

Chapter 17

State Violence, Separatist Agitations, and Population Displacement in Cameroon: Factors Breeding Separatist Agitations in Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

This chapter interrogates the impacts of state violence and the proliferations of pro-separatist agitations in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon on vulnerable groups as its objective. Through secondary sources of data collection and content analysis, authors observed that the continued interplay of state violence and the various agitations for the independence of Ambazonia by separatist groups accounts for the ongoing displacement of women and children both as internally displaced persons and refugees. Hence, they argued that the unprecedented humanitarian challenges facing these vulnerable groups manifest in the various spheres of confrontations involving the Cameroonian security forces and various armed separatist groups in Southern Cameroon. Tables in this chapter provide links between how various dimensions of the Anglophone crisis affect women and children. This chapter discusses also the factors fuelling separatist agitations, future research directions, solutions and recommendations in resolving the Anglophone crisis in the Republique du la Cameroun.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent times, the central African state of Cameroon has been grappling with diverse security challenges that present a potent threat to its national stability and development (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 1997, International Crisis Group, 2010). These security challenges include the Boko Haram jihadist sect infiltration in the Far North region that has killed millions of people and forced an estimated hundred thousand Nigerians from the North-eastern states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa to flee to Cameroon as refugees (Onuoha, 2010; 2018), the dominance of the political dynasty of President Paul Biya that has continued to undermine the prospects of democratization in Cameroon (Nwosu, 2012; McAllister, 2018; Tamfu, 2018) and, the simmering poverty, unemployment and absence of democratic deliverables in the Anglophone regions (Reach out Cameroon, 2018; Cavalcanti, 2018).

The most immediate of these security challenges is the growing state violence against the rising separatist agitations in the Anglophone regions of North West and South West Cameroon. This has collectively heightened the displacement of the vulnerable groups such as women and children both as internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees in a neighbouring country like Nigeria (Onuegbu, 2018, Premium Times, 2018). The sustained repressive state policies and actions against the pro-separatist groups in the Southwest and Northwest of Cameroon have within the past few years led to widespread humanitarian crises such as hunger, starvation and massive forced displacement in Anglophone regions (United Nations High Commission on Refugees, 2018). Thus, Nkongho (2017) observes that the government security forces extreme response against the demands of the Anglophone independence agitators served to further radicalize the protesters whose demands have been the creation of an independent state of Ambazonia. The strong response of the centralized government under president Biya can be explained by the nature of the current political system (Krieger, 1994, Munshi, 2018). The audacity of state powers vested on the President by the constitution of Cameroon arising from series of change in the constitutional term limit of the Presidency since 1982 (Eweka, 2016., Dze-Ngwa, 2015., Munshi, 2018., Nna-Emeka Okereke, 2018).

Similarly, Dowdy (2019) reveals that due to the escalating dimensions of Anglophone violence, an estimated 2.3 million people are vulnerable to the conflict. There are about 4.3 million people who require life saving assistance such as food, water, shelter and health care facilities out of the 24 million population of Cameroon. Since October 2016, with an estimated official population of 5 million Anglophone populations, an estimated 437,000 people have been forcefully uprooted from their homes as internally displaced persons in various locations and have found their ways inside the bushes and forests in and around Cameroon. More than 32,000 people have fled into neighbouring Nigeria as refugees (UNHCR, 2018, Premium Times, 2018, United Nations, 2019).

Furthermore, various confrontations involving Cameroon's security forces with various armed separatist groups, especially, the Ambazonian Defence Force (ADF) have also escalated the number of cases of killings, kidnapping, and vandalization of properties in the Anglophone regions of Northwest and Southwest Cameroon. This is as a result of the clashes resulting from sacking the hideouts of the armed separatist groups by the Cameroonian security forces in various towns and villages such as Beau, Bamenda, Kumba, Dadi, Bodam, Kwakwa, Kombone, Belo, Mbingo, Manfe, Binka, Batibo, Esu, among others (Amnesty International, 2018). These clashes and confrontations have recorded unprecedented casualties in terms of the numbers of deaths from both Cameroon's security forces and the separatist groups (United Nations, 2019, Lunn & Brook-Holland, 2018). The 2019 United Nations report on the global humanitarian overview, coordination and support to the people affected by disaster and conflict

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