between her and separatists. Based on the above point of view it could be said that the Major National Dialogue organised by Paul Biya has not been the panacea to put to an end the ongoing crisis in the Southern Cameroons.

The above findings diverge from the one of Fuh (2022) which posits that there were three types of indexical expressions used on social media during the Anglophone crisis namely person, time, and place. Person deixis was used to show that some ministers implicated in the Anglophone crisis are liars because they do not tell the truth concerning the situation in the Southern Cameroons and that Paul Biya is a dictator, killer, and a destroyer. For example, he burns homes, killed people, rapes, and subjugates (Twitter 195, Dec. 2019). Time deixis was

also used to established that Paul Biya is a dictator because he has been in power for 42 years, more so, to question when the world will speak up for the oppressed people of Southern Cameroons concerning ongoing genocide there. Place deixis was used to show a number of things: first, that Paul Biya is committing heinous crimes in Southern Cameroons; second, the military burnt houses, raped women, abducted and killed men just to install a command and control centre; third, how the tribal militias, Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR) of dictator Paul Biya picked up people right in their houses without arms and summarily executed them. Furthermore, this study is also different from that of Fuh (2023). The author reveals that peace plants, boards, dresses (black), banners, body and facial signs, and the use of black, yellow, and white colours were found on the posts. The signs and symbols were used to call upon the belligerents to cease fire so that peace should come back in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon.

Conclusion

This paper explored the Major National Dialogue organised by Paul Biya as a panacea to the Anglophone crisis. The analysis revealed that the government is of the estimation that the dialogue it organised was the real panacea to put an end to the Anglophone crisis because economic activities have resumed in the two regions, many schools have opened their doors to students and pupils, Fons have been enthroned in the two regions, cultural and sporting activities have restarted, so many fighters have repented of their acts and have dropped their arms and there is reconstruction work that is ongoing just to name but these. From the above information by the government one could say that the Major National Dialogue was the panacea to end the crisis in the Southern Cameroons. On the other hand, politicians, political parties, activists, religious leaders, and the population in the crisis zones think that the dialogue organised by the state was a failure because nothing has changed in these places. They also say so because killings are still going on (see pictures above), houses are being burnt, people are being kidnapped, people are still praying for peace to reign in the Southern Cameroons, and the affected population is calling on their elites to pressure the government to end the crisis and the persistent denial of the government for a third party not to aid in stopping the crisis just to list but these.

This researcher thinks that the approach adopted by the government in resolving the conflict in the Southern Cameroons to a greater extent has not been completely successful because people are still dying, be they civilians or soldiers. People are still losing property like houses, goods, and cash as was the case of burnt houses in Mbakong. Since this strategy is not helping the government make the country a united Cameroon, it should explore other means of dealing with this conflict. The investigator is suggesting that the Cameroon government should organise a genuine and an inclusive dialogue with key actors directly linked to this conflict. If this is done and in good faith, it is strongly believed that the situation in the Southern Cameroons will be brought under control.

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Appendix

Pictures of the Major National Dialogue:

7:11 AM [messaging icons] 3G 1.47 K/S [battery 43]

Vatican News [close icon]



Cameroon
tribune

Major National Dialogue : Game Changer In Local Governance

By Godlove BAINKONG 30 Déc. 2019 14:42 0 Li





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