A Disease of will among African states: The separatist agenda of Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC), c. 1995-2004

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Abstract. *This article sets out to analyse an understanding of the impact of borders (both physical and symbolic) on African states, with specific reference to the separatist movement in former British Southern Cameroon, perpetuated by Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC). A close understanding on how border crisis in Africa are being approached is critical especially when we consider that continuous ethnic violence in Southern Sudan which recently separated from Sudan highlights the weakness of separatism as tool in redressing identity issues in Africa. It also raises the question of whether separatism as advocated for by Southern Cameroon elites, empowers some of these African movements with the ability to sustain independent states.*

Keywords: *Southern Cameroon National Council, Africa, borders, boundaries, ethnicity.*

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Introduction

The inherited British and French Cameroonian borders (both symbolic and physical) have for over three decades served as a source of conflict between the Anglophone and Francophone Cameroon regions. These two regions were administered distinctively under colonial rule and were only reunited in 1961 through United Nation organised Plebiscite, where Southern Cameroon voted for a reunion with La Republique du Cameroon against integration with Nigeria. However, the Anglophone Cameroonian population has always resented the French Cameroon domination in the socio-economic and political

spheres, which has led to increasing tensions between the regions and the request for an autonomous Anglophone state. Also, the Anglophone political elite and local government officials have fuelled local hostile sentiments and ethnic hostilities for their own ends. These internal divisions among the Anglophones driven along ethnic lines have led to the creation of social borders between ethnic communities as the canvas for political representation and a share in the state resources. This has led to different forms of domestication and mobilisation of space and resources that produce new internal borders that are not limited to only Anglophone Francophone dichotomy.

In Cameroon as across the continent, without refuting the bipolarisation of space between states, African borders (both symbolic and physical) remain very fluid and not frozen in time and space and are consequently, constantly changing due to pressure that often comes from either internal or external actors, usually organised into networks as they claim rights and ownership over these territories (Mbembe, 2000:261). This has led to the constant rise in separatists movements in Africa today, each attempting to carve out a distinct and homogenous socio-spatial space. The prevailing literature on African borders is animated by different schools of thought, as scholars of African studies continue to debate on the causes of the border crisis in Africa. To some scholars like Herbst (1992), Asiwaju (1984) Nugent and Asiwaju (1996) Aghemelo and Ibhasebhor (2006) and Davidson (1967), colonialism and the partitioning of Africa account for border conflicts in Africa, because of the arbitrary nature in which they assume African borders were drawn. This article debunks such a simplistic and reductionist view of looking at borders and we argue that the creation of socio-cultural borders and identities within and across African states, and not only physical colonial lines of separation accounts largely for the conflicts in the continent. This is because ethnic politics and the politics of belonging in Africa has become the means by which homogenous communities seek access to power and scarce economic resources (Nkwi, 2006; Awasom, 2003; Geschiere, 2001& 2004; Geschiere & Nyamnjoh, 1999).

This article sets out to attempt an understanding of the impact of borders (both physical and symbolic) on African states, with specific reference to the separatist movement in former British Southern Cameroon, perpetuated by Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC). A close understanding of how border crisis in Africa are being approached is critical especially when we consider that continuous ethnic violence in Southern Sudan which recently separated from Sudan highlights the weakness of separatism as tool in redressing identity issues in Africa (see Arnold, 2003; Kaufman, 2004; Soderlund *et al.* 2014:38-99; Omer Beshir, 2007; Tyedt, 2004). It also raises the question of whether separatism as advocated for by Southern Cameroon elites, empowers some of these African movements with the ability to sustain independent states. Taking the SCNC as a case study, we further argue that although the organisation looks at the surface as being homogenous underneath, there are inherent contradictions worth examining which have largely rendered the secessionist actions impotent.

In what follows in this article and for purposes of clarity, we have compartmentalised the article into three sections. The first section looks at the discourses that seek to account for the expanding and contracting nature of both visible and symbolic African borders. It highlights the basis of the two schools of thoughts on the persistent post-colonial border disputes in Africa, which seem to anchor on simplistic notions of the role of borders in African history and an over generalisation that seems to suggest that borders are all physical lines of separation or that colonial borders were all arbitrarily drawn by the colonial masters. Nkwi, (2014) appears to have been the first scholar to have confronted such generalisations by studying the cell phone and the negation of physical borders among the Bamenda Grassfielders of North West Cameroon. This argument seems to lose sight of the fact that in some cases, African borders were drawn on natural limits like oceans, rivers and mountains (Mbembe, 2000:264).

The second section looks at the separatist agenda of the Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC) in relation to the Anglophone minority problem. The Anglophone problem in Cameroon is based on the assumption that the nation-state project following the reunification of the two Cameroons in October 1961 has been driven by the firm determination of the Francophone elite to dominate the Anglophone minority in the post-colonial state and to erase all cultural and institutional foundations of the Anglophone identity which were deeply rooted in purely English tradition. This section highlights the basis of these claims which are anchored on colonial frontiers, but also on distinct socio-linguistic and ethnic claims. It further looks at the circumstances that led to the reunification of the two Cameroons in 1961, the perceived French Cameroon domination in the socio-economic and political spheres. And lastly the attempts by Anglophone elites to redress the ordeal which culminated in the zero sum demand for an independent Southern Cameroon in 1995.

In the third section, we will examine the idea of separatism as conflict management mechanism for the Anglophone problem in Cameroon, which assumes that physical lines of separation can lead to a homogenous Anglophone socio-spatial space. While this assumption is not most likely and realistic, because of the promotion of hostilities and ethnic identities within the Anglophone region that compromises any notion of a common Anglophone identity, it may also, not necessarily produce the anticipated socio-economic and political stability because of the entrenched ethnic discord between the two Anglophones North West and South West Regions. It is opinion that the current state of Cameroon needs to organize itself to assume a mediation role among the different non-state stakeholders who have emerged as a result of the cultural divergences. This should take the form of negotiations between the Anglophone and the Francophone communities, however, well beyond this level; it should address the ethnic and the regional imbalances that characterize the present political scenario in Cameroon. As Maroya argues, this is very critical if the state's legitimacy is to be established and accepted across the plurality of social actors (Maroya, 2003). However, before taking this

on board it is imperative to examine separatist movements in a more profound and panoramic perspective.

Separatist movements in Africa

Different authors hold different views for the rise of irredentist claims in Africa, kept alive by the clam of groups whose traditional borders have ostensibly been outraged by the impact of colonialism. The Berlin conference of 1884 set the precedence for the scramble for Africa and the arbitrary colonial borders in Africa by the imperial powers (Aghemelo and Ibhasebhor, 2006; Baye, 2010; Murkisa, 2014). Mukisa (2014) for example, notes that these borders separated African people of common ethno-linguistic ties, who before colonisation constituted a homogenous society. Mbembe (2000) points out that one of the reasons commonly advanced by advocates of this school of thought argues that colonial borders facilitated the partition of African societies into tiny or balkanised states designed in western models that were economically not fit to manage their internal affairs (Rodney, 1971; Mbembe, 2000:261). Most if not all the post independent states of Africa remained at best quasi-states since to a large extent they had received "flag independence" (Rodney, 1971:98).

Writing on the concept of Quasi state, in reference to most African states that were created after 1945, which have continued to survive despite the fact that they are usually inefficient, illegitimate and domestically unstable, Jackson and Penrose (1994) corroborate this assertion of weak states. They argue that most African states that gained independence as a fallout of colonisation lacked the legitimacy and institutions to support vibrant socio-economic and political independence. Most of the new states in Africa relied on international organisations like the United Nations who were advocating self-determination, or the colonial powers that were already on their way out, for legitimisation. While reliance on the international system for the survival of the state is not new, African statehood and sovereignty needed to be internally domesticated through negotiations with major stakeholders that characterised those societies (Konings, 2005). However, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) by 1963, accepted these colonial frontiers in Africa and gave them legitimacy without considering the border disputes that could arise within and among these post-colonial states. Several decades later these disputes have been at the centre of many violent conflicts in the continent today (Aghemelo and Ibhasebhor, 2006; Davidson, 1967; Rouke, 1997).

An alternative claim to arbitrary colonial borders argues that the escalating conflicts that have come to characterise the African continent today indicate a kind of regional integration which seems to occur from the periphery (Stacy and Carter, 2002; Mbembe, 2000:262). This integration occurs at the margins of official state institutions through socio-cultural solidarities and interstate commercial networks. These processes provide the basis for alternative spaces that constitute and structure the informal economy and

other migratory networks within or across states (Konings, 2005). Konings further emphasizes that these exchanges take place both at the regional and international levels. This is because African borders stimulate formal and informal cross-border trade, representing zones of opportunity for capital accumulation (Konnings, 2005). Mbembe (2000) notes that proponents of this school of thought submit that because of the fluidity of African state borders, powerful religious and commercial networks have even taken advantage of such interstate areas of production in order to create markets that elude the state with a consequence of very violent conflicts (Mbembe, 2000:262).

However, the above accounts that attempt to explain causes of the persistent conflicts in Africa are an over generalised assumptions which do not offer a holistic account of the role of borders in African history. Secondly, they tend to present a misunderstanding as to how colonial borders were actually drawn during the colonial period. With few exceptions of imaginary borders like those of the Sahara region (Mali, Niger, and Algeria), most African borders were actually mapped out from natural limits like valleys, mountains, oceans and rivers. Others were the results of diplomatic negotiations or treaties of annexation or exchange among the imperial powers (Stacy and Carter, 2002; Mbembe, 2000). African borders were able to emerge during colonisation through the efforts of traders, missionaries and explorers (Barbour, 1961; Nugent, 1996). This was mainly because during this period, borders gradually crystallized as traders, missionaries and explorers penetrated the hinterland, repressing local revolts as they tried to mark the spatial limits that separated colonial possessions between the different colonial powers.

It is however limiting that borders in Africa since independence have largely been studied as specific lines of separation that make up a state's territory in line with notions of frontiers within the scope of international law (Stacy and Carter, 2002). Mbembe (2000) argues that perceived this way, distinct territoriality would make sense on the political level only as the space of the exercise of sovereignty and self-determination and as a framework with which states can claim and anchor their authority (pp. 262-263). Theorizing borders in this way, therefore, creates a significant gap in understanding how restructuring internal spaces by different stakeholders contribute in weakening the state and collapsing its authority. Also, it leads to the emergence of other symbolic borders and identities within the nation state, especially if we consider how borders were perceived within the pre-colonial African context and have how they are perpetuated in the post-colonial African states.

Before colonial rule in Africa, borders were fluid and a people's attachment to a given territory and space was hard to determine. This was because in some of the African empires, political spaces were not delimited by boundaries in the classical sense of the word, but rather a combination of multiple spaces both physical and symbolic (Maroya, 2014). The establishment of colonial state borders was enforced through colonial military conquest and penetration, but also through the contribution of missionaries and

traders which met with stiff resistance from the interior of Africa (Kapil, 2011; Aghemelo and Ibhasebhor, 2006). Maroya (2014) and Mbembe (2000) note that some African politics had an overlapping of different spaces constantly joined, disjointed and recombined through wars, conquests and the mobility of goods and persons which indicates that pre-colonial African societies domesticated an itinerant territoriality. The West African Oyo empire for example, what is today Western Nigeria and parts of Benin Republic, grew to prominence in the 15th century, holding socio-economic and political sway not only to other Yoruba states, but also over distant kingdom of Dahomey, present day Republic of Benin (Vansina, 1962). An understanding of such spaces came as a result of controlling people or localities or in some cases both at a time (Birmingham and Phyllis, 1963). All these forms of belonging corresponded with the different notions territoriality within the African society that was not limited to physical borders.

Collective rights and ties were combined with different kind of polities, but at the same time exceeded them (Nair, 1972). Nair states for example that different political units could have control over a single place, which might itself fall under the control of another autonomous unit that was nearby (Nair, 1972). Borders in these contexts were relevant only through the relationships they sustained with other forms of distinct socio-cultural units and the degree of contacts and interpenetration that was allowed within such polities in a given region (Mbembe, 2000:264). These borders were subject to expansion and contraction either through successful military expeditions or violent wars of conquest. Despite such fluidity, it is not to say African borders excluded the existence of specific physical borders between distinct political units (Wilks, 1975).

It is our assertion that the present conflicts in Africa therefore reflects a complex reality of commercial, religious, military anarchies, struggles of power between state actors and alliances that emerged at independence but which can also be traced back to Africa predating the colonisation of the continent. The rise of these alternative modes of authority within African state weakens state's institutions as each pursues objectives that appear parallel to that of the central government.

Writing on weak states and conflict in post-colonial politics, Migdal (1988) and Jackson and Penrose (1994) highlight the issue of alternative modes of power in African states by drawing parallels between the weak post-colonial states vis-à-vis the developed western states. They contend that strong institutions that claim a monopoly on rulemaking, taxation and power within a given territory accounts for the maturity of western nations. However, the post-colonial African states are characterised with conflicts that emanate with other modes of authority, which weaken the extent to which the state can ascertain any monopoly power among the different stake- holders. The growth of ethnic politics perpetuated by the regimes through the influence of local elites like the case of Cameroon, to neutralise a common Anglophone identity, has resulted in ethnic cleavages limiting state capacity and continuous resilience of alternative authority structures.

These cleavages based on kinship and other distinct social identities and not just physical borders account for the threat of violent conflict as each group seeks representation. In Cameroon as in some African state, the inability of the state to ascertain her legitimacy over the different stakeholders pose a serious challenge that threatens the stability of the nation-state. Such threats are often due to the fact that these different networks represent different interests, as they clamour for power and resources.

Researching on warlord politics and African states Williams (1998) argues that competition for power, wealth and patronage has led to many deadly conflicts and the emergence of failed African states. He further notes that African states are often characterised by overlapping cleavages that unite either on the ground of language, religion, class or kinship, establishing different networks of power and identities. These cleavages do not support or promote the contemporary idea of statehood and the attempts of the state to replace these multiple power sources remain at best ineffective (William, 1998). The fact that some African states have failed to establish their legitimacy as a central governing unit has resulted in a situation where most post-colonial states in Africa are today the means by which different stakeholders within its territoriality negotiate their relationships and identities with each other and beyond. Each of these multiple actors attempt to maintain a stronghold on resources that can assure their sustainability at the expense of others or the states itself (Konings, 2005; Maroya, 2003; Nkwi, 2006).

The crisis in Sudan for example, puts this in context. The conflict was perceived largely between the Southern Christian minority and the Northern Muslims majority, which resulted in the granting of independence to Southern Sudan in July 2011. The continuous violent conflicts in South Sudan suggest that beyond these two main categories, the conflict involves different groups and interests: the military, the national Islamic groups, and each of these groups represent different ethnic groupings. As Maroya (2014) asserts, all these groups seek and represent a different agenda of what the process of nation building should be. This leaves the state as an empty vacuum that each faction seeks to fill with what they perceive as the best system of governance, even when such an agenda seems to benefit only those of a particular identity (Maroya, 2014).

African conflicts therefore, far from being solely a result of arbitrary colonial borders, can also be accounted for by the perceived distinct symbolic borders of varying sociocultural identities and different social actors that exist within or across nation-states in Africa. The next section looks at the origin of the Anglophone separatist movement led by SCNC. It highlights the Cameroon colonial experiences with different colonial masters and how the perceived distinct Anglophone identity came into being. While the Anglophone claim for an autonomous state may be based on their common colonial legacy and culture, such a common sense of identity is seriously compromised by the ethnic cleavages that divide the two Anglophone Regions (North West and South West). North West and South West traditional and political elites have all embraced

the construction of distinct socio-cultural identities with strategies on how best to access state resources and political representation within the nation state of Cameroon.

SCNC and the call for secession (origin of the Anglophone problem)

Cameroon's political past was marked by many phases in motion, starting with the Berlin West African conference, which led to the colonization of the country by the Germans in 1884. The german administration was short lived, as they were defeated during the First World War which led to the eventual loss of Cameroon as a colony to Britain and France (Ngoh, 1996). Britain and France took over Cameroon as a mandated territory of the League of Nations; for administrative purposes they shared it into two unequal parts. France managed its share of Cameroon as a separate entity within the political space of Equatorial Africa, and Britain did manage their own portion as part of their colony of the Eastern provinces of Nigeria (Chereji and Lohkoko, 2012).

These Mandated territories later became known as UN Trust territories after 1945, as the UN took over the responsibilities of the defunct League of Nations. Colonial rule however, came to an end in 1960. France granted political independence to its part of Cameroon under the name *La Republique du Cameroon* in 1960 which later became French Cameroon and East Cameroon (Chereji and Lohkoko, 2012). Unfortunately for British Southern Cameroon, their fate was to be decided through a UN-imposed plebiscite which gave them the option of independence only by joining Nigeria (integration) or Cameroon (reunification), without the right of gaining independence as an autonomous entity (Awasom, 2003). The outcome of the plebiscite on February 11, 1961, where an overwhelming majority voted to reunify with former French Cameroon established the basis of the Union between the two Cameroons (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997).

The Anglophone elites have persistently challenged the reunification of former French Cameroon and the Foumban constitutional conference of 1961, which established the legal framework for the reunification of the two Cameroons on grounds that it was marred by flaws (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997). The ideological framework of reunification movement was the German colonization of Cameroon, which lasted from 1884-1916. The German period of colonization in Cameroon might have been too brief to create a profound impact on cohesion and nationhood, strong enough to evoke a sense of nationalism in its aftermath (Ardener, 1967; Johnson, 1970).

Soon after reunification in 1961, Anglophone elites began mobilizing against their marginalized status, demanding a redress of their political exclusion and an unequal allocation of state resources, given that over 61% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) comes from the Anglophone region (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997). Anglophones began reintroducing concepts such as federalism and even secession to the political agenda (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997). The need therefore for a regional organisation to represent the aspirations of the Anglophone led to the birth of the SCNC in 1995. The

gross marginalization and inequality in allocation of state resources, and the frustration of political exclusion culminated therefore in the All Anglophone Conferences (AACI and AACII) respectively (Chereji and Lohkoko, 2012). The refusal of the Cameroon government to yield to negotiations on the Anglophone agenda resulted in the birth of the SCNC which took a resolute stand to demand for their independence from *La Republique du Cameroun.* The SCNC which was formed in 1993 is a self-determination organisation seeking the independence of the Anglophone Southern Cameroons from the predominantly francophone Republic of Cameroon (La République de Cameroun). It is a non-violent organization with the motto "The force of argument, not the argument of force". The chairman is Chief Ayamba Ette Otun. Because the SCNC advocates separation from Cameroon, it has been declared an illegal organization by the government of Paul Biya. Security forces regularly interrupt SCNC meetings, arresting members and typically detaining them for several days before release.

Despite the SCNC demands of a return to autonomous pre-unification territorial frontiers that separated the French and the British Cameroon, the strong start of the SCNC that was witnessed in the early 1990s to renegotiate the Anglophone issue soon became marred by internal differences, as evident in the latent nature of the conflict (Fonchingong, 2005). Divisions among the Anglophone elites and ethnic cleavages, what has come to be known as the North-West/South-West divide, (the two regions that constitute the Anglophone or British Southern Cameroon) has made it difficult among Anglophone elites to find a realistic way forward for the Anglophone problem. Each of these varying camps among the Anglophone elites offers a conflicting explanation as they attempt to understand the root causes of the identity problem in Cameroon and to bring forth proposals for redressing the Anglophone predicaments. It is as a result of these cleavages that Konings and Nyamnjoh (1997) argue that the post-colonial state of Cameroon has often taken advantage of these existing contradictions which they created within the Anglophone community to set off the South-Westerners against their North-Western brothers. This is in an attempt to bolster the unitary agenda of the state and to block the Anglophones' aspirations.

The current regime continuously attempts to obstruct the construction of a common Anglophone identity and position, by promoting and fanning the flames of the existing cleavages among the Anglophone Elites. The regime does this by stimulating new ethno-regional differences that appear to transcend the Anglophone-Francophone divide. Kefale (2010) argues that the structuring of any polity into ethno-linguistic lines invariably introduces other concepts which are strongly connected with identity and territoriality like in the case of Southern Cameroon, the effort has been to promote a North West/South West divide that obscure any common Anglophone identity against the Francophone dominated regime (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997). This is because the idea of distinct ethnic identities involves the recognition of 'others', which is critical

to the notion of territorial autonomy. Also, such communities and identities created by the present regime in former Southern Cameroon need their spatial delimitation to remain either physically or symbolically distinct from others, which does not fit well into a unified Anglophone concept of 'oneness' (Kefale, 2010).

The attempt by the current regime to match ethnic and politico-administrative borders implies that ethnic autonomy does not only contribute to the transformation of ethnic identities, but also contributes to the crystallisation of wider ethnic solidarity (Mbembe, 2000:267). This view is also corroborated by Newman and Paasi (1998) when they note that social groups exploit the ideas of borders to strengthen their social space and to pursue ethnic homogeneity within the nation state. The creation of internal physical and symbolic borders between the Anglophone communities out of the framework of Francophone/Anglophone divide, by the current regime so far has served as instrument for inclusion and exclusion (Fonchingong, 2005).

The divisive tendencies of the current political regime in Cameroon affect the internal cohesion of the nation-state, with direct implications regarding access to local resources and political representation (Nyamjoh, 2002). The continuous attempts by the present regime to remunerate some ethnic groups in Southern Cameroon with prestigious positions in the government previously reserved only for Francophones is an attempt to put such communities against less privileged ones and to render any unified Anglophone identity futile (Chiabi, 1997). The internal fragmentation within the SCNC course brings to the fore the question of whether the quest for separatism between the mainstream Francophone-Anglophone dichotomies could necessitate the anticipated socio-economic and political security that is advocated for by SCNC?

Rethinking separatism

This section highlights the fact that separatism, as fanciful as it may seem, may not produce the anticipated outcome because of the perceived internal differences that exist between the two Anglophone Regions as it is elsewhere in Africa. Separation will only shift the power struggle between the politically minded North Westerners and the economically endowed South West Region (which is considered the economic bread basket of the Country), which have been promoted by the current regime in Cameroon (Nyamjoh, 2002).

The concept of nationhood in Cameroon is very weakly constructed on the 'German Kamerun idea' or the K-Idea (Ardener, 1967). As a result of the weak concept of nationhood, the distribution of political and economic resources remain characterized by divide and rule policies leading to the creation of ethno-regional gaps (Nkwi, 2006; Nyamnjoh, 2002). The divide and rule politics has led to a severe disagreement between the Anglophone elites and traditional chiefs on the best way forward in renegotiating a unique Anglophone identity within the state of Cameroon. In this respect, following

the AAC I and II, some members of the South West elite association (SWELA) tried to dissociate from the deliberations and resolutions of the AACS and the Buea declaration which took a resolute position to demand for Southern Cameroon's independence in their own right. In like manner North West cultural and development association (N.O.C.U.D.A) establishing a distinct socio-cultural identity from that of South West, tried to dissociate the region from AACS, claiming it was the brainchild of the South West elites (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997).

These splits continue in this trend sponsored by the regime to thwart any unified efforts by the Anglophones to develop a common sense of belonging. Some in the SWELA against secession, advocates for a ten region federation (Cameroon has ten regions) within the state of Cameroon so that each region remains autonomous. In this way, South West according to this school of thought will be free from the North West political domination that has always characterized their history (Awasom, 2004). On the contrary, there exists another faction, more critical of government's policies and supports the opposition. They advocate closer co-operation between the South West and North West elites as a necessary precondition for an effective representation of Anglophones interest for secession or at least a two states federation (Konings and Nyamjoh, 1997).

In an effort to safeguard their political interests and claims to scarce resources, some Anglophones have turned to regional political intrigues by widening the gap between indigenes and non-indigenes by referring to non-indigenes as strangers and other derogatory slangs, as a means of consolidating their quest for political inclusion (Nkwi, 2006). In this light, there is thus the resurgence of identity politics and open tensions as various groups seek to gain access to state resources and a better representation in the government for their selfish interest by creating and promoting distinct socio-cultural identities of 'us' and 'them' (Eyoh, 1998). This is line with Mbembe (2000) who argues that most separatists movements have their origin not in the desire to make an ethno-cultural space coincide with the space of the state, but rather in the struggle to control resources considered vital (Mbembe, 2000:272).

In most towns of the South West region of Cameroon, non-indigenes or settlers are often referred as 'Graffi', 'come no go' (strangers), mostly derogatory words to refer to settlers from the North West who are accused of sympathizing with ideas of separation (Fonchingong, 2005). Fonchingong further adds that the increasing trend of slogans sponsored by the system between those considered as 'insiders' and 'outsiders ' among the two sister regions (North West and South West) is a strategy of the regime that marks yet another form of ethnicity, through the intensification of ethnic borders (Fonchingong, 2005:370). These multiple forms of borders and the concepts of insiders and outsiders creates the 'us' and the 'them' among the Anglophone and challenges the idea of a separate Anglophone territory which assumes a common Anglophone cultural homogeneity.

The idea of separation which is anchored in an Anglophone socio-linguistic identity may be losing sight of the pluralists ethnic cleavages that have characterized the two Anglophone regions and therefore does not seems to represent the best form of managing the conflict. This is because besides the physical borders of separation between former British and French Cameroon other social borders define the way these regions see each other even among themselves.

Conclusion

This article has argued that conflicts and separatists movement in Africa occur not only as a result of the disputed colonial borders, but also as a result of the construction of distinct socio-cultural border either across or within nation-state. Each of these groups seeks to establish a distinct homogenous socio-cultural space that guarantees access to political but also economic resources. Specifically it looked at (1) the discourses that seek to account for persistent conflicts in Africa, (2) it highlighted the separatist agenda of the Southern Cameroon National Council in relation to the Anglophone minority problem and (3) the constraints of separatism as tool in managing conflicts of identities in the Anglophone problem in Cameroon who are largely divided themselves along ethnic lines.

With specific reference to the former British Southern Cameroon, this paper has argued that borders are fluid and people's attachment to a given territory and space is hard to determine solely on physical borders. The present conflict of secession in Cameroon reflects a complex reality, struggles of power between state actors and alliances that are fostered through the construction of distinct ethnic identities and a solution can hardly be attained by merely separating these regions into autonomous entities. This is because the internal fragmentation within the SCNC course brings to the fore the question of whether the quest for separatism between the mainstream Francophone Anglophone dichotomies could necessitate the anticipated socio- economic and political security that is represented by SCNC advocates. Social cleavages will hardly follow very distinctively territorial lines as proponents of separatism may seem to suggest. The cross-border socio-spatial relationships between the Anglophones and the Francophone in Cameroon create room for mutual consents, hence a common ground for negotiation.

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