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## The “Kamerun Idea”: E pluribus unum Cameroon

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### Abstract

Since independence, the “Anglophone” and “Francophone” identities (both legacies of British and French colonialism, respectively) have remained the dominant national identity of Cameroonians. This linguistic national identity was formalized by the adoption of bilingualism at the dawn of independence and the enactment of English and French as the two official languages of the country. Nationalism and national integration in the Cameroonian context therefore revolve around the cohabitation of the aforementioned distinct linguistic and cultural identities, which harbors significant incompatibilities. This article probes into the effectiveness of the cohabitation model of nation-building in Cameroon and attempts a new alternative. A survey was conducted to sample the opinion of Cameroonians on national identity and nationalism in Cameroon. The results indicate there are enormous challenges with the implementation of the cohabitation model, which an overwhelming majority of respondent believe has a negative impact on national integration. A new approach dubbed “Civic-multicultural model” is proposed. This model is based on the “Kamerun Idea,” which is a glaring reminder that before being “anglicized” by the British on the one side of the Mungo river, and “gallicized” by the French on the other side, the inhabitants offshore the “Rios dos Cameroes” were first “kamerunized” by the Germans.

**Keywords:** nationhood; nationalism; Anglophone; Francophone; Cameroon

### Introduction

At independence, the reunited Cameroon opted for a cohabitation model of nation-building that consisted of integrating the two constituent linguistic communities (former French and British Cameroons) into a single nation using a federal system of government as its constitutional framework. The cohabitation of the aforementioned linguistic communities since independence has been that of a union of strange bedfellows with allegations of marginalization of the minority (Anglophones) by the majority (Francophones) and intermittent attempts toward separation. Despite attempts over the years to forge a sense of patriotism, nationalism and national integration between the two constituent linguistic entities (Anglophones and Francophones) that came together to forge a Cameroonian nation, it has been difficult to achieve a blend that overshadows the primary identification and primordial loyalty to the two distinct linguistic identities. The ongoing Anglophone crisis in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon has eloquently demonstrated that the attainment of independence doesn't necessarily imply the attainment of national integration. It is one thing to establish a state but quite another to build a nation – especially one forged from two heterogeneous linguistic communities. The construction of a distinct Cameroonian national identity that rises above the parochial linguistic dichotomy between the constituent communities therefore remains a quandary for academicians, politicians, and other

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stakeholders to resolve. This article attempts a novel approach to national identity and national integration in Cameroon which focuses on a civic-multicultural integration model rather than linguistic cohabitation.

In terms of methodology, this article examines the effectiveness of the cohabitation model of nation-building through a structured questionnaire-based survey administered to a random sample of 208 Cameroonians. The results indicate a strong attachment to linguistic and ethnic nationalism; an overwhelming acknowledgement of the existence of an Anglophone and a Francophone nationalism; a clear recognition of the negative impact these mutually exclusive nationalisms have on nation integration; and an acknowledgement of the ineffectiveness of the cohabitation model as an approach toward national integration. The article presents the detail results of the survey and interpretations that can be drawn thereof.

This article is divided into four sections: The first section focuses on the theoretical framework and explores various theoretical perspectives on nationhood and nationalism, as well as looking at the concept of nation-building. The second section traces the history of nationhood and nationalism in Cameroon beginning from the German colonial era to independence. The third section analyzes the effectiveness of the cohabitation model in the pursuit of nationhood and nationalism in contemporary Cameroon, while the fourth section proposes a multicultural-civic approach to nationalism as a means to enhance national integration and nation-building in Cameroon.

## 1. Theoretical Framework

Cameroon can be categorized as *sui generis* among other African states given its unique history and contemporary realities. Cameroon is the only African country to have experienced colonial occupation from three imperialist powers (Germany, Britain, and France). Cameroon's rich cultural and geographical diversity has earned it the appellation of "Africa in miniature." The country comprises two linguistic communities (English-speaking or "Anglophone" and French-speaking or "Francophone"); about 250 ethnic groups (Sawe 2018); and a total of 274 different spoken languages (Statista Research Department 2021), which makes Cameroon the sixth most ethnically diverse country in the world with an ethnic diversity score of 0.8870 (Wee 2019). To analyze the evolution and state of nationalism and nationhood in Cameroon, it is imperative to define certain key theoretical and conceptual tools that are vital in undertaking such an analysis. These include the theories of nationhood and nationalism. To provide a comprehensive understanding of these two concepts, a brief conceptual analysis will also be made on nationalism and nation-building from the African context.

### 1.1. Theories of Nationhood

There are four fundamental theoretical approaches on nationhood or what constitute a nation: primordialism; perennialism; modernism; and ethno-symbolism. Much have been written on these approaches in nationalism literature (Smith 2015; Weinreich et al. 2005; Smith 1998; Llobera 1999), which makes its further exploration in this article an exercise in redundancy. Suffice it to say that the notion of nationhood in Cameroon adheres more to the modernist approach; this is because Cameroon is ethnically diverse in its composition and emerged from a colonial experience that engendered two distinct linguistic communities who decided to unite together to form a single sovereign polity.

Modernism is centered around the concept of nation-building that Smith (1998) identifies as one of modernism's best known and most obvious models, which became popular in social science during the decolonization era in Asia and Africa. Mylonas (2017, 1) conceives nation-building as "the process through which the boundaries of the modern state and those of the national community become congruent," emphasizing that "the desired outcome is to achieve national integration." The idea of nation-building is the catalyst behind the emergence of a Cameroonian

nation out of the ashes of colonialism. The goal of Cameroonian nationalists was to develop a nation based on the integration of the two linguistic communities that emerged from the colonial experience (Anglophones and Francophones) and the preexisting ethnic groups.

### 1.2. Theories of Nationalism

Theories of nationalism usually revolve around the distinction between ethnic and civic nationalism. Eriksen (1992) believes nationalism, like nationhood, is rooted in ethnicity and sees nation-states as the outcome of the nationalism of an ethnic group, which has attained or seek to attain statehood. By contrast, Haas (1986) perceives nationalism purely from the civic perspective. He defines it as “the convergence of territorial and political loyalty irrespective of competing foci of affiliation, such as kinship, profession, religion, economic interest, race, or even language” (Haas 1986, 709). Clifford Geertz adopts a middle ground approach that integrates both the ethnic and civic perspective of nationalism. To him, nationalism comprises “two competing yet complementary components – ethnic and civic – in the nationalism of post-colonial states” (Geertz as cited in Smith 1994, 15). He further points out that “the ethnic dimension is portrayed as a commitment to ‘primordial’ loyalties which endow individuals with a distinctive identity: the civic as a desire for citizenship in a modern state” (ibid.). This article subscribes to the views of Geertz as it proposes a civic-ethnic approach to nationalism dubbed ‘Civic-multicultural model’ as an effective tool to achieve national integration and national unity in Cameroon.

The “Civic-multicultural model” I am proposing is based on a nation-building process that emphasizes civic nationalism while safeguarding the cultural values of various existing ethnic groups. It explores ideas that can help the state to transition from parochial loyalty to the current dualistic constituent linguistic identities and culture to a broader, encompassing, and transcending national identity. It attempts to remove the focus on a binary choice on nationalism along the lines of constituent linguistic communities to an inclusive and diverse alternative that could provide a foundation for deeper integration and unity.

### 1.3. Nationalism and Nation-building in Africa

Nationalism and nation-building in Africa has a paradoxical history as both the product of and the repudiation of colonialism. Contemporary African nation-states are mostly the offspring of the partition of the continent by European imperial powers into colonies. Imperialism unintentionally reshaped Africa into multi-ethnic political entities and colonial rule, inadvertently forged a national identity, and ignited a desire for a nation free from colonial dominance and ruled by its indigenes (nationalism). Commenting on the birth of nationalism and nation-building in Africa, Okoth (2006, 2) underscored that

the colonial powers alone created the present bases of the nations of independent Africa by arbitrarily dividing the continent into administrative entities and imposing thereupon legal, linguistic, and cultural concepts. Of course, they did not complete the nation-building process; it was left to the independence rulers to complete the unified national designs left to them by their previous rulers.

The aforementioned task (nation-building) depended a lot on national institutions at the central level, which, as Coleman and Rosberg (1966, 2) argue, “remain fragile and nonfunctional” at the dawn of independence.

Nationalism and nation-building in Africa has attracted the attention of several scholars who have tackled the issue both from a cross national and individual country levels. Depetris-Chauvin and colleagues (2020) reveal the positive impact national team victory has on national identity in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA): using Uganda as a case study, Green (2020) argues that the transfer of allegiance from ethnic identity to national identity is largely determined by membership to a core

ethnic group and if that ethnic group is in power; Ahlerup Baskaran, and Bigsten (2017) explain the enhancing effect regional development has on national identity; Robinson (2014) evokes the positive impact modernization has on national identity; and Green (2022), as for the case with modernization, argues that industrialization can be a catalyst to the transformation of rural communities into ethnically homogenous societies. By contrast, Bandyopadhyay and Green (2013) reveal in a study, evidence that suggests nation-building policies do not enhance and political stability and even have the potentials of enhancing political instability.

Other authors have focused on case studies on nation-building in Africa. With data from more than 200 interviews in Ghana, Koter (2021) suggest a new paradigm in the assessment of the strength of national identity, which is based on political stability, peace, and the conduct of elections. Comparing the nation-building process in Switzerland and Belgium with Botswana and Somalia and with China and Russia, Wimmer (2018, 151) argues that there are three principal reasons why nation-building succeeds in some multi-ethnic countries and fails in others: “the early development of civil-society organizations, the rise of a state capable of providing public goods evenly across a territory, and the emergence of a shared medium of communication.” Using surveys and focus group data from inhabitants of the Niger-Burkina Faso border and the capitals of the two countries, Bhandari and Mueller (2019) contend that what fosters nationalism in marginalized communities is an attachment to a nation-family rather than the nation-state.

## 2. History of Nationhood and Nationalism in Cameroon

The geographical zone today known as Cameroon is said (based on archaeological evidence) to have constituted the first homeland of the Bantus, who are believed to have inhabited the area around 1500 BCE (Longley 2020). On the economic front, DeLorme, Kamerschen, and Mukum Mbaku (1988, 146) note that

before the arrival of the European colonizers, the economy of the territories later to be known as Kamerum [sic] (Cameroon from 1914 onward) was characterized by groups of indigenous cultivators, most of whom belonged to semi-autonomous or autonomous tribal groups. Pigmies, scattered throughout the rain forest, lived in caves and were primarily hunters. Agricultural production dominated the economy with foodstuffs and raw materials such as cotton, raffia palms and palm kernels, forming the bulk of output. The principal method of farming was that of shifting cultivation.

The history of nationhood and nationalism in Cameroon predates the colonial era. It would be incomplete to trace the origins of Cameroon as a nation without mentioning the etymological evolution of the name “Cameroon.” Etymologically, the name “Cameroon” originated from the Portuguese expression “Rio dos Camarões,” which means “River of Prawns.” This was the appellation given to the Wouri River by Portuguese explorer Fernão do Po on his visit to the river estuary in 1472 due its abundance of prawns (shrimps) (Britannica 1999; Todd 2015). According to Todd (1982), the name “Rio dos Camarões” was first applied to the Wouri river itself and its bay, then extended to the coastal town of Douala and its coastline and progressively extended to the whole country.

### 2.1. Nationhood and Nationalism under German Colonial Rule (1884–1916)

The Germans later annexed the territory in July 1884 and named it Kamerun, which was the first time the territory was formally given a name as a congruent political unit, albeit under colonialism. The defeat of the Germans during the World War I witnessed a third etymological twist with the entry of the appellation “Cameroon” and “Cameroun” used by Britain and France, respectively, as the name of their respective portions of the territory they received after the partition of German Cameroon amongst the two.

The first attempt toward nationhood therefore can be seen as a by-product of German imperialism, which hemmed together clusters of distinct and autonomous ethnic groups and kingdoms into a single political entity under German colonial authority. While the goal of the Germans was primarily not that of nation-building, their imperialistic enterprise nonetheless formed the foundation of what would later become a Cameroonian nation.

Nationalism during the German colonial era was essentially ethnic in character. Ethno-nationalism took the form of native resistance to German colonial rule. In the Bamenda grassfields, the German expansion led by Dr. Eugene Zingtraff was resisted by local ethnic groups (Mankon, Nso, Kom, Bafut, Fungom, Bum, Esimbi, Esu, Aghem, Fungong, and others), some of whom put up a fight to defend their chiefdoms against colonial encroachment (Gwanfogbe 2019).

In the coastal regions, the Bakweris (an ethnic group that predominantly inhabited the area around Mount Fako) put up a very stiff resistance to German colonial expansion. Under the leadership of their charismatic chief Kuva Likenye of Buea, the Bakweris went as far as inflicting a humiliating defeat on the Germans in their attempt to capture Buea in 1891 (Tande 2006).

Another prominent coastal ethnic group that resisted German rule were the Dualas, who protested against the expropriation of their land by the Germans. In 1902, the Dualas dispatched a delegation to Germany comprising three of their four paramount chiefs to articulate the grievances of the Duala traditional assembly (the “Ngondo”) against the German colonial authorities, prominent amongst which was land expropriation, which they believed violated the terms of the annexation treaty signed with the Germans in 1884 (Derrick 1980).

The major contribution of German colonialism to nationhood and nationalism in Cameroon was that it established the foundation of nation-building, though unintentionally. While the goal of the Germans was to expand their colonial boundaries and to achieve as much benefit as it could in terms of the resources (both natural and human) the territory had to offer, the Germans unconsciously established a contiguous territory out of the many scattered ethnic communities and gave it a name, from which emerged for the first time a national identity of a people united under colonial occupation. Though it was relatively brief given its interruption by World War I, German colonial rule has been credited with giving a basic shape to modern Cameroon through their expansion of the territory to Lake Chad and the negotiation of colonial boundaries with the British and the French (International Crisis Group 2010, 2). German colonial inland expansion extended Cameroon into a demarcated territory of over 520,000 square kilometers in size (DeLorme, Kamerschen, and Mukum Mbaku 1988).

The Germans also established a colonial administration, which endowed the colony with a political structure that had the trappings of a state in gestation: administrative and governance structures; a central administration with a capital from which the colony was governed (which moved from Douala, to Buea, and to Yaounde as the territory expanded); a colonial governor whose jurisdiction was much akin to that of a modern-day head of state; a monetary system; an economy at the time based on cash crop production; a transport network (road and railway) across the major towns in the territory; and a draft code of arms and flag designed by Wilhem Solf (the German Colonial State Secretary by 1914), whose implementation was forestalled by the advent of World War I (Lekane and Asuelime 2017; Karaschewski 2009; Njoh et al. 2021; Tchindjang et al. 2005). The German epoch can therefore be rightfully perceived as one that saw what I would term a “Kamerunization” of the territory presently known as Cameroon – knitting together autonomous precolonial ethnic groups into a contiguous territory with a central administration and defined territorial boundaries.

The process of nationhood and nationalism in Cameroon went through another milestone in 1916 when Cameroon was partitioned between Britain and France, who had combined forces to kick out the Germans from the territory (Dupraz 2019). The French took about four-fifths of the territory and the British about one-fifth in an agreement that was ratified by the 1919 Treaty of Versailles. The two territories (French and British Cameroons) were attributed the status of League of Nations mandates under the administration of Britain and France in 1922 and later were

transformed into trust territories of the United Nations (UN) in 1946 when the UN was established to replace the defunct League of Nations (Le Vine 1964).

## *2.2. Anglophone and Francophone Nationalisms in Colonial Cameroon*

The British and French colonial administrations in their respective sections of Cameroon gave birth to and Anglophone and Francophone nationhood and nationalism. Before discussing the development of nationhood and nationalism within both sections of Cameroon, it is imperative to underscore the vital role played by the League of Nations' Mandate and the United Nations' Trusteeship systems in the process of nation-building and self-determinations in both British and French Cameroons.

The League of Nations' Mandate system refers to a system of international oversight over former German colonial and Ottoman held territories seized by Allied forces in the course of World War I (Pedersen 2006). The system, which was largely conceived by South African Prime Minister General Jan Smuts with contributions from United States President Woodrow Wilson, divided the former German and Turkish colonies into three mandate categories: Class A mandates, which comprised territories that were reckoned adequately advanced and recognized as having provisional independence though still under colonial tutelage until a time they would be fully capable to govern themselves; Class B territories (under which both Cameroons fell), which comprised territories that were under the direct mandate responsibility of allied powers though subjected to certain oversights geared toward protecting the rights of the natives of the territories; and Class C mandates, which comprised former German colonies that were to be henceforth administered as integral parts of the mandated powers (Britannica 2020).

Though somewhat ambiguously stated, Article 22 of the League's Covenant contained some provisions, which entrusted the responsibility of grooming mandated territories toward self-governance. The United Nations was more direct and clearer in its resolve to promote self-government. Article 76(b) of Chapter XII of the UN Charter pointed out unequivocally that one of the fundamental objectives of the trusteeship system was

to promote the political, economic, social, and educational advancement of the inhabitants of the trust territories, and their progressive development towards self-government or independence as may be appropriate to the particular circumstances of each territory and its peoples and the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned, and as may be provided by the terms of each trusteeship agreement. (United Nations 2021)

Out of these two institutional frameworks and especially within Article 76(b) of the UN Trusteeship system, the colonial authorities that took over the administration of Cameroon (Britain and France) introduce legislative and administrative reforms that laid the foundation for the emergence of nationalist struggles across both sides of the Mungo River.

*2.2.1 "Anglophone Nationalism" in British Southern Cameroons (1916–1961).* Britain divided its portion of Cameroon into two: British Northern Cameroons which was fully integrated to the three northern provinces of British Nigeria (Benue, Bornu, and Adamawa), and British Southern Cameroons which was administered as a single unit though initially attached to the Southern Provinces and later Eastern Region of Nigeria (Budi 2019). This distinction is very important because nationalism in British Cameroons is usually centered on British Southern Cameroon, which by virtue of its remaining a contiguous territory under British colonial rule kept a stronger identity cohesion rather British Northern Cameroons, which was easily absorbed into the political and cultural fabric of Northern Nigeria given their shared ethnic roots as Fulani-dominated areas (Budi 2019).

Though the British Southern Cameroons was administered as an integral part of Britain's Nigerian colony, there was a consciousness of its distinctness, which triggered nationalistic

sentiments and movements that engendered various constitutional reforms introduced by the British as part of their efforts to fulfil the requirements of the UN Trusteeship system. British Southern Cameroon nationalists used Article 76(b) to contest the amalgamation of the territory to Nigeria, highlighting that it was a violation of British Cameroon's trusteeship status and that as a trust territory it was also entitled to self-government (Awasom 1998). Britain reacted by introducing a series of constitutional reforms, which progressively raised the status of British Cameroons from that of an appendage to the Britain's Nigeria colony to a quasi-Federal and fully autonomous status under British trusteeship: the Richards Constitution of 1946 divided Nigeria into three regions (Northern, Eastern, and Western regions) with British Southern Cameroons appended to the Eastern region and provided two native authority seats in the Eastern Regional House of Assembly (Budi 2019).

Protest over the constitution by Cameroonian nationalists such as P. M. Kale acting under the banner of the National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) and the Cameroon Youth League (CYL) led to the replacement of the Richards Constitution with the Macpherson Constitution (Awasom 1998). The Macpherson Constitution introduced in 1951 expanded the representation of British Southern Cameroons in the Eastern Regional House of Assembly, the House of Representatives, and the Executive Council and Minister's Council, which nevertheless did not quench the quest for an autonomous status amongst British Southern Cameroonians (Enonchong 2021). The distinctiveness of the Cameroonian identity was eloquently demonstrated during the Eastern Regional Crisis that erupted in Nigeria in 1953 (engendered by an internal regional power struggle amongst Nigerians). At the recommendation of their constituents, a group of ten Cameroonian elected representatives at the Eastern Regional House of Assembly led by Dr. EML Endeley opted for 'benevolent neutrality' in the crisis. While communicating their stance in a Council of Ministers meeting in March 1953, Dr. Endeley underscored

Our people have considered the situation clearly and resolved that... we should steer clear of Nigerian political controversies.... We shall remain independent and neutral to all political parties in Nigeria... I wish everybody to note that I am here in the Council of Ministers primarily as the representative of the Cameroons and not as the representative of a Nigerian political party... Those who do not know this should please read over their constitution... no other interests shall be allowed to take precedence over my first duty to represent the people whose votes brought me into this house. (Bongkorog 2020, 173)

The Eastern Regional Crisis led to the collapse of the Macpherson Constitution, which was replaced in 1954 by the Lyttleton Constitution, which in turn granted British Southern Cameroon full regional autonomy. The Lyttleton Constitution endowed the territory with a legislature comprising the British Commissioner to the Cameroons as president, 13 elected members, and 6 Native Authority representatives, 2 special interest or community representatives and 3 ex-officio members (Awasom 1998).

British Southern Cameroons eventually attained full regional status in 1957 after two London Conferences in 1957 (May–June and September–October), which amended the Lyttleton Constitution. The territory also obtained a ministerial government for the first time and a bi-cameral legislature comprising a House of Assembly and a House of Chiefs (United Nations 1959).

While German colonialism laid the foundation for the birth and evolution of a Cameroonian nation, British colonialism in Southern Cameroons endowed the inhabitants of the territory with some distinct Anglo-Saxon characteristics, which can be traced as the origins of the "Anglophone" national identity and nationalism. This process, which I term "Anglicization" of Cameroon, was carried out through constitutional reforms and administrative structures akin to those in the metropole (Britain) – for example, a parliamentary system of government with a bi-cameral legislature; the Common Law as the legal system enforced in the territory; an educational system that largely reflected the one obtained in Britain, with similar certifications such as the Cambridge

School Certificate after five years of secondary school study and a General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Level certificate at the end of two years of high school study.

Nationalism in British Southern Cameroons was therefore largely based on the newfound “Anglophone identity” endowed by the British colonial administration on the territory that currently host the Northwest and Southwest regions. Fanso (1999, 285) captures the nexus between British colonialism and the emergence of an Anglophone Cameroon nationalism in the following terms:

The first factor that made for the anglophoneness of Anglophone nationalism was the Anglophone culture (language, education, political philosophy, freedom of speech, an unarmed police and other innumerable influences) to which anyone being brought up or living his or her first experience for long, in the (former) British-ruled territory was naturally exposed or accustomed. The official language of Anglophone culture was English although the English-based pidgin became the domestic lingua franca, operating side by side with the different mother tongues of the Southern Cameroons. The culture provided a value system, often referred to as the British ways to which Anglophones knowingly or unknowingly, consciously or unconsciously, became closely attached.

*2.2.2 “Francophone Nationalism” in French Cameroon (1916–1960).* France administered its own section of Cameroon as a separate colony on equal status with its other colonies in French Equatorial Africa. Francophone nationalism in French Cameroon was peculiar and different when compared to British Southern Cameroon. The French intentionally sought to instill in their colonies a sense of membership in the French nation. France adopted the policy of “Assimilation” in its African colonies (including French Cameroon), which treated their colonies as an extension of France. Assimilation, as the name implies, sought to integrate the natives of the French colonies into French culture and transform them into French citizens. According to Lambert (1993, 241) the policy of assimilation

considered Africans, collectively and individually, as a tabula rasa onto whom the French could write French values. According to this theory, colonization was expected to produce Africans with French cultural values. Thus transformed, Africans would then be accorded the full political rights and responsibilities of French citizens.

Rubin adds that the policy of assimilation, as used by the French, underscores

‘the right of anyone who acquired the French language and habits of life to be treated as any other French citizen’ and thus dismissed the possibility of ‘any divorce between France and those in the colonies who could be regarded as Frenchmen.’

(Rubin as cited in Acha-Morfaw 2018, 54)

The colonial administration especially the educational and legal system were therefore tailored to achieve the goals of the policy of assimilation. The French eliminated the school fees system introduced by the German colonial administration and installed a tuition free education system at all levels throughout their territory with government scholarships for students admitted to advanced studies (Ndille 2018). France also introduced its legal system (Civil Law) in Cameroon. The French colonial administration issued a decree on May 22, 1924, whose article 1 called for the execution of French laws already enforced in French Equatorial Africa before January 1, 1924 in French Cameroon (Edjua 1995).

The downside of the assimilation policy was the reluctance of the French to let go of their colonial possessions. On this issue, French colonial administrators meeting at the Brazzaville Conference underscored unequivocally that



the object of the task of the civilization accomplished by France in her colonies rules out any idea of autonomy, any possibility of our evolution outside the French bloc of the Empire; the eventual creation even in the distant future of autonomy for the colonies should be ruled out. (Monie 1970, 118)

Notwithstanding, France within the framework of its obligations under Article 76(b) of the UN Charter and the context of the “Wind of Change” (decolonization) blowing across Africa in the late 1950s and early 1960s did enact constitutional reforms that paved the way for Francophone Cameroon nationalism and independence. After a violent uprising against French rule in Cameroon put forward by the Union des Populations Camerounaises (UPC) in May 1955 and internal pressures, France introduced major institutional reforms collectively known as “Loi-Cadre” in June 1956 (Ngoh 1976). The “Loi-Cadre” (or Outline law in English) not only extended universal adult suffrage and a single electoral college for elections into the territorial assemblies (Ngoh 1976) but also provided for each territorial assembly in French colonies to elect from its members a council of ministers. These reforms led to the election of Andre Marie Mbida as French Cameroon’s first Prime Minister alongside being a member of parliament in the French National Assembly (Atangana 1997).

French Cameroon would later be granted independence by France on January 1, 1960, after a year of transition (1959) put in place by France to prepare the Cameroonian government for self-rule and a series of cooperation agreements (Franco-Cameroonian convention) signed between French Overseas Minister Bernard Cornut Gentile and French Cameroon’s Prime Minister Ahmadou Ahidjo (who will later become the first president of an independent Cameroon) (Atangana 2010).

In a nutshell, though French Cameroon did not go through the same nationalist patterns as British Southern Cameroons, the French policy of assimilation did engrain a Francophone Cameroonian identity amongst the inhabitants of the colony. French colonialism engendered what can be termed as the ‘Gallicization’ of the inhabitants of the territory east of the river Mungo, which France inherited as a result the partition of German Cameroon.

### **3. Nationhood and Nationalism in Contemporary Cameroon (1961–Present)**

Modern-day Cameroon saw the light of day on October 1, 1961, with the officialization of the reunification of former British Southern Cameroons (who voted in a Plebiscite on February 11, 1961 to achieve independence by joining the Republic of Cameroon) and former French Cameroon. The aforementioned date also marked the entry into force of the Federal Constitution of Cameroon, adopted at the Fouban Constitutional Conference that took place in July 1961 (Ngoh 1999). A Cameroonian nation that consisted of two distinct constituent linguistic communities bound by a federal constitution that provided for two states and a federal administration was born. It is one thing to establish an independent state but nation-building remains a process that requires conscious and intentional efforts to endow the emergent polity with a distinct national identity; enhance and sustain national integration and national unity; and instill a sense of patriotism to the nation that supersedes devotion and loyalty to subordinate entities. How did the newly establish Federal Republic of Cameroon pursue this journey of nation-building?

#### **3.1. The Cohabitation Model**

Nation-building in Cameroon from independence until the present has taken the form of what I will call the “Cohabitation Model” – the integration of two linguistic communities with distinct colonial heritages (Anglophones and Francophones). The fundamental focus of the representatives of both Cameroons at the Fouban Constitutional Conference was to design a mosaic of laws that accommodates and ensures a harmonious co-existence of the aforementioned cultures within a single contiguous territorial unit. It is not surprising therefore that the framers opted for a

federation, which, from a rational perspective, provides (at least theoretically) for each constituent linguistic community the opportunity to preserve its distinctive characteristics and cherished values. The cohabitation model has been the principal mechanism undergirding Cameroon's pursuit of national integration and national unity throughout the various phases of its political evolution – that is, federal to unitary state system.

The cohabitation model was most glaring in the federal system of government adopted by Cameroon after reunification. The states of West Cameroon and East Cameroon provided a constitutional framework for the preservation of the linguistic, political, and sociocultural traditions and values of the respective constituent linguistic communities (Anglophones in West Cameroon and Francophones in East Cameroon). The Anglophone linguistic community was therefore able to preserve, within the context of the federation, its parliamentary system of government and bi-cameral legislature (House of Representatives and House of Chiefs), its Common Law legal system, and its educational system. The same was true for the Francophones who continued with its Civil Law legal system, its educational system, and parliamentary democracy.

Meanwhile, the federal administration was to serve as the platform to pursue policies and strategies to build a national identity and to promote and consolidate patriotism, national integration, and national unity. Here, the cohabitation model was evident in the decision to pursue official bilingualism through the adoption of English and French in the federal constitution as the two official languages of the country (Fon 2019). In the quest to promote bilingualism in the education sector, the federal government opened the first government bilingual secondary school dubbed “Bilingual Grammar School” in Buea in 1962 (Ayafor 2005). The Cameroon national anthem, originally composed in French by students of *École Normale de Foulassi* (a teachers' training college in East Cameroon) in 1928 and adopted as the national anthem of the Republic of Cameroon (former French Cameroon) in 1960, was reconceived in English by Dr. Bernard Fonlon in 1961 (Dze-Ngwa 2014).

While the collapse of the federal system of government and its replacement by a unitary system through a referendum conducted in Cameroon on May 20, 1972, can be seen as a significant challenge to the cohabitation model, it did not disappear thereafter but persisted and still prevails in contemporary Cameroon. A bilingual training program for employees who want to improve their second language (English or French) was established through a presidential decree in August 1990. The program currently has bilingual linguistic centers in all the ten regions of Cameroon (Bilingual Training Programme, 2020). Official bilingualism remains a state policy enshrined in the 1972 revised constitution instituting the unitary system in Cameroon.

More than half a century after independence, how has the cohabitation model fared? What do Cameroonians think about their national identity, nationalism, and the state of national unity and national integration? These and other questions constituted the focus of a perception survey, the results of which are analyzed below.

### *3.2. Perception Survey on National identity and Nationalism in Cameroon*

In a bid to understand the perception of Cameroonians on national identity and nationalism and their assessment of the cohabitation model, I conducted an anonymous questionnaire-based perception survey.

*3.2.1 Survey Methodology.* The survey was carried out online July 7–24, 2021, using Google forms survey administration software (given the precarious security situation in Cameroon). A total of 208 Cameroonians of various age grades and both genders and constituent linguistic communities took part in the survey. Concerning the survey sample and demographics, the survey was done using random sampling to ensure maximum representativity.

**3.2.2 Survey Sampling Strategy.** A random sampling strategy was used in order to mitigate bias and enhance representativity. An online questionnaire survey was chosen instead of a paper version to circumvent the security challenge surrounding carrying out such surveys in areas in the Anglo-phone regions affected by the ongoing military confrontation between separatist and government forces. An online survey provides a better chance for more people to participate without compromising the security of those distributing or responding to the survey. It also enhances access to more Cameroonians in different locations (both at home and abroad) to take part in the survey.

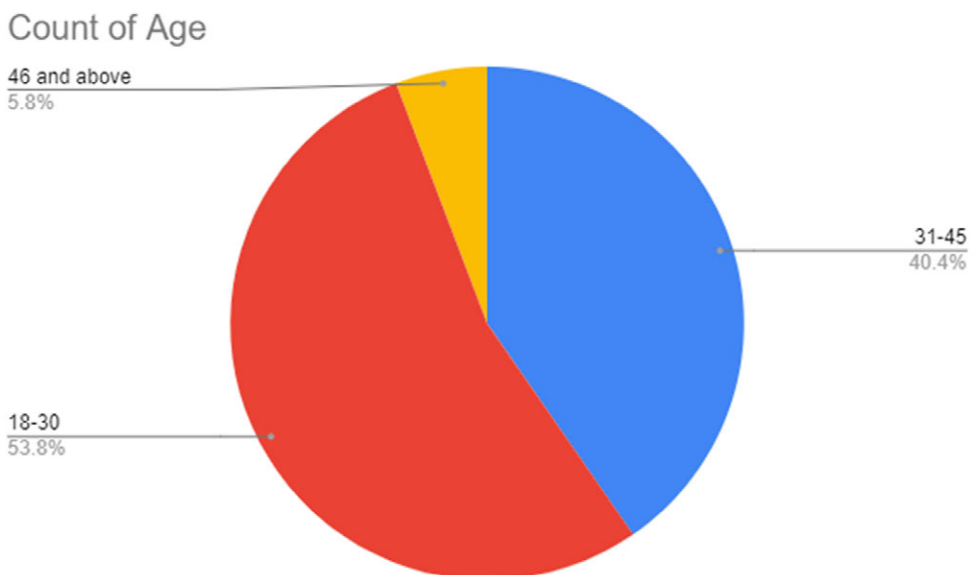
Concerning recruitment of participants, the online survey was distributed randomly by sharing the links on social media sites with Cameroonians of different age, sex, regions of origins, educational, professional, and ethnic backgrounds. No restriction was placed on who was allowed to participate.

**3.2.3 Limitations of the Survey.** Notwithstanding the noble intentions of the sampling strategy espouse, the outcome showed some limitations that must be acknowledged. First, most of the respondents turned out to be university educated, which affects the representativeness of the sample population. Also, the survey questionnaire would have benefitted from an additional lens of analysis by asking participants to identify their regions of origin on in the online questionnaire.

The ages of the participants in the survey ranged from 18 to 46 and above (see [Figure 1](#)). In terms of gender, 58.2% were male and 41.8% female (see [Figure 2](#)). Concerning level of education, an overwhelming majority (94.2%) of participants had university education (see [Figure 3](#)).

Here is a summary of the results of the survey:

On the issue of identity, there was a significant disparity between how respondents perceived what constituted the primary identity of Cameroonians and what constitute their own primary identity. Linguistic (29.8%) and ethnic (18.8%) primary identity combined (48.6%) primed over national identity (47.1%) when it comes to how participant think Cameroonians primarily identify themselves (see [Figure 4](#)). However, an overwhelming majority of participants (63.5%) said their primary identity was national (see [Figure 5](#)). This disparity reveals a social desirability bias, which



**Figure 1.** Participants' age grade.

### Count of Gender

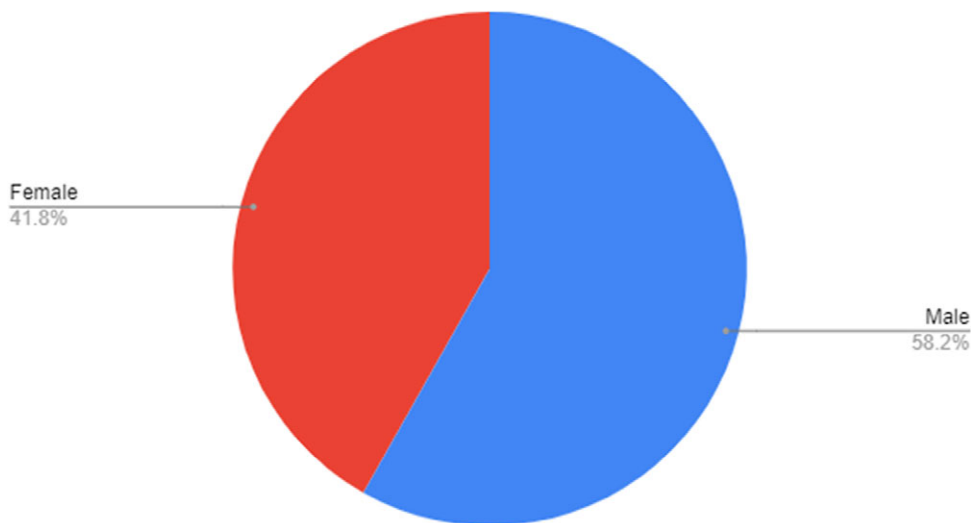


Figure 2. Participants' gender.

### Count of Level of education

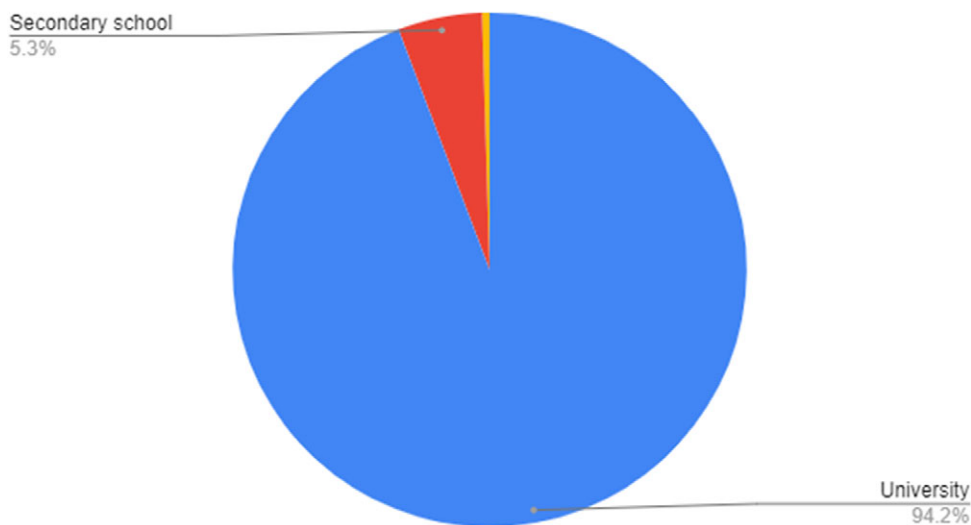


Figure 3. Participants' level of education.

may have influenced participants' judgement about themselves in contrast to how they perceive the general Cameroonian population on the issue of identity.

When it comes to the drivers of national identity in Cameroon, linguistic (28.8%) and ethnic identities (22.6%) combined was significantly higher than national identity (44.7%) (see Figure 6). When one combines all the aforementioned responses, it is clear that linguistic and ethnic identities, put together, trumps national identity as the primary drivers of identity among Cameroonians. This goes to confirm the primacy of the linguistic and ethnic identities expressed in Figure 4 as the primary identities among Cameroonians. One can therefore affirm that more than half a century

1. In your opinion, what is the primary identity category Cameroonians use to identify themselves

208 responses



Figure 4. How do Cameroonians primarily identify themselves?

2. Under what primary identity category do you identify yourself?

208 responses

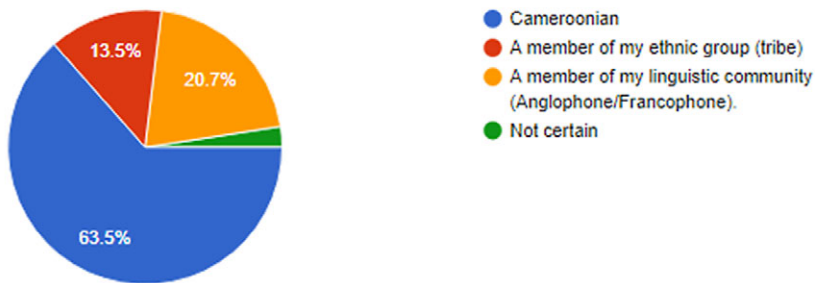


Figure 5. How do respondents primarily identify themselves?

3. In your opinion, what are the primary drivers of identity among people of Cameroon.

208 responses

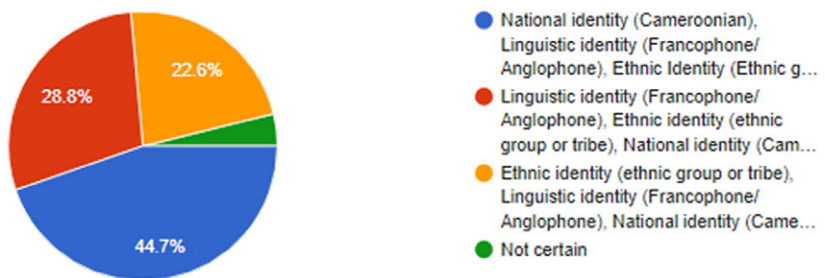


Figure 6. Drivers of national identity in Cameroon.

4. In your opinion, which of the following represents the structure of the 'Cameroonian nation' as we see today?

208 responses

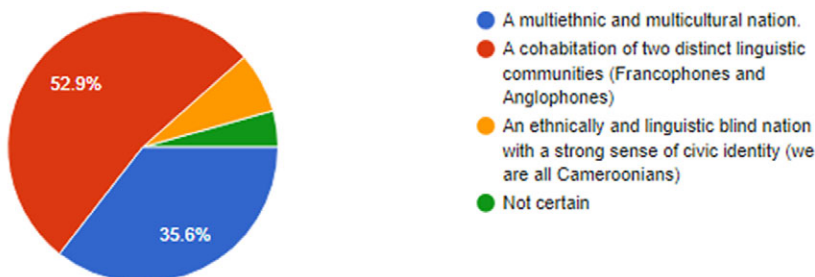


Figure 7. The structure of the Cameroonian nation.

after independence and the pursuit of linguistic cohabitation, linguistic and ethnic affiliations remain stronger than national affiliation when it comes to how Cameroonians identify themselves.

Concerning the existence of the cohabitation model, a majority of respondents (52.9%) perceive the structure of the Cameroonian nation as a cohabitation of two distinct linguistic communities (Francophones and Anglophones) (see Figure 7). An overwhelming majority (81.3%) believe there exist an “Anglophone Nationalism” and a “Francophone Nationalism” in Cameroon (see Figure 8), which according to them have a predominantly negative impact (62.5%) on the pursuit of national integration and unity in Cameroon (see Figure 9).

Respondents had a negative assessment of the cohabitation model and its characteristics such as systems of education, law, and culture, with 41.6% judging it as problematic and 35.1% seeing it as chaotic (see Figure 10).

The cohabitation model therefore is far from being an illusion as it reflects a pertinent reality when it comes to identity politics in Cameroon. According to George Esambe Ngwane, a member of Cameroon’s National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism (NCPBM) and prominent Anglophone elite, the dual colonial heritage is embedded in the identity of Cameroonians, and the linguistic identity (Anglophones and Francophones) is the predominant

5. Do you believe there is an 'Anglophone Nationalism' (attachment and allegiance to the English-speaking community) and 'Francophone Nationalism' (attachment and allegiance to the French-speaking community) in Cameroon?

208 responses

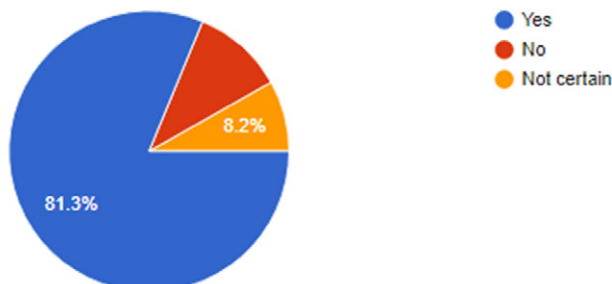


Figure 8. Anglophone and Francophone Nationalisms.

6. If yes (that Anglophone and Francophone nationalisms exist in Cameroon), how would you assess its impact on the pursuit of national integration and unity in Cameroon?

208 responses

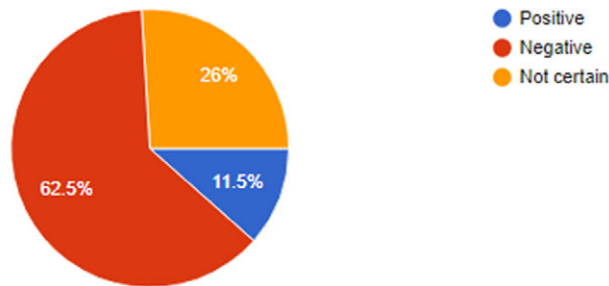


Figure 9. Impact of Anglophone/Francophone Nationalisms on the pursuit of national integration.

10. What is your assessment of the cohabitation model of national integration (the co-existence of English and French systems of education, law, and cultures) in Cameroon?

208 responses

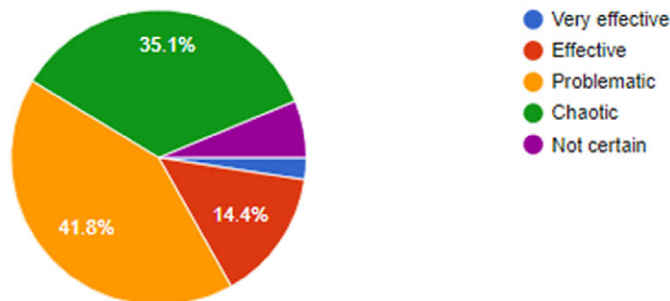


Figure 10. Assessment of the cohabitation model A majority of the respondent were of the opinion that national unity in Cameroon is currently very weak (45.7%) or weak (34.1%) (see Figure 11).

form of identification amongst Cameroonians (Ngwane 2021). Anglophone and Francophone nationalisms seems to be the main drivers of the cohabitation model, providing impetus for its adherents to push toward the safeguarding of a governance system that reflects their colonial heritage. Concerning this, Ngwane (2021) affirms (referring more particularly to the Anglophone nationalism) that “nationalism has grown overboard that is why again we are where we are where people want to have their own educational system, their judiciary system, they want to have a system of public administration that is reflective of their British heritage. So, I think that is come to stay for a while.”

Eyoh (2004), on his part, believes that the distinct Anglophone identity serves as the basis upon which Anglophones perceived their marginalization within the postcolonial nation-building process. In what can be considered as a poignant indictment of the cohabitation model, he points out unequivocally that

Anglophone grievances turned on a self-conception of former west Cameroon as a distinct community defined by differences in official language and inherited colonial traditions of

## 8. How would you judge the level of national unity in Cameroon right now?

208 responses

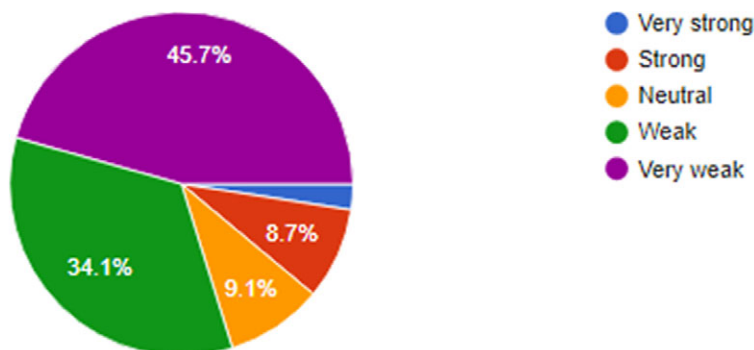


Figure 11. State of national unity in Cameroon.

education, law, and public administration. In the popular wisdom of the Anglophones, the postcolonial nation-state building had been defined by the singular determination of the Francophone elites to erase the cultural and the institutional foundation of Anglophone identity.... The resulting marginalization of their community was borne out by the exclusion of Anglophones from the most senior positions in state and party, a pattern of distribution of public investment that favoured Francophone regions, and discrimination in employment in the public and private corporate sectors. (Eyoh 2004, 106)

Lee and Schultz (2012) highlight the differences in national identity that both constituent linguistic communities (Anglophones and Francophones) inherited from British and French colonialism: one is the legal system (common law from the British for the Anglophones and civil law from the French for the Francophones); and the other is the separate educational system, language, and culture, all of which were retained when the country was reunified.

It is evident from the above analysis that the cohabitation model adopted by Cameroon since independence has not been effective as a tool for nation-building, national integration, and national unity. So, is there an alternative to the cohabitation model?

### 4. Toward a Civic-multicultural Model of Nationhood and Nationalism

It is very easy and highly tempting for members of both constituent communities in a heterogeneous state to blame each other whenever there are challenges and failures in the nation-building process. While it is usually not uncommon to find situations where the majority tries to override over the minority and in some rare instances vice versa, it is also possible that the fundamental cause of the conundrum may not be intercommunity or interethnic rivalry as the case may be. Sometimes, the fundamental issue may revolve around the model or approach that forms the foundation of their nation-building process. Connecting this to Cameroon, it is important to understand that historical accidents thwarted the original blueprint. Cameroon was founded on what became known as the “Kamerun Idea,” which merits a brief reflection.

#### 4.1. The Kamerun Idea

The “Kamerun Idea” refers to a nationalist belief in the existence of a single and contiguous Cameroonian nation established by the Germans, which inspired the movement toward the



reunification in both the British and French Cameroons. The phrase was coined by Edwin Ardener to refer to the notion of reunification of the two Cameroons based on a return to German “Kamerun,” which he saw as a political idea instead of a historical concept (Ardener 1962). The Kamerun Idea inspired the emergence of a political pressure group in British Southern Cameroons dubbed the “Kamerun Society” (KS) whose membership comprised individuals originating from both British and French Cameroon (Akara 2015). KS played an active role in the movement toward the reunification of the two Cameroons (ibid.). The Kamerun Idea embodies the ideal or blueprint for nation-building for Cameroon, which was interrupted by British and French Colonialism.

Though not a formal movement or political ideology, the Kamerun Idea inspired political developments in British Southern Cameroons – especially the formation of political parties. Starting with the Kamerun National United Congress (KNUC), established by Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue and Nerius Namaso Mbile, most of the major political parties that emerged during the political evolution of British Southern Cameroon’s adopted the German “Kamerun” name instead of the British appellation “Cameroon.” Other examples include the following: The Kamerun National Congress (KNC) of Dr. Emmanuel Mbela Lifafa Endeley; the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP) of John Ngu Foncha; and the Kamerun People’s Party (KPP) still of Mbile. Concerning the reason for the creation of the KUNC, Mbile said, “We want the Cameroons under French and British Administration to be brought together as in the days of German rule. Hence our adopting the German spelling Kamerun” (Mbile as cited by Ngoh 1979, 203–204).

The impact of the Kamerun Idea on the quest for reunification was also buttressed by Awasum (2000, 93), who underscored that “the ideological framework of the reunification movement is the German colonization of Cameroon.” It pursues a civic model of nationalism that focuses on allegiance to a Cameroonian nation-state comprised of multiple ethnic groups that were merged together into a single polity by the Germans.

The fact that after 60 years of independence, “Anglophone” and “Francophone” nationalisms are still waxing strong and supersede national identity amongst a significant portion of Cameroonians (as seen in the results of the aforementioned perception survey) eloquently demonstrates the need to reconsider the cohabitation model of nation-building and national integration. It is my fervent opinion that the cause of the perceived marginalization of Anglophone Cameroonians dubbed “Anglophone Problem,” which has recently degenerated into a full-blown crisis in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon (Northwest and Southwest Regions) fundamentally lies in the cohabitation model of nation-building, which seems to have outlived its usefulness as a tool for national integration and national unity.

There is no empirical evidence of xenophobia or intercommunal violence between the constituent linguistic communities of Cameroon in the history of the country. This implies that, despite clear differences and incompatibilities that may exist between them, the fundamental impediment to national integration in Cameroon does not stem from mutual hatred or antagonism between Anglophones and Francophones. It rather reposes on the governance tool that was utilized to forge a nation out of the two heterogeneous linguistic communities. Perhaps the time has come therefore to revisit the foundation of nation-building in the country and to conceive alternative framework that can better manage the linguistic and ethnic differences, forge a stronger bond of unity, instill a greater sense of belonging and establish a more sustainable foundation for national integration. For this, I am proposing a civic-multicultural model.

#### *4.2. Rebuilding on the Civic-multicultural Model*

There is no panacea or one-size-fits-all remedy in nation-building. Each country has to adapt, re-adapt, learn from its failures, rise up from defeat, correct its mistakes, and continue to reinvent itself to suit the context of its evolution. Most of the shining examples of democracies we see today such as the United States, the United Kingdom, or France have gone through centuries of reforms, amendments, and realignments in their nation-building process. With an intractable crisis in its

Anglophone regions and other challenges in national integration and national unity as seen above, the time has never been more auspicious to explore a new model of nation-building. A civic-multicultural model can be very beneficial to Cameroon in the context of its current predicaments.

What I mean by civic-multicultural model is the combination of two concepts: civic nationhood and multiculturalism. Civic nationhood refers to a conception of nationhood devoid of ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or religious homogeneity or exceptionalism. A civic nation describes “a political identity built around shared citizenship in a liberal-democratic state” (Stilz 2009). In other words, the political institutions of the state take precedence over parochial loyalties. One of the pitfalls of the cohabitation model in Cameroon’s nation-building is that it reinforces linguistic exceptionalism at the expense of national cohesion. It pushes Cameroonians to perceive themselves as members of distinct linguistic communities seeking to fit in. A civic nationalism would focus on instilling, consolidating, and reinforcing patriotism regarding state institutions, national interest, and national identity. This may require a conscious effort on the part of the state to invent, innovate, and create symbols of nationhood and landmarks and to achieve milestones that would gradually shift parochial attachments to patriotism to the nation and its causes.

Multiculturalism is also a crucial ingredient in rebuilding the Cameroonian nation. Rosado (1996) provides a comprehensive definition of multiculturalism as

a system of beliefs and behaviors that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context which empowers all within the organization or society.

Given its rich ethnic diversity that earned it the appellation of “Africa in Miniature,” there is a need to harness the potentials of unity in diversity, which can be done through a proactive policy of multiculturalism. All ethnic groups should be given adequate opportunities to pursue and attain their highest potentials. Local languages need to be developed and promoted (including being used as an optional language of instruction in schools). Local traditions and cultures also need to be valorized and preserved in a national patrimony so each Cameroonian irrespective of their ethnic group can feel a sense of inclusion.

According to David Abouem A Tchoyi, a member of Cameroon’s National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism (NCPBM) and former Governor of the two Anglophone regions in Cameroon (Southwest and Northwest), the pursuit of civic nationalism in Cameroon must take into consideration the country’s ethnic heterogeneity and the notion of unity in diversity (Abouem A. Tchoyi 2021). The rich ethnic and cultural heritage can be respected while federating on shared republican values embodied by the institutions of the state. The civic-multicultural model can help enhance national cohesion by better managing unity in diversity.

Some of the main criticisms levied against the notion of civic-nationalism espoused by Western democracies is that it carries a derogatory connotation of ethnic nationalism that is perceived as morally inferior, and it promotes a type of illusional nationless nationalism that blinds politicians to the need to address social schisms (Tamir 2019). The civic-multicultural model reconciles rather separate civic and ethnic nationalism into mutually exclusive categories. Rather than presenting a binary choice that elevates one (civic-nationalism) over the other (ethnic nationalism), it integrates both promoting civic nationalism as an instrument of national integration and multiculturalism as an acknowledgement and celebration of Cameroon’s rich cultural heritage.

In concrete terms, the civic-multicultural model can be pursued through the following suggested institutional structures and programs:

A successful implementation of a civic-multicultural model necessitates the institution of an appropriate governance framework that can uphold both an efficient and effective national government and an empowered local government. This can be achieved through effective decentralization. Decentralization as a system of governance has been defined as “any act in which a

central government formally cedes powers to actors and institutions at lower levels in a political-administrative and territorial hierarchy” (Ribot 2002, ii). It is a bottom-top approach to democracy which provides ample opportunity for citizens at the grassroots to participate and contribute to nation-building. As Ghandi puts it, “A true democracy cannot be worked by twenty men sitting at the centre; it has to be worked from below by the people of every village” (Nair 2020). There are two main arguments for the adoption of decentralization: from the political perspective, it has the tendency to enhance transparency, accountability, and increased political participation; while from the economic perspective, it enhances the effectiveness of the delivery of public services by matching the provision of services to the priorities of the constituencies (Balaguer-Coll, Prior, and Tortosa-Ausina 2010).

Examples of the effectiveness of decentralization as a governance strategy in ethnically diverse countries in Africa include the following: Ethiopia (a country of 115 million people and 98 ethnic groups) in which decentralization contributed significantly to its giant leap in human development through a drastic reduction of infant mortality, poverty, and an increase in primary net enrollment (Faguet 2021); Uganda and Senegal where “the lowest tier of government is directly elected; turnout is reasonably good, and the elections are perceived to be fair” (Ndegwa and Levy 2003); and Ghana where district assemblies have enhanced grassroots participation in politics, and the autonomy of local officials with respect to local financial resource allocation and decision-making (Debrah 2014).

Decentralization, within the scope of the civic-multicultural model, should go far beyond what is currently practice in the country. Here are some suggestions on what can be done to render decentralization more effective in Cameroon: regions should be given the opportunity to elect their chief executive; deconcentration, delegation, and devolution of administrative authority, responsibility and resources should be fully implemented; local councils should be fully empowered to generate and manage their own resources; and the state should also transfer the funds necessary for decentralized organs and local governments to function properly.

While some may argue for a return to a federal system of government, is important to point out that the centralized nature of the federal system adopted in Fouban contained the seeds of its own undoing, given that it eventually failed to provide the level of autonomy that could insulate the states from the influence of the federal government. A good example is the appointment of federal inspectors in West Cameroon under Decree No: 61-DF-15 of December 20, 1961, which basically ascribed to the latter functions that are normally the prerogatives of the prime minister of West Cameroon thereby engendering a power struggle between both (Stark 1976). If the ultimate goal for the enhancement of local government is autonomy, then a fully decentralized governance system is more effective than a centralized federation.

In terms of promoting national integration and patriotism, a National Diversity Service Corps (NDSC) can be established. The NDSC should be focused on providing compulsory youth service training for young people after their high school or university studies that would serve as an immersion into patriotism, responsible citizenship, intercultural exchange, tolerance, and national identity. The NDSC should be based on a curriculum tailored to meet the needs of molding a generation of Cameroonians who would put allegiance and loyalty to their nation and national identity above any parochial consideration. Similar policies have been successfully implemented in several Sub-Saharan African countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, The Gambia, Mali, Senegal, ivory Coast, South Africa, and Zimbabwe (Lamidi 2019).

Another strategy would be the institution of a cultural immersion program dubbed “Discover Cameroon” in the Cameroon secondary school curriculum. This program shall focus on a compulsory excursion trip for young Cameroonians in secondary schools during the third term holidays to a locality out of their linguistic community or origin and region of residence. For instance, an Anglophone “form one” (grade six) student residing in Buea may be included in an excursion to Edea; meanwhile, his French counterpart in Edea does the reverse trip to Buea. These short trips which can last for maximum two weeks would enable these youths to discover the

history, cultures, traditions, and arts of other parts of their country and get to meet and create friendship ties with their peers from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Another policy that could be pursued is the promotion of what I would term “National-symbolism.” It is important to note that symbols such as flags, postage stamps, and currencies constituted part of the initial nation-building policies in postcolonial Africa (Bandyopadhyay and Green 2013). Therefore, national integration and nation-building in the contemporary era can still be enhanced through new symbols. National symbols and relics such as statues of national heroes should be erected in all the various regions to celebrate the contribution of sons and daughters from all the various regions in nation-building. Symbolic artefacts such as the Reunification monument found in Cameroon’s capital Yaounde should be erected in all the various regions as pointers to the importance of national integration and national unity.

Similarly, a “National Heroes Day” could be instituted to celebrate and pay homage to all the nationalists who contributed to the independence of Cameroon (founding fathers) and illustrious statesmen who have made significant contribution to nation-building – including the likes of Andre Marie Mbida, Ahmadou Ahidjo, John Ngu Foncha, Martin Paul Samba, Rudolf Duala Manga Bell, Kuva Likenye, Fon Galega, Sultan Njoya, Chief Victor Mukete, Simon Achidi Achu, and others.

Last but not least, a national language commission could be put in place with a two-fold mission: First, to explore the possibility of developing a distinct Cameroonian language, which could be added to the current two official languages. The Committee can build on Tadadjeu and Sadem-bouo’s (1984) *General alphabet of Cameroon languages*, a publication based on what was adopted by the National Committee for the Unification and Harmonization of the Alphabets of Cameroon Languages in Yaounde on March 9, 1979. The aforementioned text contains an orthographic system for all Cameroonian languages. One of the possibilities may be to make a fusion of the regional languages that already have a developed alphabet.

The second mission would be to develop various existing national languages to the extent they could be learned and taught in schools and universities. Regional languages such as Fulfulde, Duala, Bulu, Ewondo, Munga’ka, Lamso, etc. could also be taught in schools at secondary and university levels in various regions in Cameroon.

## Conclusion

Since independence, Cameroon based its nation-building process on a cohabitation model that focuses on integrating both constituent linguistic communities (Anglophones and Francophones) into a single nation. This article examined the challenges of the cohabitation model of nation-building in Cameroon. After establishing a theoretical framework based on nationhood and nationalism, it examined the evolution of nationhood and nationalism in Cameroon from colonial to contemporary times. It was observed that the partition of Cameroon between Britain and France gave rise to two distinct linguistic communities with their own nationalisms. Through a questionnaire-based survey, this article also underlined the shortcomings of the cohabitation model and ends with a proposal for a civic-multicultural model as the way forward in nation-building in Cameroon.

**Disclosures.** None.

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