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Conformism in Cameroon Politics: A Strategy For Survival in a Repressive “Democracy” 1961-1990

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ABSTRACT

The gradual shift in democratic standards and the challenge to its universalism has given room for democratic abuse to thrive in most parts of the world including Cameroon. This research paper paints a picture of the democratic realities in Cameroon by questioning the political docility of Cameroonians who have all taken refuge in Conformism. The paper postulates that unlike in other democracies where repression begets dissidence, protest, and reform, in Cameroon, repression rather annihilated dissidence, eradicated protest, and imposed conformism as the only option for political survival. To develop this argument, the qualitative research approach was adopted with an in-depth analysis of behavioral traits, attitudes, opinions, mindsets, and value systems of political actors in an interactive and documentary research procedure. In this procedure, we privileged data from archival depositories, newspaper accounts, and reports, as well as oral accounts from interviews and documentaries spotlighting key political actors in Cameroon. Our findings revealed that Cameroon has an inspiring History of militancy and political activism, it also lay bare the fact that absolute power wielded by Cameroons' post-independence leaders greatly infringed democratic values, pushing the erstwhile militants and activists of change and freedom to embrace docility and political conformism at the expense of freedom and democracy.

INTRODUCTION

The march towards effective statehood in Cameroon ignited a strong militant spirit throughout the territory and revealed an exceptional generation of nationalist politicians who were true to themselves, devoted and entirely committed to the course of liberty and prosperity. This cream of politicians on whose shoulders rested the heavy task of deciding the fate of the future independent Cameroon found themselves at the crossroad of two opposing options or ideologies. On one end we had “freedom in total sovereignty” and on the other, “freedom in conformism to the colonial status-quo”. While Ahidjo and a cross-section of French Cameroon politicians opted for and attained independence on the basis of conformism to the colonial status quo, another cross-section of nationalists firmly opposed conformism to the status quo and maintained the struggle for total freedom in sovereignty. The confrontation of these two opposing ideological views greatly fragelised the newly independent Cameroon and ushered in a period of great uncertainty and insecurity throughout the country.

The daunting task of consolidating unity following the 1961 reunification of Southern Cameroons with the republic of Cameroon added to this uncertainty and insecurity. Therefore, presiding over the destiny of post independent Cameroon in 1961, Ahidjo was described by many, especially in French newspaper commentaries as a state's man at the helm of a fragile state which was at the verge of disintegration (Gaillard, 1994). In order to salvage this new state at the verge of collapse and disintegration, Ahidjo who incarnated this state resorted

to a highly autocratic system of rule with one principal objective which was; the restoration of state authority and power as well as the consolidation of National Unity among Cameroonians on both ends of the Mungo. This objective of Ahidjo which was later transferred to Biya was to become a great obsession which legitimized repression, state terrorism and political violence in Cameroon, thus putting in limbo all fundamental values of liberty, democracy and human rights. This obsession for unity and absolute control over state authority and power by post-independent Cameroon leaders introduced into the Cameroonian political landscape a long history of state violence and repression which instead of provoking indignation, dissidence and protest, rather consolidated conformism to the status-quo which has become a perfect strategy of political survival for all political dissidents in Cameroon since 1961.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The qualitative research method was engaged in an interactive and documentary research approach to conduct this research study. We proceeded in this approach by collecting a wide range of data from primary and secondary sources which permitted a successful diagnosis of the problem. To capture the intentions, attitudes, opinions, mindsets, and facts on the conduct of militancy in post-independent Cameroon, we privileged data from newspaper accounts and administrative reports corresponding to the time scope of the research. We mostly exploited newspaper accounts from; La Presse du Cameroun, Cameroon Tribune, Le Messenger,

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Kamerun Times and The Cameroon Champion. Aside the newspaper accounts and reports, a wide range of data was collected from specialised published books on Cameroon, Africa and global politics. Scientific articles, dissertations and thesis on the political evolution of Cameroon, political ideologies and development were also exploited. Oral interviews were conducted to fill up the gaps inherent in newspaper reporting and other secondary data to ascertain and establish the facts. Altogether, fifty (50) persons were interviewed, amongst them we have politicians (actors), Traditional rulers, academics, and civil society actors. Of the 50 persons interviewed, 47 are Men and 3 are women depicting clearly the absence of gender parity in Cameroons’ political space. The principal research tool put to use so as to carry out this research exercise was the question guide and simple methodique observation. The use of this tool was carefully guided by the methods and techniques of oral historical research which put together, eased the analysis of our data in total respect of the historical method with special emphasis on the thematic and chronological approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Militancy and Activism in Cameroon Prior to 1961

Political consciousness already inherent in the minds of Cameroonians all over the different corners of the territory took a new dimension in the Post-World War One era. In this context of great deception and disappointment, the new occupational forces (Britain and France) technically introduced policies with the

aim of containing the highly aggrieved Cameroonians and effectively administer and exploit their territory. The already conscious Cameroonian population did not remain docile in the face of such great injustice and deception forced on them by the mandatory powers. Thus in spite of the repressive and constraining measures put in place by these occupying powers to limit the expression of their political freedom and power, the Cameroonians through protest and resistance succeeded to twist the arm of the imperialists by adopting clandestine measures of political activism which paved the way for the emergence of several interest /pressure groups across the territory hence marking the effective beginning of militant politics in Cameroon.

The politisation of the Cameroonian population and the effective kick-off of militant politics in the territory has been a long process nursed by several Historical antecedents, which gained stronger impetus and exposure throughout the period spanning the First and Second World war. Enhanced by unpopular “colonial” administration introduced in the territory after the First World War and sustained by their exploitative socio-economic policies, militancy in Cameroon has been on a consistent and permanent growth. Its appropriation by the educated elites and the working class in British and French Cameroon produced exponential political repercussions fundamental amongst these repercussions was the birth of political parties which marked a clear transition from Micro-Nationalism to Macro-Nationalism which effectively set in motion party-politics in the territory.

Table 1: List of frontline political parties in french cameroon before 1960

No	Political party	Leader	Creation
1	Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC)	Leonard Boulli	1948
2	Evolution Social Camerounais (ESOCAM)	Piere Dimala	1949
3	Renaissance Camerounais (RENAICAM)	Alphonse Ndounokon	1952
4	Bloc Democrates Camerounais (BDC)	Louis Paul Aujulat	1951
5	Union Social Camerounais (USC)	Rene Guy Okala	1954
6	Mouvement D’Action National Camerounais	Paul Soppo Priso	1956
7	UNION CAMEROUNAISE (UC)	Ahmadou Ahidjo	1957
8	Démocrate Camerounais (DC)	Andre Marie Mbida	1957
9	Paysan independants (PI)	Mathias Djoumessi	1957

Source: compiled by author from field data

With the coming to scene of political parties which federated the masses behind strong political ideals clamoring for freedom and sovereignty, repressive and divisive measures put in place by “colonial” powers served as a galvanizing force to the masses and increased their determination to achieve freedom and sovereignty. In effect, competitive politics in French Cameroon which resulted from the creation of the UPC party in 1948, enhanced militancy in the territory which was very much sustained by the contradictory debates over the question of independence raised by the UPC.

Unlike in French Cameroon where the UPC party federated a large cross section of masses behind a common ideal of

freedom and sovereignty, the British Cameroons on its part experienced a transition to macro nationalism with a plethora of political organizations which failed to agree on a common ideal of freedom and sovereignty. Within the British Southern Cameroons, Political competition was heavily sustained by these 3 great ideologies which included amongst others: Integrationism, Secessionism, and Reunificationism. (Dze-ngwa, 1996) Unable to agree on a common ideological platform for the effective attainment of the independence of the territory, the various parties remained in a permanent political competition till 1961 when the UN decided to impose on them a plebiscite with two questions.

Table 2: List of political parties in the british southern cameroon before 1961

No	Political party	Creation	Initial Ideology	Leader
1	KNC	1953	Separate regional status for the Cameroon and the respect of the people's right to self Determination.	E.M.L. Endeley
2	KPP	1953	Regional autonomy and secession from Nigeria when it became Independent.	P.M.Kale
3	KLP	1953	Separate region for Cameroons.	Prince Walter Mbong Wilson,
4	KNDP	1955	Secession from Nigeria and the attainment of full autonomy for the Cameroons.	John Ngu Foncha
5	KUCP	1955	Unification and reunification of the Cameroons.	E.A. Anjeh
6	KSBP	1956	Five year period of association of the Cameroons to the federation of Nigeria.	E.R.Robinson Tembu
7	OK	1957	Immediate independence and reunification	Nde Ntumazah
8	KUP	1959	Independence for the Southern Cameroon.	P.M.Kale
9	CCC	1959	Independence for the Southern Cameroon.	Nyenti Stephen
10	MCP	1960	Association of the Cameroons to the federation of Nigeria.	Mallam Sale
11	CIP	1960	Independence for the Southern Cameroon	J. Manga Williams
12	CPNC	1960	Association of the Cameroons with Nigeria.	E.M.L Endeley

Source: Conceived by author during field work

Repression and Crackdown on Political Dissidents in Post-independent Cameroon

Considered fake and a clear means of propagating a new form of colonialism, independence attained in 1960 was highly contested especially amongst UPC militants from amongst whom emerged a strong anti-imperialist ideology which challenged the status-quo and opted for total dissidence with the post-independent regime. As if this was not enough after reunification in 1961, the dissatisfied delegates of British Southern Cameroons who didn't appreciate the final constitutional project for the Federal Republic of Cameroon, saw in it a strong annexationist tendency. In order to safeguard their sovereignty and interest within this new Federal structure they opted to firmly oppose these annexationist tendencies of the Ahidjo regime by adopting an anti-annexationist ideology which stood in total opposition to the regime and by so doing took the path of dissidence.

Repression and Crackdown on Political Dissidents from Former French/East Cameroon

The crackdown on political dissidents in post-independent Cameroon begins with the 1960 Assemblée Legislative du Cameroun (ALACAM) laws. Having obtained legal backings from the 12th February 1960 ALCAM laws which accorded Ahidjo exceptional powers, he was to eventually centralize state power around himself, the UC party and maintain security and unity which was largely fragelised by dissident voices in the former French Cameroon and later in the former British Southern Cameroons. To this effect it was evident that great doom awaited all political dissidents in post-independent Cameroon as a Zero-Tolerance approach was adopted to crack down on all

who stood against the post-independent leaders and their ambitions to safeguard power and unity at all cost.

Realizing doom already well pictured in the horizon, several political leaders and movements as from 1960 in the former French Cameroon, started decamping into the UC party of Ahidjo and conforming to his policies, but for the exception of the Democrat Camerounaise of Andre Marie Mbida and the UPC who officially contested the status-quo and took the path of dissidence. With the continuous spread of his cravings for absolute power and centralization, Ahidjo by 1962 pushed further his plan to silent opposition by putting in place a Grand Partie Nationale Unifié,(Gaillard, 1994) project which was a deliberate attempt to completely kill democracy and erect a one-party dictatorial state. This autocratic project contributed in swelling the rangs of dissidents as it provoked the Mouvement d'Action Nationale du Cameroun (MANC) of Charles ASSALE and Partie Socialiste Camerounais (PSC) of Rene Guy Okala to join the UPC and DC in a strong opposition front against the status-quo called le Front Nationale Unifié (FNU) (Gaillard, 1994). Determined to crack down and silent any opposing voice which stood against his policies, Ahidjo immediately decided to arrest all the 4 leaders of the FNU and slammed each of them a 2 and a half year jail sentence.

Besides the leaders of the FNU who were neutralized by Ahidjo for choosing dissidence, radical and brutal crackdown actions were equally taken against radical UPC militants who continued to challenge the status-quo by propagating anti-imperialism. One of the first to be tract and executed by the post-independent regime was Felix Roland Moumie who on October 15, 1960 with

the help of French secret services was poisoned and died on November 3rd 1960. After this recorded victory against a dissident of the first order Ahidjo launched a massive crackdown in the Bamileke zones considered to be the hideout of anti-imperialist UPCist (Maquisards). Reports by the French pilot; Max Badet who participated in the scorched earth operations in the Bamileke regions revealed that between 1962 and 1964 they successfully exterminated 300 to 400,000 people in Bamileke land (Eyinga, 1991). This not sufficient enough, a serious man-hunt was launched against Ernest Ouandie who was reported to have returned from exile and had taken base in the bushes of the western zones of the territory. In the main time, Osende AFANA another UPCist and dissident who attempted a military offensive against the Yaounde regime from the South Eastern part of the country was brutally neutralized in 1966. Finally apprehended, arrested and executed in 1971, the death of Ernest Ouandie marked a significant victory against anti-imperialism and the total neutralization of UPC dissidents on Cameroonian soil. This is also described by Daniel Abwa (Abwa, 2010) as the event marking the end of the second war of independence in Cameroon.

Repression and Crackdown on Political Dissidents from Former British Southern/West Cameroon

The crackdown on political dissidents which was already enacted in La Republique du Cameroon in 1960 was extended in 1961 to the former West Cameroon following the emergence of the anti-annexationist ideology in this part of the territory which stood in total opposition to all of Ahidjo's annexationist schemes in the guise of unity. Being a complete rejection of the Annexationist plan of Ahidjo, Anti-Annexationism was a strong political ideology conceived and developed in the former Southern Cameroons prior to its reunification with la Republique du Cameroun in 1961. The bearers of this ideological principle were simply referred to by Ahidjo as Autonomist, (Gaillard, 1994) prominent amongst them we had E.M.L Endeley and A.N Jua. This ideological principle which stood in strong defense of federal autonomy for West Cameroon within the federal republic of Cameroon, was highly resented by Ahidjo who was determined to build a strong, united and centralized federation with all powers wielded to him and no one else. With this a clear plan was put in place to crackdown on all anti-annexationist or anyone who preached or even nursed the idea of autonomy for west Cameroon.

To materialize this plan, Ahidjo signed decree No. 61-DF-15 of Dec. 20, 1961 (Ebune, 2016) which divided the two state Federal Republic into 6 administrative units placed under the heavy control and supervision of Federal inspectors. The state of west Cameroon which was a little bit comforted with the Federalism obtained at Fouban only came to realize later that even the little autonomy they had gained was taken back and given to the Federal inspector whose authority was not distinguished from that of the Prime minister and who even acted in defiance

of the authority of the Prime minister as he could report directly to the president without the consent of the Prime minister (Ndi, 2013). By this arrangement, Ahidjo had successfully transformed the state of West Cameroon into one of the 6 administrative regions with Jean Claude Ngoh as the Federal inspector for West Cameroon.

As inspector General for West Cameroon appointed by Ahidjo, Jean Claude Ngoh had absolute control over all administrative units in West Cameroon. Infact he was the personal representative of the president of the Federal Republic within the state of West Cameroon who had an authoritative eye on all administrative, economic and political affairs of the state of West Cameroon. Exercising his authority with absolute power invested on him by Ahidjo, J. C. Ngoh indulged into great excesses and abuse of power. An incident is even reported of him badging unannounced into the radio broadcasting studios of Radio Buea just because he heard the name of EML Endeley mentioned in a program he didn't even border to know but was so swift to charge the presenter Wilfred Nkwenti of supporting the opposition. (Ndi, 2013) Added to this, the police and the French elite force Gendarmerie were at his disposal. This reputed brutal (Nyo-Wakai, 2009) paramilitary corps that acted in extreme savagery and in total violation of fundamental human rights became an appropriate instrument of terror in the hands of Inspector J.C. Ngoh which he effectively used to exhibit the supremacy of Central authority over Federal authority This heavy concentration of power in the hands of Inspector Ngoh had one principal aim which was to subdue and suppress the politico-administrative autonomy of the PM. of West Cameroon hence alleviate or eradicate the Federal scare which remained a strong obstacle to the full exercise of power by Ahidjo over the entire Federal Republic of Cameroon.

The Rise of Biya and the Continuation of the Crackdown Policy on Political Dissidents in Cameroon

The coming to power of Paul Biya in 1982 as the second president of post-independent Cameroon was received with great euphoria and ecstasy as many Cameroonians saw in him the hope for a new Cameroon free of violence and repression. Unfortunately, all the promises of rigor, moralization and democratization which he made to Cameroonians remained mere slogans which were never materialized. Like Ahidjo, Biya's obsession for power and the consolidation of the neocolonial status-quo caused him to become very uncompromising towards anyone who stood on his path of power. To this effect the era of political violence and torture which many had thought ended with Ahidjo was still very much present in perfect continuum with Paul Biya.

One of the first persons to experience Biya's crackdown policies was Ahidjo. Having resigned as president of the republic in 1982, Ahidjo continuously poured his weight of influence and autocracy on all political matters of the state using the UC now CNU party as his new found sphere of influence. To officialise and give legitimacy to

his actions, Ahidjo successfully used the CNU majority to adopt the 19th June 1983 bill which institutionalized the one-party system, established the pre-eminence of the party over the state, and elevated the prime minister to the rank of head of government. With all this put in place it was very much evident that Ahidjo even after resigning from power was still the one ruling the united republic of Cameroon. Upon realizing that Biya was determined to counter all his policies and affirm himself as the new leader of Cameroon, a group of alleged supporters of Ahidjo majority of whom hailed from the northern regions staged what became known as the failed coup of 1984. Convinced now that his power as supreme leader and president of Cameroon was threatened, Biya decided to launch a rootless crackdown on all dissidents starting with all who were involved either directly or indirectly in the alleged coup d'état of 6th April 1984. Reports hold that between 500 and 10,000 dissidents were killed by Government forces (Article 19.Org, 1995) and several others imprisoned. As Ahidjo successfully fled out of the country into exile it was thus clear that a new era of repression had effectively begun with Biya at the helm of power.

As the repressive arsenal was fully institutionalized after the crackdown on pro-Ahidjo elements, the next target of the Biya regime were all supporters of Freedom, Democracy and human rights who he considered as non-conformist who had chosen the path of dissidence. It is ironical that a person who mounted the stage of power on the platform of rigor moralization and democratization should suddenly become the one to fight advocates of freedom and democratization. One thing alone can explain this incongruity and it could only be the obsession to wielder absolute control over power and preserve a fragmented unity. (US Central Intelligence, 1984) Amongst the many pro-freedom activist and politicians who suffered the heavy hand of repression and torture under the Biya regime we had a good number of Anglophone activist in the likes of Gorji Dinka Bate Bessong, Albert Mukong, Mola Litumbe. These Cameroonians of the erstwhile British Southern Cameroons continuously castigated the annexationist policies of the Biya regime whom they thought would be more open to freedom than his predecessor, unfortunately this was not the case. Like Ahidjo, Biya launched a serious crackdown on all dissident voices that did not adhere to a strong centralized union and as a result, these activists became his prime target as each of them suffered great torture for propagating a loose union with Anglophone autonomy. Gorji Dinka on May 1985 was arrested, detained and tortured at the headquarters of the Brigade Mixte Mobile (BMM) to the point of suffering from a stroke which provoked the paralysis of his left side. (Gorji Dinka Case, 2005) After him, the sledge hammer fell on Albert Mukong who suffered multiple arrest and cruel torture in the hands of the Cameroon forces for expressing his opinion on the state of the union. (Albert Mukong Case, 1994) Later came the arrest of literary

critic Bate Bessong who decided to stage one of his works the play "Beast of no nation" on March 26th, 1991 at amphitheatre 700 of the University of Yaoundé I. (Doh, 2014) This play which addresses the systematic annexation and alienation of Anglophones within the French dominated republic of Cameroon wreaked havoc within the ruling circles and could not be tolerated at a time Anglophone nationalism was on a steady rise. The brutal repression of Anglophone activist was to serve as a deterrent to every other form of micro-nationalism that was in gestation within the territory.

As the crackdown on Anglophone activists intensified so also was the crackdown on all other activists of freedom across the country who had become exasperated with the democratic farce brandished by the new deal regime of Biya characterized by incessant repression, press censorship and torture. Barrister Yondo Black who took the lead in dissidence to call for change by launching the Comité de Coordination pour le Multipartisme et la Démocratie, did not see this idea prosper as he was immediately arrested together with all his followers on the 19th of February 1990. (Boulaga, 1997) Following in his footsteps, Celestin Monga and Pius Njawe, determined to ignite change in the media landscape which had been held captive by the heavy hand of repression and censorship decided to write and published an open letter to Paul Biya titled "Democratie Truquée". The publication of this letter was immediately followed by the arrest of Celestin Monga the author and Pius Njawe the publisher on January 1st 1991. (Boulaga, 1997)

Realizing all existing doors to break through the yoke of political oppression and repression were now closed, activist saw in the return of multiparty politics the last option left for them to be able to challenge the Biya regime without fear of repression and torture. The resolve to bring about change through the return of multiparty politics was championed by the Anglophone working group of 1989 also called the "89 study group". (Gwellem, 1996) This group of Anglophone activists who had exploited all available means to voice out the Anglophone plight but always met with great torture, repression and humiliation believed that with the return of multiparty politics they will be able to address a wide scope of challenges without fear of repression. It was therefore in this perspective that John Fru Ndi forcefully launched the Social Democratic Front (SDF) in total dissidence and defiance of all "illegal" administrative restrictions and military repression mobilized by the regime to stop the move. With this courageous move by Fru Ndi coupled with the resolve of over 80,000 unarmed civilians in Bamenda, multiparty politics was reintroduced in Cameroon with the successful launch of the SDF on May 26th 1990. The success of this launch which symbolized great hope for freedom and democracy was to set the pace for democratic freedom in Cameroon. Unfortunately, despite succumbing to the democratic pressures, the Biya regime's acceptance of multiparty politics did not in any way mean the renunciation of

political repression and violence. For, even with the return of multiparty politics, political opponents continued to suffer repression and violence orchestrated by the regime. It was still about opposing in conformism or disappearing in dissidence.

Conformism as Surviving Strategy for Political Dissidents.

Conformism is a social principle or ideology by which one is expected to adopt or adapt to an established social norm or value by making it part and parcel of one's personality, as well as an essential element of his/her social identity without being compelled to do so. (Larouse, 1993) In other words conformism is a political choice taken by rational beings to militate in favour or in alignment with a political order and system which they don't approve, but judge appropriate to ensure and guarantee the attainment of their political goal which could be personal or collective. In political conformism we take the train not necessarily because it takes us to our destination but simply because it permits us to move and change position.

Political dissidents in post independent Cameroon who were hard pressed on every side and could barely have space to express their political freedom had two options set before them. "Persist in dissidence and disappear" or "Conform to the status-quo and exist". These were the political options systematically placed before all dissidents by the post-independent regimes of Ahidjo and Biya. Ahidjo was even more emphatic on this in 1962 when he made it clear that dissidence is tantamount to subversion (Gaillard, 1994) and knowing what awaited anyone guilty of subversion it was but clear that conformism was the best way to go unless one was prepared for doom. Of the many political actors who abandoned dissidence for conformism we have the following;

Theodore Mayi Matip: from Dissidence to Conformism

Appointed the administrative secretary of the UPC party in 1950, and a strategic actor of the 1955 UPC riots in the French occupied territory of Cameroon, Mayi Matip was a strong advocate of freedom and sovereignty which he defended with great zeal and passion (Kala-Lobe, 1992). Adhering to the nationalist cause in 1950, Mayi Matip affirmed himself on the side of Um Nyobe as An anti-colonialist, a true militant determined to fight colonialism and ensure the triumph of the anti-colonial ideology in French Cameroon. This ideal for which Mayi Matip went as far as sacrificing his job with the colonial administration to uphold, was finally dissipated in colonial repression and the numerous torture he underwent in detention and the hardship experienced in the Marquis. All these unfortunate experiences, instead of forging in Matip a veritable Combatant of liberty, rather produced a conformist. Emerging out of the Marquis in 1958 following the death of Um Nyobe, Mayi Matip decided to abandon the Anti-Colonial idealism propagated by the UPC to embrace a pragmatic Conformism to

Neo-colonialism hence legitimising the independence of French Cameroon on Neo-colonial basis, a kind of independence he had earlier castigated and fought fervently to avoid.

Now fully integrated within the neo-colonial regime of independent Cameroon Mayi Matip was convinced he could resuscitate the UPC ideal of sovereignty and effectively oppose and even win power in Cameroon. Based on this new conviction, Mayi Matip opted for dissidence in alliance with the Front National Unifié of Okala, Mbida and Bebey Eyidi. This intolerable act of theirs was tantamount to subversion, and Ahidjo did not relent to slam Matip and the other members of the FNU a Three year jail term. (Gaillard, 1994) After undergoing serious moral and physical torture in detention, Mayi Matip came out of prison greatly weakened politically with no other alternative but to conform to the Neo-colonial Jacobinist order by adhering to the UC which became CNU in 1966 and lone political party in the entire territory.

Henri Effa and G. Atangana; Strong Allies of Mbida Who Abandoned Dissidence for Conformism

Henri Effa and Atangana were among the relevant Grand Sud opposition leaders who condemned and rejected the 1960 constitutional project of Cameroon which they considered as Neo-colonial in character and had to do everything to ensure that the independence of Cameroon declared on 1st January was genuine and well consolidated in strong institutions. As advocates of freedom and sovereignty out of the neo-colonial status-quo, their ideals directly clashed with Ahidjo's ideal of absolute power in conformism. By persisting in dissidence under the banner of the DC of Mbida, Henri Effa and Atangana came to the realization that their rigid and aggressive position against the UC of Ahidjo was counter-productive as not only did it exclude their regions from development, it as well deprived its elites of the privilege of participation in government and public administration. Unable to counter these repressive measures put up by Ahidjo against them, they decided in Febrary 1962 to quit dissidence by creating their own party the Idepandant Democrates party (La Presse du Cameroun, N° 3537) with which they sought a possible alliance and eventually integrated Ahidjo's UC party. Thus from anti-imperialism Henri Effa and Atangana switched over to Neo-colonial Conformism which eventually guaranteed them Clientelist rewards as the few of the federal post allocated for the south all went to them who had deserted the opposition. (Willard, 1970)

Prince Dika Akwa Nya Bonambela: the Dissident UPCist Turned Conformist

This descendant of the Akwa Dynasty who by 1951 had started militating within Student Movements in Europe was to later become a key actor of the anti-imperialist movement in Africa and Cameroon in particular. After having petitioned the UN in 1957 requesting Cameroon Independence and Reunification, Dika Akwa had to

join UPC radicalism and even led a branch of the UPC rebellion (Force de Liberation Nationale du Cameroun) FNLCAM. (www.Peuplesawa.com) Though he accepted Ahidjo's general amnesty and opted for national reconciliation by integrating the legal wing of the UPC in 1960, Dika Akwa continued to preach anti-imperialism condemning the neo-colonial status quo incarnated by Ahidjo. This led to his arrest and imprisonment in 1961 where after serving 5years jail term he was freed and decided to vacate back to his university and research career in France. Two years later, Dika Akwa after failing to realise any meaningful success in his anti-imperialism campaign decided to abandon dissidence and reconverted himself to conformism in 1968 by joining the CNU unique party (La Presse du Cameroun, 1986). Through this spectacular action taken by Dika Akwa during an extraordinary section meeting of the CNU party in the Wouri section, it became clear that Dika Akwa had crossed the carpet from a UPC dissident to a CNU conformist.

Rene Jacques N'Gouo Woungly Massaga; Dropping Dissidence to Embrace Conformism

Woungly Masaga, a strong and committed militant of the UPC party embraced the party's anti-colonial ideal while as a student in France where he led the (UNEK) Union National des Etudiants Kamerunais. Following his activities in France he was considered by the Ahidjo regime as a dissident and so was to face the consequences. Immediately a diplomatic offensive was launched by Ahidjo through France leading to his dismissal and expulsion out of France in the 1960's (Eyinga, 1991). Taking the road to Ghana, Massaga joined the exiled wing of the UPC in Ghana where he participated in the putting in place of the "comité révolutionnaire" (Eyinga, 1991), greatly influenced by communist ideals this comité révolutionnaire launched from exile two military offensive operations into the Cameroon mainland in 1966 and 1967 respectively with the objective of overthrowing the neo-colonial regime of Yaoundé (Eyinga, 1991). Following the failure of these two operations, Woungly Massaga relocated to Senegal where he later in 1974 started a new movement known as Manifest Pour La Démocratie au Cameroun (MANIDEM). While in Senegal he persisted in castigating the neo-colonial regime of Yaoundé through newspapers, tracts and other forms of literature. Surprisingly in 1982 he abandoned dissidence to offer or put himself at the service of Paul Biya the Successor of Ahidjo. This not sufficient enough, he went further in 1990 to resign from the UPC/MANIDEM and pledged his support for the one-party (CPDM) leader Paul Biya (Kala Lobe & Abena, 1992). All these were simple maneuvers to survive in a repressive system which he became convinced was the only option for his political survival in Cameroon.

Jean Jacques Ekindi: The Dissident Turned Conformist

Developing a strong urge for social activism and militancy as a student in Paris, Jean Jacques Ekindi was to

finally enroll in the famous Union Nationale des Etudiants Kamerunais (UNEK) a branch of the exiled UPC party based in France and principally composed and animated by Students. This UPC oversea movement which had become a refuge ground and an effective platform for the dissemination for UPC ideals, carried high and effectively pursued with great determination the UPC struggle against imperialism through its multiplication of conferences and publications on Anti-colonialism. By his strong engagement and expression of great zeal and passion to fight imperialism, Jean Jacques Ekindi rapidly grew within the Ranks of UNEK to occupy the office of Vice President (Ekwe & Ekindi, 1996). Being in charge of Communication and the Editor in chief of the UNEK Scientific Review named "L'Etudiant Du Kamerun" he on a daily basis multiplied the publication of contestant and anti-conformist articles which revealed him as a veritable anti-conformist of the Cameroon regime headed by Ahidjo. Returning to Cameroon in 1970, Jean Jacques Ekindi unlike other Cameroonians and members of UNEK who upon stepping foot in Cameroon reconverted themselves into conformist, he rather remained very vocal and maintained his anti-conformism which was to immediately cause his arrest and imprisonment by the Yaoundé regime for a period of 16months (Equinox TV, 2020).

Weakened by his incarceration, Jean Jacques Ekindi travelled back to France and only to resumed politics again in full by 1982 (Ekwe & Ekindi, 1996) following the rise of Paul Biya to Power. With the rise to power of Paul Biya replacing Ahidjo J. J. Ekindi who had earlier demonstrated a strong zeal to fight the neo-colonial status-quo, convinced by the democratic emphasis of Biya and his "new deal" regime had to drop his anti-conformist activism to embrace conformism by enrolling into the unique CPDM party in 1986. As if to compensate an erstwhile dissident so as to have full grips on him and maintain him in total submission and conformism, Jean Jacques Ekindi who had just joined the party was by an electoral consensus mixed with ethnicity within the party voted President of Wouri Section of the CPDM party in Douala dislodging well established party barons like Koloko Levis. (Boulaga, 1997) In October 1987 Just one year after, J. J. Ekindi used his own eyes to witness with great Disappointment the dictatorial standards consolidated within the CPDM. Following the 1987 municipal elections, which saw the proclamation of Dooh Priso as Mayor of Douala instead of him who had secured a massive vote from the electorate, J. J. Ekindi became convinced the Biya regime was nothing different from the erstwhile Ahidjo regime. Having enough arguments now to attack and oppose the dictatorial and neo-colonial status-quo he had always stood against, J. J. Ekindi surprisingly chose to conform to the regime for fear of annihilation. Even with the effervescence produced by the pro-democracy movements in 1990's, where it was expected people like J. J. Ekindi will endorse, to the amazement of all it was rather J. J. Ekindi the

erstwhile dissident and advocate of democracy who led the CPDM manifestations against democracy. With this it was clear that for political survival, the dissident had no option but to conform to the regime and its neo-colonial status-quo.

JUA and ENDELEY Abandoning Dissidence for Conformism

The hunt for political dissidents launched by the Yaoundé regime did not limit itself only to the French speaking politicians. In the west Cameroon we had staunch autonomist like A.N JUA and ENDELEY who persistently challenged the regime by rejecting its annexationist policies thus identifying themselves as dissidents to the regime. Following the December 1967 elections into the West Cameroon Assembly that came up just one year after the putting in place of the single party CNU, the Jua coalition constituted of staunch Autonomist continuously maneuvered strategies to dictate their rule within the One-Party frame work. Evidence to this was the humiliating defeat they inflicted on the Federalist largely made up of the former CUC militants by sweeping 31 seats in the assembly leaving just 6 seats to the Federalist. (Mbile, 1999) This was a strong signal and even a provocative message to the CNU leader Ahidjo in which the Autonomist made it clear to him that in spite of the Uni-Polarisation of politics and the strong autocratic influence he had over Cameroon, they were still in control of politics in West Cameroon. This could not be pardoned by Ahidjo who had become at the time very intolerant and intransigent with contradiction or dissidence. Thus with immediate effect Ahidjo appointed S.T. Muna as Prime Minister of West Cameroon (Mbile, 1999) replacing Jua and his coalition who thought they could contradict Ahidjo and survive in the CNU one-party system. Politically weakened and disarmed, A.N. Jua and E.M.L Endeley had just one choice to make that is to conform to the CNU ideals and survive within the politics of the time. This they effectively did in the Garoua CNU Congress of 1969 (Gaillard, 1994) where they abandoned dissidence and completely conformed to the CNU status quo, hence earning appointment into the Political Bureau and central committee of the CNU (Gaillard, 1994).

CONCLUSION

Man, as the principal actor of history has continuously shaped the course of history and significantly determined the path of progress and failures of human society through various decisions and actions taken on a daily basis. The political evolution of post-independent Cameroon which has known great and significant developments in the conduct and practice of politics was seriously influenced by human action. By investing themselves and engaging themselves in very crucial issues of national interest, Cameroonians in their diversity took and adopted diverse political positions either in alignment with the ruling status-quo or in total contradiction of the said status-quo. In any of the cases, their positions greatly shaped

the political landscape of the country, but to a greater extent, those who opted for the position of contradiction played a key role in consolidating repression as a political instrument within the country thereby imposing docility and conformism as a political way of life. Greatly terrorized for affirming their dissidence vis-à-vis the ruling order of Yaoundé, political dissidents in Cameroon had an option to choose either to die in dissidence/exile or survive in conformism. In their great majority as exposed in this study, Cameroonian politicians renounced freedom and democracy to embrace a repressive neo-colonial status-quo in conformism, since the latter guaranteed them political survival and existence. Thus, by taking this path, they completely annihilated the culture of contradiction and protest to magnify a culture of political repression and docility which is the order of the day in Cameroons political landscape.

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