

Nationalism or Power-Politics: Understanding The Dynamics of Militancy in The British Southern Cameroons, 1953-1961

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Abstract:

Expounding on the independence struggle in British Southern Cameroons between 1953-1961, this paper sets out to unveil the underlying forces behind the nationalist movement in the British Southern Cameroons with the goal of giving visibility and clarity to the dynamics that characterised militancy in the territory from 1953-1961. The paper evolves from a laid down premise that Nationalism in its expression and manifestation in the territory, did not meet its goal of Sovereign Power but rather engendered Power-Politics which greatly influenced militancy in the territory rendering it persistently inconsistent and dynamic in character. To bring light to the above argument, the qualitative research approach was put into use and it permitted a constructive analyses and confrontation of primary as well as secondary sources while making use of the question guide as the main research tool. The result of this exercise revealed that KAMERUN Nationalism was the principal driving force in the British Southern Cameroons independence struggle. It was later observed that this primary force in the struggle was infiltrated and even shattered by Power-Politics which in turn gave rise to divisions, dissensions, disagreements, resignations, alliances and counter alliances. All this pushes forward a conclusion that; the path to independence in Southern Cameroons was trapped in the net of nationalism and power politics with the latter taking precedence of the former hence leading to the non-attainment of sovereign power for Southern Cameroons in 1961.

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INTRODUCTION

With the materialisation of the arbitrary conventional Anglo-French boundary in 1919, a nationalist upsurge broke out along the Anglo-French border lines of Cameroon. This nationalist upsurge in its early manifestation was purely ethnic, putting on limelight border ethnic groups of the Mungo (*Mbo, Balong, Bakossi*) and the Northern interiors (*Bangwa-Dschang, Nso-Bamun*)¹. Ethno-Nationalism in British Southern Cameroon in its expression took the form of civil disobedience by independent ethnic groups, “illegal migrations” along the Anglo-French border and petitioning to the UN visiting missions by some traditional rulers as was the case with the *Fon of Bangwa* ². The failure of these ethnic groups to restore the political, cultural, and economic sovereignty of their people along the Anglo-French borderlines gave way to the emergence of a stronger force inhibited by the educated elites in British Southern Cameroons known as the KAMERUN idea³. The Cameroon idea which arose from the outright rejection of the Anglo-French partition of Cameroon, couple with the pain and humiliation under Nigerian domination, gave birth to a wider nationalist movement which cut across ethnic boundaries to produce a stronger Kamerun nationalism. The growth of Kamerun Nationalism in the early 1950s in Southern Cameroons saw expression in the formation of inclusive trade unions, pressure groups, and political parties in the likes of the Cameroon Development Corporation Welfare Union (CDCWU), Cameroon Youth League (CYL), Kamerun United National Congress (KUNC) and Kamerun National Congress (KNC)⁴. These political movements and organisations respectively launched their activities in Southern Cameroons thereby setting in motion militancy throughout the territory. The beginning of political activities and militancy in the early 1950s in Southern Cameroons was motivated by one fundamental goal which was Self-determination and the attainment of **Sovereign Power**. How then could such power be attained when **Nationalism** as weapon that was designed to achieve this power was swallowed up in the incessant battles of **Power-Politics** producing dynamics in militancy which found expression in resignations, dissensions, carpet crossing, alliances and counter alliances?

Conceptual Framework

Nationalism; derived from the word nation, Nationalism has variously been defined and explained in different context and periods. It is believed to be a spirit of consciousness developed by a people of their specific identity at a particular time. The Cameroonian Historian Abwa⁵ says it is a doctrine or better still a movement that upholds the predominance of a particular identity (nation) in all aspects of society. Independence fighters in the early 1940's in Africa referred to it as the wind of change that blew across Africa bringing forth liberation and independence of the African people from colonial subjugation. In a knot shell nationalism as used in this paper is the struggle by a people to uphold and defend their specific socio-economic and political identity with the primary goal of affirming their political predominance in the form of total sovereignty.

¹ V.G.Fanso, “Inter-Group Relations and the Cameroon Reunification: A Prototype of Africa’s Frontier Problem” in *FALSS ANNALS University of Yaoundé I, Vol. I, N° 2, 02/07/1985*, p.37-46.

² Ibid p. 44

³ S.N. Tata, “The Evolution of the Reunified Cameroon 1961-1982” *PhD Thesis, University Of Lagos, Nigeria, 1991*, P.84.

⁴ L .F. Awah, “Party-Politics and the Dynamics of Militancy in British Southern Cameroons 1953-1961: A Historical Perspective”, *M.A Dissertation, University of Yaoundé I, 2015*, p.36-50.

⁵ D. Abwa , *Cameroon Histoire d’un Nationalism: 1884-1961*, Yaoundé, Edition Cle, 2010, p.18.



Power-Politics; as viewed in international relations and political science, It is the politics of threats and sanctions (military and economic) put in place to influence other states on the international scene. In other words power-politics is politics primarily based on the use of Power as a coercive force with disregard for ethical precepts.⁶ According to Schwarzenberger power-politics is the system of international relations in which each group considers not merely as a means to a common end, but as an end in itself. He adds that in such a system any measure which is required to achieve self-preservation is deemed to be justified and groups are measured by their weight in any potential or actual conflict⁷. Like Hans Morgenthau, schwarzenberger conceives power-politics essentially as 'Force' and such force remains both "ends and means" of national foreign policy⁸ Though the concepts is widely used in international politics and political science, it doesn't in any way erase its fundamental meaning which is firmly rooted in the permanent Struggle for Power. According to Allan James Power Politics as end and means of national foreign policy, cannot be limited only to workings of international relations but can as well be streamed down to political activities within a territory where the struggle to maintain power and dominate others is usually very predominant⁹. In this light therefore Power Politics as expressed in the British southern Cameroons, will imply all political activities of groups or individuals which had great emphasises on the strong use of force, influence and authority for no other goal than to safeguard Power and dominate over others in the political platform of the territory. Thus Power-politics here is the use of Power by the powerful to compel and influence the choices and fate of the less powerful in a competitive political arena with the principal aim of sustaining and preserving this Power not for its own sake but for selfish interest.

Militancy is a concept which is very much pregnant in meaning. It could bear a religious as well as political connotation According to Merriam Webster it is the active championing of a course or belief, a state or condition of being combative¹⁰. Andrew Heywood on his part thinks that it is the zeal and passion of one who is engaged in combat.¹¹ Such a person is often called a militant. In competitive politics, a militant is one who adheres to a political party and participates actively to the life of the party in every aspect.¹² In other words, Militancy expresses a strong sense of belonging; that is, adhering to the vision and ideology of a party with the conviction and the zeal to contribute in its advancement. Therefore, Militancy without full engagement is nothing but *Du Militantisme Aveugle*.¹³ Such persons who cannot fully engage themselves in a cause are best described as supporters or sympathisers, who have strong attachment or love for a party, its ideology, take part in its rallies but cannot be voted or stand for election on the ticket of the party. They rather serve the interest of ambitious politicians.¹⁴ Holding a similar view, Celestine Atanga¹⁵ adds that Militancy in a political party must be backed by membership (owning a party membership card) without

⁶ Mirriam Webster Online Dictionary,

⁷ Georges Schwarzenberger, *Power-Politics: a study of international society*, London institute of world affairs, New York, 1951, p. 13.

⁸ See, Hans Morgenthau, *politics among nations; the struggle for power and peace*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1948.

⁹ Allan James, "Power-Politics" in *SAGE Journal*, October 1964.

¹⁰ [Http://www.Merriam-webster.Com/dictionary/29th/07/2013,6:30Pm](http://www.Merriam-webster.Com/dictionary/29th/07/2013,6:30Pm).

¹¹ A. Heywood, *Political ideology*. p. 243.

¹² Encyclopédie Grand Larousse Universel, (Tom10), p. 6947.

¹³ Joeph Marie B.Eyafa, *RDPC:FLEURON DU RENOUVEAU (histoire électorale et perspectives)*, Edition 2011, Yaoundé, nd, p. 281.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Interview with Celestine Atanga, 47years, Politician Social Democratic Ffront National Vice Secretary, Yaoundé, 10th/ 07/2014.

which one remains a mere sympathiser or supporter. Today many politicians find uncomfortable to identify with the concept of Militancy and rather prefer Party Membership.¹⁶ This is because Religious Fundamentalists have embraced a conventional state-centered view of politics wherein they have pursued a highly distinctive style of political activity which is vigorous, intense and violent¹⁷. In a way to dissociate from this fundamentalist view of militancy, some persons militating with political parties have refused to be identified as militants'. But this does not in any way cancel the fact that Militancy has to do with political activism animated by zeal and passion all in the defense of a specific interest, political opinion or ideology. Thus Militancy in the Southern Cameroons as used in this study, articulates the active participation or engagement of individuals or groups in the defence of specific interests or parties and ideologies. It is all about the active role of engaged politicians in the defence of specific party interests and ideology.

The concept **Dynamics** is derived from the word dynamic, which is a verb describing an action. The concept was first used in physics as a branch in the field of Mechanics that deals with motion of objects and material under applied forces.¹⁸ Over the years, this purely mathematical concept as developed by Isaac Newton,¹⁹ has gained more meaning and significance in other domains of knowledge. In physics dynamics refers to the science of the forces involved in movement that is, the force or power that produces movements and changes²⁰. In social psychology, dynamics is more or less the description of a personality trait. Thus a dynamic person is one open to new experiences, who likes variety, freedom of expression over harmony, enjoys moving from one city to another, is more adaptive than non-adaptive, extroverted, enthusiastic, likes to have beliefs and ideas challenged, is optimistic and likes to keep him or herself constantly occupied²¹. According to the economist R. F. Harrod, Dynamics in economics is the study of the evolution and growth of an economy over a long period. It is also the study of movements and fluctuations in economic activities.²² As for A. Comte, Dynamics or social dynamics is a branch of sociology that studies changes or successive stages in the evolution of social events.²³ Philosophically, the concept dynamics bring into confrontation two schools of thought, the traditionalists and evolutionists. In other words, we can talk of the struggle between Mechanism and Dynamism²⁴. From the above fields of knowledge which we have explored and others, it is noticed that the notion of change runs throughout. Therefore, Dynamics is a concept that expresses evolution and is directly opposed to immobility. It is all about the changing perspectives in a socio-cultural, economic or political system and their evolution over time ²⁵. It could as well be likened to what Abwa calls *mutations* in Southern Cameroons party politics.²⁶ As such, dynamics as used in this

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Heywood, *Political Ideologie*. p. 243.

¹⁸ *Academic American Encyclopedia*, Vol. 6.

¹⁹ Isaac Newton in his book *Principia Mathematica Philosophia Naturalis*, published in 1686 clearly developed the fundamentals of classical dynamics putting at the fore front the law of motion and gravitation. See *Academic American Encyclopedia* Vol.6.

²⁰ <http://www.Encyclopedia> the free dictionary.Com.

²¹ <http://www.Similar> Minds.Com/r-drive/.29th/07/2013,6:30pm.

²² Encyclopédie Grand Larousse Universel. p. 3467.

²³ Ibid., p.3466.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 3467.

²⁵ Willibroad Dze-Ngwa, "Boundary Dynamics and the Search for Geopolitical Space: The Case of the Mbororo in the North West Region of Cameroon", In *Boundaries and History in Africa: Issues in conventional boundaries and ideological frontiers*, (eds) Abwa, Maryland Publishers, Bamenda, 2011, p.15.

²⁶ Interview with Daniel Abwa 61 years, Professor of History University of Yaounde I, Yaoundé ,9th/07/ 2014.

study implies changes and flexibility in the conduct of partisan politics. Hence, the dynamics of militancy simply refers to the ease with which militants as well as supporters (sympathisers) of political parties changed or moved from one political party and ideology to another. It evokes the changing realities of time and nature. Thus the Dynamics of militancy as used in this paper refer to the flexibility and ease with which militancy in Party-politics was influenced by the struggle for power to consistently waver from one ideology or political platform to another²⁷.

The British Southern Cameroons: Location, Size and Population

The British Southern Cameroons happened to have been a geopolitical entity whose origin and evolution was never envisaged before 1922. Carved out from the German Kamerun occupied since 1884, British Southern Cameroons was the resulting product of western realpolitik²⁸ manifested in the global conflagration of 1914-1918. This international circumstance and its ramifications dealt a serious blow to the Germans who, out of defeat, were forced to quit the Cameroons which they had occupied for over thirty-two years. This led to the ushering in of the Anglo-French coalition as new occupants of the territory. For administrative convenience; the new occupants partitioned the territory into two spheres, that is, British and French Cameroons. This single action led to a series of political squabbles in the Cameroons especially in the section that became known as the British Southern Cameroons.

British Southern Cameroons is situated in the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa. It lies between the Federal Republic of Nigeria and former French Cameroon with which it shares boundary to the West and East respectively. To the South, it is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean. The territory is found within longitude 80° and 120° E. and latitude 50° and 100° N. of the equator²⁹. It has a total land surface of 16,581 square miles, (42,928 square kilometer)³⁰. The territory lies entirely within the tropics and was known for its heavy rains and rich volcanic soils which favoured plantation agriculture, which is one of the major economic activities of the area. According to the British report to the United Nation on the Cameroons under United Kingdom trusteeship for the year 1953, Southern Cameroons population stood at about 753,000 inhabitants³¹. The British Southern Cameroons for administrative convenience was administered as an integral part of the Nigerian federation. It was first a province of Southern Nigeria, and later part of the Eastern Nigerian region with its own separate administration. It was initially divided into four Divisions namely; Kumba, Mamfe, Victoria and Bamenda ³²**(See Map)** The Divisions were each administered by a Divisional officer who reported to the resident based in Buea. The resident himself was answerable to the Lieutenant Governor of the Cameroons Province in Nigeria. In 1948 the post of Commissioner was instituted in the Southern Cameroons. This was followed in 1949 by the transformation of Bamenda Division into a province (Bamenda province), and the creation of Wum and Nkambe Divisions³³

²⁷ L.F. Awah, *Party-Politics...* p.8&9

²⁸This expression was first used in Germany to describe the policies put in place to materialize German unification in 1870, and by extension is used today in international politics to refer to all foreign policies based on the principle of calculation, power parity and national interest.

²⁹Nfor N. Nfor, *The Southern Cameroons: The Truth of The Matter*, Bamenda, 2003, p.1.

³⁰Eyongetah, R. Brain, *A History of the Cameroons*, Longman, London, 1974, p.97.

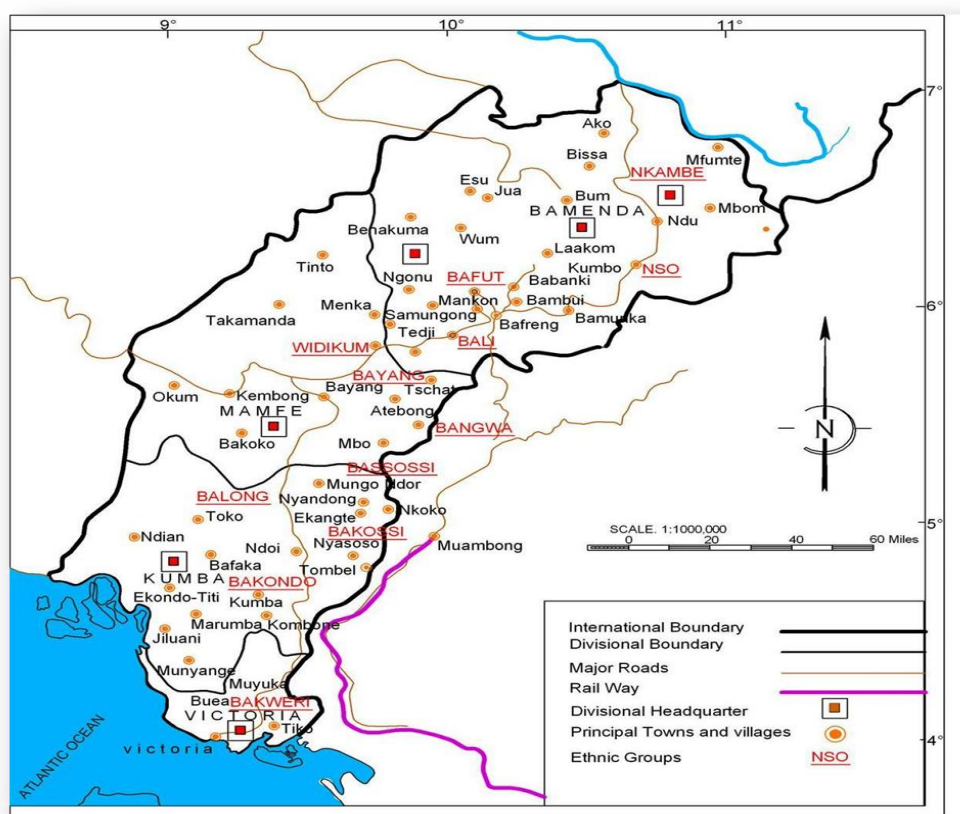
³¹ NAB/Ba1953/3 Cameroons report to the United Nations Organization 1953, p.129.

³²V. J. Ngoh, *Cameroon 1884-1985: A Hundred Years of History*, Navi group, Limbe, 1987, pp.165-166.

³³ NWRA/FileN⁰ Fa.1949/1.Short notes on Bamenda province on General issues .14th November1950, p.30.

From the total population of the Southern Cameroons, four major ethnic groups could be identified, that is; the Bantu, Bantu- oriented (semi-bantu), the Tikar and the Chamba-speaking peoples. The Bantu speaking people of the Southern Cameroons inhabited mostly the Coast or the forest region of the British Southern Cameroons. The area was as well referred to as “*Vikuma*”³⁴ since it covered the administrative divisions of Victoria, Kumba, and Mamfe. As for the Bantu-oriented (semi-bantu) speaking people, together with some Tikar and Chamba nations³⁵, they occupied the region called the Bamenda grassfields. Among the Bantu and semi bantu speaking peoples of Southern Cameroons could be identified nations like the Bakweri, Bakossi, Bambuko, Bakundu, Bafaw, Balong, Banyang, Balue, Balundu, Bassosi, Mbonge, Mbo, Bangwa, Mbulu, Mundani, Menka, Assumbo and the Widekum.³⁶ Except for the Widekum stock that was heavily represented in the Bamenda grasslands precisely in Mankon, Akum, Pinyin, Moghamo, Ngie, Oshei, widikum³⁷ etc. the rest of the above ethnic groups were all confined within the administrative divisions of Victoria, Kumba, and Mamfe. As for the Tikar and Chamba groups, we could identify nations like; the Bafut, Nso, Bikom, Bum, Bali, Sungom,

Map Showing Territorial and Ethnic Composition of British Southern Cameroons



Source: NAB. Survey Department Lagos Nigeria 1947; Adapted by Author

³⁴ Interview with S.T. Abel Ndeh 70 years, Former Municipal administrator of the Bamenda City Council, Ngomgham (Bamenda), 02/03/ 2015.

³⁵ The word nation as used in this context to describe the various organized groups within the Southern Cameroons is in recognition of the power, authority and independence which these groups commanded vis a vis each other.

³⁶ NAB/AB85. Cameroons under United Kingdom Administration, report for the year 1954, p.2.

³⁷ Aaron S. Neba, *Modern Geography of the Republic of Cameroon*, NEBA PUBLISHERS, Camden, New Jersey, 1987, p.55.

Nationalism in British Southern Cameroons: Antecedents and Full Expression.

The nationalist upsurge in British Southern Cameroons was the result of multiple considerations which manifested themselves in a strong movement which would not have gained grounds without powerful antecedents established as far back as 1914. The 1914 global conflagration also called First World War, had produced long-lasting repercussions on the people of Cameroons, and one of such was the arbitrary partition of the territory into British and French Cameroons. The 1916 provisional partition line which was later approved in 1919 provided a smooth platform on which future crisis were to emerge and later metamorphosed into what has been called Cameroonian nationalism. In effect, nationalism in British Southern Cameroons will make no sense without its initial link to the '*Kamerun* identity' lost in 1916 after the First World War. As a matter of fact this question of identity already posed itself immediately after the defeat of Germany especially among the natives and the victorious powers who all asked the question to know "what shall we become as well as our territory after the war?"³⁸ From this question it was already clear that a crisis of identity was taking shape in the minds of the people, since the *Kamerun* identity created by German colonisation had just been shattered. The effects of this was an immediate return to the ethnic identity which on its part, received a serious blow in 1919 following the institutionalisation of the Anglo-French conventional boundary. This Anglo-French boundary of 1919 had amongst other effects, the separation of people linked by close territorial and cultural relations. It as well distorted flourishing socio-economic and cultural institutions which shaped ethnic relations and traditional diplomacy in Cameroon³⁹. This led to a strong ethnic driven force which laid the foundation of nationalism in British Southern Cameroons. This nationalist upsurge in the British part of the partitioned Cameroon was greatly sustained by the desire to abolish custom barriers and border lines separating ethno-linguistic communities along the Anglo-French boundaries of Cameroon. This early nationalist force was expressed by the *Mbow*, *Bakossi*, *Bafaw*, and *Bangwa* people who constantly challenged border officials and even petitioned the United Nations through its Visiting Mission as was the case of the petition from the *Bangwa* Native Authority calling for the annulment of the boundary separating Dschang and Bangwaland.⁴⁰ As the struggle to consolidate an ethnic nation after World War One proved ineffective and very difficult, the people resorted to forge a new territorial identity which went beyond ethnic lines and this was the Cameroons identity which gained momentum following the attachment of British Cameroons to Nigeria by the British government. It was therefore at this moment that a British Southern Cameroons Nationalism took off.

³⁸ Abwa, *Cameroun : Histoire d'un nationalisme...* p129.

³⁹ Fanso, "Inter-Group Relations and the Cameroon Reunification, p.44.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Considerations in the British Southern Cameroons Nationalist Movement

Nationalism in Southern Cameroons was fuelled by multiple considerations and one of such was the deliberate attachment of Southern Cameroons to Nigeria by the British government in violation of the mandate provisions⁴¹. This act was not welcomed by the people who had just forged amongst themselves a common territorial identity in the Cameroons and would not accept to be imposed another identity other than their Cameroons identity. The outcome was the birth of the British Southern Cameroons nationalist Movement. This movement, found expression mostly among the new class of educated elites in the territory who questioned the wellbeing of Southern Cameroons in the Nigerian framework as well as its future following the end of the mandate and trusteeship. If such questions arose it was simply because the administration of British Cameroons as part of Nigeria exhibited a lot of flaws and provoked serious problems in the Cameroons, amongst which was the total neglect of development in the Southern Cameroons from 1922-1950⁴². It was against this backdrop of acute underdevelopment that the Southern Cameroons nationalist movement found great expression. Again, the attachment of Southern Cameroons to the Eastern Region of Nigeria raised a serious problem in Southern Cameroon which was the Igbo domination. This Igbo/Nigerian domination in Southern Cameroons was greatly reflected in the predominance of the Igbo/Nigerian in all spheres of life in the Southern Cameroons. All departments of the civil service were occupied by them, accounting for a very low insertion of the British Cameroonians in the Southern Cameroons Civil Service department⁴³. Worse still the economy of the territory was completely high jacked by these same Igbo/Nigerian thus affirming Amaazee's assertion that "*while Europeans colonised Nigeria, Nigeria technically colonised Southern Cameroons*"⁴⁴

⁴¹ The League of Nations in 1920 had given British Cameroon a new international status as Mandate "B" Territory to be administered by Britain under the close supervision of the Mandate Commission of the League of Nations. By virtue of this status Britain could not administer the territory as its colony not to talk of merging it with its Nigerian West African Colony.

⁴² V.B. Amaazee, "The Under Development Of The British Southern Cameroons, 1916-1961" In *Africa Zamani, Journal Of African History* No 4, 1996,

⁴³ P. M. Kale, *Political Evolution in the Cameroons*, p.52

⁴⁴ Amaazee, "The Under Development of The British Southern Cameroons."



Table I: Southern Cameroonians in the Cameroons Civil Service departments 1922-1944**Source:** P. M. Kale, *Political Evolution in the Cameroons*, p.52.

Conscious of their newly acquired Cameroons personality/Identity which found stronger roots in the *Kamerun* idea, the people of Southern Cameroons through Trade Unions, Associations, and Pressure Groups decided to stage a vibrant nationalist movement which in 1953 with the birth of political parties became stronger and determined to affirm the

DEPARTMENT	HIGHER GRADES	CLERICAL SERVICES	TEACHERS	NURSES AND MIDWIVES	TECHNICAL STAFF
Custom	-	2	-	-	-
Post/Telegraphs	-	2	-	--	-
Nigerian Secretariat	-	-	-	-	-
Provincial	-	15	-	-	-
Education	1	-	20	-	-
Medical	1Ast. MD	-	-	11	-
Health	-	-	-	1Sr.Inspector	-
Agric./Cooperative	2Ast.Agric .Officer	4.prd.examiner/1.cop.Insp	-	-	-
PWD	-	2	-	-	-
Forestry	--	-	-	-	1Ast.2foresters
Judicial	-	2	-	-	-
Mines	-	-	-	-	-
Colliery	-	-	-	-	-
Marine	-	-	-	-	1Jr.Tech.Staff
Railway	-	-	-	-	-
Police	-	-	-	-	1.Inspector
Treasury	-	-	-	-	-
Prisons	-	-	-	-	1chief warden
Total	4	28	20	12	6

Cameroons identity and bring about its autonomy as a sovereign nation. It should however be noted that the coming on board of political parties in the Southern Cameroons nationalist movement, greatly energised the movement but at the same time politicised militancy in the territory to the point of provoking Factions or Polls of Power within the movement, with each holding different opinions and strategies towards achieving the nationalist goal. This in effect provoked political competition which gave room for Power-Politics in the territory and in the long run completely compromised the established ideals of Southern Cameroons nationalism.

Power-Politics in British Southern Cameroons' Nationalism

Power which is the ability of Man to exercise control over the minds and actions of other men according to Hans Morgenthau must be distinguished from influence and force.⁴⁵ Power it should be noted, must be used in such a way that it establishes a mutual link between the

⁴⁵ Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations the Struggle for Power and Peace*, Sixth Edition, Alfred A. Knopf Inc. New York, 1985, p 32.

holder of this power and the people over which it is exercised by so doing power becomes an instrument of public action best known as political power⁴⁶. The moment political power fails to establish that psychological relation between the holders of power and those over which it is exercised and rather resort to influence and force using coercive measures it loses completely its ethical precepts giving birth to what is best known in international relations as Power-politics⁴⁷. Power-Politics therefore is the use of Power by the powerful to compel and influence the choices and fate of the less powerful in a competitive political arena with the principal aim of sustaining and preserving this power not for its own sake but for personal interest. The nationalist struggle in Southern Cameroons in its evolution saw the emergences of several poles of power which instead of being harnessed for public action (nationalism) were rather harnessed for personal aggrandisement thus sustaining a dynamic and competitive political environment in the Southern Cameroons from 1953-1961.

Royalty and Educated Elites in the Struggle for “Power” Instead of Self-Determination

With the newly found consciousness of a “Cameroons Personality”⁴⁸ rooted in a *Kamerun* Idea among the people of Southern Cameroons, a general spirit of nationalism broke out in the territory with all hopes inclined towards a total rejection of the alien (Britain/Nigeria) and an eventual self-determination and independence. Unfortunately, the march toward the attainment of these goals was frustrated by the emergence of several Poles of Power fashioned at different periods by the colonial authority to sustain their exploitative ambitions in the territory. Amongst these Poles of Power, we had the Traditional Rulers on one hand and Elites on the other, who together happened to have inaugurated the first phase of Power-Politics in Southern Cameroons.

Traditional rulers in Southern Cameroons enjoyed a privileged position of Power conferred on them by the British administration which they cherished even more than the Political Power they initially commanded in the territory. This well calculated Power handed to them by the British policy of indirect rule made of them the only liaison between the people and the administration.⁴⁹ To further strengthen this view, the 1922 Clifford’s constitution which organised the British colony of Nigeria did not take into consideration the people of Southern Cameroons, and to this effect the constitution was seriously criticised by nationalist in the territory. To quell down the rising tension among Southern Cameroons nationalist, Britain introduced a representative seat for Southern Cameroons in the Nigerian legislative council, but to the greatest surprise of these nationalist mostly educated elites of the Cameroon Welfare Union (CWU) in the likes of P.M. Kale, Charlie Ndobedie and Barber, the British appointed a traditional ruler Chief Manga Williams to represent the territory in the legislative council⁵⁰.

Plate I: Chief. Manga Williams (O.B.E) Cameroons Representative to the Legislative Council in Nigeria

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ The expression Cameroons personality evokes a sense of the Kamerun identity and it is based on the belief that the arbitrary fragmentation and separate colonial administration did not in any way erased the idea that the people of the territory had existed in the past as a single Kamerun Nation. Therefore besides expressing the separate identity of the Cameroons from Nigeria, it goes further to uphold the Kamerun nation

⁴⁹ Mucho Chiabi, “Chieftaincy: Traditional Rulers in National Politics”, in *FALSH* N° 1&2, vol. VI, July 1990, p,36.

⁵⁰ V.J. Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons , 1922-1961: a Constitutional History*, Ashgate, Burlington,2001, p,12



Source: National Archives Buea

As if this was not enough, with the constitutional reforms of 1947 that brought into law the Richards constitution, Southern Cameroons which had been placed under the Eastern Region of Nigeria was accorded 2 seats in the legislative council, and again the privileged traditional rulers (Manga William and Galega) were still called up to occupy these seats⁵¹. From every indication the British administration was consciously building up a Power tussle between the chiefs and the elites which in the long run provoked Power-Politics as these rulers tend to use their political power to discredit the elite and even observed a disappointing silence in the Nigerian assemblies just to inflict a frustrating sanction on the elites and play the card of the British administration. E.M.L. Endeley was quick to notice this during the 1948 and 1949 budgetary session in Nigeria where these chiefs representing Cameroon observed a total silence instead of addressing the plight of Southern Cameroons⁵² thus it is clear here that Political Power was used in an unethical manner by the Traditional Rulers to coerce the elites into submitting to the colonial exploitative statusquo of the British administration instead of advancing the Nationalist cause.

Unfortunately for these Traditional Rulers their action rather encouraged the galvanisation of support for Elites and their Nationalist cause among the people of the territory pushing the British administration which earlier preserved Royalty against rising elites to later drop Royalty in favour of the Elites. Evidence of this was the sudden change of Southern Cameroons representatives to the Ibadan conference of 1950 by bringing in Elites like E.M.L Endeley instead of the famous Manga William and Galega⁵³. The outcome of this was a political revolution initiated through the Macpherson constitution by which 13 seats were accorded Southern Cameroons in the Eastern Region and democratically won in their entirety

⁵¹ Ibid, p,42

⁵² Ibid, p, 46.

⁵³ Ibid, p, 54.

by Elites instead of the usual Traditional Rulers. Worth noting is that even the popular chief Manga Williams was beaten in his own Victoria constituency, a clear proof that Political Power had left the hands of the chief into the hands of the Educated Elites. The new issue raised is how well will such Power be used by the Elites to achieve the Nationalist cause? A question that leaves much to doubt as the entry of Elite into the political scene of Southern Cameroons like Traditional Rulers rather provoked power tussles instead of advancing the Nationalist ideal for which they all identified. The effect of this was the inauguration of a second phase of Power -Politics within the Southern Cameroons Nationalist movement.

Power-Politics in Southern Cameroons: The Quest for Power and Political Influence among the Elites

With their successful ascension to the political arena of Southern Cameroons, Educated Elites acclaimed as champions of the nationalist movement federated under the unique umbrella of self-determination saw their ranks infiltrated by the greed of power and politics. This unfortunately sowed the seed of discord among them thus divisions, disagreements and carpet crossing all in an effort to secure a comfortable position of power and influence.

The manifestation of Power Politics among the Elites of Southern Cameroons was first witnessed in 1953 during the Eastern Regional Crisis which affected the Eastern Regional legislature of Nigerian⁵⁴. Dissatisfied with the political manipulations in Nigeria which in no way advanced the Southern Cameroons cause, the 13 young Elites representing the territory in the Nigerian Eastern House of assembly opted to withdraw from the assembly and steer clear of Nigerian politics.⁵⁵ Unfortunately their resolve to withdraw from Nigerian politics was fractured by egoism and the quest for power and political positioning. Thus out of the 13 representatives, 9 led by E.M.L Endeley remained committed to their decision of withdrawing by opting for Benevolent Neutrality while 4 others led by N.N Mbile, carried away by the fear of losing power and political influence which they had started commanding in Nigerian politics decided to stay off the neutrality bloc.⁵⁶ This created a big fracture within Southern Cameroons Nationalist movement and set the pace for the birth of the first two political parties in the territory; that is the Kamerun National Congress KNC⁵⁷ and the Kamerun People Party KPP⁵⁸. While the benevolent neutrals led by Endeley created the KNC, the opposing camp of Mbile created the KPP. As if to follow the example of Mbile, several other Elites seeking power and political influence at the detriment of the Nationalist cause had to break up with Endeley and the KNC party. A good example was Prince Walter Mbong Wilson who in 1953 created the third political party in the territory called Kamerun Labour Party.⁵⁹ Their triumphant take-over of political affairs of the territory by Elites in 1953, brought significant breakthrough which convinced many that the dream of self-determination would finally be a reality. This was so because this new class of young and vibrant educated elites incarnated a strong spirit of nationalism united in a common goal and ideology which brought

⁵⁴ Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story...* p.56

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ N. N. Mbile leader of the 4 non benevolent neutrals had expressed clearly in his memoir that contrary to the benevolent neutrals argument who appeared weakened as a minority in the Nigerian legislature following the Eastern regional crisis, to him staying in Nigerian legislature as a minority was rather an advantage of power which they could use to control the Nigerian majority. See N. N. Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story: Memories Of An Authentic Eye Witness*, Limbe, Presprint, 1999, p.56.

⁵⁷ Ebune, *Growth of Political Parties*, p.143.

⁵⁸ Ibid. p.146.

⁵⁹ NAB Vb /b.1959/4/Kamerun Labour Party.

hope of a bright future for the Southern Cameroons. Unfortunately, this hope was shattered by the selfish ambitions of these Elites which they allowed to plunge them in to disunity, hence the emergence of divergent ideological platforms in the nationalist struggle. It is surprising that a man like Mbong Wilson who shared the same core Nationalist goal of Autonomy and Self-determination for Southern Cameroons like the KNC will go ahead to create his own political party instead of uniting his efforts to the general nationalist struggle. It is evident here that he also like Mbile wanted to secure a comfortable position of power and influence. Acting in the same manner like Mbong Wilson was John Ngu Foncha and A.N Jua who in 1955 abandoned Endeley and the KNC to create the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP). This was done on the basis that the leader Endeley failed to federate the different views that emerged in the party and rather entered into an alliance with the Action Group (AG) of Obafemi Awolowo a Nigerian party of which they had unanimously agreed to stay neutral in Nigerian politics⁶⁰. It is clear here that Endeley saw his Power and influence threatened by some rising ideologies and to secure his ego and power he went into alliance with the A.G forcing Foncha and others who had earlier refused any link with Nigerian politics to withdraw from the KNC and build their own power by creating the KNDP in 1955 and later the same year E. A Anjeh did same by creating the Kamerun United Commoners Party⁶¹ followed the next year by E.R Robinson Tembu who launched the Kamerun Socialist Party (KSBP)⁶² Equally in 1958 after Endeley had successfully entered another alliance with the KPP to fight the rising KNDP, Endeley failed to position P.M Kale the leader of the KPP in his cabinet and rather chose Mbile the deputy leader of the KPP this to the annoyance of Kale who decided to abandon the KPP to form his own party Kamerun United Party (KUP)⁶³. To justify his action Kale wrote a letter dated 25th May 1959 to Foncha the PM of Southern Cameroons and to Commissioner JO Fields where he said

“...in actual fact this is not altogether a new party but merely a change of nomenclature from the Kamerun Peoples Party which until recently was under my leadership. The background of it all is that the KPP went into two factions just after the last elections... amongst other things an idea was mooted that the KNC and the KPP should merge... under the leadership of a legislator. Undoubtedly, the mooters had Dr Endeley in mind. The idea was opposed ... by KPP supporters who had enjoyed my leadership... Irrespective of my not being a legislator. ...my two Lieutenants Mbile and Motomby... were in favour of the merger. To avoid confusion, we therefore agreed to disagree... that so far is the outcome of the KUP” ⁶⁴

Another case in point was the resignation of S T Muna from the KNC in 1958 to join the KNDP. This Elite who had remain loyal to the KNC from 1953 to 1957 had to cross over to the KNDP in 1958 to secure power and influence. It should be noted that until 1957 Muna had enjoyed a privileged position as minister in the KNC led government. Thus with the growing popularity of the KNDP after 1957 it was clear to Muna that power had to change hands and so in order not to lose his position of influence and power he had to abandon the KNC for the KNDP⁶⁵.

⁶⁰ L .F. Awah. *Party-Politics...* p70

⁶¹ NAB.File P.310/S.6Vb/b. 1959.3 Kamerun United commoners Party.

⁶² NAB.File N^o P.310/S.5,Vb .1959.2 Socialist Benevolent Party.

⁶³ NAB.File N^o P310/S.8, Vb /b. 1959/5. Kamerun United Party

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Interview with HRH FON Angwafor III of Mankon, Traditional ruler and Politician, Mankon Palace (Bamenda), 8/01/2014.

Again the quest for power and influence pushed Hon Boja on the 11th March 1960 to abandon the KNDP for the KNC. His switch over was justified by his declaration to the BURKE Commission of inquiry where he stated that his crossing of the carpet was influenced by pressure from his electorate who did not longer believe in reunification. Thus remaining in the KNDP will imply losing votes as well as power, hence he chose to secure power by moving into the KNC.⁶⁶ Equally on the 7th May 1960 another strong elite of the KNDP D.M. Frambo through a letter, officially resigned from the KNDP to the KNC. Two days later the same Frambo on the 9th May 1960 wrote another letter disclaiming the first as being a letter presented to him at gun point by Mbile and Endeley to sign.⁶⁷ Without plunging into polemics, the attitude of Frambo could best be understood if only placed within the context of the time marked by serious power-politics with the main stakes being the re-conquest of power by the KNC-KPP and the preservation of power by the KNDP. In such a context where Endeley had already made a strong declaration at the UN that the Foncha's government was at the verge of collapse, had to do everything to concretise this collapse as declared.⁶⁸ To further corroborate this, Boja testified himself that a mass crossing of carpet to the opposition was planned by five MP's of the KNDP (Boja, Effiom, Sam Moffor, Frambo, And Bokwe)⁶⁹ Though the KNDP Failed to retain Boja they succeeded to foil the plan by retaining the four others. All this shows that political conviction in militancy was a rare virtue in the practice of politics in Southern Cameroons, since political choice became heavily dependent on the strength and power of deals and the ability of one Pole of Power to coerce the other. This attitude persisted throughout 1953 until 1961 and the result was the persistent inconsistency in militancy throughout the nationalist struggle which in the end greatly jeopardised the ideals of self-determination.

The Compromising Effect of Power-Politics on Nationalism and Self-Determination in the Southern Cameroons

Power politics in the Southern Cameroons Nationalist movement gave a serious blow to nationalism and its ideal of Self-determination throughout the territory. This inordinate quest for power through compelling deals and other unorthodox means greatly compromised the future of Southern Cameroons as an autonomous and independent state as envisaged in the UN Trusteeship system.

The new found unity around the *Kamerun* idea and Cameroon personality by the people of Southern Cameroons in the early 1950 constituted the credo on which the Nationalist movement in Southern Cameroons was founded. This ideal on which nationalism gained momentum was later to become the principal cause of division among the nationalist and the political class of the territory, and this was simply because they gave-in to Power Politics and its divisive intrigues instead of binding themselves with the unifying Nationalist ideology.

One of such instances where power politics compromised nationalism and statehood for Southern Cameroons was in 1953 following the Eastern Regional crisis⁷⁰. With the chaotic situation in which the Eastern House of assembly found itself, a great opportunity presented itself to the 13 Southern Cameroons representatives to seize and distinguish themselves and of course lay a strong foundation for the attainment of the nationalist goal of autonomy which they had all longed for. Unfortunately, they had to let go this opportunity by embracing Power

⁶⁶L.F. Awah, *Party-Politics...* p101.

⁶⁷ Chem-Langee, "The Frambo Affaire" *In Science and Technology Review, Social Science Series*, VOL. IV, N0.1-2, January-June, 1986, p, 78.

⁶⁸ *ibid*

⁶⁹ *ibid*

⁷⁰ N. N. Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story: Memories Of An Authentic Eye Witness*, Limbe, Presprint, 1999, p.56.

Politics which ended up dividing them along strong ideological boundaries which in every aspect sacrificed the Nationalist ideal on the altar of personal political ambition and power. If only N.N. Mbile and the three other Non-benevolent neutrals knew that by dissociating themselves from the Benevolent Neutrality bloc and forming a counter power to it, they were killing Nationalism and frustrating the move towards a full autonomous region for Southern Cameroon then they shouldn't have yielded to the threats or Power-Politics of the time which was strongly blowing within Nigerian politics.

Again, the thirst for power and influence within the KNC manifested in an outburst of divergent political ideologies within the same party greatly compromised Self-determination. It is very clear that the absence of unity within the KNC put to question its Nationalist agenda, for if they were united in purpose and focus around Nationalism, then it could have been easy to reconcile their differences in the Nationalist goal. Unfortunately, Endeley's gradual shift from the KNC initial program provoking resignations and the birth of new parties like the KNDP and KUCP, was a clear proof that power-politics was the dominating factor in the Southern Cameroons Nationalist struggle and not Nationalism; this in the long run had to play against the Nationalist ideal of self-determination and independence. Equally, following the KNC victory in the 1957 elections and the granting of full regional status to Southern Cameroons with Endeley as Premier⁷¹, it was evident that the path to self-determination and sovereign power was now clear. But unfortunately by reaffirming his determination to take Cameroons back into the Nigerian federation, Endeley's government greatly instigated power-politics within the KNC as was seen in the resignations of S.T. Muna and Galega II⁷². This situation greatly reduced the slim KNC majority won during the 1957 election to the advantage of the KNDP which in 1959 through elections seized power and influence from the KNC⁷³. Because of the constant tussles within these two poles of Power manifested in acute political competition and power politics they all failed to present a common convincing ideological platform for the attainment of Self-determination, since none of them could boast of an absolute majority. It was but normal at this point for them to all put aside their political differences and unite their efforts around the Nationalist ideal of self-determination which ought to be the primordial focus. Unfortunately, elites remained blind to the ultimate goal and rather chose to pursue personal ambitions of power and influence which provoked political wars with power-politics as the principal weapon. The result of this was the creation of an uncertain political future for Southern Cameroons which Britain and the UN exploited to impose a plebiscite on the people of Southern Cameroons in 1961⁷⁴ which in all its questions and options, silenced the ultimate nationalist ideal which was Sovereign Power (independence). In essence a plebiscite would not have been necessary in Southern Cameroons if the elites who controlled "power" in the nationalist movement kept aside their personal ambitions of power and united their energies to bring about the achievement of their common goal; Self-determination. Unfortunately, this was not the case as their thirst for power rather opened doors for political calculation and schemes to win Power which in essence killed the nationalist spirit and of course self-determination. Thus power politics in

⁷¹ E .A .Aka, *British Southern Cameroons 1922-1961, A Study In Colonialism And Under Development*, Nkernji global tech, Platteville, 2002, p. 216.

⁷² L .F. Awah. *Party-Politics...* p, 70.

⁷³ N.N. Mbile, *Cameroon Political story*, p., 118.

⁷⁴ Anthony Ndi, *Southern West Cameroons Revisited? 1950-1972 : Unveiling Inescapable Traps*, Pauls Press Bamenda, 2013, p, 105

Southern Cameroons dealt a serious blow to nationalism and eventually jeopardised its ultimate goal of Sovereign power (independence).

Conclusion

Power-Politics which has proven to be a veritable instrument of international politics by which stronger states advance their interest around the world has by our study in this paper proven to be a retrogressive force when it comes to internal politics. From the evidence gathered in the British Southern Cameroons trust territory of the UN from 1961-1961, Power politics which is often used to advance power and affirm the predominance of states had rather shattered important initiatives towards the progress and affirmation of the Southern Cameroons as a state in 1961. It should therefore be retained in this study that two important forces structured and determined political evolution in British Southern Cameroons these forces were; Nationalism and Power-Politics. While nationalism was strongly propagated across the territory by urban Elites, power politics was adopted by these same elites and traditional rulers as the ideal weapon to concretise their nationalist dream. Unfortunately for them, power politics which was to serve the nationalist cause rather turn out to become an instrument for the attainment of personal political goals and self-aggrandisement which at the end of the day kept them persistently divided over the question of self-determination. This division that was well exploited to their disadvantage by Britain and the UN through an imposed plebiscite finally caused the territory to lose its right to self-determination and sovereign power.

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