THE DEFENCE AND SECURITY FORCES IN THE PRESERVATION AND CONSOLIDATION OF NATIONAL UNITY AND INTEGRATION IN CAMEROON: COMMEMORATING NATIONAL DAY (20TH MAY)

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Abstract

The process of forming a collective national identity within a given territory, broadly referred to as nation building, has been imperative for many African governments, especially after gaining independence. This was necessary to unite the pre-colonial autonomous ethnic groups which had been squeezed into single colonial entities. The persistent of violent ethnic conflicts in the post-colonial era, demonstrates that national unity has not been fully achieved in some countries and that it is still a necessary initiative to work for. Cameroon, like many African nations, is a multicultural society and has engineered national unity and integration through its defence and security institutions commonly illustrated during the annual May 20th celebration. The central focus of this paper is to examine how effectively the defence and security institutions have contributed to the maintenance of national cohesion in Cameroon. It argues that federalism as the initial state structure promoted sub state nationalism which added to the ethnic diversity compelled the state to address more profoundly the question of national integration and unity. In these efforts, the military was directly implicated. It discusses the genesis of the military's efforts as a national unifier, their achievements and challenges. Being essentially historical and using document analysis, the study concludes that the role of the military institutions in the preservation of national unity and cohesion has been a very complex one. Although great importance is attached to this sector, the results indicate that recent challenges faced by the nation have not worked in their favour.

Key words: defence and security, unity integration, nation building, national day, Cameroon.

Introduction

Cameroon, a country of more than 25 million people and sharing frontiers with six countries of varying degrees of stability, is of vital importance to regional security, a position at odds with its low diplomatic profile. In particular, it is a crucial part of the Gulf of Guinea security puzzle and a gateway to the countries to its east (Tchad and the Central African Republic), which depend on its transport infrastructure for the supply of vital goods.

In political and historical context, the current Cameroon was founded in 1961 by the union of two independently colonial entities: French Cameroon, which obtained independence from France in 1960, and Southern Cameroons, which the British controlled as a semi-autonomous region until 1961. That unification was the outcome of a United Nations-organised referendum in which a majority of Southern Cameroonians chose to unite with French Cameroon rather than assimilate into neighbouring Nigeria; independence as a separate entity was not on the ballot. President Ahmadou Ahidjo presided over a period of federalism in which the majority French-speaking East Cameroon and the largely English-speaking West Cameroon each ostensibly enjoyed some

autonomy until 1972, when voters approved a new constitution that replaced the federal system with a unitary state, formalising Ahidjo's efforts to centralise power. Many Anglophone activists, however, continue to regard the 1972 constitutional amendment as illegitimate and discriminatory. Some advocate for independence, while others advocate for a return to the pre-1972 governance framework of federalism.

The **National Day** (*Fête Nationale*) of Cameroon, also known as **Unity Day** (*fête nationale de l'unité*), is celebrated annually on May 20. In a national referendum on May 20, 1972, Cameroonians voted for a unitary state as opposed to the existing federal state, which went into operational on August 1, 1961, when former British Cameroon voted for independence by joining the already independent former French Cameroon. Since 1972, the government chose May 20 as Cameroon's National Day to commemorate the abolition of the federal system of government in favour of a unitary country. Even though it is considered a holiday, children all over the country go to schools and celebrate Unity Day, usually by singing, carrying out parades or marches all around the different parts of their various cities. Speeches are made by the president of Cameroon and other important personalities. The day is presided over by the president in the nation's capital, Yaounde. In the regional capitals, it is presided over by the governor who represents the government. The divisional officers preside over the day in their various divisions. In this paper, we shall discuss the historical context of independence and the road to the unitary system. Furthermore, the role and responsibilities of Cameroon's defence and security forces in the domains of unity and integrity will be examined. Nevertheless, the paper will end by discussing the obstacles faced by our defence and security units in an attempt to preserve national unity and integration in Cameroon.

Result and Discussion

I. The Historical Context of Independence and the Political Evolution in Cameroon

In this section, we shall discuss issues such as the early history of Cameroon; the colonial factors besides independence; the advent and abrogation of the federal system in Cameroon.

a) Early History of Cameroon and Colonial Experiences

Like most African nations, Cameroon is a creation of the late 19th century, although the name "Rio dos Cameroes" had been given to the Wouri Basin by the Portuguese as far back as the 15th century. There had been contact with North Africa through caravan routes across the Sahara as well as with Central Africa. Contact by sea with North Africa and Europe was inaugurated by the sea-loving Phoenicians, who discovered the '*Theo Oekama*' (Chariot of Fire), possibly Mount Cameroon during an eruption. The Portuguese continued these coastal contacts by discovering Fernando Po in 1462 and the river Wouri, which they named "*Rio dos Cameroes*" (river of prawns). Other visitors and traders included the Poles, French, British, Germans, and Spanish. Many trading posts and factories were established along the coast of Bimbia, Cameroon (Douala), and Big Batanga (south) by various European traders, especially the British (DeLancey Mark Dike, 2010).

But in spite of the several treaties contracted between the Douala chiefs and the British to declare protectorate over their people and territory in 1877, 1879, and 1881, Queen Victoria hesitated. In search of a colonial empire for Germany, chancellor Bismark dispatched Dr. Gustav Nachtigal to Morocco, Togo, Cameroon, and S.W. Africa in 1884.Nachtigal negotiated and signed treaties with the kings of Douala, Bimbia, and Batanga, thus declaring Kamerun a German Protectorate. Zintgraff, Zeuner, and Thoebecke, three German explorers, quickly began exploring and surveying their new protectorate. Germany set up an administration based first in Douala, then later in Buea. They created plantations, built roads, railways, houses, schools, and ports using forced labour. They launched pacification expeditions against turbulent groups (DeLancey Mark Dike,

2010). By 1914, they had created Kamerun and put it on the map of Africa and the world. Many Germans settled in the country as traders, farmers, and administrators.

During the First World War, 1914 to 1918, Germany was defeated in Cameroon in 1915 by a combined force of British, French, and Belgian troops. The British and French thereafter established a joint administration of the territory (condominium) for a few months, and then partitioned it. The British took a smaller western band with the mountains forming a natural frontier between their sector and the larger eastern French sector. The British sector was disjointed by the Benue Valley, thus providing Northern British Cameroon and Southern Cameroons. Cameroonians were henceforth subjected to two other types of colonial experiences with problems of adaptation to new languages: French and English, respectively, and new attitudes and cultures. This was a new start all over again (Fanso V. G., 1989).

While the British ruled their sector of Cameroon as part of Nigeria to which they attached it for administrative convenience, the French ruled the French Cameroon as an entity after carving out of it that part which they had earlier ceded, under pressure, to Germany in 1911 in exchange for German hands-off in Morocco, where France wished to have a free hand. At the end of the war, the newly formed League of Nations confirmed the partition of Cameroon and awarded the sectors as mandates to the British and French, respectively, in 1922 (Willard R. Johnson, 1980).

During the Second World War, 1938–1945, Germany tried to recover its colonies, of which Cameroon was one. But after her defeat in the war and the creation of a new world organization, the United Nations, the League of Nations' mandate was transformed into the United Nations Trusteeship, by which the trusteeship powers were obliged to develop the territories for eventual self-determination.

b) The Road to Independence and the Abrogation of the Federal System
Historical Background and Politics Present-day Cameroon was formed through the 1961 merger of two separately colonised entities: French Cameroun, which gained independence from France in 1960, and the Southern Cameroons, which the British administered as a semi-autonomous territory until the 1961 unification.

In French Cameroun, the major question was the type and intensity of the relationship with France after independence. The first true nationalist party, the Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC), and its leaders, Felix Moumié and Um Nyobe, demanded a thorough break with France and the construction of a socialist economy. French officials opposed and suppressed the UPC, leading to a bitter civil war. The French encouraged alternative political parties and leaders as they gradually granted increasing power to elected assemblies. Eventually, independence was granted, with Ahmadou Ahidjo becoming the first president. In a series of secret agreements, Ahidjo and his ruling party, the Cameroon National Union (CNU), pledged to build a capitalist economy and, in a series of secret agreements, to maintain very close political, economic, and cultural ties to France. On January 1, 1960, the independent Republic of Cameroon came into existence. On October 1, 1961, it joined with the Southern Cameroons to become the Federal Republic of Cameroon (Atangana Martin R., 1997).

The reunification of Cameroon was therefore an act solely of the people of Southern Cameroons. They thus expressed overwhelmingly their belief in the reconstitution of a larger, stronger, more populous, and richer Cameroon nation, such as that which was bequeathed by German colonization. Northern British Cameroons was annexed by Nigeria, just as British Togoland was annexed by Ghana in the late 1950s.

After a series of meetings between Prime Minister Foncha of Southern British Cameroon and President Ahidjo of the Republic of Cameroun on the form unification should take, an enlarged constitutional conference was held in Foumban in July 1961. During that conference, a framework for a constitution was mutually worked out by the government and opposition leaders of Southern

Cameroons on the one hand and the leaders of the Republic of Cameroun on the other hand. Ahidjo was determined and succeeded in forcing the acceptance of a strong federal government with weak federated state governments. After agreement in August 1961 on the constitution of the Federal Republic of Cameroon, reunification was formally consummated at Buea on October 1st, 1961 with the lowering of the Union Jack, the withdrawal of the British Commissioner, and the proclamation of the Federal Republic of Cameroon. British troops were replaced in Southern British Cameroon (renamed West Cameroon) by troops of the Republic of Cameroon (which became East Cameroon) (Ngome Samuel, 1985).

During the federalism period under President Ahmadou Ahidjo, in which majority French-speaking East Cameroon and largely English-speaking West Cameroon each ostensibly enjoyed a degree of autonomy, it ensued until 1972. His political party, the Cameroon National Union (CNU), became the sole legal political party on September 1, 1966, and in 1972, when voters approved a new constitution replacing the federal system with a unitary state, formalising Ahidjo's efforts to centralise power under a central government (Konings Piet, 1997). However, many Anglophone activists continue to view the 1972 constitutional revision as illegal and discriminatory. Some seek independence, while others have called for a return to federalism along the lines of the pre-1972 governance structure. In this regard, the year 1972 remained a historical date from which the national day celebration throughout the national territory was derived.

II. The Role of the Defence and Security Forces in Preserving National Unity in Cameroon

In this section, we shall be discussing the role and responsibility of the Cameroon defence and security forces in an attempt to preserve national unity and integrity throughout the national territory.

a) The National Police and National Gendarmerie

In Cameroon, the national police and the national gendarmerie have primary responsibility for law enforcement and the maintenance of order within the country. The army is responsible for external security but also has some domestic security responsibilities. The national police, which includes public security, judicial, territorial security, and frontier police, reports to the General Delegation of National Security (DGSN), which is under the direct authority of the presidency.

The core of day-to-day police participation in security provision is the responsibility of the Directorate of Public Security. "Local police" are those engaged in day-to-day security provision. It is intended for the police to be more active in urban areas while the gendarmerie covers the rural areas. The "local police" are involved in day-to-day security provision in communal areas such as markets or "motor parks" (minicab or minibus ranks). They address minor issues of shoplifting, assault and anti-social behaviour. In addition to the local police, other parts of the police force are referred to as interventionist police. They tend to only take part in security provision when the customary actors and the local police are incapable of coping with specific security challenges. These are usually the *Groupement Mobile d'Intervention* (GMI) with sub-units such as *L'Equipe Speciale d'Intervention Rapide* (ESIR). In normal circumstances, the GMI is tasked with the role of reinforcing the actions of other forces and police units in their role to maintain order, provide civil protection, and monitor the entire region. During crisis moments, it is tasked with intervening to maintain order at the request of the governor. Some few years ago, there was a progressive transfer of some of the police force competencies to the special security unit (ASU) of Douala international airport (CIA World Factbook, 2020). These are namely services related to passengers, luggage, access and vehicles' checks and screening.

The Law on the Use of Police Force Worldwide noted that "There are two main bodies of police in Cameroon: the regular police force (*Sûreté nationale*), reporting to the Presidency, and the

Gendarmerie Nationale, a paramilitary police force under the Ministry of Defence". By 2012 Presidential Decree, the *Sûreté nationale* was given concurrent responsibility for ensuring respect and protection of institutions, freedoms, individuals, and property. The National Gendarmerie, by 2016, had a strength of 9,000 troops (The Law on Use of Police Force Worldwide, 2019). It acts throughout the national territory, especially in rural areas and along communication routes. Under the authority of the Minister of Defence, the National Gendarmerie is a military force, also ensuring civilian missions. It can employ civilian personnel. Under the authority of the Minister of Defence, the Gendarmerie executes tasks for the Minister of Territorial Administration and the Minister of Justice.

The national gendarmerie reports to the Secretariat of State for Defence (SED), which is in charge of the gendarmerie, a dedicated branch of the Ministry of Defence. In addition to the gendarmerie, the army and the army's military security unit are other components of the ministry, which is headed by a minister delegate under the direct authority of the president. The General Delegation for External Research (DGRE) serves as the intelligence agency for both internal and external security. The Ministry of Defence and DGSN both report to the office of the President, resulting in strong presidential control of security forces (USSD,2020). Civilian authorities at times did not maintain effective control over the security forces, including the police and gendarmerie. It is also at the disposal of other heads of departments within the missions assigned to it in accordance with regulations. The Gendarmerie performs administrative police missions and police, as provided by the regulations in force. It contributes to national defence. It contributes to the maintenance of the internal security of the state. It ensures military police missions and military police (Global Security.Org, 2016). It satisfies the orders of the Head of State and the Minister of Defence, according to its technical and financial resources, the requisitions and aid applications submitted regularly by the competent authorities.

Under the authority of the Secretary of State for Defence in charge of the Gendarmerie, the National Gendarmerie includes: Central Services; the territorial commands; commands and specialised training. Under the authority of the Minister of Defence, the Secretary of State for Defence has special responsibility for the gendarmerie. It can also perform other missions as the Minister of Defence entrusts it. He is responsible for: the administration of the National Gendarmerie; designing and developing rules and guidelines necessary to implement the tasks of the National Gendarmerie. As such, it ensures the recruitment of staff, officers and civilians of Gendarmerie personnel; it ensures the initial training and continuing training of staff of the National Gendarmerie; it develops and enforces the equipment plans and infrastructure of the National Gendarmerie, after approval of the Minister of Defence; it prepares the budget proposals of the National Gendarmerie and submits them to the Minister of Defence. It is responsible to it for implementing the National Gendarmerie's budget; it draughts texts pertaining to the organisation and operation of the National Gendarmerie; and it is consulted in the development of any text pertaining to the National Gendarmerie (Global Security.Org, 2016).

The Secretary of State for Defence, specifically responsible for the National Gendarmerie, is at the disposal of the various ministers, including the Minister in Charge of Territorial Administration and the Minister of Justice, to perform the tasks assigned to the Gendarmerie and within their respective powers. It ensures that no abuse of employment is committed to the detriment of the missions of the Force and its staff. The Gendarmerie Region is in charge of command, administration, coordination, and support training of the National Gendarmerie in the execution of their tasks. The Gendarmerie Region also includes organizations, establishments, workshops, warehouses, stocks, shops, and public infrastructure or specialised ministerial implants and placed in the Region, by delegation of the Secretary of State for Defence in charge of the Gendarmerie, under the authority of the Commander of the Gendarmerie Region. The jurisdictions and command

posts of the Gendarmerie Region are fixed as follows: Second Region Police (RG2): territories: Littoral Province, North West Province, Western Province, and South West Province; command post: Douala; and Third Region Police (RG3): territories: Adamawa Province, Far North Province, and Northern Province; command post: Garoua (Routledge, 29 May 2019). All of this is to ensure proper unity and national integrity throughout Cameroon.

b. The Armed Forces

The Cameroonian Armed Forces generally have been an apolitical force where civilian control of the military predominates. Traditional dependence on the French defence capability, although reduced, continues to be the case as French military advisers remain closely involved in many operations in Cameroon. The armed forces number 38,000–40,000 personnel (including a rate of feminization of nearly 10%) in ground, air, and naval forces. The Cameroonian armed forces have bases spread all over the country. Air Force bases are located in Garoua, Yaoundé, Douala, Bamenda, and Koutaba. Currently, the organisation dates from 2001 with a distribution into several types of units: combat units, response units (*unités d'intervention*), *unités de soutien et d'appui,* and finally special reserve units as part of 3 joint military regions (*interarmées*) and the 10 military land sectors (Bagayoko-Penone Niagale, 2008).

The relationship between citizens and their army is changing fast, like never before in Cameroon, with unintended implications for peace and stability. Created on the back of fighting a bloody domestic insurgency against colonialisation, the over-50-year-old army is anchored firmly in a doctrine that ensures the security of the regime. The military establishment also perceives the protection of the ruling government as a core component of its mandate. Arguably, this is based on the assumption that regime instability would not be conducive to the military's privileged position and would leave the country vulnerable to chaos, instability, and the ultimate failure of society. The army provide security services against threats to the society. This thus explains its *raison d'être* (Bagayoko-Penone Niagale, 2008).

Considering the military's interest in regime stability as well as in providing security against threats to society, a perennial and wide gulf has therefore existed between the army and the majority of the population in the areas of politics and democracy. Reflecting on this 'perception-divide', the population perceives the regime as willing to direct the coercive power of the army against civilians as a serious, stopgap measure against any popular movements for change. In parallel, the government has tended to leverage the gap between the military and the civilian populace for political gains. The two successive regimes after independence have built on the perception divide to strengthen their positions. For example, military privileges have not only remained unchanged but have increased, even when crippling salary cuts were imposed on all civil servants following the economic crisis of the 1990s (Kokim Desmond, 2015).

But the dynamics seem to shift, albeit silently. Widespread and systematic attacks by Boko Haram, the violent terrorist group, have rallied Cameroonians behind their army. While exact figures remain unknown, Amnesty International recently estimated that over 380 civilians and dozens of security personnel have been killed by the Nigerian-imported fundamentalist group in the far north region of Cameroon since the beginning of the year. The performance of the army so far has mobilised the entire nation around their new role as a provider of 'people-centred' security services against indiscriminate suicide bombs, kidnapping, hostage-taking, torture, and abductions of child soldiers. The army has therefore become the "army of the people", emerging as an organic platform for displaying patriotism and almost replacing football as an unparalleled rallying point for Cameroonians. Socialisation is giving rise to an emerging social contract between the population and their army, with a likely profound impact on politics as well as security, through the exercise of

legitimate civilian control by the executive over the army. This is then a good record for national unity and integration (Amnesty International, 2015).

However, Cameroon's defence policy seeks a balance between internal stability and specific relations with its neighbours. But the orientation of the army, the core of the armed forces, is shifting from internal to external defence. Besides the border conflict with Nigeria and the fight against piracy, the defence posture has always been inward-looking. Previously, the army's role was limited to fighting urban crime, deterring *coups d'état* and civil strife, and dealing with other threats to the regime's survival. For example, the Rapid Response Brigade (BIR), the leading and special elite force, was created in 1999 to cope with a paramilitary and highway criminal threat, known as "*coupeur de route*". Looking from this perspective, it will be an overstatement to say the defence and security forces worked smoothly in an attempt to preserve national unity and integration in Cameroon. The next section thus handles the challenges they faced since the early 2000's.

III. Newly Challenges faced by the Defence and Security Forces in Preserving Nation Unity

Being a pivotal country has serious implications for its own and the region's security. From 2007 to 2013, 382 acts of piracy were reported in the Gulf of Guinea, when the number of attacks on ships surpassed the number of attacks in the Gulf of Aden off the lawless coast of Somalia. In 2011, 54 attacks in the Gulf of Guinea were reported to the International Maritime Organisation, compared to 20 attacks attributed to Somali pirates off the coast of Somalia (Allen Clayton D., 2017). The rise of piracy in a region with a market of around 455 million people and a daily output of 5 million barrels of oil did not go undetected for long (Hastings V. Justin, 2015).

Cameroon has suffered as a result of attacks on the towns of Bakassi, Douala, Limbe, and Kribi by seaborne armed groups operating out of nearby Nigeria, which has a 500-mile coastline on the oil-rich Gulf of Guinea. The United Nations convened the Yaoundé Summit in June 2013, where heads of state from the Gulf of Guinea, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and the Commission of the Gulf of Guinea (CGG) adopted a series of measures to boost maritime security, including the establishment of an Inter-Regional Coordination Centre in Yaoundé (Nwalozie, Chijioke J., 2020).

On September 11, 2014, Senegalese Colonel Abdourahmane Dieng officially opened the facility in Yaoundé. It is now staffed by a small crew and is still very much a work in progress, despite being intended to be the core component of a regional marine surveillance system. Its mission is to consolidate information collected from two centres in Congo-Brazzaville and Benin (Kamal-Deen Ali, 2015). In summary, Cameroon has been designated as the focal point for regional maritime security architecture in the Gulf of Guinea, the region's first such transnational security system.

On the other hand, Boko Haram emerged in the early 2000s as a small Sunni Islamic sect advocating a strict interpretation and implementation of Islamic law for Nigeria. Standing out as a Nigerian creation, Boko Haram is a radical version of Islam based on the fundamentalist Wahhabi theological system and opposes the Islam of the traditional northern Nigerian establishment, which is broadly tolerant (Campbell, J., 2022).

Boko Haram's presence on Cameroonian territory can be traced to July 2009, when many Boko Haram fighters fled to Cameroon to escape a major military crackdown in Nigeria that led to the killing of the then leader, Mohammed Yusuf. While some scholars link Boko Haram with the new wave of transnational terrorism, others link the insurgency with the internal political power struggle in Nigeria. The conflict is undoubtedly connected to socio-economic concerns such as poverty, unemployment, and inadequate education. In the Far North Region of Cameroon, where Boko Haram is most active, more than half of the population is poor; 76% are illiterate; the school enrolment rate is extremely low; and the industrial sector is extremely underdeveloped. The above, coupled with social divisions and the weak presence of the state and border porosity, are factors

that increase vulnerability. Cameroon is also seen as a genuine source of further "funding" thanks to the ransoms paid by its authorities after a kidnapping (Ngufor Forkum Polycarp,2018).

Boko Haram initially engaged in conventional warfare but later switched to an asymmetric mode of attack. The group repeatedly attacked the localities of Achigachia, Amchide, Limani, Fotokol, Waza, and Kolofata, found along the Cameroonian/ Nigerian border, as well as Kousseri and Maroua towns. The catastrophic effects of this climate of insecurity on the economy and the displacement of approximately 237,966 people, in addition to the 626,681 refugees (by August 31st, 2017), only serve to exacerbate these problems (Ngufor Forkum Polycarp,2018).

This new opportunity has already been taken by the United States and other states, which have pledged to support Cameroon's security efforts, either through training or by delivering military equipment. The current spat between Abuja and Washington appears to be benefiting Cameroon, which appears to be a more reliable security partner for the US. Western countries plan to play a supportive role in the war against Boko Haram and have already offered intelligence and logistical support to regional troops, albeit the concept of a regional force remains elusive for the time being (Trafford R. & Turse N., 2017).

Another serious issue that is currently hampering national unity in Cameroon is the Anglophone crisis. The crisis came to a head in late 2016 when lawyers, joined by teachers and others with similar grievances, led protests in major western cities, demanding that the integrity of their professional institutions be protected and their minority rights respected. When peaceful demonstrations were met with violent repression, it exacerbated tensions and escalated the conflict to a national political crisis.

In October 2017, the separatist leader Julius Ayuk Tabe declared the independence of the Republic of Ambazonia. His interim government laid claim to a territory whose borders are the same as the UN Trust Territory of Southern Cameroons under British rule (1922–1961) (Hippolyte Djounguep Eric & Nga Kalla Gertrude, 2020). The interim government's spokesman, Nso Foncha Nkem, invited the French-speaking people to leave the region and called on English-speaking counterparts in Biya's "rubber-stamp" government to return to Ambazonia and support the movement. He also pleaded for unity, asking that Anglophones speak with one voice. However, that call has not overcome the challenges posed by diverse viewpoints within the Anglophone population itself. Some favour secession. Others want to return to the 1961 federation and the power-sharing agreement. There are those who prefer decentralisation that would devolve power to regional leaders and some who simply want an administrative solution that would leave the Republic of Cameroon as it stands. And among the French-speaking population, there is some support for the radical separatists, while some see the Anglophone situation as a general crisis of governance and others deny any problem exists. Mongo Beti, a Francophone novelist and activist who spent 30 years in exile, observed after returning home in the 1990s that there was a general absence of identification with viable, which has rendered the country unified nation due to various divisions that had frayed Cameroon's social fabric and which was a significant impediment to progress (Khrouz Driss, 2008).

It is, however, understood that our defence and security forces have always been at the forefront of these conflict episodes with the aim of restoring peace and national integrity needed for the promotion of Cameroon's national unity. But however, this has never been an easy task for them, for the majority of Cameroonians, whether Anglophone or Francophone, are hungry for change.

Conclusions

The prime aim of this paper was to establish a historical link between independence, reunification, and the commemoration of the national day in Cameroon. In this work, we discussed the role played

by the defence and security forces in an attempt to preserve Cameroon's national unity and integration. Besides these exhaustive missions, we equally discussed the difficulties they faced in meeting the objectives. These challenges range from internal and external factors, with the former dominating. In the past decade, Cameroon's reputation for stability under the current regime has degenerated with the emergence of security crises on several fronts. Boko Haram began operating more openly in northern Cameroon around 2013, and attacks by Boko Haram and IS-WA insurgencies In the west, the conflict between Anglophone separatists and state security forces has featured widespread abuses against civilians, while efforts to negotiate a peaceful settlement have foundered. Together, the conflicts in the north and west have displaced over one million Cameroonians internally. Cameroon also hosts nearly 330,000 refugees fleeing insecurity in the neighbouring Central African Republic and 120,000 Nigerians displaced by the Boko Haram and IS-WA insurgencies, according to U.N. agencies. It is then at the base of these security treats that many nationals, especially those from the English-speaking part of the country, keep asking if the day (20 May) set as a national day is a valid one.

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