

NON-STATE ACTORS AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN ANGLOPHONE CAMEROON

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ABSTRACT

This paper sightsees the ongoing conflict in Anglophone Cameroon, which erupted in 2016, stressing on the significant role of non-state actors in shaping the dynamics of violence and peace. This study explores the multifaceted involvements of these actors ranging from local and international community organizations and civil society groups to armed separatist movements in the Anglophone conflict. Through qualitative research methods, this study adopted a case study research design, with the use of content analysis to analyse data which is generated through primary and secondary sources. in this direction, we examine how non-state actors have influenced conflict escalation, mediation efforts, and grassroots peacebuilding initiatives. It identifies key factors that enables or hinders their effectiveness, such as community trust, resource mobilization, and external support. The findings suggest that while some non-state actors exacerbate tensions through militant actions, others contribute positively by advocating for dialogue and providing humanitarian assistance. Ultimately, this study underscores the necessity of recognising and engaging with non-state actors in conflict resolution strategies to foster a sustainable peace in Anglophone Cameroon. By integrating their perspectives and capacities into formal peace processes, stakeholders can enhance the potentials for reconciliation and address the root causes of the conflict more effectively.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Introduction

In November 2016, peaceful strikes and protest were mobilised by the Anglophone lawyers, teachers and students pinpointing the Marginalisation of Anglophones and English Institutions. This led to a failed negotiation between the government and the teachers and lawyers trade unions in Bamenda. The peaceful protest continued calling for restoration of the federal System of government. These demonstrations were violently dispersed by the government military and Security forces causing clashes between the security agents and the demonstrators thus many people lost their lives. This provoked calls for Lockdown or operation Ghost town on Mondays by the trade unionists. The government crackdown strategies such as the banning of civil society, cutting of telephone Lines and Internet from January to April 2017 and governments efforts to establish Commission to address the Anglophone grievances such as language equity in Courts, and the Educational System collapsed. Continued distrust hindered de-escalation of the protest. With persistence Violence on both sides, the Ambazonia Nationalist movements emerged and the Southern Cameroons Ambazonia Consortium united front (SCACUF) declared Independence on the 1st October 2018 according to the sun newspaper (2017). In response to this, the government massively deployed troops to the Anglophone regions which

completely ended hope for Continued dialogue leading to the emergence of different armed groups such as the Red dragons, the Tigers, Seven Kata, ARA, embarking in to full-fledged guerilla warfare. BBC (2018) As per Tchoy (2077) the Anglophone crisis can generally be blamed on ineffective institutions leading to poor governance characterized by, limited separation of powers, limited accountability and transparency, unequal distribution of resources and limited representation as well as participation in decision making. Most of these issues demonstrates Anglophones dissatisfaction as were highlighted in John Ngu Foncha's resignation Letter in 1990 as he resigned from the ruling party or the national party.

The Anglophone conflict in Cameroon is not a simply horizontal struggle between two groups, but also features a complex set of vertical dynamics that demonstrates the widening of the conflict shaping its evolution. These "vertical trends" involve power imbalances, hierarchical structures, and the influence of various actors at different levels, impacting the conflict's trajectory and potential for resolution HRW (2020). The conflict has taken a different dimension with the involvement of different actors and an increase in criminal activities such as armed robbery. Initially, the conflict was primarily between the government and Anglophone separatist groups seeking independence for the English-speaking regions of Cameroon. However, over time, other armed groups and criminal elements have become involved, leading to an escalation of violence and instability in the region.

Additionally, the conflict has seen the emergence of various armed factions, including separatist militias, government security forces, and other non-state armed groups. This has further complicated the situation and made it increasingly difficult to resolve through peaceful means. The involvement of different actors and the rise in criminal activities like armed robbery and kidnapping have added to the complexity of the conflict and posed significant challenges to efforts aimed at finding a peaceful resolution Tembon W. (2020) The situation has also led to a humanitarian crisis, with widespread displacement and human rights abuses being reported. The government of Cameroon declared war on the separatist fighters deploying the military to the Anglophone regions and escalated the conflict, rapidly spreading in the two regions. The initial actors of the Anglophone conflicts are the state and the separatist groups. The Cameroonian government, dominated by Francophone elites, maintains a strong centralized control over the country, often seen as unresponsive to the grievances of the Anglophone population. Njung G. (2019)

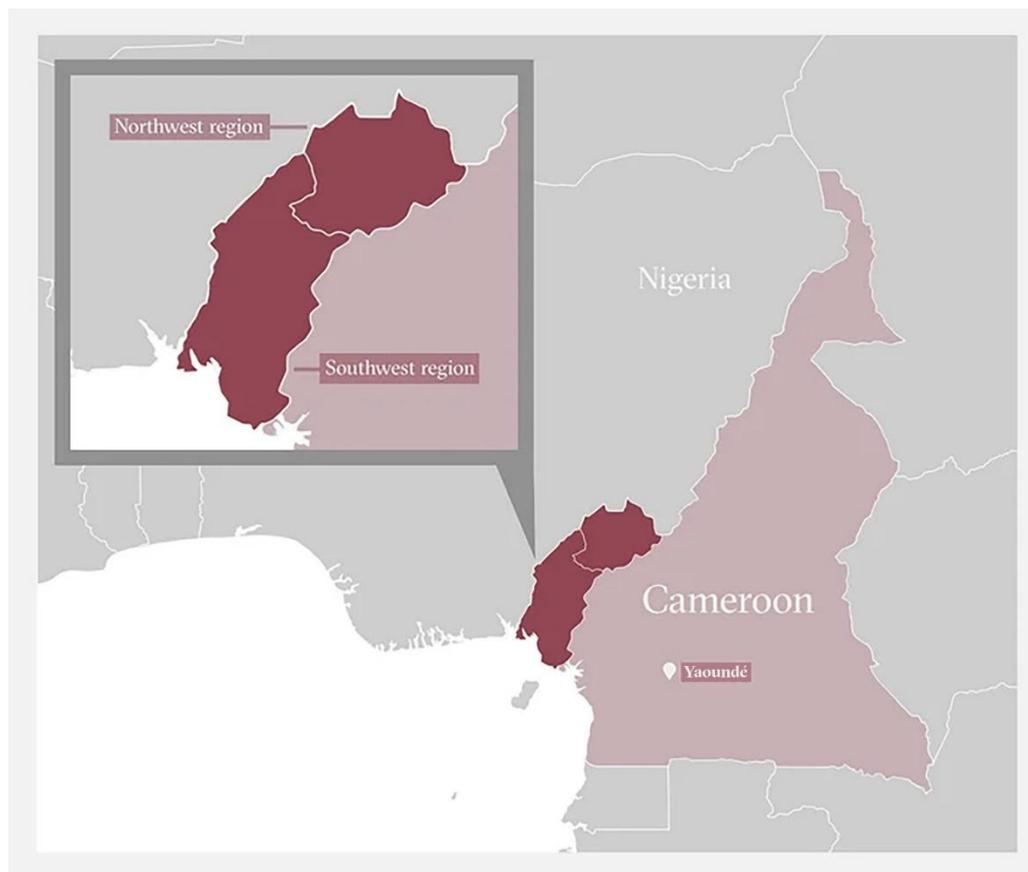
This paper embarks on the analysis of the role of non-state actors in conflict resolution, with a specific focus on the peacebuilding endeavours in the northwest and Southwest regions. The selection of these two regions stems from their distinct historical contexts, unique conflict dynamics, and varied approaches to peacebuilding. By delving into the experiences of non-state actors within these contexts, this study aims to illuminate the effectiveness, challenges, and contributions of non-state actors in navigating and mitigating conflicts as it lays the groundwork for an in-depth exploration of the role played by non-state actors in conflict resolution, offering insights into potential lessons learned and implications for policy and practice.

2.0 OVERVIEW OF THE ANGLOPHON CAMEROON

Anglophone Cameroon in present day northwest and southwest regions here are referred to in French acronym as NOSO located west of mungo with a current population of about 8million

out of Cameroon's estimated 20million population. This study is therefore limited to the northwest and southwest regions of Cameroon. They both share boundaries with Nigeria and Malabo in Equatorial Guinea

Map1: Map Showing the Northwest and Southwest in Cameroon



Source: Adapted from Macmillan School Atlas of Cameroon, Malaysia, Macmillan Publisher Limited, 2005, p.12.

Agreeing with BUCREP (2010). The Northwest region was renamed as a region in 2008 changing the 1972 name as it was referred to as the Northwest province which was previously referred to as the Grassland due to its herbaceous plant species for extensive grazing activities, composed of mountains, hills and plateaus such as the Sabga hill, Oku mountain and the Yamba plateau. These topographies compelling with the cold climatic condition suitable for agriculture which is the main economic activity of the region backed by Agric industries such as the Upper Noun development authority (UNVDA) enchasing rice soy beans, maize and cassava both for consumption and commercial purposes. Amawa (2009) The region has an average rainfall of about 2400mm and an average temperature of 23c0 with two main seasons, the rainy and the dry seasons from November to February. The inhabitants of the Northwest region are the semi-Bantu Anglophone who share some culture affiliation with other francophone tribes and are even related for instance the Nso people in the Anglophone region Northwest region with the Bafia and the Barnum people of the Francophone zone. The region is also well known for its cultural diversities with multiple tribes such as the Fulani Kom Wimbun, Bali, Oku, Ngemba,

with varying touristic sides such as Chiefdoms Fondoms Grass field landscape water falls, handicraft shops lakes such as lake Nyos Lake Awing and lake oku Tata (2016).

The Southwest region with the capital city Buea is made up of six administrative divisions which are Fako, Manyu, Meme, Ndian, Lebiallem and Kupe Muanenguba. This region was created in 1972 with the dissolution of the Federal State and the emergence of the unitary system in 1972 as the southwest province later changed into region in 2008. According to Ndoh M.I., D., Bitondo and BAlgah R.A. (2016) the region is a multi-ethnic area of Bantu origin with major tribes such as the Banyangi, the Bakweri, Bakundu, Balong Boki, Bassossi and Ejagham- habouring touristic and water sides such as Mount Fako, otherwise known as the Mount Cameroon which is the highest mountain in Cameroon and West Africa measuring about 4,40 meters above sea level Mount Kupe Meningioma Korup national part colonial vestiges such as the Germans colonial lodge or palace of von Put Kamer, water bodies like the Mungo river, the sea in Limbe, twin lake and river Manyu. The southwest region main activities include fishing, tourism, hunting, Agriculture and lumbering. Agriculture in this region is boosted by the Cameroon Development Cooperation (CDC), PAMOL and The National Refinery Company (SONARA). Companies characterized by subsistence farming and the plantation of bananas, cocoa, palm trees, timber and tea for exportation.

3.0 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

According to Schelling T. (1960) the concept of non-state actors refers to a broad spectrum of entities that operate outside of governmental structures but exert influence on societal, political, and economic dynamics. These actors encompass a diverse array of organizations, institutions, and groups, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), grassroots movements, religious organizations, multinational corporations, and community-based associations. The classification of non-state actors is multifaceted, often categorized based on their objectives, affiliations, and methods of operation. NGOs, for instance, are typically characterized by their non-profit status and commitment to advancing social, environmental, or humanitarian causes. Schmidt T. (2008) Grassroots movements, on the other hand, emerge from local communities and mobilize collective action around specific issues or grievances. Religious organizations may play significant roles in conflict resolution by offering spiritual guidance, fostering dialogue, and promoting reconciliation. Furthermore, non-state actors can be classified according to their level of engagement and influence within conflict resolution processes. Burton J. (1997) For instance, Track I actors refers to formal governmental entities engaged in diplomatic negotiations and policymaking, while Track II actors comprise informal networks and intermediaries, including civil society organizations and religious leaders, who facilitate dialogue and mediation efforts. Track III actors encompass grassroots initiatives and community-based organizations that directly engage with affected populations at the local level.

3.1 Conflict resolution

With reference to Bolton, L., (2020). Conflict resolution refers to the methods and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflict and retribution. It encompasses a variety of strategies aimed at addressing disputes, whether they arise in interpersonal relationships, organizations, communities, within a nation or between nations. Conflict can be emotional, ideological, or resource-based. Herman O. (2021) Conflicts can be categorized as intrapersonal

(within an individual), interpersonal (between individuals), group (within a team or organization), or international (between nations).

As per Rustarde (2024) Conflict Resolution techniques include negotiation which is a dialogue between parties aimed at reaching a mutually beneficial agreement, mediation which involves a neutral third party who facilitates communication and helps the disputing parties find a resolution, arbitration is more of a formal process where a neutral third party makes a binding decision on the dispute, collaboration that is the working together to find a solution that satisfies all parties involved and Compromising where in each party gives up something to reach an agreement. There are different Steps in Conflict resolution containing identifying the source by understanding the root cause of the conflict, listening Actively through the encouragement of all parties to express their views and feelings, develop options that's brainstorming the possible solutions that address the needs of all parties, evaluating options such as assessing the pros and cons of each proposed solution, agree on a solution by reaching a consensus that all parties can accept, implement the solution as well as putting the agreed-upon resolution into action, lastly ensuring follow up and checking all parties to ensure the solution is working and to make adjustments if necessary. Azad S. (2019)

4.0 THEORETICAL REVIEW

Rahel Kunz (2022), explains that theory analysis can gain deeper comprehension as far as strategic calculation in conflict is concerned as it helps to explain how the various actors of the Anglophone crisis that is the government, the separatists, the international community, NGOs, civil society, the federalist, the security forces pursue their interests through strategic calculation. Similarly, the goals and incentives factors of the theory of the instrumentalisation clearly analyze or explain how actors go to war because they have objectives or aim, they will wish to attend. For example, the Cameroonian government strive and fight to maintain control and preserve national unity. Meanwhile, separatists fight for liberation autonomy. Thus, understanding these goals, gives an insight to the dynamics of Anglophone conflict. Moreover, government strives at all costs to remain in power and to dominate the English-speaking region. This is demonstrated by the stakeholders or the elites who politicalize track down protests, which is a strategy to maintain power at the risk of escalating violence thus the use of violence by both parties to pursue their interests.

In the context of Liberal Pluralism Piaget emphasizes the vital role of non-state actors in promoting diversity and inclusivity within societies. Civil society organizations, grassroots movements, and advocacy groups advocate for marginalized groups, champion human rights, and facilitate the integration of diverse perspectives into conflict resolution processes. They are seen as essential agents for fostering democratic governance and peaceful coexistence. Transnationalism underscores the interconnectedness of global actors and the flow of ideas, resources, and information across national borders. Non-state actors operate transnationally, forming networks and alliances to address common challenges such as armed conflict, environmental degradation, and human rights violations. Transnational advocacy networks mobilize public opinion, shape policy agendas, and pressure governments to adopt peacebuilding measures on the international stage.

In respects to Dollard et. al (1980) highlights that with the theory of Constructivism and the socially constructed nature of conflict and peacebuilding processes, non-state actors contribute

to conflict resolution by shaping norms, identities, and discourses that underpin peacebuilding efforts. Through dialogue, education, and cultural exchange, they promote reconciliation, build trust, and challenge divisive narratives that fuel conflict. Constructivist approaches emphasize the role of non-state actors in creating shared meanings and narratives that facilitate conflict transformation and reconciliation. Grassroots movements and civil society organizations challenge dominant power structures, advocate for social justice, and demand accountability from state and corporate actors. Critical perspectives stress the importance of addressing root causes of conflict, including poverty, inequality, and marginalization, and call for transformative, participatory approaches to conflict resolution one state actors in Anglophone conflict

5.0 REVIEW ON THE ACTORS OF THE ANGLOPHONE CONFLICTS

Government of Cameroon since 2016 has been a key actor involving in the Anglophone conflict in several ways, therefore, Deployment of security forces to Northwest and Southwest regions. The military, the police and gendarmes have been sent to these zones characterized by instability to maintain law and order, and combat separatist fighters. This action has rather led to grave misconduct and human rights abuse such as extrajudicial killings arbitrary arrest, torture and high crime rate relating to rape, arm robbery, and looting. Crisis group (2019). The state has played significant role as far as the Anglophone conflict is concerned demonstrated crackdown of the protest demonstration and internet short down which were early government response to the Anglophone grievances. The state had taken diverse actions to put an end to the conflict the grand national dialogue converged by the president from 30th-september-04th October 2019 in Yaoundé where all stake holders were invited to provide possible solutions to the Anglophone crisis including the separatists who did not give a positive response due to the fact that some key leaders were absent on the basis that the national dialogue was going to take place on the framework of the Cameroonian constitution as stipulated by the head of state. Ngoh Ann (2020)

Following reports from the Crisis Group (2020), the state responded to the crisis in the following ways. Internet restoration, translation of the OHADA code in English, Recruitment of bilingual lawyers and teachers, release of many detainees and Pro-grievance activist, organization of a major national dialogue, creation of adhoc committees of the bilingualism and multicultural commission, the granting of special status to Northwest and southwest region and the establishment of rehabilitation centers in Bamenda and Buea.

Separatist groups involving the Anglophone conflict in Cameroon are primary seeking for greater autonomy and independence of Ambazonia or the federal republic of Ambazonia proclaimed by the Anglophone separatist which consist of the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon Lando (2022) Ambazonia rebels have engaged in armed conflicts with the la Republique military leading to Attacks on government institutions and infrastructures. They have attempted to setup an interim government in exile as some Ambazonia leaders have gone to exile in order to avoid arrest and persecution from the Cameroonian authorities. Through the use of social media, and other communication platforms such as southern Cameroon broadcasting cooperation (SCBC) and Southern Cameroons television (SCTU) created to communicate with supporters on “ground zero” implementing ghost towns and specific date to be respected such as the 1st October which is believed to be independent day

and directives to boycott national days such as 11th February and 20th May. Nkwain (2022) p.18 supportive militias have exerted control over some remote areas, though no country has recognized the state of Ambazonia created since ococtober 2017. The state has mobilized support from civilians through recruitment drives, propaganda, campaigns and community outreach.

According to Amnesty International (2021) human right abuse committed by the separatist groups are enormous ranging from harassing civilians and extortion of the local population to contributes to the “struggle” kidnapping for ransom, unlawful killings, destruction of property women and children abuse. These actions have further complicated efforts to resolve the conflict and have led to protraction of violent conflicts with significant humanitarian crisis. In spite of the afore mentioned, separatist groups have laydown some conditions for a ceasefire some of these conditions included, the liberation of all those who were arrested relating to the Anglophone problem, they equally proposed that the president of Cameroon, who declared war should declare a ceasefire and demilitarization of the “ambas”, the government should grant amnesty to those in exile, the organization of an international dialogue arbitrated by a neutral country in a venue agreed by both parties once these conditions are put in place we will sit down if the government so wishes to negotiate. Seseku Auk Tabe Juluis declared to the press on 5th December 2022.

Non-state actors have played significant role in the Anglophone conflict ranging from peace building, initiative, humanitarian actions, documentation of human right abuse, trauma healing, advocacy for justice and accountability to the advocacy for mediation. Despite constraints to civic space, they have supported civilians affected by the conflict. the government needs to acknowledge and support non-state actors for their relentless effort to bring back stability in the Anglophone regions even though they have done a lot, the government still remains the primary actor as bringing back stability in NOSO is concerned as they are just acting as a support system. Nancy A. et al (2021) in relation to humanitarian actions, the civil society organizations have played pertinent role in providing assistance to communities affected by the conflict such as basic needs like food, aid, medical care, shelter and psychological support.

The provision of basic humanitarian needs has been significant in expressing solidarity as it demonstrates concern. The preparedness of non-state actors to take risk to the conflict zone and going into bushes to provide relief to the internally displaced person (IDPs) accompanied by threats and accusation from both warring parties demonstrated their good will in supporting the vulnerable. Tanis (2019) As far as documenting and reporting on human rights abuse and other heinous crimes the civil societies such as Amnesty international human rights watch, crisis group have spearheaded the documentation of various inhuman Acts committed in Cameroon since the 2017 Numerous killings of children and pregnant women documented by the Human Rights Center for Democracy in Africa CHRDA (2020) which documented the Ngarbouh massacre perpetrated on the 14th of February 2020 and the Kumba tragedy by the network of human rights defenders in central Africa REDHAC (2021). CSOs have equally endeavored to provide post trauma healings leading to psychological relief with the aim of helping those affected most especially in Gender Based Violence to be reliefs from pains and probably prevent such conflict behavior. Peace building and peace educations are also one of the strategic areas where in the CSOs have played significant role. Most peace educations have been carried out in villages such as Takijah where the military have inflicted serious destruction

not to retaliate, educating victims that all hope is not lost peaceful campaign, have been carried out by the Northwest and Southwest women task force (SNWOT) established in May 2018.

In the context of the Anglophone conflict in Cameroon, federalist actors play a crucial role in advocating for greater autonomy and rights for the English-speaking regions regarding these actors, Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) One of the oldest movements advocating for the rights of Anglophones, seeking independence or greater autonomy. Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC) formed to unify various civil society groups advocating for federalism and better governance in Anglophone regions. Numerous NGOs and community-based organizations work to promote federalism and human rights, addressing issues such as governance, education, and health care in the Anglophone society.

The international community have not been silent as far as the Anglophone conflict is concerned as actively involved in the conflict through various channels such as Diplomatic engagements by the African Union, European Union, United Nations and individual states such as the Vatican, Russian, and many others encouraging the government and separatist fighters on dialogue and peaceful resolution, supporting mediation initiative to facilitates successful dialogue. Human rights monitoring sanctions and pressure, are efforts of the international human rights organization as they have documented, monitored raised awareness on the Human rights violation and the various atrocities committed. These measures are intended to hold perpetrators accountable and deter further violations Crisis Group (2020). peace building, reconciliation and direct Humanitarian assistance demonstrated by funding assistance, provision of technical assistance and expertise to support civilian in their various communities in local peace building efforts and the engagement in the provision of basic needs such as food, medical care, shelter and psychological assistance to the displaced persons IDPs and other vulnerable groups.

The Anglophone conflict has gone national and international involving the activities of both states and non-states actors with different pertinent roles played by each actor to bring back peace, security and stability in the English-speaking zone of Cameroon following serious socio-economic impacts on the development of these regions. Despite the efforts of the government, the state is being blamed for being heavyhearted and inflicting tension in the region thus there have been calls for more serious effective and inclusive and transparent dialogue to address the grievance of the Anglophones and possibly provide long lasting solution to the conflict.

6.0 FACTORS INFLUENCING THE ROLE OF NON-STATE ACTORS

The effectiveness and impact of non-state actors in conflict resolution are shaped by various factors, reflecting the complex dynamics of conflict environments. The regulatory context within which non-state actors operate profoundly affects their ability to engage in conflict resolution activities. Supportive legal frameworks that safeguard the rights of civil society organizations and ensure freedom of expression and association facilitate their participation in peacebuilding efforts. Conversely, restrictive legal environments, marked by limitations on civil liberties or NGO activities, may impede their effectiveness. Podders S. (2013) The availability of financial, human, and material resources significantly influences the capacity of non-state actors to engage in conflict resolution initiatives. Access to adequate funding, skilled personnel, and technology enhances their ability to implement programs, mobilize support, and

sustain peacebuilding efforts over the long term. Conversely, resource constraints such as funding shortages or organizational capacity limitations can hinder their effectiveness. The political landscape and power dynamics within conflict-affected settings shape the opportunities and challenges confronting non-state actors. Alison, G. (1969) Negotiating complex political environments characterized by competing interests, power struggles, and vested interests requires skillful navigation. Non-state actors may encounter resistance from state authorities, political elites, or armed group opposed to peacebuilding initiatives, necessitating careful strategic engagement. Sociocultural factors, including norms, values, identities, and historical legacies, profoundly influence the attitudes and behaviors of non-state actors and their constituents. Sensitivity to cultural diversity, respect for local customs, and inclusive approaches are critical for building trust and fostering meaningful dialogue and reconciliation. Pearlman and Cunningham (2012) Non-state actors must navigate complex sociocultural dynamics, including ethnic, religious, and tribal affiliations, to promote social cohesion and address the underlying causes of conflict. Non-state actors often rely on external support and partnerships to enhance their capacity and effectiveness in conflict resolution efforts. Collaborating with international organizations, donor agencies, diplomatic missions, and academic institutions can provide access to funding, technical expertise, and networking opportunities. Wright Q. (1983) However, reliance on external actors may also pose challenges related to dependence, accountability, and sovereignty concerns. Non-state actors' engagement in conflict resolution processes should prioritize local ownership, participation, and empowerment. Meaningful engagement with local stakeholders, including marginalized groups, women, youth, and indigenous communities, enhances the legitimacy and sustainability of peacebuilding initiatives. Adopting inclusive, participatory approaches that prioritize local perspectives, knowledge, and priorities is essential for fostering community resilience and promoting lasting peace

7.0 THE ROLE OF NONE STATE ACTORS IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE NORTHWEST AND SOUTH WEST REGIONS

Anglophone Cameroon has grappled with armed conflict and internal strife for almost a decade, fueled by various factors including political instability, socioeconomic inequality, and demands for autonomy. The involvement of non-state actors in conflict resolution efforts has been instrumental in addressing the root causes of violence and fostering peace in the regions. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have played a pivotal role in promoting human rights, advocating for social justice, and providing humanitarian assistance to conflict-affected populations in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon. Tembon W. (2018) Organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and Peace Brigades International have documented human rights abuses, campaigned for justice and accountability, and monitored peace processes to ensure compliance with international standards. Civil society organizations have emerged as important actors in facilitating dialogue, reconciliation, and community empowerment initiatives at the grassroots level.

These organizations have mobilized communities, facilitated truth and reconciliation processes, and advocated for the rights of victims of violence and displacement, genders rights and inclusivity. Religious institutions have also played a significant role in peacebuilding efforts in Cameroons Anglophone conflicts, leveraging their moral authority and spiritual leadership to promote forgiveness, reconciliation, and social cohesion. They have actively

involved in mediating conflicts, providing humanitarian assistance, and promoting dialogue between conflicting parties. Community-based organizations and grassroots movements have been at the forefront of local peacebuilding efforts, mobilizing communities, fostering social cohesion, and promoting alternative livelihoods in conflict-affected regions. Initiatives such as the Association of Indigenous Women of North west have advocated for peace in their communities, resisted violence and exploitation, and pursued collective strategies for peace and development ICRC (2022).

As per Kaze, T. and Elokobi, E. (2024), the role of non-state actors in conflict resolution in the English-speaking part of Cameroon has faced threats, intimidation, and violence from various armed groups, as well as the military, and criminal gangs or opportunist opposed to peacebuilding initiatives. Limited resources, institutional capacity constraints, and political polarization have also posed obstacles to their effectiveness and sustainability. Nevertheless, the contributions of non-state actors in conflict resolution in Cameroon have been significant, fostering dialogue, promoting reconciliation, and advancing human rights and social justice. Their efforts have complemented state-led initiatives and contributed to the broader peacebuilding process in the country. Moving forward, strengthening partnerships between state and non-state actors, enhancing resource mobilization and capacity-building efforts, and fostering inclusive, participatory approaches will be essential for sustaining peace and promoting reconciliation in Anglophone Cameroon.

8.0 CHALLENGES OF NON-STATE ACTORS IN ANGLOPHONE CAMEROON

The impact of non-state actor engagement in conflict resolution is profound as the Anglophone Cameroon in the sociopolitical context is characterized by deep-rooted political violence and historical grievances. Non-state actors operate in a complex environment marked by political polarization, institutional weaknesses, and the presence of armed groups. The legacy of almost a decade-long conflict has created deep divisions within Anglophone society, complicating efforts to build trust, foster dialogue, and promote reconciliation Crisis Group (2023). Non-state actors face threats, intimidation, and violence from various armed groups opposed to peacebuilding initiatives, posing significant challenges to their engagement in conflict resolution. In Cameroon, the sociopolitical conflict is shaped by political instability, ethnic diversity, and historical inequalities. Non-state actors operate in a dynamic environment characterized by cultural tensions between the Anglophone and the francophone and socio-economic disparities. However, challenges such as political fragmentation, weak governance structures, and limited resources have hindered their effectiveness in addressing the root causes of conflict and promoting sustainable peace. ICRC (2022).The impact of the sociopolitical context on non-state actor engagement is evident in their strategies and priorities. non-state actors focus on addressing human rights abuses, advocating for justice, and documenting violations, reflecting the country's history of political violence and impunity. non-state actors on the other hand prioritize dialogue, reconciliation, and social cohesion, reflecting the region's diverse ethnic and religious landscape and the need to promote inclusive peacebuilding processes.

9.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study has been conducted in the English-Speaking regions (also known as Anglophone region) which are co-terminus to the North-West and South-West regions of the Republic of

Cameroon. The study employed survey and case study research designs, with purposive and systematic random sampling techniques for field data collection. In this study the sources of data collection were both primary and secondary data. The method that was used in collecting primary data in this study was mainly interview guides as the central instruments, but the researchers also carried out some observations. These guides were semi-structured to enable prompting. Secondary sources (Library, Internet, published books and articles, research reports, statistics and documented useful information from websites on related problems) also served as sources of data in this study. Secondary data used for this research is accessible as Information have been collected from both online and offline sources. The study population included selected groups of women and men, youth of different age groups, religious associations, non-governmental organizations and civil societies who were directly or indirectly affected by the ongoing Anglophone armed conflict opposing the security defense forces of the republic of Cameroon and armed separatist groups. The total sample size was 139 respondents, with 86 women and 53 men. content analysis was used as the method of data analysis, using the themes to make a robust analysis of the research findings.

10.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings revealed that the ongoing conflict has led to serious effects on the people of the Anglophone regions and among these effects include; unlawful Killings, sabotage and burning of properties, health facilities, kidnapping and extortion and effects of the conflict on local economies. The findings of this study remain valid as places such as Ngarbuh, Kumba just to name these have felt the brunt. To begin with, the massacre took place in the village of Ngarbuh, in the Ngoketunjia Division of the North-West region, an area heavily affected by the conflict. Cameroonian soldiers, accompanied by armed Mbororos and Ambazonian detractors, carried out a massacre of civilians in Ngarbuh, two quarters of Ntumbaw Village in Ndu sub division of Donga-Mantung Division, Northwest Region. The two quarters that make up what is called Ngarbuh are known in Ntumbaw as Sirngar (Ngar) Mabuh (buh). Calling the area Ngarbuh was introduced after the 1980s when the government set up as school and located it between the two quarters of Ntumbaw, hence the designation Ngarbuh.

The findings of non-state actors in conflict resolution in the Anglophone regions, yield important insights and best practices for future peacebuilding efforts. Non-state actors have demonstrated the value of inclusive and participatory approaches to peacebuilding. By engaging diverse stakeholders, including marginalized groups, women, youth, and indigenous communities, they foster ownership, legitimacy, and sustainability of peace processes. Non-organizations NGOs play a crucial role in protecting human rights during the Anglophone conflict in Cameroon. They operate in challenging environments, facing numerous obstacles, but their work is vital for mitigating suffering, holding perpetrators accountable, and advocating for a peaceful resolution.

Non- state actors play a crucial role in safeguarding human rights in the Anglophone conflict. They work tirelessly to mitigate suffering, expose abuses, and advocate for peace and accountability. Their work is vital in a complex and challenging environment. Humanitarian efforts by international civil society organizations (CSOs) in the context of the Anglophone conflict in Cameroon have been essential in addressing the needs of affected populations. These organizations have engaged in various activities to provide relief, support, and advocacy. None

-state document human rights violations, including killings, torture, disappearances, arbitrary arrests, and displacement. They collect evidence through interviews, witness testimonies, and investigations, which is used to hold perpetrators accountable and advocate for justice. They monitor the conflict, observing human rights abuses and reporting on the impact on civilians, highlighting areas of concern and documenting the humanitarian crisis. Non-state actors report and testimonies bring public attention to the human rights situation in the Anglophone regions, increasing international pressure on the government and other actors to address the conflict.

They provide essential humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees fleeing the violence and residing in neighbouring countries like Nigeria. This includes food, water, shelter, medical care, and psychological support. Non-state actors often work with local communities to provide essential services, including education, healthcare, and livelihood support, which are disrupted by the conflict. Non-state actors can help people to access legal aid and support for seeking justice, particularly for victims of human rights abuses. Non-state actors actively promote dialogue and reconciliation, working with local communities, the government, and other stakeholders to build bridges and foster understanding. They advocate for the respect of human rights by all parties to the conflict, raising concerns about human rights violations and calling for accountability. Non-state actors lobby governments and international organizations to take action to protect human rights and address the conflict, including by imposing sanctions, providing humanitarian aid, and supporting peace talks.

Emergency relief and humanitarian assistance demonstrated by the fact that many organizations have provided food assistance to displaced individuals and communities facing food shortages due to the conflict. CSOs have distributed essential non-food items such as blankets, cooking utensils, and hygiene kits to those displaced from their homes. Organizations have set up temporary health clinics and mobile health units to provide medical care, vaccinations, and maternal health services to affected populations. Several organizations focus on protecting children from violence, exploitation, and recruitment into armed groups. They provide psychosocial support and educational opportunities for displaced children. Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Prevention as CSOs have implemented programs to prevent and respond to GBV, offering support services for survivors and raising awareness about rights and available resources. Community Engagement and Capacity Building as international CSOs often collaborate with local NGOs and community-based organizations to ensure that humanitarian efforts are culturally appropriate and sustainable. Training programs are provided to local leaders and organizations to enhance their ability to respond to humanitarian needs and advocate for their communities. Many organizations offer psychosocial support services to help individuals cope with trauma resulting from violence and displacement. This includes counseling, support groups, and community-based healing initiatives. Given the disruption of education due to the conflict, some organizations have focused on providing educational materials, temporary learning spaces, and support for teachers to ensure that children can continue their education.

Addressing root causes of conflict, such as socio-economic disparities, political grievances, and historical injustices, is essential for building lasting peace. Non-state actors advocate for social justice, promote human rights, and work to rectify structural, cultural and direct inequalities as foundational steps toward reconciliation. Building trust and fostering dialogue between conflicting parties are central to promoting understanding and cooperation. Non-state

actors serve as mediators, facilitators, and bridge-builders, creating spaces for constructive dialogue, negotiation, and conflict resolution at various levels. Mobilizing community resilience and solidarity empowers communities to withstand the impact of conflicts and pursue shared aspirations for peace. Strengthening social networks, promoting mutual assistance, and fostering collective action enable communities to resist violence and pursue sustainable development. Advocating for human rights, accountability, and justice is crucial for addressing past atrocities and preventing future conflicts. Non-state actors document human rights abuses, amplify victims' voices, and advocate for accountability measures to promote reconciliation and prevent impunity. Strengthening partnerships and collaboration among diverse stakeholders enhances the effectiveness and impact of peacebuilding efforts. By leveraging complementary strengths, resources, and expertise, non-state actors can address complex challenges and promote sustainable peace and development. Adapting to contextual dynamics is essential for the success of peacebuilding initiatives. Understanding local histories, cultures, and power dynamics enables non-state actors to navigate complexities, build trust, and promote locally-driven solutions to conflict resolution challenges. By embracing these lessons learned and best practices, non-state actors can contribute to transformative change and foster sustainable peace and reconciliation in conflict-affected societies worldwide. Their experiences in the Anglophone regions underscore the importance of collaborative, adaptive, and inclusive approaches to peacebuilding.

11.0 DISCUSSIONS

The ongoing armed conflict in the Anglophone regions has faced many challenges to peace building, including Intimidation as the government's intimidation of civil society groups, such as the Cameroon Anglophone civil society consortium (CACSC), destabilized social cohesion and made participants in peacebuilding processes doubtful of their security. The government's ambiguous reaction to the conflict and the arrest of CACSC members led to distrust of the government and prevented participation in the 2019 dialogue process. Trauma from violence, displacement, and other events can lead to mental health challenges like anxiety, depression, and PTSD. If left unresolved, trauma can perpetuate a cycle of violence and hinder peace building. Some research suggests that NGOs were not effective in their humanitarian and peacebuilding role in the conflict. A lack of a shared vision for change among key stakeholders can hinder peace building. Pre-existing inter-community conflicts can deter the peace process

Experimenting with the roles and influences of non-state actors in this context can yield valuable insights into the conflict's dynamics and potential pathways for resolution. Types of Non-State Actors include armed groups Ambazonia Defense Forces, civil society organizations, NGOs, and community leaders. Each plays a different role in the conflict landscape. Motivations and Goals Non-state actors often arise from perceived marginalization and grievances against the government. Understanding their motivations whether for independence, autonomy, or social justice is essential for framing discussions around their involvement. It is pertinent to note that non-state actors can Impact Local Communities most especially in the domain of Security and Governance. Non-state actors can provide security in areas where government presence is weak, but they can also impose their own forms of governance that may be authoritarian or violent. Some non-state actors gain legitimacy through community support, addressing local needs that the government fails to meet. This can create a complex relationship where communities may rely on these actors for protection and services.

Dialogue and Mediation especially through engaging Non-State Actors and experimenting with dialogue initiatives that include non-state actors could open pathways to peace. This requires creating safe spaces for discussions that address grievances and aspirations. Role of Mediators and Neutral third parties (for instance, international organizations) could facilitate dialogue between the government and non-state actors, helping to build trust and find common ground. Humanitarian Consideration and Access to Aid as Non-state actors can either obstruct or facilitate humanitarian assistance. Understanding their control over territories can help in planning effective aid delivery. Human Rights Violations since Some non-state actors have been implicated in human rights abuses. Addressing these violations is crucial for any peace process and requires accountability mechanisms. Establishing inclusive dialogue platforms that brings together government officials, separatist leaders, civil society, and community representatives can facilitate understanding and negotiation of grievances. Mediators from neutral parties such as international organizations can help foster these discussions. Grassroots peacebuilding initiatives that involve local communities can help address underlying tensions. Programs that promote dialogue between different ethnic and linguistic groups can build trust and understanding. Engaging communities in dialogue helps build trust among individuals and groups. When people feel heard and valued, they are more likely to cooperate and collaborate toward common goals. Community engagement ensures that the perspectives and needs of local populations are considered in peacebuilding initiatives.

International Dynamics and Diaspora Influence due to the fact that the Anglophone diaspora plays a significant role in mobilizing support for separatist movements, impacting local dynamics. Engaging with diaspora communities could enhance understanding and support for peaceful resolutions. Foreign Policy Implications, the involvement of external actors (for instance, neighboring countries, international organizations) can influence the behavior of non-state actors and the government. Conducting interviews and surveys within affected communities can provide insights into perceptions of non-state actors, their legitimacy, and their impact on daily life. As a result of conflict mapping utilizing tools like conflict mapping can help visualize relationships among various actors, including non-state entities, and identify potential leverage points for interventions. Potential Pathways such as Inclusive governance models which explores governance models that incorporate non-state actors could enhance legitimacy and address grievances. Community-Based Approaches through Fostering community-led initiatives that bring together diverse stakeholders may build trust and resilience against conflict. By engaging these actors constructively, there is potential to foster dialogue, address underlying issues, and work towards sustainable peace.

12.0 CONCLUSION

The experiences of non-state actors in conflict resolution in the North west and Southwest regions underscore the importance of inclusive, adaptive, and contextually sensitive approaches to building peace and reconciliation. Throughout their engagement, non-state actors have traversed complex sociopolitical environments, addressing the origin of conflict, encouraging dialogue, and advocating for human rights and social justice. In the Anglophone zones, non-state actors have met the legacies of political violence and historical grievances. Despite facing threats and challenges from both parties, they have played pivotal roles in documenting abuses of human rights, facilitating dialogue, and promoting reconciliation at the grassroots level. Non-state actors have leveraged the country's ethnic diversity and religious

pluralism to foster interfaith dialogue, reconciliation, and social cohesion. The policy implications and recommendations derived from the experiences of non-state actors offer valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders involved in conflict resolution efforts. By prioritizing inclusive peace processes, investing in conflict prevention, and promoting human rights and justice, governments and international organizations can create enabling environments for non-state actors to contribute effectively to peacebuilding initiatives. Moving forward, it is imperative to recognize the agency and expertise of non-state actors in shaping peace processes and building resilient communities. Strengthening partnerships, fostering collaboration, and supporting local initiatives are essential for sustainable peace and reconciliation in the English-speaking part of Cameroon and beyond. In conclusion, the contributions of non-state actors highlight the transformative potential of grassroots peacebuilding efforts. By embracing diversity, promoting dialogue, and addressing systemic inequalities, non-state actors play critical roles in building bridges, healing wounds, and laying foundations for a more peaceful and just future. Their experiences offer valuable lessons for navigating the complexities of conflict and advancing shared aspirations for peace and reconciliation in diverse societies around the world.

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