

WEST AFRICA EARLY WARNING & EARLY RESPONSE NETWORK

WARN

Policy Brief

MARCH 2019

CAMEROON

Conspiracy of Silence or Feigned Indifference?

The Crisis in Cameroon and its Security Implications
for Nigeria and the International Community



**WEST AFRICA NETWORK
FOR PEACEBUILDING**

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS FOR PEACE

Copy Right: WANEP© 2019

CAMEROON

Conspiracy of Silence or Feigned Indifference?

The Crisis in Cameroon and its Security Implications for Nigeria and the International Community

1. INTRODUCTION

The current violent agitations going on in the English-speaking part of Cameroon [North-West and South-West] have historical origins and international significance. By virtue of its shared history and geographical proximity, Nigeria does not only suffer the consequences, but also serves as a key player in the resolution of the protracted crisis. One of the effects of the crisis on Nigeria is the influx of more than 40,000 registered refugees, with tens of thousands more living in host neighbouring communities since September 2017¹. Amongst the affected populations are women and children. According to reports from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), four out of every five of refugees registered are women and children². In fact, the current refugee situation constitutes a huge humanitarian burden on a country that is already grappling with its own internal security challenges emanating from the violent activities of Boko Haram, armed banditry and farmer-herder crisis among others. In addition to the crisis impact on Nigeria, it also has repercussions on regional and international security dynamics. This includes illegal migration, transnational organised crimes and heightened vulnerability for terrorist and violent extremist recruitments.

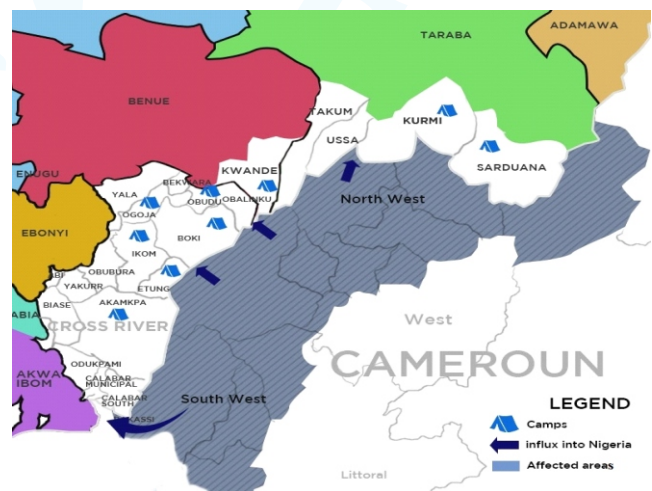


Fig 1: Map showing the influx of refugees from Anglo-Cameroon into Nigerian communities (Cross River, Taraba and Benue States). Map Credit: Google images.

Internally, there are reports of indiscriminate attacks against civilians in the English-speaking Cameroon. However, the absence of data on the attacks is largely due to inaccessibility of the affected area by independent media and humanitarian agencies. Both State security and the separatist fighters known as the “Amba Boys” have been accused of committing atrocities such as summary executions, arbitrary and indiscriminate arrests, kidnapping for ransom, burning of schools, hospitals and

¹See <https://www.msf.org/tens-thousands-cameroonians-seek-refuge-southern-nigeria> (Accessed 14/03/19).

²See <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/fleeing-violence-cameroonian-refugee-arrivals-nigeria-pass-30000> (Accessed 14/03/19)

West Africa Early Warning & EARLY RESPONSE Network (WARN)

The West Africa Early Warning Network (WARN) is an integral part of the West Africa Preventive Peacebuilding Program co-ordinated by the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP). Through its WARN Program, WANEP is setting the stage for a civil society-based early warning and response network in Africa with emphasis on human security.

WARN covers the entire Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) region.

Since 2002, WANEP entered into an agreement with ECOWAS through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in the framework of capacity building in Conflict Prevention. One of the goals of

this agreement is to interface WARN with the ECOWAS Early Warning Systems to optimize early warning conflict prevention in West Africa. In view of this development, WANEP has been operating a liaison office located at the ECOWAS Secretariat in Abuja, Nigeria since April 2003.

In recognition of the role and achievements of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) in Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding in Africa, particularly in West Africa, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations at its substantive session of 2006 granted WANEP Special Consultative Status to the UN. WANEP is therefore mandated to designate official representatives to the United Nations in New York, Geneva and Vienna to further its advocacy and outreach strategies for peace and human security.

houses³. This has also affected school enrolment in the affected region. According to the Ministry of Education, out of the 237,000 students enrolled for the 2017/18 academic year in the South-West, only 63,000 completed the year⁴. In the North-West, the primary school enrolment dropped to 131,000 in the 2017/18 compared to 387,000 the previous academic year⁵.

The impact of the crisis is also manifested in the economy of the country. For instance, according to Cameroon's private sector employers union, Groupement inter-patronal du Cameroun (GICAM), the economic and financial cost of the crisis has been enormous. Over \$566million losses in business deals; \$4,062 billion infrastructure losses; 6434 formal sector job losses and 8000 jobs in the informal sector⁶. Besides the petroleum oil that comes almost entirely from the affected region, it also supplies 70 percent of the Arabica coffee and 45 percent of Cameroon's cocoa and coffee production. More importantly, the largest agro-industrial plantations – the Cameroon Development Corporation – that produces palmoil, banana, and rubber is located in this agriculturally rich region of the country. In view of these considerations, the English-speaking region of Cameroon has strategic importance to the socio-economic developments of the country and the sub-region. Thus, growing insecurity in the region is a cause for concern not only for its immediate neighbours, especially Nigeria, but also the larger international community.

On the basis of the foregoing discussion, this policy brief examines the root causes of the crisis in Cameroon and its security implications for Nigeria and the international community. It further explores other possibilities for interventions to end the ongoing crisis.

Historical Drivers of the Crisis

In 1961, the region, then known as Southern Cameroons, a UN Trust Territory that was hitherto administered as part of Eastern Nigeria, voted in a UN organised plebiscite to join the then Republic of Cameroun that had earlier achieved its own independence in 1960. Cameroon thus became known as the Federal Republic of Cameroon, operating a federal system of two states, and adopted English and French as its official languages. This historical development conferred upon the country a bi-jural legal system and bilingual status, making the country a unique experience in Africa (compared only to Canada). This peculiarity, it was believed, constituted the strength of the country. However, over the years, the inability of the State to manage the regional and linguistic diversity has been a source of tension and violence.

The political maneuvers leading to the plebiscite and its outcome also constituted a significant part of the seeds of today's agitations⁷. According to the agitating people of Southern Cameroons⁸ – Ambazonia – the political developments that resulted in the systematic marginalization and attempts to subjugate the English-speaking entity, including the geopolitics of 'arbitrary change of names' has partly contributed to the current crisis. This was preceded by a number of calculated political moves to undermine the Federal Constitution that brought the two entities together. These include, the institution of a unitary state, and subsequently the abolition of the United Republic in 1984 by a unilateral executive decision by President Paul Biya, who has monopolized power in Cameroon for 36 years.

³See a sample BBC investigation into one of such arson acts. Currently, thousands of homes have been systematically razed in areas suspected to host separatist fighters or their sympathisers. (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-44561929>). (Accessed 15/03/19).

⁴See <https://reliefweb.int/report/niger/west-and-central-africa-weekly-regional-humanitarian-snapshot-18-24-september-2018> (Accessed 15/03/19).

⁵Ibid

⁶<https://www.legicam.cm/index.php/p/une-enquete-du-gicam-revele-l-impact-de-la-crise-anglophone> (Accessed 13/03/19).

⁷Read Bongfen Chem-Langhe (2004). *The Paradoxes of Self-Determination in the Cameroons under United Kingdom Administration: The Search for Identity, Well-Being and Continuity* (Lanham-Boulder-New York-Toronto-Oxford: University Press of America). Proponents of the Southern Cameroons agitations claim that the UN General Assembly Res. 1541(XV) on the territory never took place, and that the passing of UN General Assembly Resolution 1608(XV) of 21st Apr 1961 granting independence to Southern Cameroons, which was vigorously opposed by the then République du Cameroun and France as well as all French speaking African nations except Mali voted against this landmark Resolution.

⁸Southern Cameroon successively became known as West Cameroon and eventually North-West and South-West Regions, and now self-baptized Ambazonia.



*Cross Section of Anglophone Lawyers' meeting in Bamenda in May 2016.
Credit: Photo Credit: Google Images*

The current crisis came to the peak in 2016 when trade unions including teachers, lawyers and other interest groups demanded reversals of policy decisions by the Government which seem to undermine the Anglo-Saxon system inherited at independence. These decisions, according to 'protesters', are deliberate attempts to 'francophonize' English-speaking Cameroon. This has been a source of recurrent protests and demonstrations, leading to the arrest and detention of protesters including teachers and lawyers by the security operatives. In addition to this, they have also been charged with treason, using anti-terrorism laws that were recently passed to curb the Boko Haram insurgency. Thus, the trade union protests degenerated into prolonged teachers and lawyers strikes including closure of schools for almost three years in the affected areas.

The October 1, 2017 killings: Triggering beyond the Threshold

On October 1, 2017, thousands of people from the former Southern Cameroons came out to proclaim what was referred to as "the restoration of their independence". This proclamation was in response to the alleged marginalisation and mistreatment of the people from the affected region as "second-class citizens" by the dominant French-speaking Cameroon. The media blockade by the Government inhibited the flow of people and information

on the incident to the global community for discussion. However, with the interventions of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)⁹, especially those based in the French-speaking side of the country, brought the issues and widespread human rights abuses ensuing in the region to global attention and conversations.



Massive protest in Anglophone Cameroon regions against continued repression by Government. Photo Credit: www.africanews.com (22/09/2017)

Prior to the October 1, 2017 incident, there was a spontaneous defiant march by Anglophones, mostly young people including women on September 23, 2017 when President Paul Biya was scheduled to address the UN General Assembly. Despite a ban on movement of persons and protest imposed by the Government, the defiant march was a manifestation of the frustrations and resentments of the people of Southern Cameroon against continued repression and marginalisation by the State. The protest was met with stiff resistance from state security apparatus, resulting in deaths, injuries and mass displacement of people. The actual number of casualties remained unknown. However, human rights groups including Amnesty International indicated that 100 were killed and 100 more wounded¹⁰. Also, hundreds were arrested and incarcerated in prisons in Buea, Bamenda and Bafoussam¹¹.

In response to the killings, mass arrest and detention of protesters, the UN and AU condemned the violence, and called for restraint and dialogue. Similarly, the Catholic and Presbyterian Churches decried the killing of unarmed

⁹ See Press Release of Réseau de Défenseurs de Droits Humaines en Afrique Centrale (REDHAC) (<http://www.redhac.org>), of 03 October, 2017 issued in Douala and Bamenda.

¹⁰ See <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-44561929>. Accessed on 15/03/2019.

¹¹ Ibid.



Mothers and grandmothers leading a protest march in Fontem, South-West Region. Photo Credit: www.africanews.com (22/09/2017)

unarmed civilians. Amnesty International, in its report on 13th October 2017, also raised concerns over the killings and clamp down on protesters by the security forces.

Since then, the matter has been a source of polarisation and tension in the Republic of Cameroon¹². Despite this, the Government continues to justify its actions as attempts to deal with potential threats of terrorism and violent insurrection in the affected area¹³. The indifferent posture of the Government towards the mistreatment of the people of Southern Cameroon has galvanised radical groups, who with the support from some diaspora Anglophone sympathisers, constituted self-defense and resistance groups in response to suppression of the people. These groups have also meted out untold suffering on the civilian population, including attacks on schools to enforce their "no-school" campaign, kidnaps for ransom, and killings of suspected traitors (those who do not agree with their approach). The population is therefore caught in a dilemma, trapped in between a marauding army that blames them for shielding the armed fighters and the "Amba Boys" that threatens any one who dares collaborate with the state military.

Another dimension of the political imbroglio in Cameroon is also reflected in generational crisis between the elite that has benefitted from the status quo and the youths who

seem to have no future in a country where political power has been dominated by gerontocrats for several decades. The emergence of youth population, many of whom have known only Paul Biya as President, have utilized the social media usage to galvanize support to challenge the current governance system in Cameroon.

Further, media manipulation that has always been an instrument in the hands of the Government has been challenged by the social media and satellite television technology. While this has sustained the crisis, it has also dissuaded others who are caught in between the 'responsibility to prevent/act' and the necessity to verify and ascertain the reality. The decision by the Government to inhibit access by the international community, including the United Nations¹⁴ and shut down of the internet and mobile phone signals are indications of attempts to cover up the misrule and human rights violations in the country.

The explosion of the crisis and the manner with which the Government of Cameroon has responded is also revealing. For instance, the attempts by the international community to request for a humanitarian appeal, and perhaps, eventually an access corridor, were quickly countered by the Government decision to create a Government-led Humanitarian Plan.

Another angle of this crisis is also manifested in the October 2018 presidential election, which was largely boycotted in the English-speaking part of the country. Key figures within opposition parties and some right activists who protested against the outcome of the elections were arrested and court-martialled. This is a further attestation of the regime's disregard for human rights and civil liberties in the country.

¹²The country is very divided and one can easily notice the divided between Anglophones and Francophones generally; between Anglophones elites in power and those at home; between the diaspora and those at home; between Francophones close to the ruling party and administration versus those in the opposition of sympathetic with the Anglophones.

¹³See defiant speech by Hon. Joseph Wirba in the floor of parliament: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ju6vHGgIx0>

¹⁴It is embarrassing that the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), Francois Lounecy Fall for UN Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), was not only denied access to the crisis area but also denied audience with President Paul Biya on this matter. If the UN cannot resolve the matter, who else can?

Possible Regional Ramifications and Likely Scenarios

The implications of the ensuing geopolitical crisis in Cameroon is reflected in the regional and international security dimensions. While attention to the crisis has focused on human rights dimensions, especially, from the perspectives of the International Crisis Group and Amnesty International, not much light has been shed upon its ramifications on regional and international security. Importantly, the possible role of Nigeria in contributing to resolving the crisis has also not given enough attention in the space of policy conversations.

Nigeria: 'Big Brother', Big Responsibility

While Nigeria might have ignored discussing the crisis in Cameroon for political expediency due to the electioneering politics, it can no longer conceal or afford to remain indifferent. Cameroon and Nigeria have cooperated well in the fight against Boko Haram, especially in the context of the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) arrangements to flush out the insurgents in the Lake Chad Basin. However, recent reports by Medecins Sans Frontieres that Cameroon forcefully repatriated thousands of Nigerian refugees fleeing the Boko Haram in the Rann area have brought the Cameroon-Nigeria relations back to the limelight¹⁵.

Relatively less discussed was the recent judgement by the Federal High Court of Abuja on what is now referred to as "the illegal deportation of 47 Cameroonian refugees and asylum seekers from Nigeria"¹⁶. In her ruling of March 1, 2019, Justice Chikere declared the arrest and detention of the 12 applicants illegal as the Federal Government did not controvert the affidavit of the applicants and awarded N5 million damages to each of them. On the deportation of the 12 detainees and 35 others from Nigeria to Cameroon on January 26, 2019 the presiding judge, Justice Chikere

dismissed the preliminary objection of the Federal Government as lacking merits. The Judge agreed with the submission that the applicants were expelled in utter violation of the legal obligations under the National Refugee Commission Act, section 35 of the Constitution and article 12 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights which have prohibited Nigeria from expelling or deporting refugees and asylum seekers from the country. Consequently, Justice Chikere declared the deportation of the applicants as illegal and unconstitutional, awarded N200,000 to each of them and ordered the Federal Government to ensure that they are brought back to Nigeria forthwith. Justice Chikere further granted an order of perpetual injunction restraining the Respondents from further violating the fundamental rights of the Applicants in any manner whatsoever upon return to Nigeria¹⁷. The court verdicts demonstrate Nigeria's role as a key stakeholder in the search for lasting solution in the crisis in Cameroon.

Within the last few years, Nigeria-Cameroon relations have improved following years of tension over the Bakassi peninsular and the ruling of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) with subsequent agreements, including the Green Tree Agreement of June 2006. At Green Tree, Nigeria, amongst others, recognized the "sovereignty of Cameroon over the Bakassi Peninsula in accordance with the judgment of the International Court of Justice of 10 October 2002 in the matter of land and maritime boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria". Cameroon on its part agreed, after the transfer of authority to it by Nigeria, to accord "guarantees to Nigerian nationals living in the Bakassi Peninsula the exercise of the fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in international human rights law and other relevant provisions of international law." Despite lingering issues and intermittent frictions between the communities in Bakassi, the two countries have succeeded in managing the crisis and other differences in a pacific

¹⁵ See <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/cameroon-forces-nigerian-refugees-back-violence>. Accessed on 15/03/2019.

¹⁶ 1. R SSIKU AYUK TUBE & 11 ORS AND THE NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER AND ANOTHER (SUIT NO/FHC/ABJ/CS/85/2018). 2. WILFRED TASSANG AND 50 OTHERS VS NSA AND ANOTHER (SUIT NO FHC/ABJ/CS/147/2018)

It should be recalled that in a suit filed on their behalf by prominent human rights lawyer, Mr. Femi Falana (Senior Advocate of Nigeria- SAN) the applicants prayed for the following declarations and orders:

- A declaration that the arrest of the applicants without warrant of arrest is unconstitutional and contrary to section 34 & 35 of the 1999 Constitution as amended and article 5 & 6 of the African Charter of Human and Peoples Rights (Ratification and Enforcement Act).
- A declaration that the detention of the applicants in an underground prison by the 1st Respondent was a violation of their right to personal liberty
- A declaration that the detention of the applicants without access to their lawyers or family was a violation of their right to fair hearing.
- A declaration that the arrest and detention of the applicants was a violation of their right to freedom of assembly and association.
- An order of the court ordering the immediate release of the applicants.
- Pay the applicants the sum of 200 million naira each as compensation for the damage and hardship which they suffered.
- An order of perpetual injunction restraining any further violation of the rights of the applicants by the defendant or any of its agencies.

¹⁷ <http://saharareporters.com/2019/03/01/breaking-court-declares-deportation-cameroonians-nigeria-illegal> (Accessed 15/03/19).

manner that has been hailed as classical international best practice in conflict resolution.

Besides the frequent meetings of the Nigeria-Cameroon Mixed Commission that alternates between the two capitals of the countries, the exemplary collaboration in the fight against Boko Haram has raised the level of the friendly relationship to another level. However, since the 2018 end of year speech to the nation by President Paul Biya, which suggested an end to the fight against Boko Haram, Cameroon has virtually shifted its military focus on the Anglophone separatists front, leaving a vacuum that may be exploited in the north by the extremist and militia groups operating across the borders. Furthermore, the United States of America has indicated its intention to significantly withdraw its technical military support for Cameroon, with allegations that part of such support is used to fund the Government's military operations in the North-West and South-West Regions.

The potential regional ramifications that may likely occur if the current situation is not brought under control are legion. Media coverage of the killings in Cameroon is still very minimal within Nigeria. However, former President Goodluck Jonathan on the occasion of the 15th Anniversary of [Rhodes Forum](#) in Greece criticized the UN for lack of pro-activeness, partly blaming it on the covert or otherwise role of France as a former colonial master with vested interests in Cameroon¹⁸. The recent action by the Buhari Administration to arrest and deport Anglophone activist leaders in January 2018 has remained controversial. Besides the fact that they are being tried in a military court, there is no extradition agreement between Nigeria and Cameroon to warrant such action. There are also indications that Cameroon security forces have reportedly crossed into Nigeria to arrest suspected fighters along its border with Nigeria. The actions of the two countries have some international legal implications within the context of international law. In this respect, there are some dilemmas that need to be emphasized for the 'big brother' and western neighbour.

1. The March 1, 2019 Ruling by the Abuja Federal High Court on "the illegal deportation of 47 Cameroonian refugees and asylum seekers from Nigeria" in favour of the detainees held by Cameroon, who are equally facing dead sentences in a military tribunal in Yaounde, following charges of terrorism and insurrection constitutes a dilemma. The political and diplomatic implications of this development cannot be under-estimated. A scenario where Nigeria, in maintaining its image as a law abiding country that obeys court decisions (with example of the International Court of Justice – ICJ ruling that compelled it to cede the Bakasi Peninsular to Cameroon) and compels Cameroon to send back the detainees may force Nigeria to get directly involved in the crisis as a "positive peace broker". Without seeking to antagonize Cameroon, Nigeria may use this opportunity to influence the Biya regime that has been reluctant to initiate sincere dialogue with no pre-conditions.

Plausibility of the scenario: Highly probable.
Indicators for this are:

- i. By virtue of its shared history and geographical proximity, Nigeria is a key stakeholder in the resolution of the crisis. The influx of more than 40,000 registered refugees (mostly in Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Benue and Taraba States), with tens of thousands more living in host communities constitutes a huge humanitarian burden to a country that is already grappling with its own internal displacement largely due the Boko Haram insurgency, militant group activities as well as farmer-herder conflicts among others.
- ii. Since 2017, thousands of the over 4million Nigerians living in Cameroon following the 1967-70 war, and dominate the trade and commerce landscape are returning to Nigeria in their numbers. The Ruling of the Abuja may just be a legal and legitimate avenue for Nigeria to be actively involved in the resolution of the crisis. The claims of forceful repatriation of thousands of Nigeria refugees from across Rann area in the Far North Regional border of Cameroon and Nigeria would also give the Federal Government a strong moral argument and

¹⁸The Rhodes forum discussed the topic, "Multipolarity and Dialogue in Regional and Global Developments: Imagining Possible Futures" which took place (6-7 October 2017) in Rhodes, Greece.

international legal standing.

iii. The 2019 elections in Nigeria are over and the ongoing attempts by the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to contest the results of the presidential election at the the Supreme Court may give the Buhari Administration an opportunity to seek international sympathy by abiding by the court decision.

2. The second dilemma is a scenario where the millions of Nigerians in Cameroon could be targeted and trigger a mass movement.

The English-Speaking part that voted in the October 1, 1961 UN-organised plebiscite (that is at the core of today's agitations) is a host to the majority of the more than 4 million registered Nigerians in Cameroon¹⁹, predominantly those who migrated and settled during the 1967-1970 Biafra war. Owing to this, Nigeria have a justified reason to protect its citizens within the confines of international law and state responsibilities. In view of this, there is the need for circumspection in order to ensure that such actions are not taken on the basis of parochial political interest but the considering the its implications for the security of the two states and the region.

Plausibility of the scenario: Highly probable.

Indicators for this are:

i. Cameroon authorities may likely play this card to hoodwink Nigeria into inaction or draw them to their side (if they have not already started doing so) despite the potential humanitarian consequences an upsurge in violence may have on Nigeria (see dilemma or scenario two below). There were media allegations that during the security meeting held by the Minister for Defense of Cameroon in Buea, there was a suggestion that Nigerians in Cameroon may be targeted and blamed on Southern Cameroons agitators so as to win sympathy of Nigeria. One of the reasons was to force Nigeria to crackdown on Southern Cameroons activists who are based in Nigeria. Cameroon officials have consistently called the agitators terrorists (coming in the wake of IPOB in Nigeria officially

branded a terrorist organization by the government).

ii. It should be stressed that the Nigerian population in Cameroon has always remained apolitical and hold sway in commerce as they own most daily market shops (spare parts, motor vehicle, electronics shops, new generation banks, etc) in almost all towns, including Yaoundé and Douala in the French-Speaking side. Historically, during the peak political upheavals of the 1990s, there was always a tendency to attribute all kinds of blames on Nigeria (externalisation of woes) for any mishappenings. When the opposition Social Democratic Front (SDF) mustered courage and challenged the status quo of the one-party system, it was alleged that people came from Nigeria to join the SDF to destabilize Cameroon²⁰. Flimsy as it sounded, many Nigerian traders were harassed but the situation was contained.

iii. The English-speaking people have most times been labelled "Biafrans", and a mindset that Nigeria is behind their woes remains strong in Cameroon. Until a few years ago, there was never any paved road linking the two countries, despite the trade agreement signed between Nigeria and Cameroon in the aftermath of the Nigeria civil war by Gen. Yakubu Gowon and Ahmadou Ahidjo. Cameroon refused to recognise the declared state of Biafra (unlike Gabon and Cote d'Ivoire).

3. The third dilemma is related to the first. The level of current crisis heightens, with attendant implications: humanitarian and political. Nigerians become targets or they feel insecure, and mass movement back into Nigeria begins. The hypothesis that if for instance 2 million of the more than 4 million Nigerians start streaming back 'home', this would trigger a massive humanitarian crisis that would be difficult to handle. The only direction Cameroonians caught in the crisis will likely follow remains Nigeria that is already grappling with a huge crisis in the north-east and middle belt. Most affected destination states for the stream of Cameroonian refugees would be Cross River, Benue and Taraba.

¹⁹President Obasanjo gave a figure of 4 million during a visit to Cameroon in 2004 when he inaugurated the new Nigerian High Commission building in Yaoundé.

²⁰They pointed to the SDF's green and white flag as evidence since the Nigerian colours are green and white.

Fig 2: Chart generated by WANEP from the UNHCR Estimated Cameroon Refugee Population in Nigeria, by December 2018²¹.



Fig 2: Chart generated by WANEP from the UNHCR Estimated Cameroon Refugee Population in Nigeria, by December 2018.

Plausibility of this scenario: Very Probable

Indicators or arguments in support of this scenario are:

- i. The political diatribe in some media houses in the French-speaking side of Cameroon is capable of drumming possible incitement against the Nigerian community. Allegations that people came from Nigeria and attacked security posts in the frontier town of Ekok, near Mamfe in the south-west region of Cameroon (closer to Ikom) fan the embers of suspicion and various conspiratory schemes. House to house search of 'terrorists' by the Cameroon military is ongoing in many localities, with attendant violations of human rights and summary execution of suspects.
- ii. The current context in Nigeria where the Biafra agitations is still an issue may compound matters. Certainly the Buhari Administration may likely be reluctant to make any move that would give the impression of quasi support to the Cameroon agitation for self-determination. However, if a mass of disgruntled Nigerians stream in from Cameroon, in an already tensed atmosphere and misgivings of IPOB and its supporters, the possibility of heightened clamour for an Igbo state of their own would be high.

- iii. On the other hand, an alliance of convenience between agitators in Cameroon and Nigeria may eventually bring the two or multiple groups together in a collaboration for a common end²². The Niger Delta activists since some months ago have stepped up their demand for an independent Niger Delta country of their own (different from Biafra). These groups could likely find common ground in an alliance of convenience. The entire bight of Biafra would be engulfed in an unprecedented instability.

Possible Options for Response

- I. It should be noted that despite years of the Bakassi dispute, Cameroon and Nigeria have maintained a cordial relation and the visa-free agreement between the citizens of the two countries. The Bakassi peninsular crisis might have been a culmination of the mistrust that has lingered between the two countries, although role of multilateral oil interests propelled it. The Boko Haram insurgency however compelled the two suspicious neighbours to cooperate. Whatever happens in any of the two countries should be a matter of mutual concern because of possible spill-over across boundaries.

· There is urgent need to act before it is too late. Strong condemnation of use of violence either in seeking redress of conflicts wherever it comes from, must be sounded. An immediate investigation to ascertain the magnitude of the casualties is crucial to avert further deterioration that may result in a major catastrophe that is already unfolding.

· The abusive use of the social media and the propaganda and threats to individuals and institutions who differ with the views of the Anglophone agitators as well as burning of schools should be vehemently condemned. Also, the use of the military to suppress peaceful demonstrations and use of live ammunition against own citizens should be investigated.

· It must be made known that ongoing 'scotch earth' policy of systematic burning of houses by the military and allegations that the burning of health centers and hospitals to punish medical personnel who are

²¹See also "Cameroon Situation Refugee Contingency Plan, Nigeria, 2018 by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

²²Though it must be stated that it was the so-called Igbo factor - domination of Southern Cameroonians that tilted the plebiscite result in favour of re-unification with French Cameroon. Such an alliance of convenience may not endure for long.

treating wounded separatist fighters constitute human rights violations. There should be commencement of investigations by the international community including regional stakeholders, leading to justice, reconciliation and forgiveness.

ii. The challenge of governance in Cameroon is a critical factor in the crisis. Therefore, resolution of the ongoing crisis should take into account addressing the issues of constitution reforms with all options on the table including decentralization, federation, and or referendum on self-determination, which have not been done for over twenty years.

iii. Call for restraint and dialogue is not enough. The Government should be engaged to establish an independent investigation into the October 1, 2017 mass killings. An immediate cease-fire should be declared to clear the way for dialogue.

a) A facilitated dialogue process, supported by the UN, AU, (with ECCAS and ECOWAS' involvement as stakeholders or observers). This should involve all stakeholders – the Government, political parties, representatives from the various regions, pressure groups, religious leaders, youth and women groups, civil society organisations, the media and the academia in the politics and governance of Cameroon to find lasting solution for the crisis.

iv. There is also the need to look at the socio-economic angle of the crisis in finding sustainable solutions. This should include confidence building measures along the Cameroon-Nigeria border, beyond cooperation in the fight against Boko Haram, are necessary. In line with the AU mantra of transforming border areas into regions of shared prosperity, and 'build bridges not barriers,' Nigeria and the international community can engage Cameroon to: admit the marginalisation of Anglophone Cameroon, attested by absence of paved roads linking the two countries (until the Abakaliki-Mfum-Ikom-Mamfe-Bamenda axis of the trans-African road was built, Cameroon had deliberately turned its back on

Nigeria; build more bridges across the English speaking stretch of the border and enhance legal trade between Nigeria and Cameroon. Border markets will provide opportunities for legal trade, and absorb the many idle hands that have seen trafficking and a violent struggle as the only alternative to survive; and activate and ratify the trade agreement between Nigeria and Cameroon, signed between General Yakubu Gowon and the then President, Ahmadou Ahidjo.

Conclusion

As discussed, the ongoing crisis in Cameroon has regional and international security implications. Notably, despite existing regional and international conflict resolution and prevention mechanisms for intervention including the AU Constitutive Acts' provision of Non-indifference in intervening to avert grave human rights violations, the crisis in Cameroon has continued unabated, causing significant instability in the country and the sub-region. The policy brief has also noted that Nigeria as a key stakeholder in the conflict cannot be ignored in its resolution. Likewise, ECOWAS, ECCAS, UN and the international community.

Remarkably, over the years, the UN has demonstrated its commitment to resolving internal crises of countries. Therefore, the Cameroonian crisis requires similar intervention from the UN towards peaceful resolution. Women and children have also been adversely affected by the crisis. This is reflected in the number of deaths and internal displacement in refugee camps in Nigeria and other countries within the region. To assuage the current crisis, this Policy Brief calls for a robust engagement with stakeholders through dialogue, mediation, negotiations and reparation of victims under the initiative of regional, continental and international actors is imperative in order to prevent further deterioration of the conflict.

CAMEROON

Conspiracy of Silence or Feigned Indifference?

The Crisis in Cameroon and its Security Implications for
Nigeria and the International Community