



**IMSISS**  
International Master  
Security, Intelligence  
& Strategic Studies



**Erasmus  
Mundus**

**Decolonisation and its Impact on Current Crises  
and Conflicts in Cameroon:  
A Human Perspective  
Cohort 2023**

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**Presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of  
International Master in Security, Intelligence and Strategic Studies**

Word Count: 22,344

Supervisor: Dr Sarah Leonard (Dublin City University)

Date of Submission: 22-07-2023



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UNIVERSITY**

## **Acknowledgements**

I would firstly like to thank my supervisor, Dr Sarah Leonard, for her immense patience, her guidance, flexibility, and availability throughout those last seven months. Thank you for supporting me through all my doubts and uncertainty, I could not express enough how grateful I am for your help.

I would also like to thank my family. First, my parents who never failed to believe in me and supported me despite my – sometimes doubtable – decisions. I would also like to thank my nieces who never failed to support me in the process of writing this dissertation but more generally in the last twenty-five years.

I would like to give a very special thank you to Arnaud Flores, Florent Chavoutier, Romane Perrier and Sarah El Ayachi, who showed me this year more than ever what unconditional friendship and love is. I would never be able to express how grateful I am for your support this year.

I am hugely thankful to all my IMSISS classmates for those two intense yet amazing years. I am very proud of all of us for finishing this master but also for all the challenges that we all overcame in our personal lives. In particular, I would like to thank Paula Bogóñez Muñoz and Eléonore Thierry d'Argenlieu who have been my rocks for two years. A special thought also for Esther Irani, Nynke de Jong, Fiammetta Mondini and Noémie Kurta, thank you for your invaluable friendship and support.

Finally, I would like to give a special thanks to Ian McKim, and Zella Parry from the University of South Wales but also Giorgia Stefania Vernace, without whom this master would not have been possible.

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## **Abstract**

*Cameroon is currently facing various crises and conflicts that are impacting different regions of the country. The main security challenges in Cameroon are: the Boko Haram insurgency, the Anglophone crisis and the inter-ethnic tensions and conflicts. This dissertation explores the link between the decolonisation in Cameroon and those ongoing crises and conflicts, with a particular focus on the human perspective. It examines how the social and psychological impacts of decolonisation on individuals contributed to the emergence of those security issues. The study first analyses the consequences of decolonisation on Cameroonians, uncovering profound identity struggles, mistrust towards government, fear for the future, and a ruptured social contract. The dissertation demonstrates how such sentiments can lead to conflicts, fuelling anger and frustration, strengthening group identities, and undermining state legitimacy. Drawing on postcolonial theory, collective memory, and concepts of historical trauma, I argue that these sentiments were transmitted across generations to explain how the Anglophone crisis was provoked, how poor governance and inequality following decolonisation enabled the rise of the Boko Haram insurgency and how competition over resources drove inter-ethnic tensions. Overall, the study shows that decolonisation persisting psychosocial and social legacy shaped contemporary crises in Cameroon. Furthermore, I advocate for centering individual narratives to fully understand conflicts' historical roots and urge researchers to capture personal memories before they are lost in the hope that by revealing the human impacts of decolonisation, more inclusive solutions may be found for building peace.*

**Keywords:** decolonisation, Cameroon, post-colonialism, conflicts, psychology, neo-colonialism

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Cameroon is a nation rich in its diverse cultures, ethnicities – that are numerous across the territory – and languages. In addition, the country possesses many resources including oil, gas, minerals, timber, and fertile lands for agriculture. However, the development of Cameroon faces many challenges. Economically, the nation is confronted with high unemployment rates and widespread poverty that particularly affect some regions of the country such as the Far North region. Similarly, the political landscape of Cameroon faces multiple challenges such as allegations of corruption as well as limited transparency and political freedom. Moreover, the healthcare and education infrastructures are underdeveloped, undermining the global development of the country. Despite the undeniable importance of those issues, the country is confronted with several immediate and severe security problems that greatly hinder its development. Indeed, for many years Cameroon has faced a series of crises and conflicts. The most important ones are: the Anglophone crisis, the Boko Haram insurgency, and the inter-ethnic tensions and violence. The Anglophone crisis, also called Ambazonia conflict, refers to the violent conflicts between the English-speaking regions of Cameroon and the predominantly French-speaking part of the population more precisely, its government (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 1997). Indeed, some members of the Anglophone community, marginalised since the decolonisation, self-proclaimed the independence of a part of the territory that they named Ambazonia. In the context of this conflict, both the separatists groups and the Cameroonian government committed atrocities such as killings, forced disappearance and torture. The Boko Haram insurgency originated in Nigeria in 2009. The terrorist group is responsible for many violent attacks in the region where it aims to establish an Islamic state. As part of its objectives, the group spilled over into the Cameroonian Far north region around the Chad Lake Basin region, resulting in serious security challenges and humanitarian crises (International Crisis Group, 2016a). Finally, inter-ethnic tensions and conflicts represent another important security issue in Cameroon as some of the numerous ethnic groups present on the territory are in competition for land and essential resources. The conflicts between the different ethnic groups resulted in many loss of lives, displacement, and strengthened the socio-economic instability of an already fragile equilibrium .

Many studies have been conducted to explore the root causes of those conflicts today. Scholars have pointed to economical, political, cultural and social issues to explain the emergence of those issues (Nkwi, 2015; Nyamnjoh, 1999; Awasom, 1998; Chinyere and Namenda, 2020).

However, existing literature on the current crises and conflicts in Cameroon has largely focused on the political and historical aspects of these issues. Indeed, while the literature sometimes mentions the importance of decolonisation, it does not explore in-depth the consequences of such a phenomenon and how it could represent one of the main root causes of the current security issues in Cameroon. Moreover, the content mentioning decolonisation mainly adopts top-to-bottom perspectives and overlooks the human perspectives. This research study aims to address this gap by exploring the psychological and social consequences of decolonisation on the population of Cameroon and connecting those consequences to the Anglophone crisis, the Boko Haram insurgency and the inter-ethnic conflicts. Indeed, the country has a complex colonial history as it was administered by the French and the British empire after being under German rule in the 19th century. This division resulted in the implementation of different colonial policies, including different legal, administrative, and educational systems, which ultimately shaped the political, social, and economic landscape of the country. While decolonisation occurred in 1960 and 1961, the legacy of this period is still affecting Cameroon today as it will be shown in this research study.

In this dissertation, I will aim to explore the link between decolonisation and the current crises and conflicts in Cameroon through a human perspective and a bottom-to-top approach. As such, this dissertation will intend to reply to the question: How has the decolonisation process in Cameroon socially and psychologically impacted individuals and therefore contributed to the ongoing crises and conflicts in the country? Indeed, this question establishes the foundation to understand the relation between historical challenges and contemporary issues. To address this question, the dissertation will further explore several sub-questions: (1) What are the psychological and social consequences of the decolonisation in Cameroon? (2) What sentiments did those consequences generate? (3) How can those sentiments, psychological and social consequences lead to the emergence of crisis and conflicts? (4) How can they directly be linked to specific crises and conflict in the country, namely, the Anglophone crisis, the Boko Haram insurgency and the inter-ethnic conflicts? By addressing each of those aspects, I aim to provide in-depth and comprehensive insights on the topic.

My research study has several objectives that aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the link between the decolonisation process and the ongoing crises and conflicts in Cameroon, particularly from a human perspective. These objectives cover different areas in order to guarantee a deep understanding of the topic. The first objective is to explore the historical context in order to shed light on different characteristics of the decolonisation period and the

post-colonial realm in the country. In addition, this dissertation will aim to examine the human consequences of the decolonisation process in Cameroon. This includes the cultural, economic, and political repercussions of the decolonisation experienced by the population in the different regions. By exploring the human perspective, I intend to reveal the impact that decolonisation had on the everyday lives of the citizens. The third objective is to show the lack of studies surrounding the decolonisation of the country, more precisely the lack of collection of the Cameroonians' memories, however key for researchers to draw the right conclusions on a wide range of research focusing on that time period. In addition, this research will aim to demonstrate how psychology and human sentiments are key to understanding the actions taken by individuals not only in the official decolonisation period but also years after the decolonisation event. As such, the study will accept the use of unconventional methods to access the human perspective of decolonisation. Finally, I intend to discuss the role of this period in the emergence of specific events, namely, the Anglophone crisis, the Boko Haram insurgency, and inter-ethnic tensions.

The study is highly relevant to academia but also to the humanitarian field. The most important aspect of the significance of this research is the contribution to the understanding of those crises and conflicts. Indeed, understanding the current crises and conflicts ongoing in the country is primarily important for academia and the research of the roots of those issues. However, understanding those mechanisms is key to support the efforts of the Cameroonian government, the international community and the non-governmental organisations who should all support the resolution of those conflicts not only for the maintenance of the international security but also to protect the numerous human lives caught in the crossfire between the separatist groups, the terrorist groups, the ethnic groups, and the government forces. Indeed, a conflict cannot be efficiently resolved if the stakeholders do not take into consideration all the reasons for the existence of such conflicts (Coleman, 2014). A clear example of this is the multiple attempts by the Cameroonian government but also the international community to solve the Boko Haram insurgency, with only short term results and the rapid resurgence of the violent actions conducted by the group. In that sense, such research is crucial to inform policy-makers, and serve as a basis for discussions and later policy recommendations as well as it is crucial to pave the way for the development of sustainable peace (Jua and Konings, 2004). Regarding academia, my research contributes to filling the gap in the analysis of the decolonisation and its link crises and conflicts as it explores in depth the link between the two. More precisely, while previous researchers have explored the political, economic, and social



consequences of decolonisation in Africa, no literature found have focused specifically on the human aspects of decolonisation and their connection to contemporary crises and conflicts in Cameroon, while also approaching the topic from the human perspective, adopting a bottom-to-top approach. Similarly, this dissertation will pave the way to future research on the decolonisation in other African countries where the Cameroonian experience could be used for comparison. Finally, from a human perspective, this research study is highly significant as it intends to replace individuals' discourse at the centre of the research. In other words, this dissertation defends the importance of the human perspective and advocates for a collection of the Cameroonian memory that so far has been ignored, silenced or not compiled enough to ensure that the memories of the decolonisation are not only reflecting the official version of decolonisation but capture and reveal all dimensions of the truth.

The scope of this study covers the link between the decolonisation process in Cameroon and the ongoing crises and conflicts in the country, with a particular focus on the human perspective. I will investigate the historical context of decolonisation in Cameroon, examine the human consequences of the process, and analyse the link between decolonisation and the current crises and conflicts. The study will also consider case studies of specific crises and conflicts: The Anglophone crisis, the Boko Haram insurgency, and inter-ethnic tensions. However, it is important to note that the dissertation does not pretend to cover all the violent crises and conflicts in the country but solely will focus on the three main ones mentioned above. In addition, I will approach this dissertation from a national perspective and will not dissect every regional or local event related to those crises and conflicts. As such, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of my research. First, my study is limited by the type of data used as no data from primary sources will be used due to time constraints, limited availability and the complexity to obtain those data. Similarly, it is important to acknowledge the limit to access relevant secondary data on decolonisation which can be difficult due to the time that has passed since decolonisation but also the limited conservation efforts. In addition, the study explored as many personal narratives as possible but it is important to note that the personal narratives surrounding decolonisation are mainly concentrated in art rather than official reports, creating a particularly strong challenge and rendering my analysis more difficult. Those constraints can indeed limit the depth of the analysis that I will conduct. Then, the study is limited by different biases. This includes the biases of the scholars and experts that contributed to the work that will be used here, the human perspective that is undoubtedly biased by the individuals' own experience as well as my own biases and own opinions on the

topic, which will not be raised here but undoubtedly will play a role in my judgement and analysis. The mechanisms to counter such biases will be detailed in the methodology part of this research paper. Finally, my dissertation will be limited by the complexity of the root causes of the crises and conflicts ongoing in the country. Indeed, while I will focus on one of them: decolonisation, it is important to acknowledge the role played by all the different root causes whether they are linked with decolonisation or not.

Taking into account those limitations, the dissertation will be organised in the following way. Next chapter will compose the literature review of my dissertation including the analysis of the gap in literature. Chapter three, will focus on exploring the theoretical framework. This chapter will be followed by a detailed methodology and by an historical background. Chapter six, the first empirical analysis chapter, will explore the social and psychological consequences of decolonisation on the Cameroonians. The following empirical analysis chapter will focus on exploring how such consequences could lead to emergence of crisis and conflicts. Finally, I will explore how those mechanisms come into play in the case of the Anglophone crisis, the Boko Haram insurgency and the inter-ethnic conflicts in the last empirical analysis chapter before concluding the dissertation.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This chapter is focused on a review of the academic literature regarding the causes of crises and conflicts in post-colonial Cameroon as well as the consequences of decolonisation in the country. After providing a short historical context on each crisis and conflicts, this literature review will cover the scholars' views on the root causes of today's crises and conflicts in Cameroon, namely, the Anglophone crisis, the Boko Haram insurgency and the inter-ethnic tensions and conflicts. Then, this literature review will cover the vision of scholars regarding the different consequences of decolonisation. Finally, this chapter will analyse the literature in order to provide clear insights on the gaps present in academia.

### **Post-decolonisation crises and conflicts in Cameroon**

#### ***a. The Anglophone crisis***

The Anglophone crisis – also called the Ambazonia conflict – is a socio-political conflict present in the Anglophone regions of the country more precisely in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon, close to the Nigerian borders. Scholars describe how French and British colonial legacies have cultivated distinct identities amongst Francophones and Anglophones populations and how divergence contributes to the perceived marginalisation of the Anglophone minority (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997; Anyefru, 2011; Awasom, 1998; Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997). As such, the crisis originally started as the English-speaking minority from the ex-British part of Cameroon were marginalised by the French-speaking part of the country and by the government, mainly implementing policies supporting the French-speakers (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997). In 2016, the tensions escalated into a crisis as teachers and lawyers organised strikes and protests against the government policies aiming to enforce the use of French in courts and schools in the Anglophone part of the country. The government responded to the protests in a violent way by repressing the strikers resulting in further radicalisation. This radicalisation triggered the emergence of separatist groups who called for the creation of an independent state called Ambazonia from the secession of the Anglophone regions (International Crisis Group, 2017a). The armed clash between the government and those separatist groups resulted in human rights abuses including killings, torture, and displacement (forced and not-forced), affecting both populations (Human Rights Watch, 2018a; IDMC, 2020; International Crisis Group, 2017b). Scholars traced back the evident root causes of the crisis to the decolonisation process and more precisely to the way

decolonisation process was conducted including the unification in 1961 of both Cameroons (Awasom, 2000; Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997; Stark, 2014). Other scholars acknowledge that the root causes of the conflicts are more complex, by for example pointing at the centralisation policies adopted by the central government of Yaoundé that are believed to be triggering the conflict. Indeed, Konings (2005) states that the slow deterioration of the federal system and the imposition of one unitary state have contributed to the increase of regional tensions as the marginalisation of the Anglophone community increased. Additionally, others focus on the international dimension and argue that the role of the international community, particularly former colonial powers, but also other international actors in the ongoing dynamics of the conflict has been severely underestimated (Takougang, 2020; Awasom, 1998; Konings 2005). For those scholars, the tacit or explicit support to the government's management of the situation as well as the indifference given to the Anglophone population has been a significant factor in the conflict's escalation. Finally, scholars highlight how socio-economic disparities have a strong influence on the conflict (Mwangi and Cirella, 2022; Vigh and Sausdal, 2014). Mwangi and Cirella (2022) suggests that the relative underdevelopment of Anglophone regions and the perceived exploitation of their resources for the benefit of Francophone regions fuels discontent amongst the population and have contributed to the socio-economic imbalance that has prompted the conflict. Today the conflict is still a major security issue as local and international efforts to solve the crisis have been impeded by the corruption amongst the rank of the power in place and resulted in creating mistrust towards the government. Moreover, the lack of cohesion in the opposition movement has rendered dialogue between parties more complicated.

### ***b. The Boko Haram insurgency***

The second armed conflict highly affecting Cameroon is the Boko Haram<sup>1</sup> group insurgency that is highly active in the Far North region of the country. Boko Haram is a jihadist terrorist militant group who started in the early 2000s in Nigeria and especially emerged under the leadership of Mohammed Yusuf (Comolli, 2015). The group aims to establish an Islamic state in Nigeria but also in other countries surrounding the Lake Chad basin region (Onuoha, 2014). Since 2014, the group has been the source of numerous terrorist attacks in Cameroon which involved kidnappings, loss of thousands of lives, displacements, and stealing of the population resources as well as other violent activities which led to a complicated economic situation in

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<sup>1</sup> Boko Haram translates as “Western education is forbidden”.

the region (International Crisis Group 2016a; International Crisis Group, 2016b; Opoku, 2020). The literature on Boko Haram does not only focus on the root causes of the insurgency but also on the reasons why the group gained attraction and managed to develop across the region. For example, Bøås and Dunn (2017) stated that the Far North region of Cameroon has been particularly vulnerable to the group's attack due to the porous border separating it from Nigeria (Bøås and Dunn, 2017). On the other hand, Taguem Fah (2007) explained that the Far North region has been vulnerable due to the complicated economic situation of the area which is one of the poorest regions of the world. In academia, there is a general consensus regarding the causes of the Boko Haram insurgency. Indeed, authors agree that the crisis has a multidimensional nature and have attributed the rise of Boko Haram to different drivers such "bad governance, problems of corruption, unemployment, the [global] resurgence of the radical Islam movement, elite manipulations, rising poverty levels, economic deprivation, class discrimination, and societal justice" (Chinyere and Nemanda, 2020; Olojo, 2013). It is important to note that the crisis challenged and is still challenging the military and security forces who have been accused of participating in violence and human rights abuses against the population during their efforts to tackle the terrorist group (Amnesty International, 2017). In addition to national efforts to address the issue, the regional and the international community set up forces to tackle Boko Haram insurgency. This includes the creation of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), which comprises troops from Cameroon, Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Benin (Opoku, 2020). While progress has been made in weakening the group's capabilities and the Cameroonian government even stated that the group was defeated in 2018, a comprehensive solution to the crisis requires understanding the complex root causes of the insurgency in order to address the drivers of the insecurity in the region. Scholars have linked the Boko Haram insurgency in Cameroon with regional challenges like the ones mentioned above as well as with global dynamics (Comolli, 2015; Loimenier, 2012, Olojo, 2013). Those include the global increase in the Islamic ideology and the consequent dissemination of jihadist networks across different regions and countries. Additionally, scholars mentioned that the conflict underlined socio-economic problems caused by Cameroonian politics (Adesoji, 2010; Olojo, 2013; Mustapha, 2023). More precisely, it exposed the corruption amongst the government ranks and the limitations of the security structures as well as the lack of efficient long-term strategies to counter the group but also the overall underdevelopment in the affected regions (Chinyere and Namenda, 2020).

### *c. Inter-ethnic tensions and conflicts*

Cameroon is the host country of over 250 different ethnic groups (Figure 1). Tensions between those groups, called inter-ethnic tensions and conflicts, are the third main source of crisis in the country. Indeed, those conflicts persisting since several decades between the communities are currently playing a massive role in the current security state of Cameroon as they influence the political, social and economical dynamics (Vogt and al, 2021). Scholars acknowledge that the conflicts between the different ethnic groups mainly arise from competition over resources including water but also competition over lands whose sovereignty is being challenged by nomadic herders (Nkwi, 2015; Nyamnjoh, 1999). A good example of such an issue is the dispute between the Mbororo pastoralists and the sedentary farming communities in the North and Adamawa regions which demonstrates the complexity of the problem where the two groups are in conflict over resources and lands (Pelican, 2009). Aligned with such an explanation, Gurr (2000) in his work, "Peoples Versus States," underlines the socio-economic disparities between different ethnic groups as part of the roots of inter-ethnic conflicts. More precisely, the author argues that economic inequalities and perceived injustices often incite ethnic tensions that can escalate into violent conflicts (Gurr, 2000). Additionally, Nyamnjoh (1999) argues that the visible government elites' manipulation of the communities' identity to exercise control over those populations fuel the anger of the different groups. Scholars state that those factors result in the government failure to efficiently address the conflicts leading to increasing insecurity in the regions which are swamp by violence (Mbaku, 2005; Vogt et al, 2021). Moreover, scholars acknowledge that the government's failure to effectively address these issues has contributed to the persistence of inter-ethnic violence and insecurity in the region like in the Western region, where persisting tensions exist between – for example – two ethnic groups: the Bamiléké and the Bamoun communities (Lenshie et al, 2021; Nyamnjoh, 1999). In addition to the direct consequences of the government failure to tackle those conflicts and the loss of lives, Lenshie et al (2021) argue that the problem also led to the creation of a gap between communities, as well as massive displacement of the populations (Lenshie et al, 2021). Despite the general consensus that this issue needs to take into consideration history and requires a more comprehensive approach that considers historical, socio-economic, and political factors, the historical factors and the past experiences of those communities has been mainly overlooked. For example, in his study on Cameroonian borders Nana Ngassam (2014)

acknowledges the importance of the decolonisation history but fails to link the decolonisation responsibility with the border insecurities related to inter-ethnic conflicts.

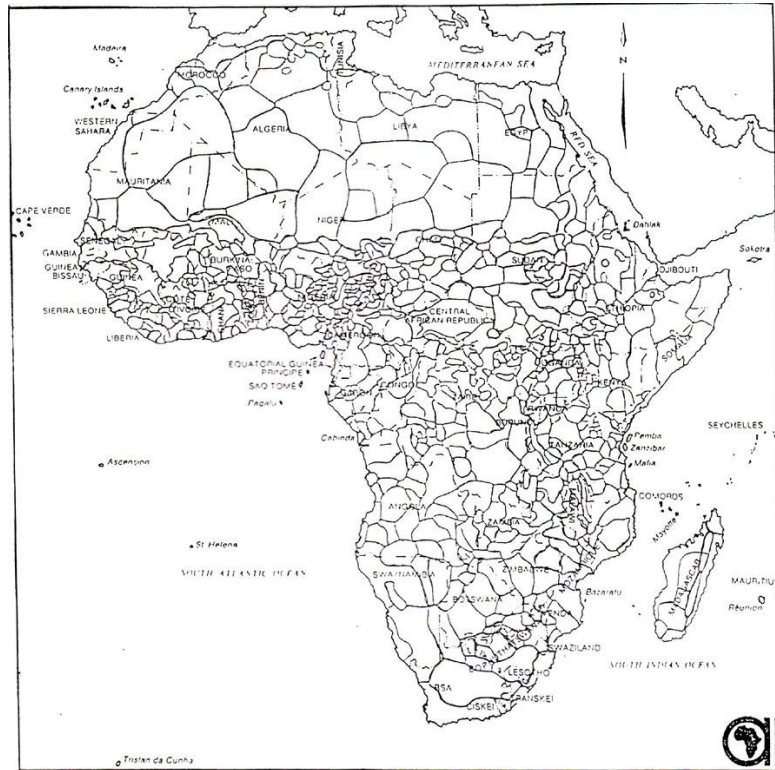


Figure 1: Superimposed ethnic map of Africa, Africa Institute and De Blij, 1977: 102

### Consequences of decolonisation

The process of decolonisation in Cameroon has had profound consequences for the population including social, cultural, psychological and economical consequences. Konings and Nyamnjoh (2003) argue that the social consequences for the Cameroonians involve the definition of their cultural traditional landscape including the change of a major key factor: the linguistic factor. While scholars do not cover the whole picture of the consequences on individuals, they acknowledge the important identity struggle that the population faced (Iyekikpolo, 2016; Oyewole, 2015). In that sense they explain that when the colonial powers *officially* left the country, the newly independent state had to establish a new identity after years of colonisation and forced implementation of a different culture and language. Indeed, in the struggle to find a national identity, the different social groups populating Cameroon encountered difficulties to manage the community differences that colonialism had created. Consequently, Awasom (2000) states that the country faced the full legacies of colonialism which included the inequalities and challenges it created. As mentioned previously and

according to scholars, the linguistic issue was and remains one of the most significant challenges for the government (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997; Awasom, 1998). While the main part of the Cameroonians speak French, the part left by the British represents the Anglophone community of the country. This created many tensions as the predominantly French government tried to impose the French language to the entirety of Cameroon (Anchimbe, 2013).

Secondly, scholars acknowledge that the cultural consequences of decolonisation in Cameroon have been significant (Atanga, 2011; DeLancey et al, 2010; Awasom, 2000; Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997). This includes the above mentioned social consequences from the linguistic factors. Tadadjeu (1975) argues that not only, the linguistic difference between the two parts increase the ongoing tensions and are key in the Anglophone crisis but they also contribute to deeper inequality in the cultural management of the country (Tadadjeu, 1975). Additionally, Nkwi (2015) explains that decolonisation forced the rapid resurgence of ethnic identities including the wide range of different cultural practices present in Cameroon but that during this process the newly formed government sought to unify the identity of the nation while the ethnic groups sought to regain and rebuild their own identity and cultural heritages (Nkwi, 2015). As such, the author concludes that the obvious contrast between those goals served the proliferation of inter-ethnic conflicts where groups competed for resources and power in regards to the new post-colonial state (Vogt and al, 2021; Nkwi, 2015). Regarding cultural consequences, scholars also acknowledge what the Cameroonian culture gained from colonisation, as explored by Achakeng (2018) who highlight the rich cultural content that emerged in the decolonisation period and which promoted the flourishing of the cultural richness of the country as demonstrated by the increased number of art that emerged post-colonisation. Indeed, numerous films, music and literature appeared in that period (Achankeng et al, 2018).

Scholars also explore the economic aspect of the consequences of decolonisation as they explain that the decolonisation process also had significant economic consequences for the country which created considerable challenges that the government needed to address (Mbaku, 2005; Amin, 1972; Nkwi, 2015; Konings, 2005). Ndongko (1985) explains that this deeply rooted economic structure remained in place after the decolonisation which rendered Cameroon highly dependent on ex-colonial powers and therefore limited the country to specific sources of income as Cameroon still relied on the export of those commodities (Ndongko, 1985). This dependance on the exports had resulted in the financial vulnerability of the country which is



exposed to the international market and curbs Cameroonian economic growth. Additionally, it is important to note that those economic consequences are present alongside the issues of corruption and unequal distribution of resources. Mbaku (2005) states that the decolonisation process in Cameroon led to a significant centralisation of economic power and resources in the hands of the ruling elite, hindering the construction of an inclusive economic market and resulting in the aggravation of financial inequalities. Oyono (2004) has argued that those inequalities play a significant role in the ongoing tensions at a national level, but also between regions and between different ethnic groups (Oyono, 2004).

Finally, some scholars explore the psychological influence on Cameroon's society (DeLancey, et al, 2010; Fanon, 1961; Memmi, 1957; Eyoh, 1998). However, the studies on the topic lack in depth-analysis about the emotions of the populations related to decolonisation as they mainly focus on the role played by the state. Indeed, authors acknowledge that the psychological influence played a role in the country's current issues but unfortunately rarely discuss this facet in relation to decolonisation events. One of the major psychological effects of decolonisation, according to Konings and Nyamnjoh (2003) is the, already mentioned-above, sense of identity crisis that many Cameroonians experience as they try to reconcile their varied cultural luggages including their languages with the post-colonial society and the legacy of colonialism. This is specifically true amongst the English-speaking minority, who believes that the Francophone-dominated state has silenced their distinct cultural history and identity. Fanon (1988) who extensively studied decolonisation stated that many people continue to carry feelings of helplessness and inferiority toward their former colonisers (Fanon, 1988). Overall, some scholars explored the psychology of decolonisation. However, most focused on African post-colonial societies rather than specifically Cameroon. Despite this, they acknowledge and agree that the experience of colonisation and the subsequent independence process have profoundly affected the population's psychological state (Memmi, 1957; Fanon, 1961). According to Nyamnjoh (1999) those internal struggles have taken the form of a broad desire for cultural independence and the revival of indigenous traditions, languages, and lifestyles, which are frequently seen as being threatened by international powers.

### **Gap in the existing research**

While the existing body of literature has provided invaluable insights into the social, cultural, economic, and psychological consequences of decolonisation in Cameroon, there is a noticeable gap in the literature. Indeed, the macro-level effects of decolonisation, such as its impact on politics, the economic structure of the country or the cultural changes operated

post-colonisation have received significant attention in the academic discourse. However, the attention given to the micro-level implications and their impacts on crises and conflicts has not been the same. In other words, the exploration of the deep consequences of decolonisation on Cameroonians' lives and perspectives have so far presented a lack of depth (Nkwi and Nyamnjoh, 2011). Indeed, the bulk of existing research has tended to analyse the decolonisation process from a top-to-bottom approach. As such, academic researchers focused on colonial powers and high ranking personalities which are the elite of the country (Mbaku, 2005; Ndongko, 1985; Moritz and al, 2002). While this approach undeniably brought insight to understand the complexity of the multi-facet crises that shake Cameroon, it often overlooks or even ignores how citizens perceived the process and its entanglement. For example, when studying the Boko Haram insurgency Olojo (2013) qualified the group as a “severe symptom of Nigeria’s long standing post-colonial struggle”. However, colonial rule is only briefly mentioned in his study. Similarly, Iyekekpolo (2016) stated that “the hegemony of Islamic scholarship suffered serious challenges with the advent of British colonialism in northern Nigeria, thanks to the introduction of Western education”. However, the author does not provide further explanation on this idea. Similarly, the Anglophone crisis is – by history – rooted in colonialism and decolonisation history. Therefore, the multiple causes of conflicts identified by scholars include the colonial history of the country and the discrimination of the Anglophone community including the repression against the community’s culture and legacy but also the management of the crisis by the government and the international community (Mbaku, 2004; Lenshie et al, 2021; Konings, 2005; Atanga, 2011). However, while the scholars' perspectives on the root causes of the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon provide valuable insights, they are not sufficient to fully grasp the complexity of the conflicts and crises ongoing in the country. Scholars overlook the role of political elites in perpetuating the crisis but most importantly they overlook the experiences and perspectives of ordinary citizens and how the colonisation and decolonisation process influences the generations who live in this neo-colonial state and are at the centre of the current conflicts (Awaom, 2002; Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997; Takougang 2013).

This gap in the literature points to a need for further research that centres on the lived experiences and personal narratives of Cameroonians, who have directly experienced the impacts of decolonisation. This perspective is key to understanding and connecting the roots of the conflicts as it includes the individuals at the centre or participating in those. Moreover, the human perspective on decolonisation would provide important insights into the psychosocial

dimensions of the ongoing crises and conflicts in Cameroon. Indeed, research focusing on individuals' stories, experiences and narratives can divulge the emotional and psychological impacts of decolonisation. Not only research from this perspective would fill this gap in literature but it would also support the resolution of the conflicts by providing a more complete understanding of the situation. Moreover, a bottom to top perspective on the decolonisation process would highlight the possible local and regional efforts to promote peace but also underline the identity of the population in post-colonial Cameroon (Achankeng et al, 2018; Vogt and al, 2021).

## **Chapter 3: Theoretical framework**

In order to understand and explore the root causes of conflicts and crises ongoing in Cameroon in regards to decolonisation, this part of the dissertation will present a series of theories that will be used as framework of the research. This chapter will explore the post-colonial and neo-colonial theory, the conflict theory, the concept of historical trauma, the concepts regarding identity and decolonisation, the concepts regarding the social contract and its implications for crises and conflicts, and finally, this theoretical framework will explore emotion theories, focusing on mistrust, anger and fear.

### **Post-colonial and neo-colonial theory**

Post-colonial theory offers valuable insights into the realm of former colonies like Cameroon. Indeed, by exploring the legacies of colonialism and its ongoing effects, post-colonial theory investigates the structures and discourses that perpetuate inequality and domination (Bhabha, 1994; Said, 1985). For instance, post-colonial theory provides key insights on the role of cultural and ideological factors in shaping the experiences of the colonised populations. Fanon (1988) and Memmi (1957) argued that the colonial experience was importantly characterised by a creation of a ‘us’ versus ‘them’ narrative when in parallel reducing and/or erasing the indigenous cultures, languages, and identities, therefore reinforcing the dominance of the colonising powers (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2003). Another important aspect of post-colonial theory in relation to Cameroon is the concept of hybridity, which recognises that colonised societies are defined both by their indigenous roots and their colonial influences (Bhabha, 1994; Mbembe, 2001). It is important to understand that while colonised nations gained official independence, it did not signify that all colonial influences ceased. This post-colonial period – that can still exist today – under the partial control of colonial powers, is called neo-colonialism. As explained by Nkrumah (1965) “the essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of sovereignty”. Young (2016) adds that neo-colonialism is characterised by the maintenance of control by the former colonial powers through indirect means. The work of Mbembe (2019) - a post-colonial theorist from Cameroon - is essential to understand the complexity of the post-colonial world. He explains that the post-colonial period is a time for ‘political improvisation’. Indeed, in this period countries need to adapt to their new independence and the remains of the political influence and pressures of the colonial powers (Mbembe, 2019). He also acknowledges the violence that often characterises the postcolony that can be

characterised by different forms, such as physical and systemic violence (Mbembe, 2019). Overall, post-colonial and neo-colonial theories provide a valuable framework for understanding the complex historical, social, and cultural dimensions of the crises and conflicts in Cameroon as it helps to underline the root causes of these contemporary challenges.

### **Conflict theory applied to post-colonialism**

Conflict theory has been applied to the study of post-decolonisation crises in various ways as a framework for understanding social, political, and economic tensions. This theory is rooted in the work of Marx (1867) and was later developed by other scholars (Dahrendorf, 1957; Galtung, 1969). It posits that societies are inherently marked by struggles for power and resources, giving rise to conflicts and tensions between different groups. In the context of post-decolonisation crises and conflicts, this theory supports the understanding of the structural factors that contribute to ongoing conflicts in post-colonial nations like Cameroon. For instance, lack of resources, resource scarcity, and economic inequalities are critical drivers of conflicts in many societies, as various groups compete for limited resources and opportunities, leading to tensions that have the potential to escalate in violent conflicts (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004). Additionally, conflict theory helps to explain the role that institutions and governance holds in contributing to the emergence of post-decolonisation crises as well as exacerbating them by perpetuating marginalisation, inequality, and discrimination (Galtung, 1969). Overall, conflict theory offers a precious framework to analyse the root causes of post-decolonisation crises in Cameroon.

### **Historical trauma concept and collective memory theory**

The concept of historical trauma – also known as intergenerational or collective trauma – refers to the accumulation of psychological and emotional effects of traumatic events experienced by a group or a community, which are then transmitted across generations (Brave Heart and DeBruyn, 1998; Kellermann, 2001). This concept has been used to understand the enduring impact of mass traumas such as genocides or slavery on the affected populations and their descendants (Evans-Campbell, 2008). This concept is crucial to understand how decolonisation can affect a population. Similarly, the persistence of the feelings that individuals experienced during an event and the transmission of those feelings across generations lies in another theory, key for this paper, called: collective memory (Halbwachs, 1992). The collective memory refers to shared information that is held in the memories of a group. In that sense, decolonisation, an event and period of time which brings strong emotions amongst the population, has a strong

and long-term impact on the collective memory. This results in the transmission of emotions and traumas across generations through stories and cultural practices. According to Amin (1972) studying the post-colonial societies, this transmission of memories across generations reveals the societal divisions and conflicts that are strongly rooted in the trauma created by the colonial history of decolonisation (Amin, 1972). This influences the individuals identities and the national narratives long after the decolonisation and independence (Fanon, 1961). In the context of decolonisation, historical trauma provides a useful framework for understanding the long-term consequences of colonialism and its violent processes on the colonised populations. The concept of historical trauma is particularly relevant for understanding the human perspectives in the study of decolonisation and its connection to contemporary crises and conflicts in post-colonial countries. Indeed, the concept offers a valuable lens through which to explore the psychological dimensions of decolonisation and its ongoing consequences for the population as well as how it shapes contemporary identities, attitudes, and behaviours (Brave Heart and DeBruyn, 1998).

### **Identity and decolonisation theories**

The history of decolonisation in Africa often comes with strong social changes which triggered an identity questioning amongst the population. This re-evaluation of the populations' identity is inevitable after the years of colonisation where their identities have been shaped by the colonial powers through different cultural, social and economic identities norms. As decolonisation occurs, the population faced the forced reinvention of their identities. Despite the idea that this period regards an identity *loss*, it would be limiting to qualify it as such. Indeed, decolonisation triggers a change in the construction of identity and cannot be limited to be explained by a loss of colonised identity and a (re)gain of traditional identities because identity is not inherited but constructed (Oliver, 2019). Indeed, as Mbembe (2001) states in his book "On postcolony", the post-colonial realm is made of several public spaces in which the population orbits. Each of those spheres possess its own 'logic' that yet can overlap with another sphere's logic. This complexity forces the individuals to adapt to those different spheres including a change of identity which becomes malleable depending on the context. As a result, the post-colonial population has the ability to manage several identities in order to survive to their environment. Mbembe (2001) further explains that this is not only valid in the public sphere but becomes equally valid in all the spheres of lives of the population including the private ones.

The second point that regards individuals struggles with their identity is the inferiority complex generated by the colonial rulers. This inferiority complex is the result of two processes: the economic inferiority experienced by the colonised population and the *epidermalisation* of this inferiority. In other words, how the indigenous population are internally convinced of their own inferiority (Fanon, 1961; Césaire, 1950). Fanon (1961) describes that the complex is so intense that the “the black man wants to be white” which he describes as its only destiny. Additionally, the colonisers forced across time and space a deviation in the identity of the indigenous population which results in the population not understanding their own race and feeling that its own race do not understand them (Mbembe, 2001). Furthermore, the psychologists Tajfel and Turner (1979) explain the principle of social identity which provides critical insights to understand identity in the context of decolonisation. They state that the individual's identity is dependent on its group membership. This group can be for example racial, ethnic, or religious. As individuals compose the society itself, the individuals’ own experience of their identity builds the collective identity. However, if fragmentation of this group occurs then it is likely that an individual would seek to find this membership identity by attaching to another group (Tajfel and Turner, 1979).

Finally, Fanon (1952) explains that the decolonisation process is a complicated continual but not linear process to reshape a humanity that has suffered from colonisation, racism, and violent oppression. In that sense, decolonisation is an ongoing process that does not have a limited date and does not stop at the official decolonisation date. Those factors of identity crisis and the emergence of conflicts have been studied by psychology and sociology researchers. One of the first psychologists to study this phenomenon is Bion (1961). Bion explained how the unconscious dynamic mechanisms in place intra- and inter-groups can lead to the emergence of conflict. For this part, the group in question is represented by the Cameroonian society. When Bion (1961) theorises about “basic assumption groups”, he describes the mechanisms that shape individuals’ behaviours in relation to the group. The “basic assumption groups” includes three different conduct: fight-flight, pairing, and dependency amongst which two of them are particularly relevant for the study of the emergence of conflicts: fight-flight and dependency. The fight-flight behaviour describes a conduct where facing an external threat – an enemy – two choices are made available: stay and fight or escape. This mechanism is key in uniting a certain group of people and strengthening the group’s identity as it gathers its members around a common goal. However, it can also lead to entrenchment in this common goal to remain part of the group, to have this energy generated by the feeling of fighting for a

cause and for the people part of our community, therefore potentially blurring the limits set by the moral and leading to an emergence of violence. Moreover, it can fuel the ‘*us versus them*’ narrative further escalating the violent confrontations. The second relevant behaviour, dependency, describes how the group can attach itself to a leader on which the group relies heavily and follows vigorously. Conflicts can not only emerge from the actions of this leader but also internally.

Furthermore, the identity as part of a group and the emergence of conflict have been studied by the above-mentioned psychologist Tajfel. He states that one part of an individual's identity lies in the group's membership (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). Tajfel and Turner (1986) warn that in the scenario where this part of the individual's identity is lost or questioned, the subject can experience anxiety and conflict. Additionally, the role of collective identity/ies is crucial for the maintenance of social cohesion and the stability of the society. Ashmore et al (2004) argue that “shared identities” unify the society and that at its contrary “social fragmentation” around different axes such as ethnicity, political or religious opinion divergence and therefore an increased risk of the emergence of conflicts (Ashmore et al, 2004).

### **The social contract, gap between the government and the population and lack of resources**

The social contract can be understood as a tacit agreement between two actors, usually a population and its government. The term of social contract was extensively explored by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in 1762, and is based on the notion that two actors should obtain from this social contract mutual benefits. In economy this social contract could take the form of the government assuring its citizens economic safety including ensuring low unemployment rates and providing economic aid in exchange of taxes. In security, the social contract can take the form of freedom restriction in order to maintain the safety of the Cameroonians and the state. Those two categories fit in the three dimensions of the social contract: economic, social and moral. Each of those dimensions possess its own set of tacit or explicit rules that provide guidance to the actors part of this social contract, for example laws. It is important to note that this is expected to be the case in well-functioning societies but the maintenance of the social contract may be different in other societies (Addison and Murshed, 2006). If the economical part of the social contract fails to be maintained it creates a lack of resources for the population. The lack of resources has strong potential to trigger conflicts and crises. More specifically, crises and conflicts can arise from two different types of inequalities in society: *vertical* and



*horizontal* inequalities where vertical inequality is described as inequality between different socio-economic classes and horizontal inequality is understood as inequality between groups with different identities such as religious or ethnic (Addison and Murshed, 2006).

Firstly, conflict can arise from vertical inequalities, more precisely between the wealthiest classes and the poorest classes of the society. Indeed, the lack of resources is often associated with the theory of relative deprivation (Walker and Pettigrew, 1984; Gurr, 1970; King, 2018). Those social scientists described this concept as the experience of individuals or groups who have the perception that they are in a situation worse than other individuals or other groups. In other words, the subject believes – rightly or not – that it is not receiving the fair amount or quality of resources, services, opportunities, or treatment compared to others. Despite the potential lack of foundation of this belief, the subject considers that it is entitled to receive those resources. However, economic prosperity is one of the key backbone of societal peace (Addison and Murshed, 2006). Undoubtedly, this can generate a feeling of frustration and anger having the potential to initiate conflicts. Gurr (1970) employed this theoretical concept to study the emergence of political violence and found that in addition to the feelings previously mentioned, relative deprivation can lead to the feeling of injustice (King, 2018). As a result, individuals who experience anger, frustration and injustice, and also have to carry the burden of economic anxiety can take arms in order to fight this injustice and shift the circumstances to what they perceived being a more fair repartition of the resources (Theisen et al, 2013). In addition, the relative deprivation is not only valid for isolated individuals but can affect a group of individuals. This is especially important and relevant in a context such as the one studied in this research paper. Indeed, if a group of individuals have the same motivation to shift the injustice they perceive and gain control over the resources they believe to be entitled to, then relative deprivation can motivate a group to gather around those same objectives. In other words, relative deprivation shapes the group's identity and narrative and defines their place in the society as a group demanding more resources (Addison and Murshed, 2006).

Secondly, conflicts can arise from horizontal inequalities, more precisely, between the different ethnic or religious groups. As explained by Addison and Murshed (2006) “societies where industrialization and urbanization have not fully occurred, class interests may be less significant than ethnicity or religion”. As peaceful disputes can occur, the authors explore the threshold point before violent conflicts erupt. They identified several key factors such as the inequality in resources principally land, unemployment and particularly the young generations of males who can be more prompt to be recruited into extremist groups (Addison and Murshed,

2006). In addition, societies with slow economic growth may present limited employment opportunities. Those limited employment opportunities are often distributed while favouring one ethnic group, especially in the public sector. This undoubtedly, increases the marginalisation of certain groups which can fuel tensions and conflicts. Moreover, ethnic discrimination affects other sectors such as access to healthcare or education which are contaminated with inequalities and therefore have the potential to lead to conflicts. Furthermore, this contributes to causing stress as the individuals carry a strong uncertainty about the quality of their future resulting in mental health issues (Amin, 1973).

Additionally, in the context of decolonisation and post-colonisation this lack of resources has the potential to create and further strengthen the gap between the government and the population. Mbembe (2001) explores this aspect in depth in order to provide a comprehensive perspective on the gap and the mechanisms behind it. He explains that post-colonial realms are dominated by the *grotesque* and the *obscene* (Mbembe, 2001). The grotesque and the obscene can be presented under the form of diverse content that the public come across and which can be virtual or tangible. This content will have the characteristics to be shocking, exaggerated, or disturbing. Instead of being an abstract context stolen from the artistic area, those two characteristics are visible in post-colonial societies as part of ordinary people's lives, mainly from the perception of the elite's display of power. On one hand, the government and the rulers use the grotesque to manipulate the mask of power and prosperity that they are trying to maintain by displaying extravagant lives. Using those tools allows the government to dig a gap between their socio-economic paradigm and the everyday life of the rest of the population, therefore consolidating the government authority as superior in every way. Moreover, this spectacle serves as masking the corruption that is deeply rooted in some post-colonial governments. This extravagant display of force and influence is by definition unavoidable to the eye of the citizens who are the evident target of this mechanism and who are forced to adhere to this exaggeration of power. In addition to enhancing power and authority, this display of the grotesque contributes to building a social space where the reality of the government's rule is unquestionable.

This concept, defined by the fact that the government wants to force this perception into the citizens' mind is a concept called by Mbembe: the 'banality of power' (Mbembe, 2001). While the population was forced to watch governments' display of power, citizens found a way to resist such domination. Indeed, the population resisted this forced incorporation in the government's masquerade by reshaping the sense and meanings of the government's content

around a different vocabulary. This took the form of, for example, changing the meanings of communication or mocking the images provided by the rulers (Mbembe, 2001).

### **Emotion theory: mistrust, anger and fear**

As this dissertation focuses on the psychological and social consequences of decolonisation, it is critical to understand the theories behind emotions not only how they are triggered but the consequences of such emotions. Firstly, when mistrust is experienced by a population, it can have a strong influence in the relation between the citizens and the government. More particularly, mistrust shapes the relation between the two as it influences political attitudes and behaviours towards the political system (Citrin, 1974). Indeed, while mistrust has been underestimated by some scholars, Hetherington (1998) states that “trust is a powerful cause of [...] dissatisfaction” which force should not be underestimated as it can lead to the disengagement from the political sphere, political instability or even the radicalisation of individuals who attempt to devise their own way to survive as they do not perceive that their government is a reliable source of support (Citrin, 1974; Hetherington, 1998). Moreover, if mistrust emerges from corruption then it is “negatively correlated with regime legitimacy” (Seligson, 2002). The observation made by the U.S. Institute of Peace, also confirmed by Transparency International, states that corruption is a threat for the citizens safety as “corruption generates new grievances in society, or drives existing ones, by undermining defence and security institutions, and by eroding state legitimacy” (Transparency International, 2022). Additionally, mistrust leads to distrust where mistrust is understood as a scepticism or suspicion and distrust is understood as a belief that the other part is not trustworthy. Once distrust is in place, it creates a framework for undermining the relation between the two parties (Lewicki and Tomlison, 2003). Indeed, distrust hinders the cooperation inside the relationship as the priority for each party is to safeguard its own interest resulting in a potential reluctance to make concessions. Undoubtedly, the danger with distrust is that it pushes the individual to act in order to decrease its vulnerability level. In other words, distrust provokes a survivability mechanism. The lack of cooperation can therefore lead to the escalation of conflicts especially if the sentiment of distrust is mutual as the risk for conflict escalation is reinforced (Lewicki and Tomlison, 2003).

Frustration, anger, and fear are also fundamental concepts in psychology. Those emotions can lead to escalation of violence. Anger is a human emotion that can prompt people to take action and usually leads to more politically assertive behaviour as well as stronger attachment to current views. When anger is present in individuals, triggering a change in opinion can be

challenging. In addition, individuals are more likely to take decisive action, often in opposition to a perceived adversary or threat (Huddy et al, 2007). Berkowitz (1993) developed an hypothesis connecting frustration and aggression. This hypothesis suggests that the first one leads to the second (Berkowitz, 1993; Berkowitz and Harmon-Jones, 2004). Similarly, Halperin et al (2011) discuss how emotions like anger and hatred can contribute to conflicts and inhibit peacemaking as it can increase the support for aggressive means in the context of conflicts, especially between groups.

On the other hand fear can also increase the risk of conflict escalation. The psychological and sociological explanation to why fear can lead to violent conflicts reside in the fact that fear is an emotion called primary emotion. Primary emotions are known to be grounded in the past, the one that is memorised by an individual, a group, or a society. This memorised past is processed by individuals in two ways: consciously but also unconsciously, which results in preventive hostility and therefore potential conflicts (Jarymowicz and Bar-Tal, 2006; Lake and Rothchild, 1996). Moreover, when coupled with hope, fear can lead to an increased violence. This is explained as hope is qualified as a secondary emotion. This involves that the emotion of hope – at the contrary than fear – implies a certain cognitive activity, requiring the examination of creative ideas and solutions as well as anticipation. As such, fear blocks the emergence of hope as it occurs spontaneously (Jarymowicz and Bar-Tal, 2006; Davis, 1998). Those two emotions are key in defining societal organisation and even drive societal motions and perceptions as they can become a “collective emotional orientation” (Jarymowicz and Bar-Tal, 2006). Scholars studying societies that are affected by conflicts that seem unresolvable are often governed by a collective sense of fear (Jarymowicz and Bar-Tal, 2006; Lake and Rothchild, 1996; Davis, 1998). Indeed, intense inter-ethnic conflicts are caused by the intense fear of the future felt by the population (Lake and Rothchild, 1996):

*“As groups begin to fear for their safety, dangerous and difficult-to-resolve strategic dilemmas arise that contain within them the potential for tremendous violence. As information failures, problems of credible commitment, and the security dilemma take hold, groups become apprehensive, the state weakens, and conflict becomes more likely”.*

As such, fear and anxiety often push individuals to seek more information therefore increasing receptiveness to new information. Fear and anxiety can induce a state of uncertainty and cause

people to hesitate, avoid making decisions, or even become more receptive to political messages or radical messages that promise safety or security (Huddy et al, 2007).

This theoretical framework englobes different theories and concepts that will be key to understanding the impacts of decolonisation on individuals. More precisely, the post-colonial, neo-colonial and historical trauma theories and concepts will support the understanding about the existence of a link between the emergence of the crises and conflicts and the decolonisation years after the gain of independence. The concepts of identity and the concept of social contract give a solid framework to understanding the social impact that decolonisation had and the tensions and conflicts resulting from it. On the other hand, the emotion theory allows me to dig into individuals' psychology and the emotional mechanisms that surround individuals after decolonisation but also triggered the ongoing conflicts. Finally, the conflict theory applied to decolonisation englobes the research paper approach and helps to understand the theoretical link between decolonisation and conflict. While this concept will rarely be directly cited in the following chapters, it is key to support this whole research and act as the backbone of this dissertation.

## Chapter 4: Methodology

### Research design and methods

The research design for this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the link between the decolonisation and the current crises and conflicts in Cameroon, with a particular focus on the human perspective. To provide a deep understanding of this, I chose to approach the topic by exploring the human perspectives on decolonisation that has been under-studied. In other words, this dissertation will investigate how the impact of decolonisation on Cameroonians is one of the root causes of the crisis and conflicts. The research will be divided into three empirical analysis sections. The first part of the research will focus on exploring how the Cameroonians were psychologically and socially affected by the decolonisation and understanding how this process affected the generations post-decolonisation. More precisely, the psychological part will focus on three key emotions: mistrust, anger and fear. The second part of the research will focus on connecting those human impacts to crises and conflicts. Precisely, I will explore how those human sentiments contribute to the emergence of crises and conflicts. Finally, I will use the connection made in the two previous chapters to explore the link between decolonisation and the conflicts and crises from a human perspective that will be reviewed in regards to the three crises and conflicts explored in this dissertation: the Anglophone crisis, the Boko Haram insurgency and the inter-ethnic conflicts. While in this research paper I intend to explain the emergence of crises and conflicts, I do not, in any case, condone the violence caused by any of those groups like I do not condone the violence caused by the Cameroonian government.

To achieve this goal, the study will employ a multi-method qualitative research approach also sometimes called an integrative qualitative research, combining qualitative information from different sources. The use of multi-method approach allows for a more in-depth exploration of the complex nature of decolonisation and its consequences. Moreover, by triangulating the research methods, the researchers obtain data from various sources and perspectives which strengthen the robustness of the research and provide valuable insights (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2006; Creswell and Miller, 2000). Indeed, this ensures the validity and reliability of the research findings (Denzin, 1970; Bryman, 2012). The multi-method qualitative research will include four different types of research methods: (1) literature review, (2) phenomenology, (3) narrative research, and (4) historical research. The *literature review* (1) involves the detection, collection, analysis and synthesis of findings from previous academic studies. While the

literature reviews chapter underscored the gap in academia, more literature review research on – but not exclusively – particular psychological phenomena will permit me to gain valuable knowledge from reliable sources. The *phenomenology* research (2) design focuses on understanding how a certain group of individuals lived an experience. In other words, phenomenological research concentrates on the description and the interpretation of lived experiences and their perception rather than merely facts. This research method is aligned with the research design based on the theory that states that reality is constructed by individuals and their interactions in the society (Beck, 2021). In addition, this dissertation will use *narrative research* (3). As its name indicates, narrative research aims to collect individuals' narratives about an event. While the narrative research may not provide a general rule of how an event was lived by the population, it provides an incredible valuable insight into the human perspective on a phenomenon. However, narrative research is subject to the biases of the narrator therefore representing a challenge for this research. I previously explained how the literature on the decolonisation of Cameroon lacks a human perspective to offer a bottom to top approach to the impacts of decolonisation. In that sense, the narrative research will provide precious knowledge on the human perspective and intend to fill this gap (Dwyer et al, 2017; Brière, 2007). In addition, this type of research will be valuable in order to bring those narratives in academia. The narrative research combined with the other three research designs will contribute to building a full picture of the decolonisation impact from a human perspective. Finally, *historical research* (4) involves the study and understanding of past events which help to draw conclusions about the present. In that case, a deep understanding of the decolonisation consequences will help to understand the current crises and conflicts in Cameroon. Indeed, a historical research design provides a strong understanding of past-events, not just in terms of dates but also in terms of socio-economic, cultural and political context (Argyres, 2020). However, historical research presents the significant challenge of the time that has passed. The four above-mentioned will complement each other in order to provide the best possible multifaceted and comprehensive research and results. Indeed, each chapter will concurrently include aspects from history, personal narratives, literature and particular phenomena to build the most complete picture on decolonisation and its link with crises and conflicts.

### **Data collection**

The data for the three empirical analysis chapters of the dissertation will be collected using different sources. The qualitative component of the research design will involve the analysis of

a combination of secondary data from different sources. Those sources include: academic publications on the literature about the decolonisation process in Cameroon and the social as well as the psychological impact of the decolonisation on individuals. This also includes books, journal articles, conference proceedings, and dissertations related to the research topic. Secondly, data from secondary data sources also includes data from reports and documents from international organisations such as analysis reports, policy documents, and other publications from international organisations. Those organisations range from international organisations such as the United Nations, regional organisations such as African Union but also non-governmental organisations such as Human Rights Watch or the International Crisis Group who provide valuable insights in the communities. Finally, media reports such as newspaper articles and online news reports will be used to analyse the public discourse and narratives surrounding the decolonisation process.

The use of survey data which would have given a valuable insight on the Cameroonians perspective was rejected as no survey corresponded to the information needed for this research. However, it is important to note that the data available on this topic are very limited. This phenomenon can be explained by the neo-colonial ties between Cameroon and its ex-colonial powers, in particular France. Indeed, as the independence process advanced, the memory of individuals was voluntarily silenced, more particularly the resisters' one. This colonist strategy had the aim to "lock out of time" colonial history. However, those actions conducted by the colonial power and pursued by the Cameroonian government had the consequences to hinder the construction of a future society on healthy bases (Brière, 2007). As the government and official institutions did not participate in the preservation of the decolonisation memories other than the official narrative provided by the neo-colonial system after 1960, other actors assumed this role. In particular, writers and filmmakers as well as other artists became the protectors of the post-colonial narratives (Brière, 2007). While the individual narratives may have been invented by the creators, they were consciously made to reflect the narratives of Cameroonians at this time. Therefore – and acknowledging the unconventionality of this type of sources – the narratives of individuals will not only be collected via NGO reports but also via this type of content. As such and as explained by Makuchi (1999) they will "bring the reader directly [...] into the heart of people" but also counter the narratives of the ex-colonial power. When introducing Makuchi's book, Brière (2007) states that if "Makuchi is able to write as she does, then there is a place for counter hegemonic perspectives" (Makuchi, 1999).



This unconventional choice reflects the researcher's – my – philosophy. Indeed, in this dissertation I will adopt the feminist perspectives on research methodology, a well-aware political and unconventional choice. While there is no such a thing as feminist research methods, the researcher can adopt feminist perspectives that can be applied to research methods. As suggested by feminist methodology, this dissertation will be using the 'I' pronouns. Indeed, while I am aware that it is unconventional, this choice challenges the traditional academic standards and enforces the feminist perspectives on research methods (Letherby 2003). Moreover, the choice of bringing individual narratives in this dissertation fits the feminist approach as it allows individuals to speak more freely but also empower the voices of the interviewee previously caged to respond within the lines set by traditional interview methods. In that sense, the narratives are richer and provide invaluable insights on the research (Berg 1989; Letherby 2003). In addition, further understanding my epistemology position is key to understanding my approach to this dissertation. Indeed, I approach this work with a *constructivist* and an *interpretivist* epistemology where constructivism claims that reality is not an objective entity but rather is a product of human intellect constructed through individuals experiences and interactions; and where interpretivism claims that our realm is filled with multiple subjective realities and that in that sense the understanding of people's lives experiences in different social and cultural context is crucial. Those constructivist and interpretivist epistemologies, combined with the bottom-to-top approach offers a crucial dimension to understand the complex links between decolonisation and contemporary conflicts in Cameroon. By focusing on the lived experiences of individuals and communities such as the ethnic groups, the human perspective allows for a more nuanced and in-depth analysis of the various factors that contribute to ongoing crises (Mamdani, 1996). Indeed, this will contribute to uncovering the ways in which historical trauma, identity crisis, and social dynamics arising from decolonisation are interconnected and contribute to contemporary conflicts (Brave Heart and DeBruyn, 1998; Evans-Campbell, 2008). Moreover, by examining the lived experiences of individuals affected or directly involved in the Anglophone crisis, Boko Haram insurgency, and inter-ethnic tensions, I will gain valuable insights that will potentially pave the way towards resolution (Boege et al., 2008).

### **Data analysis**

The analysis of the first part of this dissertation will be conducted by gathering from the different sources mentioned above different sentiments as well as psychological and social consequences that decolonisation had on individuals in Cameroon. Those consequences will be

organised thematically. This chapter of the dissertation will include the study of the social consequences of decolonisation. More precisely, the chapter will detail the (1) long terms effects of colonisation, in other words, the neo-colonialism present in Cameroon; (2) the identity crisis that shook the citizens life; (3) the gap between the population and the government and how the citizens felt this separations; (4) the perception of how the government fail to maintain the social contract. Finally, the first empirical analysis chapter will detail the psychological impact of decolonisation, more precisely, (5) the mistrust, fear and anger that emerged from the decolonisation process. In that sense, I will conduct content and thematic analysis from my literature review, phenomenology, narrative research, and historical research. Thematic analysis is a widely used method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In the second part of my analysis – in chapter 5 – I will mainly use literature to understand how those sentiments, psychological and social consequences found above, can lead to the emergence of conflicts and crises. For example, I will explore in depth by which mechanisms the rupture of the social contract or mistrust can lead to the emergence of conflicts and crises. In the last part of my analysis, I will use the connection made in the two previous chapters between decolonisation and the emergence of crisis and conflicts to give a new perspectives on the emergence of the three main conflicts ongoing in Cameroon: the Anglophone crisis, the Boko Haram insurgency and the inter-ethnic conflicts.

### **Limitations and ethical considerations**

To offer the most complete study on the Cameroonians perspective on decolonisation, data from primary sources could have been collected. Indeed, conducting interviews or a survey on the Cameroonians population would have allowed me to obtain invaluable insights for this research study. However, due to time constraints and resource limitations this data collection method was not selected. This represents an important limitation in this research as it would have allowed me to fill a considerable gap and gather the narratives of individuals who experienced the decolonisation. Similarly, the study relies on published literature, reports and media accounts which might not fully capture the scope and diversity of experiences amongst the Cameroonians citizens. In addition, as the study will – unconventionally – include narratives from books and other creative works to capture individual experiences, it is important to note that it may not reflect the experience of the broader community as they are shaped by authors' perspectives. Moreover, this study heavily emphasises qualitative data analysis, but does not integrate quantitative data. This choice was made as quantitative data

collected by sources such as surveys did not correspond to the research conducted, either in terms of time range or in terms of study itself. However, quantitative data, such as socio-economic indicators or demographic data, could have provided additional context and further triangulation to validate the qualitative findings. Finally, the study explores the process of decolonisation that happened a few decades ago, a difficult process as memory can be influenced by time and subsequent experiences.

This study exploring decolonisation's impact on current Cameroon conflicts is bound by ethical principles. Ensuring research integrity, I will above all aim for a positive impact on the academic community. This section outlines my ethical considerations guiding this research process in accordance with the ethical guidelines and standards of the University of Glasgow. Although this dissertation will not rely on data from primary sources the principle of informed consent still applies. Indeed, I will ensure that the secondary data have been collected in the most ethical manner before being used in different published materials such as academic articles, reports, and media accounts (Israel, 2014). With the same aim to protect individuals, if a doubt arises, I will ensure that identifying information such as names, locations, and affiliations, is removed or modified in order to prevent any potential backlash and protect the confidentiality of individuals. In addition, I will demonstrate the highest level of cultural sensitivity and respect. In that sense, I will show the highest respect to the different culture, linguistic and ethnic backgrounds of the communities in Cameroon when writing this paper on a realm that is not mine and to which I could not have direct insights. In order to reduce the impact of inevitable biases I will employ reflexivity which involves the continuous process of reflecting on my own assumptions, beliefs, and biases that may influence the analysis and interpretation of the data (Finlay, 2002). Finally, to ensure the quality and credibility of the secondary data collected, I will critically evaluate the sources and assess their reliability, validity, and relevance to the research topic (Johnston, 2014).

## **Chapter 5: Historical Background**

Before addressing the empirical analysis chapters of this dissertation, this chapter will provide valuable insights into Cameroon's history of decolonisation. Indeed, this part is crucial to provide the reader with critical information necessary to the rest of the analysis. Cameroon's colonial history is characterised by a complicated interplay of European powers applying authority and influence over the area. The Portuguese originally visited Cameroon's waterfront regions in the 15th and 16th centuries and were followed by German traders as well as missionaries in the 19th century leading to Cameroon becoming a German protectorate under the name Kamerun in 1884 (DeLancey et al, 2010; Lembezat, 1964). This established the German colonial governance and kicked off an era of economic exploitation and political repression. Following Germany's loss in World War I, the League of Nations used the mandate system to partition Kamerun between France and Britain in 1919. The largest region was controlled by France and was known as French Cameroun, while the smaller British Cameroons were partitioned into two distinct territories and were controlled as part of the British colonies of Nigeria (see Figure 2; Ardener, 1964; Lembezat 1964). This division of the country in two parts, administered by two different colonial rulers resulted in a distinct Anglophone and Francophone cultural and linguistic gap that still exists today.

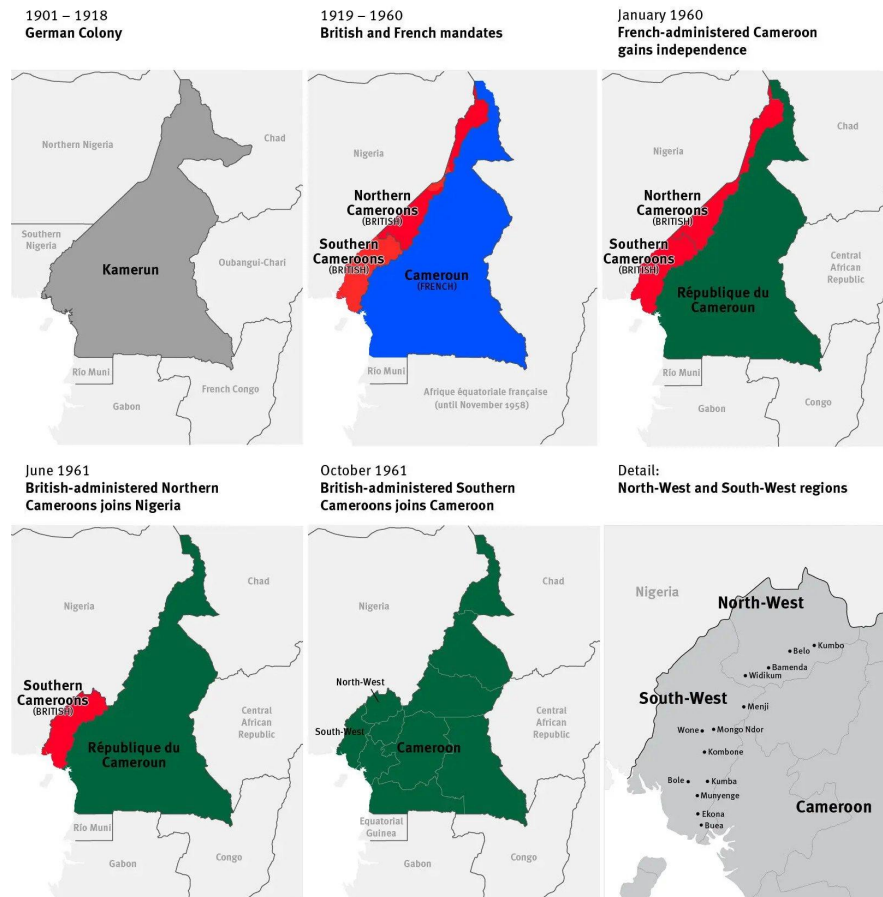


Figure 2: Human Rights Watch (2018a) Evolution of Cameroon governance. “These Killings Can Be Stopped”. *Map*.

Decolonisation began in the mid-twentieth century, when regions sought more autonomy and sovereignty. Indeed, decolonisation took place in the context including a background of anti-colonial movements and the collapse of Africa's colonial era. More precisely, the campaign for independence in French Cameroon gained traction in the late 1940s and early 1950s, with the creation of political organisations and nationalist parties. During this time, significant political personalities were active in order to push the independentist movement. This includes two key figures of Cameroon history: Ruben Um Nyobé, leader of the Union of the Peoples of Cameroon (UPC), and Ahmadou Ahidjo, who eventually became Cameroon's first President. Um Nyobé was instrumental in rallying support for independence and union with British Cameroons. As the UPC leader, he fought for rapid independence and resisted French colonial authority, resulting in a prolonged confrontation with French soldiers. The UPC suffered an enormous loss when Um Nyobé was assassinated in 1958. However, his legacy continues to influence political discussions and the national identity of the country (Terretta, 2012). On the other hand, Ahmadou Ahidjo, had a more measured and realistic

approach to decolonisation. He was a crucial ally of the French administration in negotiating the conditions of independence and the subsequent political and administrative reorganisation (Nkwi and Nyamnjoh, 2011). During the independence campaign, the UPC, initially advocating for self-government within the French Union, shifted towards a more radical – and sometimes violent – position in the 1950s as the group called for immediate independence and unification with the two parts of British Cameroon. The French administration responded to this ‘radicalisation’ with repression, leading to a violent conflict between the UPC and French forces (Terretta, 2012). Despite the conflict, French Cameroun achieved autonomy in 1958 and gained full independence on January 1<sup>st</sup> 1960, after which Ahidjo became the first Cameroonian president.

The decolonisation process of British Cameroons was more complicated as this part of the country was divided in two regions. Each region had the option to join the newly independent Republic of Cameroon or to join Nigeria positioned at the west. The decolonisation of those regions was marked by a lengthy process of political negotiations and a plebiscite. The two main political parties in British Cameroons: the Kamerun National Congress (KNC) and the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP), advocated for unification with French Cameroun. Those advocating efforts were led by John Ngu Foncha (Awasom, 2000). Indeed, Foncha played a significant role in advocating for the unification of British and French Cameroons, and later served as the Prime Minister of West Cameroon and Vice President of the Federal Republic of Cameroon (Nkwi and Nyamnjoh, 2011). After voting in 1961, Northern Cameroons joined Nigeria, while Southern Cameroons opted for unification with the Republic of Cameroon, leading to the formation of the Federal Republic of Cameroon (Konings, 2005). During decolonisation, the political and administrative reorganisation of Cameroon was influenced by the distinct paths taken by French and British Cameroons. Indeed, in French Cameroun, the granting of autonomy in 1958 marked a significant step towards independence and the establishment of the Republic of Cameroon in 1960 involved the creation of a new government and administrative structures based on the French model (Nkwi and Nyamnjoh, 2011). Ahidjo's administration pursued a policy of centralisation and adopted a single-party system in 1966 with the formation of the Cameroon National Union (CNU). This consolidation of power officially aimed at strengthening national unity and maintaining political stability during the decolonisation process (Takougang, 1998). However, the marginalisation of opposants fueled tensions that were already existing in the country due to the changing nature

of the political landscape resulting in increasing the ongoing crises and conflicts in the territory (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997).

After the vote in British Cameroons, the decolonisation process was centred on the political and administrative reorganisation. This involved the integration of Southern Cameroons into the newly established Federal Republic of Cameroon, which consisted of two federated states: East Cameroon and West Cameroon, respectively formerly French Cameroun and Southern Cameroons (Konings, 2005). The federal system was put in place officially aiming to accommodate the different cultures of the Anglophone and Francophone regions. Despite this initial intention to preserve the cultural and administrative autonomy of the federated states, the central government represented by Ahidjo and its centralisation policies gradually undermined the federal system's autonomy. This centralisation process further contributed to the marginalisation of the Anglophone minority and the exacerbation of regional tensions. Finally, a constitutional amendment in 1972 replaced the federation with a unitary state (Awasom, 1998).

## **Chapter 6: Linking decolonisation and current crises and conflicts in Cameroon**

### **Post-colonialism and neo-colonialism**

As mentioned in the literature review of this dissertation, the decolonisation of Cameroon had many impacts on the new independent nation. Those impacts range from different sectors such as economic, social and cultural (Omeje, 2006). In this part of the dissertation I will explore what impact the decolonisation had on the Cameroonians. More precisely and as explained in the methodology, this part will focus on deeply exploring the social and the psychological impact of decolonisation. In order to further understand how the decolonisation truly impacted the individuals, it is crucial to take into consideration the post-colonisation period. Indeed, decolonisation triggered tremendous changes amongst the Cameroonian society (Ngoh, 1987). The aftermath of the decolonisation period in Cameroon was characterised by a complex entanglement of changes generating hope and progress from the newly acquired independence and the prospects of autonomy. However, it also triggered uncertainty regarding the future of the country and disappointment in the light of the remaining influence of the colonial powers (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 1997). For instance, after 1960, Cameroonians tried to reclaim and define their identity which was influenced for numerous years by the colonial powers (Mbembe, 2001). Thus, the everyday life of the population included the joy from the newly acquired self-governance and the struggle to define their identity from their traditional past, and the norms forced into the communities by the British and French rulers (Takougang, 2013). From an economic perspective, the period following decolonisation was also a complex mix including new opportunities, and struggle regarding the new economic responsibilities of the government now supposed to be independent from colonial powers. Indeed, the decolonisation period was followed by an increase in entrepreneurship as Cameroonians saw this period as full of economic potential. However, the population also faced strong economic challenges that existed before the decolonisation and remained present after 1960. Those included resources access struggles and unequal distribution as well unemployment. On the other hand, the government was also relying on the economic power of the colonial rulers still very involved in the economy of the country and buyers of the products that the country was exporting (Amin, 1972; Takougang, 2013). More generally, the government and the population of Cameroon faced the harsh reality of the requirements to build a nation. This resulted in strong adaptation and struggle in the post-colonial period after the joy of freedom attenuated and the daily life of



the Cameroonians was affected by those cultural, social, economic and political changes (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 1997). Therefore, Cameroon became what was explored in the theoretical framework: a neo-colonial state (Jing, 2019). This neo-colonialisation of the country is characterised by the official cessation of colonial rule but the maintenance of ties between the newly formed nation and the colonial powers, France and Britain. The ties between the countries do not only take the form of economic, social, and cultural ties but also the maintenance of control that characterised the former colonial powers. In Cameroon, this mainly took the form of economic dependency as the country relied enormously on the exports of raw materials to the former colonial powers' territories. Similarly, the investments in the countries were mainly 'Western' foreign investments and were often conducted to the benefit of the investors rather than the local economy, fuelling the cycle of dependence (Amin, 1972). Moreover, the influence of the American giant is also present through the spread of American culture such as the American TV shows like the *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* or the indigenous name of neighbourhoods that have been replaced by American names such as Santa Barbara (Makuchi, 1999). In her book, one of Makuchi's character explains "how they [the Americans] are pulling the strings of this damned government of ours, which will continue to be neo-colonial until we crush it ourselves" (Makuchi, 1999).

Moreover, it is important to understand the position that individuals had in face of decolonisation. There is a distinction to be made between the Cameroonians population and the elite that was ruling the country following independence. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012) explains that in post-colonial Africa the paradigm of the post-colonial neo-colonised system failed to actually serve the interest of the communities and rather served the elite in power of the country. This separation which will be explored further in this chapter of the dissertation was exacerbated by the population that was marginalised from the state system and therefore looked to gain freedom from the state even after decolonisation. Indeed, as supported by Terretta (2012), the colonial powers were not the only ones at the origin of this situation as "the real neo-colonialists are recruited among the Africans themselves". As such, Mbembe's (2001) conceptualisation of postcolony is key to understanding Cameroon experiences. Further than characterising postcolony as following the colonial period, the author describes it as a "unique socio-political structure". In Cameroon, while violence erupted between different groups resulting in physical violence, it also took the form of the above-mentioned systemic violence through neo-colonialism and division between the population and the rulers. Fanon and Oliver's portrayal of decolonisation as a program of 'complete disorder'. In Cameroon the chaos

of the decolonisation process echoed as the nation struggled with neo-colonialism, identity assertion, and political improvisation (Fanon, 1961; Oliver, 2019). In the next part, I will explore the impact that the decolonisation and the following post-colonial period had on the Cameroonians by focusing on the social and psychological impact on individuals.

## **Social impact of decolonisation**

### ***a. Identity crisis***

As explained in the theoretical framework, decolonisation generates strong identity questioning amongst the populations (Mbembe 2001; Bion, 1961; Fanon, 1961; Tjeufel and Turner, 1979). In Cameroon, the entanglement of identity was even stronger as the country has been colonised by Germany and later both France and Britain, inevitably increasing confusion and chaos in those identity questioning. As both Britain and France left strong traces of their colonial rules including on the languages as well as the legal and educational systems, Cameroonians not only faced a re-evaluation of their identities in front of the colonisers but also in regards to the rest of the country (Fanon, 1961). Indeed, Cameroonians did not only struggled to reclaim their indigenous cultural heritage that was strangled by the colonial powers, but also had to shape their identities in regards to the influences of the colonial powers after their own traditions have been devalued for years (Mbembe, 2001; Ngũgĩ, 1986). This double-edged legacy of culture is at the root of the Anglophone crisis that opposed the minority previously part of the Anglophone part and the French speaking part. In that sense, it is important to study the complexity of the identity changes that the population went through.

A key aspect of the identity crisis faced by the Cameroonians regards the maintenance of the collective memories mentioned in the methodology and theoretical framework. Indeed, according to Brière (2007) the denial of the colonial past by the colonial powers trapped the Cameroonian civilisation in a “no man’s land”. This resulted in prohibiting the population from building a future. The frustration of this memory loss can be found in songs where artists mourn this loss (Bassy, 2019). However, past and collective memory is key to building a society identity (Lowry, 2009; Memmi, 1957). Not only, this prevents the construction of societal identity but it also generates upsetness to the people who remember (Brière, 2007). As such, it is not only individuals that went through an identity crisis but the whole Cameroonian society. In the case of Cameroon, the collective identity was disrupted by the colonisers but also by their departure resulting in the change, a forced shift, in the collective identity (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). The Cameroonian population also faced the *epidermalisation* of the

inferiority that the colonial powers built across the years. Indeed, after years of systemic oppression, Cameroonians had to deal with their own belief of inferiority insidiously created by the systemic oppression experienced during years. Understanding that the decolonisation of Cameroon is not a linear process and did not stop at the decolonisation dates, in Cameroon's case: 1960-1961, is key to explore its impacts.

***b. Gap between the government and the population***

While looking at the political landscape after the decolonisation in Cameroon, we can note a gap between the government or the ruling elite and the population. This gap is the result of the movement of dynamics of systemic powers that evolved during and after the decolonisation process. The mechanisms of this gap explored by Mbembe (2001) based on the grotesque and the obscene can be explored in Cameroon where this spectacle serves primarily as masking the corruption that is highly present in the country. In post-colonial Cameroon, the obscene and the grotesque became integral parts of the image that the elites provide to the population in order to create, as mentioned above in the theoretical framework, a show that displays power and authority where events, speech, images and government representation show the government glory. Indeed, the repetition of this mechanism forces the Cameroonians to accept it as their norms. More precisely, the government wants to force this perception into the Cameroonians' minds making it their reality, as the concept of 'banality of power' (Mbembe, 2001). This results in the state exercising power but also shaping the reality of the population. As such, the government strengthened its control of the people of Cameroon in addition to working to keep them in the reality in which they are controlled (Mbembe, 2001). Consequently, the grotesque and the obscene is one of the factors that lead to creating a disconnection between the population, their reality, and the government.

Another factor of the creation of the gap between the government and the Cameroonians is the dichotomy of the state's position facing its citizens. On one hand, the state presents itself as part of the society. On the other hand, the government and especially the representative figures of the government place themselves as the heart of the country, the law and truth holders therefore on a higher level than the rest of the population. In Cameroon, the President Biya embodies the state. He has in his sole possession: control of the law and of individual freedoms. He declared: "I brought you to democracy and liberty . . . You now have liberty" (Gwaibi, 2016). This concentration of power, placing the president, and by extension its government, above the truth of history or citizens clearly demonstrates the obscene nature of

the post-colonial political sphere in the country. Regarding this aspect, it is important to understand how the population responds to those displays of power. So far this section described the gap from the top perspective. However, understanding the population's reaction to such mechanisms is important. In response to this theatrical display of power, Cameroonians often use political derision as the Togolese did under one-party rule (Mbembe, 2001). In this context the grotesque is used as a form of protest against the authoritarianism of the regime. In Cameroon, the citizens are not blinded by those theatrical representations of grotesque and obscene (New African, 2018). Makuchi (1999) uses her characters in the novel 'The forest will claim you too'<sup>2</sup> or the novel 'Your madness, not mine' to show that the population knows the ridicule of the situation as one states "you claimed that it was part of your job, part of your duty as a big government official to hold these meaningless, long, drawn-out receptions. You claimed it was part of your image, that of a high government official...to entertain" (Makuchi, 1999). In this sentence, *entertain* does not only refer to entertaining the officials' representatives but also the rest of the population. This spectacular display of power is hard to ignore for the Cameroonians, who are both the targets and forced to accept this show of authority. As such, this not only boosts the image of power and control of Ahidjo and later Biya's government, but it also shapes a society where the government's rule is accepted without question. Therefore, this use of power by the post-colonial governments including by the Cameroonian government creates an important gap between the population and the rulers, a situation where the Cameroonians feel disconnected from the government.

### *c. The rupture of the social contract*

"Nowadays, who talks any more of prosperity" (Makuchi, 1999). One of the most important social consequences of the decolonisation, is the crushed hope of a better future and prosperity for the Cameroonian population. The social contract in the case of Cameroon is represented by the Cameroonian population on one side and the Cameroonian government on the other side. In Africa and in the post-colonial context, the leaders of newly independent states proposed to their population a social contract that was generally similar to the one proposed in the rest of the world (Addison and Murshed, 2006). This contract was based on the promise of better living standards including a stronger economic power and more freedom, against the citizens'

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<sup>2</sup> Makuchi (1999) page 59, in the novel 'The forest will claim you too', the radio discourse shows a clear representation of the population's understanding of the government's lies and facade. They are seeing through the official discourse of the logging company, yet they are left powerless.

support of the one-party politics which was supposed to foster the unity of the new nations. However, decolonisation often challenges the newly independent nations as they, for example, have to tackle strong economic challenges. A few decades after the decolonisation wave in Africa, many leaders still have not kept their promises of better living standards for their population. The striking truth of Cameroon is that the government failed to honour its part of the social contract during decolonisation and in the post-decolonisation period. As seen previously, the violence that existed during the decolonisation process resulted in the government opposing itself to the population. As such, the moral contract was broken as not only the African rulers but the colonisers refused to grant the Cameroonian population with rights to independence for the Anglophone community. This resulted in a part of the British colony joining Nigeria and the other joining Cameroon without the possibility to create a third independent nation. Indeed, at the time, many inhabitants of the British Southern Cameroons expressed their intention in creating an independent nation. However, the previous colonisers, the British, and other countries' decision makers of the UN trusteeship claimed that this part of the country was too limited in area and economic potential to have a positive development and to be economically viable (International Crisis Group, 2023).

Additionally, the restriction of freedom that will be further explored later in this chapter is also evidence demonstrating that Ahidjo and later Biya's government failed to maintain the social contract guaranteeing political, moral, and economic freedom to the population. When the president created the one-party rule and initiated the centralisation process in the country, it was officially to strengthen the unity of the country and to strengthen the infrastructure's operations. As an important step, the authorities decided to design the city of Yaoundé – in the Francophone part – as the capital of the country and to gather most of the management of important issues there. However, this centralisation move was above all conducted in order to keep away political opposition and resulted in the creation of many issues for the Cameroonians as the process also included the centralisation of the management of issues that would have been more efficient at the local level (Fishkin, 2022). Similarly, the population living in the Anglophone part can be obliged to travel to Yaoundé, where they often do not speak the language, in order to complete some administrative procedure. This explains the strong rejections of the centralisation by the Anglophone community which is strongly rooted in the marginalisation of their languages and their cultural identity (International Crisis Group, 2023). This failure of the social contract had an enormous impact on the economic anxiety experienced by the population and contributed to the creation of socio-economic struggle

amongst the population. The economic challenges faced by the government post-decolonisation includes the lack of infrastructure, the previously mentioned dependency on exports to the ex-colonial powers' territory contributing to the rampant neo-colonialism as well as the unequal distribution of the resources. All of those challenges have a direct impact on the individuals and the different ethnic groups present in the country as they experience poverty, unemployment as well as economic insecurity. The uncertainty about the future is shown in Makuchi's novels (1999) when she writes about the struggle that Cameroonians experience to feed their family. Finally, the government failed to safeguard its part of the social contract not only economically and morally but also in the maintenance of the security. This part of the social contract will be used as a tool to explore the psychological impacts of decolonisation in the next part of this chapter.

### **Psychological impact of decolonisation**

Having extensively evaluated the social implications of decolonisation on the people of Cameroon in the previous section, I will now shift my focus towards the exploration of its psychological impacts. My investigation and analysis will centre around three vital emotional responses triggered by the decolonisation process: mistrust, anger, and fear. The profound effects of these emotions are projected onto both individual and communal psyches, therefore influencing the collective behaviour and potentially shaping the construction of the post-decolonisation society.

#### ***a. Mistrust***

Understanding the complexity of human sentiments in a post-colonial world requires a deep comprehension of the colonial rule's system which was in place in Cameroon. Indeed, the experience of the Cameroonians has been marked by an authoritarian and oppressive power system. In post-colonial realms, those characteristics lead to the creation of a profound mistrust and distrust towards the government and the political system, especially if the oppression is pursued by the post-colonial regime. As shown in the previous part, the government failed to maintain the social contract, generating a sentiment amongst citizens that they cannot count on their government or worse that this government is against them. Terretta (2013) explains, the legacy of mistrust in the population of Cameroon is "palpable". Moreover, in Cameroon, the population is facing a political sphere that is highly corrupted. Between 2012 and 2022, the average score of the corruption perception index of Cameroon was 26 (rounded 2 sf) out of 100 placing the country on the 142th (out of 180) position in 2022 and therefore qualifying

Cameroon as very corrupted (Transparency International, 2022). The corruption is not only present in the high level of the societal organisation but also in the everyday administration system therefore directly impacting the citizens (Fishkin, 2022). The corruption has eroded the trust in the government and the political institutions, fuelling the political instability of the country. Indeed, a mistrust – justified or not – in the government has important consequences as it undermines the construction of a well-functioning society and undermines the development of effective democratic institutions (Mbembe, 2001). Furthermore, those factors drive a feeling of insecurity and uncertainty as the population has the feeling that it cannot count on its governors (Mbembe, 2001).

### *b. Fear*

Having previously examined mistrust, I now investigate the second key psychological impact of decolonisation in Cameroon: fear. This section will focus on understanding the causes and manifestations of fear induced by the decolonisation process. As Terretta (2013) qualifies the legacy of mistrust as “palpable”, the author also mentions the fear that erupted from the decolonisation period and is still present in the postcolony. Indeed, the fear present in the country amongst the population can be traced back to the persisting violence during the decolonisation period. For instance, Cameroon's independence war – or Bamileke war – from 1955 to 1960 was marked by significant violence from French and Cameroonian authorities towards the UPC rebels and civilian population. Atrocities committed during this time, by both side of the belligerents, included mass killings, destruction of villages, and use of torture (Terretta 2013). As such, the decolonisation period has been characterised by pervasive brutalities from the government and the nationalists groups. The population lived with the sentiments of constant insecurity generating fear. In post-colonial Cameroon, fear is also used as a tool by the government in order to maintain control over the population. For example, the 2014 Cameroonian legislation, Law No. 2014/028, intended for Suppression of Acts of Terrorism, is a catalyst for national civil liberty erosion and participates in generating fear amongst the population. The law restrains mass protests, and gives the enforcement services extended powers to conduct arbitrary arrests and detentions, extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearance and torture (Opoku 2020; Human Rights Watch, 2022; Amnesty International, 2017). The government first represented by Ahidjo and later by President Biya perpetuated an authoritarian regime routinely using censorship, political repression along with the corruption already mentioned above (Krieger, 1994). This censorship is first noticeable by the visible

witch-hunt conducted against the media, generating fear amongst the population. Indeed, media and activist groups also suffered the reduction of their freedom of expression with sometimes violent consequences such as arrests, torture, or executions (Ashukem 2021). In addition to hindering citizens freedom, the fear generated by the censorship strengthened as the citizens started to practise self-censorship in order to maintain their safety (Edimo 2016). Indeed, the distrust mentioned in the last paragraph comes with fear and anticipation of a risk or a danger.

### *c. Anger*

Finally, anger has been a recurrent theme in the literature and in the narratives of decolonisation. In Makuchi's book (1999) the anger is palpable and present in every novel as characters are angry for their lands, their family, their tradition, their languages, and their future. Makuchi (1999) writes: "We are slowly and surely being brought to our knees [...] We are fighting, we will continue to fight" (Makuchi, 1999). This sentence not only translates the sadness of the people and the desperation of the situation, but also the determination and the anger of the people. Indeed, the decolonisation and post-colonial period in the country gave rise to deep-seated anger amongst the population. This anger was generated by several factors such as perceived injustices, socio-economic disparities, and political marginalisation. For instance, as the UPC opposition against the government kept going, the party – initially a legal party – was banned by the French administration and its leaders were either killed or exiled like Ruben Um Nyobé or Félix-Roland Moumié who succeeded Nyobé as leader and was assassinated in Geneva by the French intelligence services. This suppression of political expression inspired a deep anger amongst the population, who felt denied of their democratic rights and freedoms of expression and opposition (Pigeaud, 2011; Terretta, 2013). Moreover, persistent economic inequality, already mentioned in the last section and lack of development in certain regions post-independence has continued to fuel anger.

Ultimately, I demonstrated the deep, personal and individual impact that the decolonisation had on the Cameroonian population. The decolonisation process and the post-colonial realm generated mistrust, fear, anger, and deep identity questioning, economic anxiety and created an important gap between the rulers and the population further strengthening the negative feelings of the citizens. The consequent fear, mistrust, and anger related to the political landscape in Cameroon has deeper consequences for the society as those sentiments infiltrated the social and everyday lives of the Cameroonians (Geschiere, 2013). In the next chapter, I will demonstrate how those consequences can generate crises and conflicts in Cameroon.



## **Chapter 7: Human sentiments and the emergence of crises and conflicts**

### **The sentiments transmitted**

How can the decolonisation that occurred in the 1950's-60's have an impact on crises that truly emerged in the 21st century? This can be explained by two factors. The first one, corresponds to the continuation of the consequences of decolonisation in terms of socio-economic and political context. In other words, the economic, social and psychological struggles that emerged during the decolonisation period still persists today. This chapter will explore how those sentiments can lead to the emergence of crises and conflicts. However, it is necessary to explore the second factor to understand how those sentiments are still valid today despite the years separating the emergence of crises and the decolonisation period. As explained in the theoretical framework, the concept of historical trauma is particularly relevant for understanding the human perspectives in the study of decolonisation and its connection to contemporary crises and conflicts in Cameroon. As such, the memories of events and sentiments that emerged during the decolonisation and in the post-colonial realm are transmitted across generations. This is for example the case of the identity crisis experienced by the individuals which is often accompanied by anger and mistrust can be transmitted across generations. The experiences of colonisation and decolonisation in Cameroon, for instance, have involved forced relocations, suppression of cultural practices, and the imposition of new political, economic, and social systems (Fanon, 1988). These experiences have had a profound impact on the psychological well-being and identity of the affected individuals and communities, with repercussions that persist in the post-colonial era (Mbembe, 2001). Indeed, the consequences of decolonisation were perpetuated in Cameroon after this period such as the economic struggle experienced by the decolonisation generations that have long term effects on the families economy and lifestyle therefore affecting the citizens for many generations after independence (Amin, 1972).

### **Mistrust in Government and Conflict**

In the last chapter of this dissertation, I explored the impact of decolonisation on the Cameroonians. More specifically, I demonstrated how decolonisation and the postcolony realm generated fear, mistrust, anger, identity questioning and economic anxiety amongst the population. In this part, I will proceed to demonstrate how those feelings can be the root cause of conflict and crises in the country, starting with the mistrust in the government and the path to conflict. In the case of Cameroon it is important to point out that mistrust in the government

partially emerged from the corruption amongst every rank of the Cameroonian administrative hierarchy. Corruption is an important source of crises and conflicts. Indeed, it triggers conflicts as it increases the poverty of the population, eases the employment of illegal resources and undermines the rule of law in the country (United States Institute of Peace, 2010). As Cameroon has a low Corruption Perception Index (CPI), it is most likely to experience violence and struggle to guarantee the safety of its citizens. Additionally, countries with a low CPI score such as Cameroon are less resilient to the dangers represented by the organised groups such as Boko Haram (Transparency International, 2022). Moreover, the evidence of violence and corruption that the Cameroonians witness in their daily lives causes mistrust to build in distrust which as shown in the theoretical framework can trigger conflicts (Tomlinson and Lewicki, 2006).

### **Identity crisis, lack of cohesion and the emergence of conflicts**

The decolonisation and the post-colonisation triggered identity crises as well as group cohesion struggle in Cameroon. In the case where the leader would be the ruler of Cameroon and it fails in its task, it is expected that as argued by Bion (1961) the group – the rest of the society – would be frustrated and a potential conflict could emerge. Moreover, as seen in the previous chapter, there is a clear gap between the government and the population, preventing the construction of a unified society as its resulting identity. One could wonder what those shared and group identities look like in Cameroon. Indeed, Cameroon possesses more than 250 different ethnic groups, the decolonisation triggered the reshaping of the collective identities, and the country has already been separated in two in the colonial period. Moreover, as the identities of individuals in post-colonial Cameroon are unsettled and sometimes ambiguous, the environment is more prompt to be the scene of conflicts (Fearon and Laitin, 2000). As explained in the theoretical framework of my dissertation, the absence of this collective identity and the inability to create one like the government failed to create post-decolonisation can lead to “social fragmentation” around different axes such as ethnicity, political or religious opinion divergence and therefore an increased risk of the emergence of conflicts (Ashmore et al, 2004).

### **The Lack of Resources and Conflicts**

From Addison and Murshed (2006) theories on vertical and horizontal inequalities we can observe that Cameroon is a country that faces challenges as strong inequalities exist between classes and between ethnic groups. In Cameroon, the display of health and resources explored

in the section on the gap between the government and the population clearly illustrates this situation. As a clear illustration of this in Cameroon, Makuchi's character states: "We had all come a long way from home, we are all in the business of survival" (Makuchi, 1999). This is equally supported by the conflict theory explored in the theoretical framework and that states that the lack of resources and economic inequality and instability are important factors of conflicts in societies because different groups enter competition to obtain those resources and those opportunities, therefore leading to anxiety and tensions having the potential to escalate in violent and armed conflicts (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004). Therefore, the economic anxiety and lack of resources available to the Cameroonians post-decolonisation has a strong potential to create a cycle of conflict where each violent episode or deprivation experience can strengthen the motivation of a violent group of individuals. In the case of Cameroon, these dynamics are evident in the conflicts over land, natural resources, and political power, which have contributed to the Anglophone crisis, Boko Haram insurgency, and inter-ethnic tensions with a particular emphasis on conflicts arising between different ethnic groups who are numerous across the territory (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2003).

### **Frustration, anger, fear and conflict**

In Cameroon, historical patterns of violence, imposed through colonial rule and the decolonisation process, have deeply impacted Cameroonians' understanding of power and conflict resolution (Mbembe, 2001). As the decolonisation was neither straight forward nor peaceful, it was marked with significant violence and oppression (Awasom, 2002). It is worth mentioning that Cameroon is ranked as 'not free' on the Freedom and Democracy Index (Freedom House). The oppressive tactics of colonial rulers have been perpetuated by the subsequent governments, normalising violence as a method of achieving political objectives (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997). Given this historical context, it is perhaps understandable, though not inevitable, that some groups might resort to violence to express discontent and strive for change as expressed by one of Makuchi's characters: "I'll rip his chest open, man-to-man. I'll lay his bowels bare for the ants to feed on. Yes, I'll do it. That's the language he understands, the only language they will understand... And he thinks we're fools and that's because we've let him" (Makuchi, 1999). This coupled with mistrust results in individuals' potential to resort to solving things by their own means. An example of this is present in the novel 'Market scene' of Makuchi's book (1999) where one of her characters calls her husband to seek revenge and the police arrive too late. Additionally, as demonstrated in the precedent part, fear existed amongst the population due to the risk for their lives but also the uncertainty

of their future. To diffuse the tensions, the government officially adopted a multi-party politics in the 90s. However, this policy had the opposite effect as it increased the politicisation of the ethnic identity struggle and therefore an increase in the fear and unsettling sentiment amongst the population. In Makuchi's book (1999) she writes that "People will go on with the business of survival" and later states that "some people have made survival [...] synonymous with the lack of conscience" (Makuchi, 1999) clearly demonstrating how the fear of the future led individuals to resort to violence and a lack of conscience. Finally, the anger felt by the Cameroonians is reinforced by the impacts of those conflicts itself on their relatives and the powerlessness of the population. Indeed, populations experience frustration towards the government that is incapable of protecting them and their children directly involved in conflicts:

*"Talk about children under ten who instead of going to school to learn-book are becoming instead experts at making bombs with petrol, sand, and beer bottles; oh, talk about children fighting army helicopters and tear gas; oh, much talk about killing the president, chopping off the heads of ministers, burning down the mansion of governors" (Makuchi, 1999)*

This chapter explored how the sentiments and social impact of decolonisation can lead to violent conflicts and the emergence of violence. In the next chapter, I will explore in depth how the decolonisation and its impacts explored in the two last chapters is an important root cause of the crises and conflicts in Cameroon including the Boko Haram insurgency, the inter-ethnic conflicts and the Anglophone crisis.

## **Chapter 8: Decolonisation and ongoing crises and conflicts**

The previous chapters highlighted the connection between decolonisation and the emergence of crisis and conflicts. This chapter will focus on linking the current crises and conflicts in Cameroon with the decolonisation. More specifically, I will present how the factors explored in the two previous chapters fit in the emergence of the three crises and conflicts presented in the literature review: the Anglophone crisis, the Boko Haram insurgency and the inter-ethnic conflicts. This is primordial as different factors combined in different and specific manner for each of those crises. For instance, the Anglophone crisis's root cause link with decolonisation is more evident than the one linking decolonisation and the Boko Haram insurgency. Similarly, the inter-ethnic conflicts regard different human impact factors than the Boko Haram insurgency or the Anglophone crisis urging separate analysis. While some scholars have argued that crises and conflict in Cameroon had root causes in the decolonisation (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997; Nkwi, 2015), this section will explore how it occurs in depth using the factors mentioned in the two previous chapters.

### **Decolonisation and the Anglophone Crisis**

The Anglophone crisis is the conflict in Cameroon with the most evident link with definition as it is taking its root in the decolonisation process and the decolonisation legacy. Indeed, the Anglophone crisis takes its roots in the partition of the Cameroonian territory and the process of unification as the Southern Cameroons – administered by the British government – had in 1961 the options to join Nigeria or the Republic of Cameroon who just became independent, without any option to be granted independence. The Anglophone part of the population had also stolen their political identity, and struggled with an identity that the government was expecting from them and the legacy of identity they carried. Indeed, the Cameroonian government failed to integrate the English-speaking regions to the system and failed to safeguard their culture and economic freedom and the Anglophone regions have experienced a gradual erosion of their political autonomy and cultural identity which has led to strong frustration (Achankeng et al, 2018). Moreover, as explained in the previous chapter the Anglophone community faced a re-evaluation of their identities in regards to the colonisers but also in regards to the rest of the country due to the challenge to reclaim their indigenous cultural heritage but also the challenge to shape their identities in regards to the influences of the colonial powers (Fanon, 1961; Mbembe, 2001; Ngũgĩ, 1986). As such, this double-edged

legacy of culture is at the root of the Anglophone crisis. In addition, the federal system created to safeguard the rights and culture of the Anglophone community was not maintained for long as Ahidjo's government started to centralise the power and the infrastructures. This decision is translated by the central government's concentration on developing the French-speaking regions which has widened the economic gap between the two territories (Achankeng et al, 2018). The imposition of the French language and the centralisation of educational policies have led to the erosion of the Anglophone educational system and therefore to the destruction of a part of the cultural heritage of this part of the Cameroonians (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997). In her book, Makuchi (1999) clearly writes "Cameroonians share in the complex linguistic reality of the post-colonial world. Monolingualism is a luxury few can afford in a world where survival requires more than one language" (Makuchi, 1999).

When the lawyers and the teachers started to protest in 2016, it was because they experienced relative deprivation. In that sense, they felt marginalised in their job to the benefit of others as they were a minority in their own country. However, the Anglophone community felt the entitlement to obtain the same opportunities of education and job, therefore leading to the protest. Indeed, the gap between the promised federal system, safeguarding the culture of the Anglophone part of the community was far from lives they experienced, therefore hindering the trust that the population had in the government creating a profound mistrust regarding the defence of the cultural heritage of the Anglophone community. In addition, the government response to the protests and the people's complaints have strongly been tackled using violence and repression which only reinforced the mistrust among the Anglophone community (Amnesty International, 2020; Human Rights Watch, 2018b). As the government is easily suspecting citizens to be part of separatists groups such as Ambazonia Interim Government (Sako), the Ambazonia Defense Forces (ADF), or the African People's Liberation Movement (APLM), the violence used by the government is a motivation to leave the region or enrol in separatists groups (Browne, 2019; Human Rights Watch, 2022). Nfor Ngala Nfor, a senior member of the Southern Cameroon National Council stated that despite French motivation to keep its colony, empires collapsed in front of the right to self determination and predicted that the same would happen to Cameroon and it would lose Southern Cameroon (Radio France Internationale, 2010). Indeed, in addition, the clear perception of neo-colonialist ties between Cameroon and France led to a feeling of powerlessness<sup>3</sup> and anger amongst the population

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<sup>3</sup> "The old woman in "the Forest will claim you too" is reduced to powerlessness by her country neo-colonial economic relationship with the West" (Makuchi, 1999)

where France was characterised as the ‘devil incarnate’ (Makuchi, 1999). Indeed, years after, the Anglophone community did not forget the marginalisation and the violence it experienced:

*“How could they not remember? They had been angry young men, angry at a system they claimed stifled their progress, crushed their hopes, and tried to usurp their identities [...] they were going to fight tooth and nail. They were going to fight to the last drop of their blood... of their breath. They were going to change the world... their world. They were going to teach Frogs an unforgettable lessons” (Makuchi, 1999)*

The crisis also emerged from the gap between the government and this part of the population. Indeed, the Anglophone citizens could not feel more remote from the government, majorly French and adopting policies in favour of the French-speaking part of the country. Additionally, the lack of openness to dialogue from the government strengthened the motivation of the English-speakers who felt that their situation was even more unfair. While the violence from separatist groups is known, some deny it and instead point to the ignorance of the government (Radio France Internationale, 2018; Browne, 2019; International Crisis Group, 2019). Similarly, the ignorance also came from the international community who, like the UN and the security council remained largely silent on the situation despite the humanitarian issues, the security challenges and the escalation of violence. Personal stories of the Anglophone population have shown discrimination, violence, and displacement underlining the profound impact of decolonisation in individual lives and on shaping the English-speakers identities and how it fuelled the crisis. Overall, the sense of marginalisation mentioned by scholars when they study the root causes of the conflict has emerged from the unequal distribution of resources following the decolonisation process. Furthermore, the difference of treatment received and the struggle of the Anglophone community to access basic administrative services or the same education or employment opportunities has strengthened the marginalisation of this community (Awasom, 2020). “Nowhere is French advocacy more evident than at the University of Yaoundé in Cameroon's capital. Bilingual in theory, it was conceived as a place where every student would be able to take any course in either English or French, yet the balance between the two languages weighs heavily in favor of French” (Makuchi, 1999). This anger, mistrust, and frustration, added to the lack of political freedom, triggered the Anglophone action to obtain greater autonomy and more respect for their rights. Finally, in addition to triggering the emergence of the conflict, the decolonisation legacy plays an important role in prolonging this conflict. This can be explained as the state of the nation did not change in any favour for the

Anglophone community. They still struggle with the language, education, employment, health access, cultural identity in a state that erased the federal system.

### **Decolonisation and the Boko Haram insurgency**

Unlike for the Anglophone crisis, the link between the Boko Haram insurgency and the decolonisation is less obvious. However, this part of this chapter will demonstrate that the link undeniably exists. Despite emerging in Nigeria, Boko Haram gained rapid influence in Cameroon and developed its activities there. While this is not the topic of this research paper, it is inevitable to mention that the decolonisation of Nigeria is intricately linked to the emergence of Boko Haram. In Nigeria, the abrupt transition from colonial rule to independence in the 1960s generated economic and political instability. Like for Cameroon, the consequences of decolonisation were perpetrated as structural imbalances, inequality, and ineffective governance systems persisted post-colony. These conditions, particularly in Northeast Nigeria around the Lake Chad Basin region, facilitated the growth of radical movements like Boko Haram. Boko Haram then gained attraction and capitalised on public discontentment regarding the post-colonial situation of the country, poverty, and political alienation to rally support. Thus, the legacy of the Nigerian decolonisation significantly contributed to the environment in which Boko Haram emerged and prospered. However, the decolonisation in Cameroon is at the origin of the strength of the group in the Far North region and explains the spread of the group from Nigeria to the Far North region of Cameroon.

Firstly, it is important to understand that the imposition of a centralised government not only affected the Anglophone community but also affected other regions in Cameroon where communities felt marginalised to the benefit of central regions. Similarly, the arbitrary delineation of the borders, often mentioned in literature, increased the marginalisation of the community as it did not necessarily correspond with pre-existing ethnic, religious, or social divisions (Aning & Pokoo, 2014). Moreover, the border delimitation that followed decolonisation complicated the land distribution and exacerbated the resources distribution challenges. Indeed, the region's underdevelopment is partially attributed to colonial and post-colonial policies. This created a great frustration amongst the population as well as mistrust as the government failed to address the issues (Onapajo and Uzodike, 2012). Not only, this has impacted the economy of the region, but it has also impacted the power dynamic in the regions and the construction of the population identities which created a fertile ground for the growth of extremist ideologies due to the relative deprivation that communities are experiencing (King, 2018; New York Times, 2021).



One of the key elements in Boko Haram's ideology is its rejection of Western education and values as demonstrated by the targets of the group, such as schools, which it views as a continuation of colonial exploitation and subjugation (Onuoha, 2014). In this context, Boko Haram's activities can be seen as a violent response to neo-colonialism and the perceived cultural and social imposition resulting from the decolonisation process. Indeed, the inability of post-colonial Cameroonian government to address the socio-economic challenges in addition with the rampant corruption and the emerging from the colonial period, has further contributed to the disillusionment of the population, who did not trust the government and fear for their future and their safety. The group capitalises on the socio-economic challenges in the region to grow their ranks and spread their ideologies. Indeed, this made the development of the group easier and more successful especially in their ability to recruit as they attract citizens that are not only marginalised but also disillusioned by promising financial benefits that the government did not provide (Adesoji, 2010; Loimeier, 2012). Makuchi's book (1999) reflects how Cameroonians can join groups that they originally would not have supported – or that their relatives advise them not to join in the objective to gain money. In the 'The forest will claim you too', the son of the main character joined the lodgers who are exploiting the forest and more broadly the territory as well as the population, because the "pay was good" despite the interdiction to join the "forest rapists". Similarly, the group exploits the widespread distrust of the Cameroonian government and the poor governance of state institutions that have characterised both post-colonial Nigeria and Cameroon (Adebajo and Mustapha, 2018). As such the group offers an alternative to the inefficient and corrupt governance of Cameroon therefore attracting more supporters (Onapajo and Uzodike, 2012).

Additionally, Boko Haram gives a sense of identity to a part of the population that is also experiencing an identity crisis. Boko Haram ideology resonates with segments of the Muslim population who experience relative deprivation and feel marginalised by the predominantly Christian governments in both countries. Not only the decolonisation and the colonial legacy had an impact on the emergence of Boko Haram but the Boko Haram insurgency also intensifies socio-economic and political challenges that emerged from the decolonisation and colonial legacy. In Nigeria and Cameroon, the conflict underscored the inter-ethnic conflicts inherited from the colonial era (Falola and Heaton, 2008; Onapajo and Uzodike, 2012). Similarly, the insurgency has exacerbated the economical challenges of the regions by increasing the poverty of the population resulting in an increase in recruitment in Boko Haram's ranks (King, 2018; Adesoji, 2010). Finally, the Boko Haram insurgency reinforced the

government's perceived weakness and strengthened the gap between the government and the population as the rulers have proved to be inefficient in tackling the crisis and protecting the populations and Boko Haram insurgency has revealed the post-colonial institutional vulnerabilities.

### **Decolonisation the inter-ethnic conflicts**

Inter-ethnic conflicts in Cameroon are different from the Anglophone crisis in the sense that they emerged from deprivation and conflict for resources between different ethnic groups. This part will explore how the decolonisation and the colonial legacy is a root cause of the inter-ethnic conflicts. The most significant and most mentioned root cause in academia is the creation of borders which disregards the cultural and historical identity of the 250 different ethnicities present on the Cameroonian territory. Those delimitations led to the creation of a number of 'ethnic states' that are populated by communities with different and sometimes conflictual interests (Awason, 2000). It is important to note here that the colonial legacy preceding the rule of the British and the French is also crucial to understand the inter-ethnic conflicts that are affecting Cameroon today. Similarly, understanding the conflicts preceding this colonisation and the resolution of such issues through traditional methods is key to understanding the impact of the decolonisation. Indeed, inter-ethnic conflicts existed and arose before the German colonisation but were resolved using mitigation and traditional conflict resolution methods. However, the German rulers decided to conduct a re-organisation of the ethnic groups hierarchy (Fomin, 2017). The colonial power gathered the many different ethnicities present on the territory defined in Africa in 1884, they erased the sovereignty of some traditional states but also designated some ethnicities to have a bigger territory and manage 'weaker' ethnic groups. However, the German involvement and the lack of consistency from the French and British rules contributed to the continuation of conflicts. Moreover, the different ethnic groups present in Cameroon left the colonial period with different experiences and socio-political identities constructed over the years also due to the double cultural heritage that they inherited from both colonial rule. This resulted in the conflicts reemerging "at the least given opportunity even after independence" as ethnic groups wished to gain their independence back (Fomin, 2017).

The conflicts, however, are not only taking roots in power competition but mainly in resources competition. Indeed, numerous ethnicities suffer resource scarcity due to uneven allocation of essential resources such as water or land that are not only necessary to live but represent crucial resources to cultivate and feed the animals. However, as seen previously, the lack of resources

trigger survival instincts where individuals can be ready to take part in activities they would not have joined before because of the sense of relative deprivation they are experiencing in order to survive resulting in those ‘resources wars’ present in Cameroon (Addison and Murshed, 2006). Moreover, the conflicts are further fueled by the favouritism of the government when it comes to resources allocation. Indeed, the government favours certain ethnicities and capitalises on it as political parties often call for ethnic loyalties to mobilise support. In other words the government and political parties instrumentalise the necessity of resources and the conflict for power between the ethnic groups in order to survive in the political theatre (Takougang and Amin, 2013; Mbaku, 2005; Makuchi, 1999; Nkwi, 2015). A good example of this remains the conflicts between pastoralist Fula ethnic group and other groups in Cameroon’s Northwest region. The conflict originated in the 20th century when the ethnic group arrived from Nigeria supported by the British rulers who initially wanted to increase the economy of the region. However, the cattle necessity to access grazing disrupted crop rotation which resulted in violent conflicts. The government increased the dependency of the group by imposing grazing restrictions that were lifted after the decolonisation. While the land nationalisation in 1974 disturbed the traditional land ownership rights and permitted the Fula ethnic group to acquire land which created more tensions, the group was often seen as supporting the government, also fueling the conflicts (Bone, 2022). This type of event creates a strong gap between the government and some ethnic communities. This gap is also reinforced by the tribalism that is present in those communities, as Makuchi (1999) says: “Tribalism is the rule of law in this place” (Makuchi, 1999). In other words, the gap with the government is such that in certain regions with different ethnic groups, the traditional tribal customs and allegiances are heavily influencing the way things work, superseding the government laws. Personal stories from individuals who have experienced or witnessed violence between different ethnic groups can shed light and provide insight on the role of political elites in manipulating and fueling these divisions for their own benefits (Brosché and Elfversson, 2012). Finally, those different aspects of the roots of the inter-ethnic conflict are also supported by the strong emotions that such contexts generate. Indeed, as seen in the previous chapters, gap between the government, survival anxiety and fear especially when manipulated by leaders or amplified by socio-political changes such as the ones created by decolonisation can create a climate conducive to ethnic conflict (Petersen, 2002). Overall, as the conflict theory suggests the state has played a significant role in perpetuating divisions and inequalities between the

different ethnic groups, particularly through its policies on language, education, and regional development (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2003).

## **Chapter 9: Conclusion**

In this research paper, I aimed to explore the link between the decolonisation of Cameroon and the current crises and conflicts ongoing in the country. More precisely, I aimed to adopt a human perspective and explore how the social and psychological impacts that the decolonisation had on individuals led to the emergence of the Anglophone crisis, the Boko Haram insurgency and the inter-ethnic conflicts. As such, this dissertation intended to reply to the question: How has the decolonisation process in Cameroon socially and psychologically impacted individuals and therefore contributed to the ongoing crises and conflicts in the country? To do so, I first explored the social and psychological impact of decolonisation on individuals, before exploring how those impacts such as the gap between the government and the population, identity crisis, lack of resources, fear, anger and mistrust could lead to the emergence of the crisis and violent conflicts. Finally, my last empirical analysis chapter, applied those principles to explain the emergence of the Anglophone crisis, the Boko Haram insurgency and the inter-ethnic conflicts. Moreover, this study aimed to fill up a gap in literature, highlight the necessity to consider the human perspectives when exploring the decolonisation, and emphasise the importance of human sentiments when interpreting post-colonial events. To do so, my dissertation highlighted unconventional methods to gather those human perspectives that are not necessarily available through narrative research.

In this dissertation, I demonstrated that the decolonisation had several important social consequences on individuals. More precisely, the manner decolonisation was managed in Cameroon triggered a complex and multi-facet identity crisis amongst the population. It also created a deep gap between the government and the population and led to the rupture of the social contract. In other words, the government did not succeed in providing a safe social, economic and physical environment for the Cameroonians. Furthermore, I explored the psychological consequences of decolonisation in Cameroon. More precisely, I showed that while decolonisation first generated hope of freedom and a better future amongst the population, it ultimately generated mistrust that changed in distrust, anger and fear for their security and for their survival. In the following chapter I demonstrated how those characteristics could lead to the emergence of crises and conflicts. First, I showed how through collective memory and the generational transmission, the consequences of decolonisation could lead to the emergence of conflicts years after the official decolonisation events. Then, explore how mistrust and distrust could lead to the emergence of conflicts through the root of mistrust

that also lies in the perceived corruption of the country but also how mistrust can undermine the regime's legitimacy. In addition, I explained how the identity crisis, the absence of this collective identity and the inability of the government to foster the creation of such identity led to “social fragmentation” and can push dissatisfied individuals to join groups in order to fill this necessary sense of identity. I also demonstrated how negative feelings such as frustration, anger, and fear could push individuals to act for their own benefits, pressing them in the ‘business of survival’ and triggering some violent response due to their powerlessness, anger and fear. After demonstrating in those two chapters the connection between decolonisation and the emergence of crises and conflicts, I used this link and applied it to explore the root causes of the Anglophone crisis, the Boko Haram insurgency and the inter-ethnic conflicts. More precisely, I explained how the English-speaking regions of Cameroon experienced a gradual erosion of their political autonomy and freedom, cultural identity, and economic safety. Moreover, the crisis was aggravated by the lack of dialogue from the government and perceived favouritism towards the French-speaking part of the country. The anger, mistrust, and frustration arising from these issues triggered actions from the Anglophone community to seek greater autonomy and respect for their rights which was received by repression, resulting in strengthening those issues, only fueling the conflict. Likewise, the Boko Haram insurgency also takes roots in the decolonisation process. While it started in Nigeria, it is important to consider the insurgency from a regional perspective. Indeed, the Lake Chad Basin region witnessed the withdrawal of colonial powers resulting in creating a complex mix of political and economic instability leading to the emergence of extremist groups such as Boko Haram. Furthermore, Boko Haram capitalised on the widespread distrust of the Cameroonian government and poor governance of state institutions in both post-colonial Nigeria and Cameroon to expand and recruit individuals in search of group identity and economic safety. Finally, inter-ethnic tensions and violent conflicts can also be traced back to the decolonisation and post-colonial period. Indeed, the colonial powers and governance foster an environment where ethnic groups feel marginalised, experienced relative deprivation, and have to compete between each other for essential resources.

Overall, this dissertation demonstrated that the social and psychological consequences of decolonisation are one of the root causes of the ongoing crises and conflicts in Cameroon. These findings have several implications. First, it urges policy makers and peacebuilding organisations to consider this aspect when approaching conflict resolution strategy. Indeed, sustainable peace will not be achieved without a full and deep understanding of the conflicts

and their causes. This research paper has limitations. First and most importantly, it only used secondary data sources which limited the findings and strength of my dissertation. Similarly, the research relied on published literature whose scope could be limited to certain contexts and therefore prevent the capture of the full Cameroonian experience. As such, this dissertation does not claim to generalise the feelings experienced by individuals to the whole population. More detailed studies such as surveys would permit me to capture those experiences. In addition, the study is limited to three main conflicts: the Anglophone crisis, the Boko Haram insurgency, and inter-ethnic tensions. Although these conflicts are the most prominent in Cameroon, other conflicts and tensions might also be influenced by the decolonisation process. Finally, an important limit was the use of unconventional material such as novels to access the Cameroonian memories, therefore subject to the creators' biases. However, those limits and the findings also advocate for further academic research. Indeed, academia and policy-makers would benefit from more research on the deep consequences of decolonisation. More particularly, conducting such research using primary data sources would bring incredibly valuable insights into the human perspective on decolonisation. Moreover, the public should understand the need for this study to be conducted rapidly. Indeed, if researchers wish to obtain a full insight on the human perspectives of decolonisation, it would be key to collect the memories of the population who not only experienced the post-colonial realm in Cameroon but also the decolonisation period. Taking into account the date of decolonisation, people who were ten during this time period are now 73 years old. The Cameroonians are aware of this loss. In the novel 'the Healer', Makuchi (1999) points to how the stories can be carried to graves and how only people who experienced an event carry its full story. Time urges researchers to collect those memories that have been purposely ignored or institutionally silenced for the benefit of the colonial powers or the Cameroonian government (Brière, 2007).

## Figures

Figure 1: Africa Institute and De Blij (1977) Superimposed ethnic map of Africa. 102. *Map*. Available at: <https://skyscraperpage.com/forum/showpost.php?p=6517445&postcount=26>

Figure 2: Human Rights Watch (2018a) Evolution of Cameroon governance. “These Killings Can Be Stopped”. *Map*. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/07/19/these-killings-can-be-stopped/abuses-government-and-separatist-groups-camerouns>



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