



A COMMON STRUGGLE NARRATIVE

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS PAPER

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Well-established territory

In this paper I shall, for the avoidance of confusion, denote the erstwhile United Nations Trust Territory of the British Southern Cameroons by its indigenous geographical indication, Ambazonia. As a trust territory, Ambazonia was a qualified subject of international law and it had international personality, a separate political, constitutional and territorial existence. It enjoyed self-government as from 1954 and was endowed with a state constitution by 1960. The territory is well-defined, delimited and demarcated by international boundary treaties: (i) the Agreement between Great Britain and Germany respecting the Settlement of the Frontier between Nigeria and the Cameroons from Yola to the Sea, 11 March 1913; and (ii) the Franco-British Declaration respecting the Frontier between the British Cameroons and French Cameroun, 10 July 1919, as well as the Declaration made by the Governor of the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria and the Governor of the French Cameroun determining the Frontier between British Cameroons and French Cameroun, 9 January 1931.

The plebiscite

The native population of Ambazonia constitute a people within the meaning of international law. They own the Land of their birth. They are separate and distinct from the people of French Cameroun. There was a Plebiscite on 11 February 1961. It was confined to the people of Ambazonia only. French Cameroun was not party to it and there is no record of any plebiscite or referendum at which French Cameroun voted to form a political association with Ambazonia.

The Plebiscite was never about fusion, or absorption, into French Cameroun. Nor was it about transfer of the territory of Ambazonia to French Cameroun. It was not a vote by which the people of Ambazonia surrendered themselves and their territory, or offered both, as a free gift to French Cameroun. There was absolutely nothing that Ambazonia could possibly have stood to gain by such a tragic vote which, in any event, would have been tantamount to political, existential, economic, cultural, and social suicide. The law of human nature teaches that people do not opt for a detrimental change in their station and status in life. The

Plebiscite was not a vote to change or adjust boundaries either. Boundaries established by treaty are not changed overnight by mere political act such as a vote without more.

The Plebiscite was primarily about Ambazonia achieving independence. It was secondarily about a free association with French Cameroun after certain due processes would have been followed. The UN endorsed that independence vote. French Cameroun, France and Francophone African states voted against Ambazonia's independence and also voted against free association with French Cameroun. French Cameroun's negative vote had legal and political implications. It meant French Cameroun continued its international boundary with Ambazonia as unchanged in character. The frontier line between both countries thus never legally acquired an internal character. It has always remained, *de jure*, an international boundary. That is the legal position notwithstanding the appearance of an internal boundary consequent upon French Cameroun's colonisation. The revival of '*la République du Cameroun*' in 1984 (even with expansionist pretensions) *ipso facto* confirmed the frontier line between Ambazonia and French Cameroun as an international boundary. Further evidence of this is provided by the policy and practice of French Cameroun in maintaining along the frontier line the pre-1st October 1961 security and customs barriers controlling the movement of persons, goods and services between the two countries.

The freely expressed wishes of the people of Ambazonia at the Plebiscite on 11 February 1961 was independence. On 21 April 1961, that independence vote was endorsed by the United Nations which then set 1 October 1961 as the date of termination of trusteeship, entailing attainment of independence. But independence was not attained either on that appointed date or at any other subsequent date. The United Nations did terminate the trusteeship agreement. But it did so without due diligence. In April 1961 it had merely supposed and assumed that independence would be achieved on 1 October 1961 and that a valid Ambazonia/French Cameroun free association would be brought into existence. So, paradoxically, after adopting Resolution 1608 (XV) on the 21 April 1961 the

United Nations simply washed its hands off Ambazonia. On their part, the British on 1 October 1961 indecently left the territory.

Colonization and the imperative of decolonization

The root cause of the ongoing conflict between Ambazonia and French Cameroun is therefore the failure of the United Nations, and Britain, the Administering Authority, to complete the decolonization of Ambazonia. On 1 September 1961, when Britain was still the Administering Authority in Ambazonia, French Cameroun proclaimed the annexation of Ambazonia. It did so through the subterfuge of a pretended 'federal constitution' the content of which was, "*sauf en apparence, une annexion*", to use the apt characterization of Pierre Messmer the last French colonial governor in Yaoundé. Four weeks later, on 30 September, the British handed powers not to Ambazonia but, strangely, to French Cameroun. The British then left on 1 October. That same day, Hon. Hugh Fraser, the British Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, informed the House of Commons that "*the Southern Cameroons had already been transferred to Mr Ahidjo of Cameroun Republic.*" It is still a mystery how a colonial power decolonises its colonial territory by transferring the colonial territory to a foreign country.

French Cameroun thus took over as successor colonialist in Ambazonia. British colonial rule ended. French Cameroun colonial rule began. Ambazonia found itself lumbered with a new colonial authority. White colonial faces were replaced with Black colonial faces in the form of French Cameroun foreign governors, administrators, troops, gendarmes and police. The colonial system became even worse: dehumanization, alienation, cruel oppression, unleashing of black terror on the people. This rabid and brutally oppressive, exploitative and assimilationist colonialism has left the people of Ambazonia with deep psychological scars and wide existential bruises.

Ambazonia's epic struggle is a fight for decolonization. It has nothing to do with language or culture. It has nothing to do with seeking positions or power in French Cameroun. Ambazonia's history, specificity, dignity and wellbeing have

always remained in the periphery of French Cameroun's colonialism. Ambazonians have been caught up in a multiplicity of identity, and a confusing state of being and belonging. This has engendered a process of alienation. Nevertheless, the struggle is not about fighting to end a so-called marginalization. It has nothing to do with a supposed quarrel between so-called English and French speakers. It is not about a linguistic or a demographic minority seeking to be recognized as a minority group in French Cameroun and to be granted minority rights. This long struggle is a fight for decolonization from French Cameroun colonialism in all its facets – political, economic, militaristic, cultural, social and administrative. It is a fight to end French Cameroun colonial rule and oppression, Black-on-Black oppression and domination. French Cameroun is a foreign country in relation to Ambazonia and its military forces stationed and committing atrocities in Ambazonia are indeed a violent foreign army of occupation and oppression and have always been experienced as such by the people of Ambazonia.

The people of Ambazonia are being slaughtered on their land. They are being killed on account of their territory. They are being killed because they cry for freedom. And yet, they have every right to govern themselves within their internationally defined territory, in the same way every other people rightfully govern themselves within their defined borders. The people of Ambazonia situate themselves squarely in their Homeland. They situate themselves physically, psychologically, spiritually, economically, socially, politically, militarily and in terms of governance. No one else, and no other people, can claim a greater right to the territory and resources of Ambazonia than the people of Ambazonia themselves.

Colonizer's propaganda: a try at conditioning rhetoric

The colonizer is trying hard and laboriously to pin the 'terrorism' and 'secession' labels on the people of Ambazonia because Ambazonians have marshalled their collective resources to combat French Cameroun colonialism. Those labels come from the colonizer's decades-old stock of demonizing hate-speech rhetoric against Ambazonians. The reality is that it is French Cameroun that is a terrorist state in this regard. Its troops in Ambazonia are daily committing

atrocities ISIS-style, including the gruesome beheading and disembowelling of people, the razing of towns to the ground, the wanton destruction of infrastructure and stocked-up food, and the shut-down of electricity and Internet. It is French Cameroun that is seeking territorial aggrandisement and thereby trying to effect territorial changes contrary to international law. It is French Cameroun that is guilty of expansionism in pursuit of its destabilizing irredentist policy.

The decolonization struggle of the people of Ambazonia is not a secessionist or separatist fight. It is not any such thing because Ambazonia has never been part of French Cameroun. Nor has there ever been any free political ties between the two countries. It is an extreme form of abuse of language to say a colonised territory fighting for independence is seceding or separating from the colonizing state. It follows that the people of Ambazonia are neither secessionist nor separatists. They are freedom fighters in the struggle for national liberation from French Cameroun colonialism. Local community civil self-defence groups are collectively engaged in Resistance. They are doing exactly what the Resistance in various European countries did during Nazi occupation in World War II.

There is no single legal instrument or principle of law that gives French Cameroun jurisdiction and competence over Ambazonia. There is no document of any kind whatsoever attesting to any form of consensual political association between Ambazonia and French Cameroun. There has therefore never been any union between Ambazonia and French Cameroun. There was annexation, evidenced by French Cameroun's unilaterally framed and promulgated so-called 'federal constitution' instituting an absorptive 'federation' which even the French concede was an act of annexation. Even that document was quickly replaced with another French Cameroun unilaterally drawn document instituting a fusionist and extremely centralised dispensation. It is therefore fraud of the first order to claim there was ever a union or even a genuine federation between Ambazonia and French Cameroun. There is sound authority to the effect that no federation in the sense of a voluntary relationship between political units ever existed between Ambazonia and French Cameroun (Stark). There is also sound authority to the effect that the so-called federation was a mere smokescreen meant to enable

Ambazonia to swallow the bitter pill of its annexation by French Cameroun as in the case of Eritrea annexed by Ethiopia (Vanderlinden).

Ambazonia has never been, and shall never be, part of the flag-independent state of French Cameroun, a French neo-colonial outpost that is among the last on the Human Development Index. Ambazonia has never been, is not, and will never be, part of France's French Cameroun colony and backyard. It is well to note and to remember that Ambazonia has never had any ties of any kind, and has no ties of whatever nature, with France. France has been using its French Cameroun *précarré* as proxy colonial state to access the wealth and natural resources of Ambazonia and to assimilate the people of Ambazonia into its unhappy Gallic environment.

Debunking other instrumentalist rhetoric

It is also important to debunk other instrumentalist and psychologically-conditioning idiom purposefully distilled by the colonizer, such as 'northwest and southwest regions of Cameroun', 'extremists', and 'brothers'. Ambazonia was a unitary territory at the time of its colonization by French Cameroun. But it was dismembered into two parts, so-called 'northwest' and 'southwest', each of which was called a 'province/region'. Both were then tagged on to French Cameroun as appendages of that country. To accept and to use those colonial designations would be conceding that those dismembered parts of Ambazonia are parts of the territory of French Cameroun. That would be giving credence to the negative rhetoric that Ambazonia's glorious fight for freedom is no more than a secessionist or separatist enterprise. We must therefore always continue to reject the so-called 'northwest/southwest' appellation and dichotomy.

It is within this same logic of an appendage that the Bamileke in French Cameroun seek to appropriate the Bamenda areas as their appurtenance by appealing to a so-called common Graffi-ness. The Duala in French Cameroun similarly seek to appropriate the Fako and Ndian areas as their appurtenance by appealing to a so-called common Sawa-ness. These strenuous attempts at appropriation must be rejected. The Bamileke have never been able to explain why

they do not extend their so-called common Graffi-ness to the adjacent part-grass-field Adamawa region. The Duala too have never been able to explain why they do not extend their so-called common Sawa-ness to the adjacent part-coastal South region.

The language of 'extremist' does not even hold water. If anything, the boot is in the other leg. For it is French Cameroun that is extremist on at least three counts. First, French Cameroun is in colonial occupation of Ambazonia and plundering its wealth and natural resources, in egregious violation of international law. Second, French Cameroun is in breach of international law by its aggression and use of extreme violence in the hope of forcing submission to its colonialism. Third, in disregard and contempt of international law, French Cameroun is stubbornly refusing to withdraw to its lawful borders. There is an international boundary that separates Ambazonia from French Cameroun. The treaty that established that boundary continues to be fully in force. The use of brutal military force in the form of slaughtering, maiming, torturing, terrorization, razing towns to the ground, raping women, mass abduction and disappearing of people, have never succeeded anywhere in subjugation a people and will not succeed in Ambazonia.

The 'brotherhood' rhetoric is false and deceitful in the mouth of a French Cameroun that is eternally and unashamedly addicted to duplicity, mendacity and devious manipulation. There is nothing positively special about the people of French Cameroun in relation to us that can possibly warrant their continuing annoying attempt to foist their brotherhood upon us. They are no more brothers to us than the peoples of all other African countries are brothers to us. Other than an African brotherhood, there is no specific claim French Cameroun people can possibly make that they are our brothers. Mere geographical propinquity is of no relevance. If it were relevant then Nigerians and Equato-Guineans who are also our adjacent neighbours would also claim our brotherhood over and above the general African brotherhood.

The challenge of armed aggression

More than a year ago, French Cameroun imposed armed aggression on Ambazonia. The ruler of French Cameroun publicly declared war on Ambazonia. The people of Ambazonia had no other option than to resolve not to shy away from that war challenge. They took the challenge as yet another chapter in its glorious Resistance of French Cameroun colonialism. There is one and only one remedy against colonial rule. That remedy is decolonization, consensual or forcible. The people of Ambazonia have the inalienable right to freedom and independence and are simply claiming what is rightfully their own under the law and by nature.

The anti-colonial struggle is also about territory and the right of the people of Ambazonia to inhabit and live in their God-given Homeland with full rights and dignity. The territory of Ambazonia cannot possibly belong to a people other than the people of Ambazonia themselves. No people can assert a higher right to that territory than the right of the people of Ambazonia. In its righteous struggle to take total physical control of its territory after having established psychological and mental control over it, Ambazonia does not claim an inch of French Cameroun territory or a single citizen of French Cameroun. The people of Ambazonia simply want French Cameroun to vacate Ambazonia by immediately and unconditionally withdrawing its military forces and civil administration in Ambazonia. Colonialism is over. Ambazonia must take full control of its territory and assert its independence and sovereign statehood.

Violation of international law

French Cameroun colonial rule in and militarisation of Ambazonia constitutes a breach of international peace and is incompatible with international law. It is incompatible with the Charter of the United Nations; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the United Nations Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Peoples and Countries; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights; the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights; the Constitutive Act of the African Union; and United Nations General Assembly

Resolution 2232 of 1966 on non-independent territories, reaffirming the fact that a continuation of colonization in all its forms and manifestations is incompatible with the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Obligation of the UN and the AU to uphold international law

It is of course the case that colonialism constitutes a violation of human rights and is a threat to international peace and security. Ambazonia therefore expects both the African Union and the United Nations to uphold and enforce their own principles and laws in this regard. It expects the United Nations to take effective measures with a view to the immediate and full implementation of the 1960 Declaration on the Granting of Independence (UNGA Res 1514 (XV)) relating to Ambazonia and to uphold Ambazonia's territorial integrity.

It expects the African Union to uphold, respect, honour and enforce the provision of its own constitutional text, Article 4 b of the Constitutive Act which reaffirms the principle of intangibility of borders on the date of achievement of independence. On 4 October 2017 the Chairperson of the African Union Commission issued a statement reaffirming the commitment of the African Union to promote peace "in line with the principle of the intangibility of African Borders as they existed at independence". Ambazonia expects the African Union to go beyond rhetoric and give teeth to its commitment to this founding principle of the continental Organization.

The matter of dialogue

There has been much talk about dialogue, some of it mere lip service. If there must be dialogue, it can only be on the basis of international law and the United Nations Charter principle of equal rights and equality of peoples. The dialogue can only be under international auspices and in a mutually acceptable venue abroad.

There can be no dialogue as between master and slave. Only free people freely negotiate and contract. Sheep and wolf cannot enter into a compact.

Ambazonia will negotiate. It will discuss peace. But it will never compromise in any manner on decolonization. It will never accept subjugation. It will not surrender its right to existence, dignity, humanity and respect. No people in history has ever done so. Ambazonia shall not be murdered a second time.

Commentators: the good, the bad and the ugly

Responsible opinion expresses and reflects the true situation and context of Ambazonia's anti-colonial struggle. It correctly states why the people of Ambazonia are heroically resisting, even with their bare hands, the colonial invasion and the unspeakable atrocities by French Cameroun troops aided by Chadian mercenaries.

Some commentators, however, erroneously or unwittingly repeat the 'secession/terrorist' propaganda narrative of the French Cameroun colonial occupier. They do so either because they are not informed of the true state of affairs or because they have not taken the trouble to research into the conflict. If these commentators are honest and if they act in good faith, they will accept the correct information proffered to them on the true state of affairs obtaining in Ambazonia. They will then change their narrative accordingly.

However, some other commentators deliberately express an irresponsibly falsified narrative. Such commentators are apt to be educated mercenaries hired by the French Cameroun colonial oppressor to propagate its narrative in a foredoomed quest to elicit wide support for its colonial aggression and atrocities. Commentators who fall in this category are paid agents who are desirous of making some quick money, even if unconscionably, from a French Cameroun that desperately needs such mercenary propping. They are never going to change their narrative so long as they remain the hired heads and hands of the colonial oppressor. They are like some of our own people who have moved into the precincts of the colonizer's power structure as privileged colonial subjects and who, for 30 pieces of counterfeit colonial francs, are dismissive of our legitimate quest for decolonization. We leave these people to the judgment of history.