

## AN EVALUATION OF NATION BUILDING POLICIES IN CAMEROON SINCE COLONIAL TIMES

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### ABSTRACT

*As one of the most heterogeneous states on the African continent due to its multi-ethnic and multi-cultural nature, nation building has been very necessary for Cameroon. Whereas this objective became an important focus for post-colonial African governments, historiography on the issue however, was dominated by discourse on the reasons and problems, rather than the policies used in achieving it. This study sets out to identify and scrutinize the different strategies that have so far been implemented to achieve this goal in Cameroon. With the help of secondary sources and using a multi-disciplinary approach, fourteen nation building rules grouped into four themes have been pinpointed. These are indigenization, harmonization, centralization and building citizenship which have almost succeeded in making the country one and indivisible were it not for hidden agenda of the Francophone-dominated apparachici cum political elite of the post-colonial state. The state has been driven by the firm determination to dominate, marginalize, assimilate, subjugate, provoke and destroy the identity, heritage and institutional foundations of the Cameroon Anglophones who have been frustrated by these guidelines.*

**Keywords:** Kamerun, Anglophones, Grassfields, dual nationality, bilingualism, national integration

### INTRODUCTION

The Cameroon nation comprises three races (Negro, Hamite and Samite) whose people are distinguished into three ethnic groups (Bantu, Pygmy, Sudanese) and streamlined into hundreds of tribal confederacies settled on about 17 140 village communities or corporate societies.<sup>1</sup> The people have been further classified into four cultural zones namely Sawa, Grassfields, Fang-Beti and Sudano-Sahelian. The fatherland has been described as “all of Africa in a single country” because she exhibits all ecological features of the continent: coast, desert, mountains, rainforest, and savanna (Besong and Ngwasiri, 1995). Even in terms of ethnicity, the country is still like Africa, a continent that is a microcosm of the world. According to Onwujeogwu, at the beginning of the

1960s, there were over 3 000 tribes in the world with the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), having about 127; China and India each had more than forty; the USA had less than fifty excluding the Red Indians; England had four, France had seven and Germany about fifteen (1995:60-76). By virtue of its ethnic diversity, India was described as a land of “million mutinies” (Roy, 2002: 2). Most African countries are composed of several ethnocultural groups and it is estimated that Cameroon has over 200 of them with 24 major African language groups apart from English and French which are the official languages (Kymlycka, 2004: 64). But according to Ngwa, there are about 250 ethnic cleavages in Cameroon with diversified origins, cultures and traditions. The most famous include Bamileke, Bassa-Bakoko, Bata, Duala, Fang-Beti, Kirdi, Mbororo, Pygmies, Shuwa Arabs, and Tikar (2006: 40-63).

## **MEANING AND PURPOSE OF NATION BUILDING**

A nation is a group or race of people with shared history, traditions, and culture, sometimes religion, and usually language. People who make up a nation always have certain characteristics: national consciousness, common geographical location and solidarity which motivates them to govern the country. As a geopolitical entity, a nation needs independence or sovereignty (it enables government to endorse, grant consent, demand loyalty and support) as well as an organized political system which provides space for citizens and state officials to exercise their duties and rights (Friedrich, 1963: 27). Originally, nation-building referred to the efforts of newly-independent nations, notably those of Africa, to reshape colonial territories that had been carved out by colonial powers without regard to ethnic or other boundaries. These reformed states would then become viable and coherent national entities (Opio, 2000). It is the process of constructing or structuring a national identity using the power of the state in order to unify the people and ensure political stability and viability in a long run. The use of propaganda or major infrastructural development to foster social harmony and economic growth is involved and demands that all citizens should be engaged in building social cohesion, economic prosperity and political stability in an inclusive and democratic manner. Through the process, people have access to and control of structures and mechanisms that govern their lives as well as equip their country with the institutional foundation necessary to increase its capacity to effectively assert self-governing powers on behalf of its own economic, social and cultural objectives. Nation-building involves various dimensions and

instruments, such as economic and cultural integration, political centralization, bureaucratic control, military conquest or subjugation, creation of common interests, democratization and establishment of common citizenship (Hippler, 2005: 3-4).

The purpose of nation-building is to develop the spirit of patriotism and solidarity in a country whose people share a common identity by fostering national unity so as to develop a new nation and an integrated race (Ibid., 1-3). It also leads to the forging of a political entity which corresponds to a given territory, based on some generally accepted rules, norms, principles and a common citizenship. Institutions such as a bureaucracy, an economy, the judiciary, universities, a civil service, and civil society organizations are created to symbolize the political entity. This further engenders a sense of purpose, shared destiny and a collective imagination of belonging. Nation building is therefore about establishing the tangible and intangible threads that hold a political entity together and giving it a sense of purpose as well as the institutions and values which sustain the collective community.

## **NATION BUILDING POLICIES IN CAMEROON**

Bandyopadhyay and Green identify nine nation-building policies that have been implemented in at least eight instances in Africa. Some countries like Guinea-Bissau, Rwanda and Togo applied only one policy each since independence while both Nigeria and Uganda executed all (2012: 3). But this study discusses fourteen approaches applied in Cameroon so far, classified into four broad themes namely indigenization, harmonization, centralization and building citizenship. Indigenization policies include the renaming of country, altering city names and the changing of national currency. Bilingualism, national integration and relocation of political headquarters have engendered harmonization in the country. Those policies based on centralization have been forged from the creation of one-party states, the encouragement of national unity, authoritarian rule and the nationalization of land. The building of citizenship involves four aspects namely regular general population censuses, defining nationality, military conscription and civic education.

## **INDIGENIZATION POLICIES**

Governments of newly-created states replaced former colonial names with indigenous ones for the purpose of political and historical legitimacy. This was because the previous names were derived from extant indigenous ethnic groups and so were later viewed by post-colonial rulers as divisive or directly associated with colonial history. The name “Republic of Cameroon” which was derived from the Portuguese word *Rio Dos Cameroes* (River of Prawns), referring to the River Wouri in Douala, has greatly evolved. When Germany annexed the territory on July 14, 1884, she referred to the country as Kamerun and her loss to France and Britain during the First World War in 1916 left the country in their hands whose fate they decided by partitioning it (Ngwoh, 2016: 226-227). The French referred to their portion as Cameroun while the British repartitioned her own into British Southern and Northern Cameroons. The French portion became independent on January 1, 1960 as *La Republique du Cameroun* whereas people of Northern Cameroons voted to gain independence by joining Nigeria while those of Southern Cameroons chose to reunify with French Cameroon. This was on February 11, 1961, in a UN-supervised Plebiscite. Following Law No 61-24 of September 21, 1961, the British and the French parts of Cameroon re-united with effect from October 1, 1961, and the country became known as the Federal Republic of Cameroon comprising two states namely East Cameroon with headquarters in Yaounde and West Cameroon whose capital was in Buea. On May 20, 1972, there was a Referendum in which Cameroonians opted for a unitary state and by virtue of Law No 72-270 of June 2, 1972 a new constitution came into force stipulating that the country had become known as the United Republic of Cameroon (Ibid).

On February 4, 1984, President Paul Biya signed Decree No 84-01 further changing the official name of the country from United Republic of Cameroon to simply Republic of Cameroon without warning and popular consultation. There were vehement protests specifically from the Anglophone section of the country that this was the name of the independent francophone Cameroon prior to reunification. The new name appeared to deny that the Cameroonian state was composed of two distinct entities (Mbaku and Takougang, 2004: 197). Biya argued that the change reflected the political maturity of the Cameroonian people after almost twenty-five years of independence (1987: 6). It was further considered in Anglophone circles as another attempt to assimilate them and secede from the 1961 union thereby losing the constitutional base to continue ruling them.

The alteration of the names of cities is another indigenization policy of nation building and has been the case of Cameroon's prominent oil city that was named after Queen Victoria of England by Alfred Saker in 1858. He was one of the leaders of the English Baptist Missionary Society expelled from Fernando Po and in dire need of land to settle, organize themselves for evangelization, relocate free or abandoned slaves and promote legitimate trade.<sup>2</sup> They arrived Bimbia on June 9, 1858 and contacted King William who claimed to have unlimited powers over the land. Alfred Saker and the king signed a treaty on August 23, 1858 sanctioning the purchase of 50 square miles of land for £2 000. The area was named Victoria to reflect the fact that it was under British control. But in 1984, a Presidential decree changed the name of the town to Limbe, an indigenous word (Delancey, Mbuh and Delancey, 2010: 228).

National currencies have contributed to nation-building in a variety of ways, both through the imagery present on notes and coins as well as the stable management of currency that can help to provide for stable governance. In Africa most countries inherited colonial names for their currencies, including the Franc, Pound and Escudo in Francophone, Anglophone and Lusophone Africa, respectively (Bandyopadhyay and Green, 2012: 5).<sup>3</sup>

When Cameroon became a German colony on July 14, 1884, the German Mark was introduced with coins and paper money in general circulation. The French Franc and British Pound later became legal tender when Germany lost control over Cameroon as a result of World War I. Until July 1, 1959, the currency used in British Cameroons had been that of the West African Currency Board. On that date, the new Central Bank of Nigeria issued a special currency which was put in use in circulation in British Cameroons. The government of the Republic of French Cameroon asked a Norwegian expert, M. K. Anderson, to undertake a study of the economic aspects of a possible merger with British Cameroons. Drafted between December 1960 and February 1961, the purpose of the study consisted in determining whether the Federal Republic should retain the Pound Sterling in West Cameroon and the CFA in East Cameroon; allow the use of both currencies concurrently in both federated states or introduce the CFA franc in West Cameroon while abolishing the use of the Pound Sterling. Anderson chose the third alternative and so on January 17,

1962, Presidential Decree Number 62-DF-3 imposed the CFA franc in West Cameroon while another ordinance fixed its terms and conditions ((Kofele-Kale, 1980: 200-201).

But the continual reliance of the country on the F CFA is not only a mockery but also a confirmation of the failure or ineffectiveness of nation building. This currency is a symbol *par excellence* of neocolonialism as well as a manifestation of the dependency syndrome. This is unacceptable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century because not only is the money produced abroad, the fiscal, financial and economic policies of a supposed sovereign nation are conceived in France.

### **HARMONIZATION POLICIES**

Linguistic homogenization through bilingualism has been an important aspect of nation building in Cameroon since the country is multilingual with two official languages (English and French) which are the heritage of Franco-British rule. In Circular N° 001/CAB/PM of August 16, 1991, the Prime Minister reiterated the need to provide bilingual services to all persons using government or para-statal means of communication. About ten years earlier, a more concrete meaning had been given to the bilingual option through the opening of the Advanced School of Translators and Interpreters (ASTI) in Buea as well as the creation of Bilingual Training Centers in all regional headquarters of the country (Ministry of Culture Cameroon, 2012).

According to Cameroon law, the state guarantees, protects and promotes bilingualism throughout the country and that is why Article 13 (2) of the January 18, 1996 Constitution stipulates that “the official languages of the Republic of Cameroon shall be English and French, both languages having the same status.” In an address to members of government on June 4, 1998, the president reminded the Prime Minister, members of Government and public officials at all levels that they are required to work for the development of bilingualism.

However, there is an unequal distribution in the usage of English and French as official languages with a minority English speaking population. For decades since the independence of Cameroon, the Anglophones have constantly been in the battle of trying to negotiate their identity in the country. English language which is the *modus operandi* in the courts of the English speaking part of Cameroon has suffered major setbacks in North West courts over the past months. A decision by

the President of the North West court of Appeal last February 2015, compelling lawyers to make their court submissions in the French language was seen by the Anglophone Lawyers as a complete violation of the Common Law system and procedure, practiced in this region. Apparently, this decision stemmed from the fact that, most of the Magistrates that were recently appointed to courts in the North West Region are Francophone who can hardly use English as a working language-an evidence of Frenchification of Anglophone Cameroon (Bamenda Provincial Episcopal Conference (BAPEC), 2016: 6-7).

There have been widespread protests about the way the English language has been treated in the public life of the nation: (i) state institutions produce documents and public notices in French, with no English translation, and expect English speaking Cameroonians to read and understand them, (ii) national entrance examinations into some professional schools are set in French only and Anglophone candidates are expected to answer them. Sometimes this happens even in the English-speaking regions, (iii) visitors and clients to government offices are expected to express themselves in French, even in the English-speaking regions, since most of the bosses in the offices speak French and make no effort to speak English, (iv) most senior administrators and members of the Forces of Law and Order in the North West and South West Regions are French-speaking and make no effort to understand the cultures and customs of the people they are appointed to govern, (v) members of inspection teams, missions and facilitators for seminars sent from the ministries in Yaoundé to the English-speaking regions are generally predominantly French speaking, and expect to be understood by audiences which are predominantly English speaking, (vi) the Military Tribunals in the North West and South West Regions are basically French courts and (vii) basic finance documents which businesses and other institutions are expected to work with are all in French. Examples include the COBAC Code, the CIMA Code and the OHADA Code (Ibid).

National integration, core value of nation building, is another harmonization policy. It can be defined as the practice of socio-political development or art of national construction that allows initially loosely linked communities during a *long duree* to become a common society with a nation-state corresponding to it. The purpose of this practice is manifold with divine, political, social and cultural underpinnings. Its devout intention is to ensure that:

Each individual is accepted and respected in his or her own right as God's special work of art in his own image. Subsequently, each family, each community with their distinct cultural traits, values and charisms converge to form a more enriched national community in fraternal solidarity (Ndi, 2005: 319).

It is also intended to bring together different ethnic communities into a natural and genuinely amalgamated society. It enables leaders and the citizenry to consciously cultivate a national identity, a sense of belonging based on shared values, tradition, history and aspirations. National identity is the foundation of social cohesion with the grand aim of constructing or structuring a global image using the power of the state. Through integration, solidarity is achieved in action and purpose amidst multiple ethnic nationalities each exerting both centrifugal and centripetal forces on the central issue of the nation, bound in freedom, peace and unity where justice reigns" (Ojo, 2002:4-5). According to Biya, one of its grand aims is that "inter-ethnic solidarity should lead to the gradual elimination of present sectarian tendencies in favour of a more integrated social environment.

This necessity is generated by the fact that ethnic groups are always in conflict and competition for scarce resources. Indeed, this is not unexpected especially between and among "ethnically defined constituencies" (William, 1980:69). Almost by definition, ethnic groups are in keen competition for the strategic resources of their respective societies. Since they are socio-cultural entities, they consider themselves culturally, linguistically or socially distinct from each other, and most often view their relations in actual or potentially antagonistic terms (Cox, 1970: 317). With a surface area of about 475 442 square kilometers, Cameroon is one of the most heterogeneous states of the African continent, a real cultural mosaic due to its geography and history. Cameroonian culture gives a picture of the country described as "a harmony of differences." In fact, she cannot be mentioned without referring to the geographical, historical and sociological aspects of this "Africa in miniature," a land of friendship and crossroads of civilizations. In order to benefit from what the whole country possesses in the different geographical and touristic areas, national integration is necessary for the citizens so "that although the rooster (cock, male chicken) belongs to one person, it crows in the morning for the whole village" (Jua, 2004: 323).



The relocation of headquarters was another nation building guiding principle. The political capital of Cameroon has been relocated in three different places and has moved twice. When Germany annexed the country, the capital of Kamerun was in Douala. But in 1902, Governor Jesko Von Puttkamer (1895-1906) transferred it from Douala to Buea because of the rebellious attitude of people in the former and the more favourable climatic condition in the latter. Again in 1909, Governor Theodore Seitz (1907-1910) moved the headquarters to Yaounde because in that year, there was an earth tremor in Buea. However, this town remained the political headquarters of British Southern Cameroons and later West Cameroon till the unitary state was set up in 1972 (Ngwuh, 2016: 229).

### **CENTRALIZATION POLICIES**

The application of authoritarian rule, creation of one-party state, building of national unity and the nationalization of land constitute policies of centralization in Cameroon's nation building project. Authoritarianism was a brainchild of the presidential system expressed through the concentration of executive, legislative and judiciary powers on a single individual. As head of state and government, the President of the Republic defined the policy of the nation and could share such responsibility with his prime minister if he so desired. The legislature was subordinated to the executive; bicameralism, which existed before, was replaced by unicameralism and federalism by unitarism. The judiciary was also inferior to the executive as regards appointments and dismissals. All this created a political monolith which finally consummated the personalization of rule and the centralization of all power in the hands of the leader (Kofele-Kale, 1980: 133-137).

Authoritarianism and repression that were entwined in the fabrics of the country's political set up by Ordinance 62/OF/18 of March 12, 1962, were the handiwork of Ahidjo who was "a state maker, a centralizer [and] benevolent despot" (. Personal rule, in turn, required the detention camps, the secret trials and the intelligence networks for which he became infamous among scholarly critics and human rights activists (Gros, 2003: 10-11; Ngoh, 2004: 428). The presidency in Cameroon was thus Africanized by being distanced from limiting constitutional devices like separation of powers and federalism. This was upheld by the circumstances of Cameroonian society as the presidency was clothed with some mystique authority transcending that of any ordinary citizen because he

incarnated the spirit of the struggle against colonialism and this elevated him to the status of deliverer or messiah. The cult of personality, incorruptibility and infallibility was accordingly built up around the leader whose name and activities were kept tirelessly in the public view through the glorification of his image in songs praising his achievements, posters showing his photographs, institutions and streets named after him and as well as statues of him raised in the most conspicuous corners of the city. Even the traditional attitude towards authority of the custom-bound citizens was transferred to the modern political leader whose authority they were not disposed to question (Kofele-Kale, 1980: 133-137).

The creation of a one party system to achieve political unity was one of methods used to enforce centralization.<sup>4</sup> In 1952 the Cameroon National Federation (CNF) party that was formed in 1949 by Dr. EML Endeley, a native of British Southern Cameroons and the Kamerun United National Congress (KUNC) party formed in 1951 by J. K. Dibonge of French Cameroon origin and NN Mbile of British Southern Cameroons fused in 1952 into one party, the Kamerun National Congress (KNC). It was in recognition of this national consciousness and their separateness from the Nigerian House of Assembly at Enugu that benevolent neutrality in Nigerian Affairs was declared in 1952 to avoid being dragged into Nigeria's internal affairs. To further pursue the idea of reunification of Cameroon, Endeley's party demanded secession from Eastern Nigeria, a quasi regional status and a separate legislative assembly which were granted in 1954. A national consciousness had thus awakened.

Ahidjo then engaged in the reunification movement by convening a pan Cameroonian conference of students from France and Great Britain, British Cameroons and Nigeria in Yaounde from August 27 to 30, 1959. The main outcome was the putting in place of a blueprint for reunification which by laying groundwork for the coming together again of people or states after many years of separation by merging of the former British and French zones, which were carved out of the former German Kamerun. On September 1, 1966 the CNU became the only political party in Cameroon. Three parties in West Cameroon that agreed to lose their identities included the CUC, CPNC and KNDP while the four in East Cameroon were the DC of Mbida, UPC of Mayi Matip, PSC of Charles Okala and PTC of Bebey-Eyidi (Johnson, 1970: 274-5).

Cameroon is described as a decentralized unitary state with the watchword "one people, one nation, one destiny" (Awasom, 2004: 175. Colonialism laid the substratum for unity by fashioning a nation out of a hotchpotch of cultural zones populated by a variety of peoples and polities because when Cameroon became a German protectorate (Kamerun) in 1884, this initiated the earliest modern mixing or shuffling of the diverse peoples of the country. This was both forced and voluntary (Ejedepang-Koge, 2011: 38). Although the territory was partitioned in 1916 as a *pro tem* measure, the sentiment of "once-a-united" Cameroon was kept burning by inhabitants of both British and French Cameroon. Factors that favoured reunification included the impact of the "Kamerun Idea" or the importance of German rule, 1884-1916. Many Cameroonians in the British and French zones looked back at the German era, when the country was one, united and indivisible, with nostalgia especially as many tribal groups in British and French Cameroons were historically linked. For example, there are close ties between the Bakossi, Balong, Bangwa and Mbo people living on both sides of the divide (Nghoh, 2011 a: 13).

On the other hand, there were peripheral forces that helped to bring the people together. For example, the activities of the Ibo people in Southern Cameroons created a dread of domination which pointed to the fact that integration with Nigeria would mean submission to their social, economic and even political control. This also applied to the supremacy of the civil service by Yoruba low-grade servants that was greatly resented. Others were also of the opinion that with Nigeria, we would always be alien, so it was better to trace our steps back from where we came and reunite with our kith and kin of the Republic of Cameroon (Nyansoka-ni-Nku, 2011: 90). Duala chiefs refused to submit themselves to French authority, demanding respect of the German heritage by considering the Cameroonians on both sides of the Mungo. On February 21, 1918 a pamphlet was published to underscore the fact that the 'bad treatment of indigenous people by the French administration had forced many men to desert their families and emigrate to the English speaking part where there was humane treatment, peace and tranquility. Can you see that the English administration in Cameroon was treating the black man with a strict respect of justice?" (Abwa, 2011: 19).

This provided Cameroonians the forum to learn to live together, in spite of the desire of the colonial administration to separate them. Some Francophones like Robert Jabea K. Dibongue, who settled in this zone even went as far as playing a crucial role in the politics of this part, and were architects of reunification despite the many obstacles imposed by the British administration. By and large, it was through the migration of these Francophones that the "Kamerun Idea" was born. This called for the unity of Cameroon as the Germans left it and even the "Cameroonian Unification Movement" which called on Anglophone Cameroonians to reject the English administration and close ranks with their Francophone Cameroonian counterparts living there for the goal of building a united and prosperous Cameroon. This was a manifestation of Pan-Kamerunism, which stresses the unity of the Cameroon people and upholds their right to nationhood. This was a crystallization of the three legacies that the Germans left behind for their subjects, namely "a memory, an idea and the hope" (Kofele-Kale, 1980: 17).

But national unity has been established to the detriment of the former British Southern Cameroonians. At reunification in 1961, the Anglophone political elite hoped to enter into a loose federal union as a way of protecting their territory's minority status and cultural heritage. But little did they know that Ahidjo and his men were still holding firm to Charles de Gaulle's words that Southern Cameroons was 'a small gift of the Queen of England to France'. That is why the Francophone political elite preferred a highly centralized unitary state and a step to assimilation.<sup>5</sup> Under the new constitution, West Cameroon lost most of the limited autonomy it had enjoyed as part of the Nigerian federation.

As a nation building policy, the nationalization of land in Cameroon has also been done to curb haphazard dealings that underpinned land transaction, promote its maximal use through a more rational system of allocation, and eliminate the customary notion of inalienability of land in order to assure proper administration, which would engender growth. This would further facilitate land registration which provided security of tenure to customary land owners to enhance agriculture by converting users into bourgeois planters with secured tenures (Fonjong, Sama-Langand Fombe, 2010: 162). This policy was initiated on June 9, 1963 when Decree No. 63-2 invalidated the provisions of the 1958 Land and Native Rights Ordinance that had re-established customary rights

over colonial entitlements to land (National Archives Buea, 1943). To this effect, all claims to land not supported by prescribed or current instruments were declared *ultra vires*. More substantive land-related vocabulary such as “owners” and “landlords” previously used in referring to the rights over ancestral lands held by members of the homegrown populations were rendered redundant in favor of inconsequential ones like “holders” and “occupants” (Ambe 1999: 5). To follow this nationalization exercise to its logical end, lands that were not actually occupied i.e. *les terres vacantes ou sans maitre* throughout the country were classified as *le patrimoine collectif national*. To make matters worse, the registration or formalization of collective customary rights on land was made obligatory by repealing a 1932 colonial law, which recognized *les droits fonciers sans titre ecrite*.<sup>6</sup> This had been exactly calculated to extort the inalienable communal property of the various peoples whose privileges to it were based upon immemorial usage.

Having thus set the foundation in the manner illustrated above, Decree No. 73-3 of July 9, 1973 allowed President Amadou Ahidjo “to establish rules governing land tenure in the country.” Equipped with such powers, he ratified Decree No. 74-1 of July 14, 1974 that became the country’s landmark land law. Section 1(2) of the ordinance provides that the state is the guardian of all lands in Cameroon and it may in this capacity intervene to ensure rational use of land, or in the imperative interest of defense, or economic policies of the nation. To render this provision operational, it nationalized all land irrespective of effective occupation except private lands with valid registration documents and state lands as per Sections 14 and 15 of Ordinance No. 74-1 of July 6, 1974. Indigenes who had effectively been on the land before August 5, 1974, but without any registered title, were given 10 and 15 years in urban and rural areas respectively, to obtain land certificates. After this period, their lands would efflux into national land according to Section 4 (1) (new) of Ordinance No. 77-1 of January 10, 1977 (Ibid., 163). The same principle applied to holders of miscellaneous deeds and final court judgment according lands to them.

But members of most indigenous communities in Cameroon have been ignorant of the fact that only authentic land certificates can guarantee any claims to their ownership of ancestral lands. This explains why intrastate conflicts over land are perennial and why indigenes look at government’s role in allocating land to settlers as infringements on their natural rights. Traditional and modern elite were important stakeholders and power brokers took advantage of the opportunities provided

in the modern land law for private property rights and the weak defense offered by customary land tenure systems to acquire land through the expropriation and appropriation of community holdings. This law classified land into four categories including national land, private state land, private corporate and the land of individuals. The supervision of the national land was thus placed under the management of national Land Consultative Boards as per Section 16 of the Ordinance No. 74-1 of July 6, 1974, which is under the control of the local administrative officers of their jurisdiction. The chiefs or traditional rulers who were the customary custodians of such lands were reduced to just members of this board.

### **BUILDING CITIZENSHIP**

Citizenship or nationality in Cameroon has been defined by the Nationality Code which is Law No. 1968-LF-3 of June 11, 1968, with supplementary procedural detail provided in Decree No. 1968 DF-478 of December 16, 1968. The various ways by which a person can become a citizen of Cameroon include birth, naturalization, marriage, adoption, territorial expansion and conquest, declaration, descent and conferment or honorary citizenship. (Ngwuh, 2016: 10). Many post-independence African leaders saw the maintenance of local ethnic identities as an impediment to the construction of new national images: President Samora Machel of Mozambique, for instance, famously declared that, "for the nation to live, the tribe must die" (Mamdani, 1996: 135). The building of citizenship involves four aspects: regular general population censuses, defining nationality, military conscription and civic education. Population and housing censuses have been organized in Cameroon in 1976, 1987 and 2005 in order to have quantitative and qualitative data about all the people living in Cameroon without discrimination and explains why everybody was counted irrespective of ethnic group.

Another way of defining nationality has been through the promotion of minority rights. This has been the focus of the Cameroonian government as well as international development and global rights organizations geared towards surpassing national citizenship (Pelican, 2009: 14). The Baka who were "the first Cameroonians," but were denied autochthony by their Bantu farming neighbors, were brought to the limelight. Their situation was similar to that of the Mbororo because their farming neighbors considered themselves "sons and daughters of the soil" and perceive the Baka

and Mbororo as “wanderers” and “vagabonds” (Leonhardt, 2006: 74). They are considered as an 'indigenous people' because their cultural identities and ways of life have to be protected. The Pygmies and Mbororo who identify themselves in Cameroon as indigenous peoples share a common attachment to their cultures, lifestyles and their marginalization in political life and the development process. Their cultures and lifestyles differ significantly from those of the dominant society and their survival depends on the recognition of their rights and access to their traditional land and natural resources. They suffer from discrimination insofar as they are considered as being 'less developed' and 'less advanced' than the other more dominant groups of the society.

These groups have been identified by the working group of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights as indigenous communities in Africa and the principle of respect for the lifestyle, customs, cultures and institutions as well as the self-identification of the indigenous and tribal peoples is recognized by ILO Convention No. 169 as fundamental for these peoples. (Tchoumba, 2006: 6-7). In line with the decade of indigenous peoples, MBOSCUDA promoted the Mbororo as an 'indigenous minority' whose cultural survival had to be protected.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, MBOSCUDA officials were enrolled to participate in government programmes for the development of indigenous and autochthonous peoples in Cameroon. The United Nations and the International Labour Organization officially recognized the Mbororo alongside the Baka, Bakola, Bagyeli and Bedzang (commonly regarded as 'Pygmies') as 'indigenous peoples'. In 2005 MBOSCUDA was granted special consultative status by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

But regrettably, Cameroon's Nationality Code prohibits dual citizenship thereby creating a diverse set of detrimental impacts on its people, both in Cameroon itself and among its sizable immigrant population, estimated 232 000 people in 2009. This has catastrophic negative effects on the nation building project as it excludes some valuable ideas, skills, technology, resources and manpower from sons and daughters of the soil abroad (Njungwe and Thorne, 2009: 58).

Many countries have promoted obligatory military conscription and/or national service for secondary school or university students as a means to integrate their citizens. In Côte d' Ivoire, for instance, all Ivorian male citizens over the age of 21 have been required to serve 6 months in the

military since 1961; more recently in Sudan the National Service Act of 1992 mandated 2 years of national service from all citizens, but with a reduced load of 18 months and 12 months for high school and university graduates, respectively. Similarly, Eritrea introduced conscription after its independence in 1994, whereby all citizens of both sexes must perform eighteen months of military service due to the government's claimed need to "foster national unity among our people by eliminating sub-national feelings" (Kibreab, 2009: 44).

Civic education has become part and parcel of Cameroonians and another way of nation building. Since independence and up till November 1990, students at various levels of the academic ladder were taught Civics. But in that year, a text from the Minister of Secondary Education transformed of Civics to Citizenship Education although the subject continued to bear different appellations in various school programmes. Whereas the name Citizenship Education is used in the basic and secondary education sectors, the term Civic Education is employed by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Civic Education as well as some professional institutions. The Ministry of Higher Education, as exemplified by the University of Buea, refers to it as Civics and Ethics (Ngwoh, 2016: 5). But whatever, it is a social science in academic circles which studies the activities of man in society. It lays emphasis on his attitude towards public affairs, especially his relationship with the state and other fellow citizens. The subject aims at preparing individuals to participate as active and responsible citizens in a democracy.

Citizenship education involves both formal and informal behavior, geared towards transforming young and old people to become more active, informed and responsible in the execution of their activities in relationship to the state, among other people and within the community as a whole. Such knowledge and understanding should be backed by the skills and abilities of critical thinking, abilities to analyze information, debates, engage in peaceful negotiation of conflicts and effective participation in community life. The subject matter also divulges values and dispositions for the respect of justice, democracy and the rule of law as well as the willingness to listen and work with others.



## **CHALLENGES TO NATION BUILDING IN CAMEROON**

There are numerous challenges to nation building in Cameroon. In the political arena, micro nationalisms and resistance to good governance mechanisms asphyxiate the dissemination of democracy dividends. Acts of public indecency like bribery, corruption and embezzlement suffocate economic equity while numerous structures of sin put a check on social equality. Cultural xenophobia and religious fundamentalism make it difficult for the establishment of a homogenous society in the country. As an ethnic and linguistic mosaic with other divergent factors such as religion, politics, corporation, etc. building a nation state out of such diversity is hampered by some centrifugal forces and propensity towards self-captivity.

Building a national consciousness or nationalism to sustain the nation state is complicated since there are competing ethnic nationalisms. The belief of a superior-inferior group makes consensus-building more difficult. Building strong and viable resources of political association and mass-based political parties is difficult, as the challenges of ethnic loyalty may determine them. If the representatives of the big ethnic groups are only interested in themselves and their groups, the resolution of divisive issues and the protection of minority interests are difficult. The political elite regard the manipulation of ethnic loyalty as the cheapest and most reliable strategy to acquire and consolidate power. (Kagame, 2010). In the case of Cameroon, such difficulty has been expressed thus:

National integration is jeopardized by ethno-regional jingoism, fanned and sustained by the state. Small wonder then that the notion of national unity is ridiculed. People are overtly encouraged to demonstrate stronger loyalties to their ethno-regional or sub-national groups than to the Cameroon nation. Priority is given to belonging to a group first and the nation second, and this state of affairs engenders the crisis of citizenship as full acceptability in one's fatherland suffers from a delimitation of a geo-ethnic order (Awasom, 2004: 268).

The debate in Cameroon on the concept of “electoral village” whereby urbanized people cast their votes along ethnic lines enhances that the village, the lineage, the clan and the ethnic group still constitute vital variables in the political system (Nkwi 1997: 140). This decision has given rise to new political struggle within the ruling class. Faithfulness to ethnic bonds demonstrated itself in different ways and situations across the country especially during the turbulent years of the early 1990s. For example, when Mgr Andre Wouking (a Bamileke) was appointed by the Pope in 1999 to replace Mgr Jean Zoa (a Beti) as Archbishop of Yaounde, some Beti elite took upon themselves to *casser le choix du Vatican* in order to “stop the invading strangers” (Jua, 2004: 318).

The concept of ethnicity refers to a social identity formation that rests upon culturally specific practices and a unique set of symbols and cosmology. A belief in common origins and a broadly agreed common history provide an inheritance of symbols, heroes, events, values and hierarchies, and conform social identities of both insiders and outsiders. Ethnic culture is one of the important ways people conceive of themselves, and culture and identity are closely intertwined. Over 250 different languages and dialects are spoken within its borders, and there is also an important religious split, as the north is primarily Muslim and the south is predominantly Christian. The colonial legacy has continued to put a check on national integration and nation building because the goal of the colonialists was not to establish a nation-state, but simply to demarcate one of their areas of influence from those of other European colonialists (Ajayi, 1992: 8). They wanted to “ensure that colonial control and dispossession could be achieved without undue rivalry among the colonizers and at minimum cost to them” (Oladipo, 1998: 113) As such, the primary objective of the colonialists was to enhance their own economic interests rather than the interests of the colonized people: certainly not the construction of a new national identity, loyalty, unity of purpose and convergence of interests that would cut across the nationalities now lumped together (Ekanola, 2006: 288-289).

## **CONCLUSION**

The policies of indigenization, harmonization, centralization and building citizenship aimed at facilitating nation building in Cameroon have been further streamlined into fourteen themes specifically the renaming of country, altering city names, changing of political headquarters,

evolution of currency, conscription, bilingualism, institution of one-party state, forging unity, organization of censuses, the nationalization of land, national integration, authoritarianism, characterization of nationality and civic education. But the ordinary Cameroonian has come to the conclusion that this whole business is a smoke-screen perpetuated with the hidden agenda of thwarting all attempts at meaningful change. The system is interested in nation-deconstruction, not nation-building, national disunity, not national unity, disintegration, not integration. It finds comfort in chaos, and makes of conviviality a subject of rhetoric mostly.

Cameroon's continued implementation of a restrictive nationality law that does not reflect contemporary world realities is just baffling. There is a clear global movement towards greater acceptance of dual nationality in countries around the world and the reasons underlying this upward trend are numerous and diverse. Considering the copious benefits dual nationality brings to a population and the country, it would be reasonable for the country to embark on a path towards dual nationality without delay. While the continuing residence of Cameroonian immigrants in developed economies can provide a beneficial stream of remittances, the repatriation of native Cameroonians who have gained valuable skills and financial resources abroad represents a far greater opportunity for achieving significant economic development gains for the greater good of the nation building project.

The policy of official language bilingualism, originally aimed at guaranteeing political integration and unity of Cameroon, now seems to constitute a source of conflict and political disintegration with conspicuous acts of marginalization of the minority by the majority population. In numerous instances that the Anglophones have raised their voices against these injustices, some Francophone state officials have strongly condemned them for this 'treacherous action'. Emah Basil, former Government Delegate to the Yaounde City Council referred to Anglophones in 1990 as 'enemies in the house' and were asked by the then Minister of Territorial Administration, Ibrahim Mbombo Njoya, 'to go elsewhere' if they were dissatisfied with 'national unity'. Other Francophones simply refer to Anglophones as "Biafrans".

**NOTES:**

<sup>1</sup> Formerly, the classification included Semi-Bantu who have recently been considered as Bantu. While the Pygmy are found in the South Region, the Sudanese are predominantly settled in the northern parts of the country and the Bantu in the other regions.

<sup>2</sup> The arrival to Fernando Po of Spanish Catholics in 1856 marked a turning point in the personal liberty, property and religion of Baptist missionaries. They were compelled to leave Fernando Po in 1858 when the Jesuits arrived and proclaimed Catholicism the sole religion in the island.

<sup>3</sup> But many post-colonial governments changed the name of their currencies as a symbolic gesture after independence. For instance, Kwame Nkrumah's government replaced the Ghanaian Pound with the Cedi in 1965, while in both Malawi (1968) and Zambia (1971) the Pound was replaced by the Kwacha. Similarly, in Sierra Leone the new currency became the Leone, after the name of the country, while in Angola the Escudo was replaced by the Kwanza, the name of a local river.

<sup>4</sup> Many leaders across Africa banned opposition parties in efforts to reduce political factionalism and unite their countries by both banning ethnic-based associations and creating a single political organization open to all citizens.

<sup>5</sup> While the Francophone elite received strong support from the French during constitutional negotiations, the Anglophone elite was virtually abandoned by the British who deeply resented the Southern Cameroons option for reunification with Francophone Cameroon.

<sup>6</sup> Members of most indigenous communities in Cameroon have been ignorant of the fact that only authentic land certificates can guarantee any claims to their ownership of ancestral lands. This explains why intrastate conflicts over land are perennial and why indigenes look at government's role in allocating land to settlers as infringements on their natural rights.

<sup>7</sup> The United Nations proclaimed the period 1995 to 2004 as the decade of indigenous people.

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