

# Mediated Dialogue: The Only Tool for Conflict Resolution in Cameroon

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While dialogue is the most appropriate means to resolve any conflict in the world, there is always need to understand the root cause of the conflict, without which any attempt to resolve it may not bear any fruit and that is what makes some wars last for long decades.

The conflict in Cameroon, which should be more appropriately understood as the Southern Cameroon Question is one which needs to be ARTICULATED in a manner as not to leave any ambiguities. This would help to provide a LASTING solution so that it never recurs again. We need to refrain from joining the Biya regime in turning round and round in circles just so as to avoid the solution.

The English – speaking people of Cameroon were a distinct people who came into a union with the francophones who were also a separate people in 1961. The main element of this distinction lies in the fact that the Anglophones, from their British colonial heritage, imbibed a culture based on STRONG SYSTEMS and POWERFUL INSTITUTIONS, while the francophones inherited the PERSONALITY CULT in the STRONG and POWERFUL INDIVIDUAL, from their French colonial masters. With the Anglophones, governance is through elections and democracy while the francophones are governed through appointments and autocracy. More so, the Anglophones came into this union bringing along with them a set of CORE VALUE SYSTEMS which included:

1. A legal/judiciary system (the Common Law Practice)
2. An educational system (An Anglo-Saxon system)
3. A financial/banking/economic/infrastructure system (banks, industries, airports, road maintenance system, electric, health and water supply system, etc)
4. A political system (a house of assembly, political parties, electoral system, etc)
5. A security system (the mobile police)
6. A tradi-cultural system (Naturally chosen Chiefs and Fons, etc)
7. An administrative system (Local Government Areas, etc). And it may be added that
8. They had a defined territory with internationally recognized boundaries.

All these systems were distinct and different from what the francophones were practicing. The conflict arose because the Anglophones found that all these systems were being

gradually and systematically deformed, adulterated, polluted, dismantled and erased through discrimination, marginalization, domination, subjugation and assimilation by successive governments of La Republique du Cameroun. If we understand and articulate the Anglophone problem in this light, we are set for a FINAL solution which must also be expressed succinctly:

- The Anglophones want these systems to be
1. RESTORED (by people whom they choose or elect)
  2. PROTECTED (inscribed in the constitution and recognized by relevant international instances,) and
  3. DEFENDED (by themselves in collaboration with an agreed third party mediator who will countersign and monitor the implementation of agreements reached with the francophone majority) so that it never resurfaces again.

This will have to require dialogue between the belligerents in the presence of a credible mediator who has to be agreed upon by both parties in the conflict. The mediator will eventually countersign the agreement which will be arrived at from the dialogue and ensure its implementation.

Now, the Anglophones think that this RESTORATION, PROTECTION AND DEFENCE of their core value systems can only be achieved through:

- SEPARATION** of the two entities which came into union in 1961, into two separate sovereign countries, or
- FEDERATION**, the system which held the two polities together from 1961 to 1972, or
- DECENTRALIZATION** of the present unitary government system. That is why Anglophones must meet in a conference to understand, discuss and agree on these issues and also choose their representatives.

When the problem is set out this way, it becomes clear that the issue of a 10 state or 4 state federation has no place because this is not a Cameroon problem. It is an Anglophone problem (the Southern Cameroon Question!) and any solution which does not take into account these core value systems and the need to restore, protect and defend them is only postponing the conflict. As for confederation, I consider it to be just a REINFORCED or improved federation.

I believe that if Anglophones think that they will not be able to DEFEND themselves and their systems in a federation with La Republique du Cameroun, then they will clearly not be able to defend themselves as a sovereign country, because their adversary is sitting right in front of them and that will never change. I hope they are not thinking that by separation, they plan to dig up Southern Cameroon and carry it on their heads to the North Pole so as to be away from LRC! All is a question of defense. Both parties have a duty to forge a sustainable and lasting relationship between themselves and whatever name is given to the relationship does not really matter. Whether it is a more tightly held

totalitarian dictatorship, or a decentralized system, or a federation or separation, doesn't make much difference as long as the core value system of each of the peoples is protected and defended.

Anglophones must note that they were at least 50% responsible for what LRC did to them in the past 57 years. They were too gullible, credulous, complacent and condescending! And LRC wrongly took advantage of it. Now it is time to rebuild a different system of coexistence and both parties are called upon to manifest maximum effort in that project.

