

THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE PROMOTION OF BILINGUALISM AND MULTICULTURALISM AND THE CHALLENGES OF MANAGING THE ANGLOPHONE LINGUISTIC MINORITY IN CAMEROON¹

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Abstract: *The socio-political and economic events that the post-independent has experienced in Cameroon are the consequence of a distinct colonial past. First as a protectorate under the German colonialist and successively as mandated and Trust territories under the British and French colonial authorities. The triad of colonial legacies and most importantly that of Britain and France fashioned the bilingual nature of contemporary Cameroon. It is worth noting that at independence, Cameroon was partitioned between Britain and France in 1916 and ruled as two different administrative entities by the colonial powers. It was only in October 1961 that both territories decided to reunite to form a bilingual country with each preserving its historical legacies. Upon the unification, the territory and Cameroonians from the British-governed part of partitioned Cameroon represented only 20% of the country's territory and population, thus making them what has been conceptualized as the anglophone minority. However, the socio-political, and linguistic marginalization of the anglophone minority since 1961 laid the basis for latent politico-linguistic grievances that materialized into the current anglophone conflict in 2016. In a bit to resolve the anglophone conflict, the government of Cameroon created the National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism (CNPBM) in February 2018. The main argument sustained in this study is that the anglophone conflict is eminently a political problem and requires a political solution. This paper questions the nature and extent to which the CNPBM can contribute to the resolution of the anglophone conflict. Indeed, through a historical approach, this work questions the assessment of the management of linguistic minorities (Anglophones) in Cameroon and the issues and challenges facing this commission for the promotion of bilingualism. This paper suggests that an enabling political environment needs to be created in other to permit the CNPBM to effectively play its role.*

Keywords: Cameroon, crisis, identity, minority, Commission for CNPBM

1. Introduction

Cameroon's official bilingualism, which is one of its riches today, is in fact the result of colonial blunders and political compromises between Western powers in Africa. Following the German-Douala treaty of 12 July 1884, Cameroon became a German protectorate. This protectorate was modelled on the German colonial model until 1915, when the Germans were forced out by the French and British during the First World War. The victors then shared the spoils from 1916 onwards, giving rise to two incongruous portions, subject to international weather, whose strings were held by the League of Nations, then the United Nations (Tamekamta, 2016: 232). The Franco-British condominium statute that came into being on 14 March 1916 already enshrined this division (Eyelom, 2003: 267). These arrangements were ratified by the League of Nations on 20 July 1922 (Guifo, 2007: 24-25). This colonial act had consecrated and levelled the formation of two distinct entities which had in common only the

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anteriority of the past. This colonial blunder created two different psycho-affective frameworks within the same pre-colonial entity. Until 1961, the parts of Cameroon remained under the administration of two opposing colonial systems, thus creating important identity cleavages between these peoples. But in 1961, President Ahidjo and John Ngu Foncha (leader of Anglophone area) decided to correct the colonial contempt by reunifying the two parts of Cameroon. It should be noted that the part of Cameroon under British administration that was attached to its colonial empire of Nigeria was divided into two parts: Northern Cameroon and Southern Cameroon. But at the end of the referendum of 10 and 11 February 1961, Northern Cameroon voted for its attachment to Nigeria while Southern Cameroon opted to join the French Cameroon, which had been independent since 1 January 1960. Taking into account the different colonial heritage and especially the protection of the English-speaking minority, English and French were established as official languages, although the English-speaking population was barely 1/5 of the population of French Cameroon (Keunang, 2019: 295). In practice, however, the management of this minority was not always appropriate. Combined with economic and political frustration, language discrimination had paved the way for deep crises, including the one that has been ongoing since October 2016. It is to resolve this crisis that the Cameroonian government created the National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism (NCPBM). This work aims to highlight the approximate management of the Anglophone minority and the challenges facing the NCPBM. Thus, what assessment can be made of the management of linguistic minorities (Anglophones) in Cameroon? What are the challenges of the commission for the promotion of bilingualism? Through a historical approach, this study presents in a first part the weight of the colonial heritage and the construction of an Anglophone feeling (International Crisis Group, 2017: 5); and in a second part, the context, issues and challenges of the creation of the NCPBM after four years of existence and operation.

2. The weight of the colonial heritage and the construction of an Anglophone sentiment

In this first section, we highlight the weight of the dual colonial heritage that gave rise to Cameroon's bilingualism and the linguistic cleavages that led to the outbreak of the crisis in 2016.

A- Exhumation of a historical vexation and the claim of an Anglophone identity

The mandate and trusteeship periods consecrated the division of Cameroon into two distinct entities in terms of culture, political aspirations and even economic development. However, political blunders, inadequate nation-building and linguistic cleavages gave rise to a feeling of frustration and separatism among the Anglophones.

B. Rejection as a test of national wealth redistribution

On 1 January 1960, Cameroon under French administration became independent with Ahmadou Ahidjo as president. Following negotiations (Foumban agreements) between Ahidjo and Foncha (leader of the English-speaking part), Cameroon was reunified on 1 October 1961 as a federal state with two federated states. While the federation was criticized by the Anglophones in its formation (France having put all its weight behind preserving its political model), it was the lesser evil for the Anglophone populations, some of whom wanted to join Nigeria and some of whom wanted their independence separately from Cameroon and Nigeria.

Just after less than 11 years in the federation, President Ahidjo wanted the unification of the two parts of the country. It took place on 20 May 1972 and left a feeling of economic regression in the English-speaking part, because it led to the centralization and/or dismantling of the economic structures of Western Cameroon such as the *West Cameroon Marketing Board*,

the *Cameroon Bank and Powercam*, as well as the abandonment of projects in gestation such as the port of Limbé, the airports of Bamenda and Tiko, in favor of investments in the French-speaking area. Faced with this situation, Bernard Fonlon declared: "In three years of reunification, thanks to Articles 5 and 6 of the federal constitution, several practices and institutions have come from the East to the West. In West Cameroon, one now drives one's car on the right, the franc has replaced the pound sterling as the common currency, the school year has been aligned with that of the East and the scientific metric system has replaced unwieldy British measurements. But I have searched in vain for a single institution brought from the West to the East. Outside its federated borders, the influence of West Cameroon is practically nil... The result, therefore, is that in East Cameroon, the already predominant French influence is terribly consolidated by the Cameroonians themselves..., we will all be French in two or three generations" (Fonlon, 1984: 283-284).

These words of Bernard Fonlon essentially translate the 'failure' of national construction based on a dual identity. In reality, they illustrate the absorption of Anglophones, an idea that has been reinforced by institutional reforms. In this context, the unilateral abolition in 1970 of the post of vice-president, which was devolved to Western (Anglophone) Cameroon, and the appointment of a Francophone to the post of prime minister was a political calculation that could not claim to structure the living together and to protect the Anglophone minority. Moreover, when in 1979, a revision of the fundamental law made the Prime Minister the constitutional successor of the Head of State, the Anglophones cried out for their exclusion from the political rent. Indeed, before 1979, the president of the national assembly was the second personality of the country and the constitutional successor of the head of state in the event of a permanent vacancy in the presidency of the republic. And since 1973, this position was occupied by Salomon Tandeng Mouna, a native of Western Cameroon, which guaranteed this part of the country even a minimal possibility of running for the supreme magistracy. The 1979 act therefore sounds like a rejection, an exclusion, a political fall from grace (Gaillard, 1989)

Furthermore, the discovery and exploitation of oil deposits in the Rio del Dey, Lokele and Moundi, or the management of the CDC (Cameroon Development Corporation) in West Cameroon, gave rise to deepening demands among the Anglophones. SONARA, which exploits this oil, is located in Limbe, a city which, because of its strategic position on the sea, is a flagship of Cameroonian tourism and the production of fisheries resources. However, the populations of the North-West and South-West regions that make up English-speaking Cameroon say they do not always benefit from this important natural potential. Moreover, many claim that the development of infrastructures does not concern the English-speaking part of the country and that the construction of the deep water port in Kribi rather than in Limbe is proof of this. In all social strata, the idea of marginalization seems to find fertile ground. Akere Muna sums up this frustration in a letter to his French-speaking friend in the following terms: "Imagine that your village has a large oil deposit and that the refinery plant has its own neighborhoods, its hospital, its residences, its school, in short everything for the people working there, that most of them are only English speakers living far from the reality of your village... Imagine that in this atmosphere your village has not made a step in thirty years. Imagine that in this atmosphere your village has not made a step forward in thirty years. Imagine then that you complain and that you are called a secessionist and an enemy of the house...this is the daily lot of your English-speaking brother who, after 30 years, wonders if he made the right choice" (Mouna, 1995: 52).

Furthermore, in terms of political distribution, Anglophones claimed and still claim to be under-represented in the government apparatus. Philippe Gaillard noted that in the government of 3 July 1972, 'there were only two Anglophones out of twenty ministers, not including the deputy ministers, as stated by Gaillard (1989, P.52). Dze Ngwa (professor at university of Yaoundé 1, during a citizen debate on Tele vision4 channel on 19 May 2017) adds to this idea when he states that in 2017, out of seven ministerial departments in charge of

education (training), not one has an English-speaking minister or secretary of state at the head. This means that beyond the marginalization in the sharing of political rent, the Anglophone party feels that it has no power at the level of decision-making regarding the education system, which is the pillar of the construction and transmission of cultural identity. It feels that the Anglophone side has been assimilated, even phagocytosed by East Cameroon. However, these recriminations are trivialized by some Cameroonian intellectuals who believe that issues of wealth distribution, land use planning or political rent distribution can be transposed to several other regions of Cameroon, thus denying the relevance of the Anglophone problem. Despite efforts, the rise of Anglophone sentiment in Cameroon and the diaspora has not abated. The political events of the 1980s and 1990s galvanized the secessionists.

C. Denial of Anglophone identity and construction of separatist sentiment

The beginning of the 1990s marked a turning point in the Anglophone question in Cameroon. Indeed, Cameroon entered the last decade of the twentieth century under a severe economic crisis like many other African nations, where social unrest and political protest erupted in the streets and ran from one capital to another like a shock wave relayed by radio and television. In the majority of French-speaking African countries, the advent of democracy is taking on the taste of a bitter potion, as it carries with it many turbulences linked to the manner of its implementation or to the economic crisis induced by the strong deterioration of the terms of trade. Benin, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon and Niger have all been caught up in this spiral with varying degrees of violence (Soudan, 1990: 28-32). At the time, there was talk of putting an end to the one-party system and opening up the country to a multiparty system. It was then that the SDF (Social Democratic Front), a popular party with an Anglophone tendency, was born. It designated John Fru Ndi (Anglophone) as its leader for the 1992 elections. From then on, the spread of a "*Fru Ndist*" (This expression refers to SDF President John Fru Ndi, whose populism is entangled with the trajectory of a providential man or demagogue), movement took shape in a society hit hard by the economic crisis and in which Anglophones claimed to be victims of discrimination (Yared, 1992: 9). The party organized an unauthorized meeting in Bamenda on 26 May 1990. The meeting was violently repressed by the police, leaving six dead, all of them Anglophones, as pointed out by Gaillard (1990, 1990: 21). At the end of the violence, the Anglophones were held responsible. The government's reaction in the North West was one of exclusion and denial of their political identity. On the same day, Anglophone students, who felt they were being repressed, demonstrated in Yaoundé and three hundred of them were arrested. In this political imbroglio, the essential fact that emerged was that the SDF was for the Anglophones an instrument to claim their identity that had been swallowed up by the Francophone system. Moreover, Marc Yared (1992, p.17.) noted that the chairman of the SDF crystallized his campaign on the demands of the frustrated strata, especially in the English-speaking part

Within the national television station, this identity divide was highlighted. The Anglophone journalists who reported on these incidents were detained and eventually suspended from airing, while the Cameroon Post newspaper was suspended. Zacharie Ngniman (Editor-in-Chief of Information at CRTV) and Antoine-Marie Ngoni (Head of Political Affairs at CRTV) had sent a letter to the Minister of Communication and Culture on 14 June, stating that Cameroon Radio Television had only "a decapitated Anglophone newsroom and a Francophone newsroom whose editors have been burnt out by public opinion" as confessed by Gaillard (1990, P.17.). The party (SDF), which in its early days claimed to be the defender of the marginalized Anglophone minority, was thus born out of the blood of the victims of the repression, noted Gaillard (1991, p.20). The SDF took part in the elections of 11 October 1992, and the Anglophones found another element of negation of their identity. In fact, on October 12, 1992, the Supreme Court accredited Paul Biya as the winner of the election with 39.90% against

35.60% for John Fru Ndi, but not without incident, especially in the North-West, Fru Ndi's stronghold, where a state of emergency had been declared (Yared, 1992: 12). This election, tainted by irregularities according to international observers, had only a hint of exclusion for the Anglophones.

All these factors added up to a separatist feeling among the Anglophones. This was reflected in the birth of the SCNC (*Southern Cameroon National Council*) in Buea in 1993. It is a movement with many factions, notably in Great Britain, the USA, Nigeria and South Africa. This movement militates in favor of the secession of the English-speaking regions of Cameroon. It generally organized protests. Every year, while Cameroon celebrates reunification on 1 October, the SCNC organizes unauthorized demonstrations to protest that the English-speaking part has simply been annexed and should therefore regain its independence. In its demands, the SCNC received support from the *Southern Cameroons Youth League* (SCYL) (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2003: 48-57). This other movement has the particularity of being led by young people, mostly products of the University of Buea. But since the recent movement that started in October 2016, teachers and lawyers have grouped together in a corporatist movement called the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium, the 'Consortium'. These associations are now illegal.

3. Linguistic cleavages and the onset of the Anglophone crisis

The notion of bilingualism in Cameroon transcends the linguistic framework and brings into play ethno-tribal and geographical identities. Moreover, although bilingualism is the norm, it is possible to observe a Francophone hegemony whose contestation constitutes one of the causes of the crisis that is shaking the country.

3.1. Bilingualism in Cameroon is challenged by the Francophone hegemony

The feeling of exclusion expressed by English-speaking Cameroonians has increased with the standardization of state symbols. Although the constitution of 1 September 1961 enshrined bilingualism, many grievances enumerated by English-speaking Cameroonians point to several misunderstandings, including

- The numerical absorption of English by French in a context of consecrated bilingualism. However, the Foumban conference ended with a joint communiqué read to the press by John Ngu Foncha, Prime Minister of British Cameroon. It stated that the two official languages of the two Cameroonians, French and English, were imported and should one day be replaced by an indigenous language and culture (Benjamin, 1972: 125). This option, apparently subscribed to by English-speaking Cameroonians through the charismatic leader of West Cameroon, was reminded by President Paul Biya on an official visit to Bamenda on 13 September 1991 in the following terms: "Let us not set Cameroonians against each other. Let us not oppose Anglophones and Francophones... The language barrier is not and should not be a political problem in our country. Cameroon is and remains a bilingual and multicultural country. Besides, remember, at the beginning of the century, Cameroonians were neither Anglophones nor Francophones. Why is it that at the dawn of the third millennium, other people's wars and other people's cultures divide Cameroonians who are already facing so many other problems?" (Biya, 2003: 297).

- The validation of the state symbols of East Cameroon as elements of sovereignty of the new federal state. This is in fact the national flag, so the colours and their arrangement on the cloth were accepted with a double star on the green band (representing the two entities). Similarly, the motto, anthem and coat of arms were maintained or partially modified to suit the federal configuration.

Within the society, a real cultural imperialism is visible. In fact, after the GCE (General Certificate of Education) exams in 1993, teachers who had not been paid and who were

demanding the formation of a GCE board boycotted the marking of the exams. Faced with this situation, the Ministry of Education entrusted the correction of the papers to French-speaking teachers, leading to violent demonstrations in the capital and in Bamenda by English-speaking teachers (Yared, 1993, pp.28-28). Thus, by exploring the redistribution of the two official languages in the public signs of the cities of Bamenda (capital of the North-West region) and Yaoundé (seat of Cameroon's political institutions) until 2012, Georges Echu notes that the majority of signs announcing services and public buildings are only in French and that most of the signs with bilingual mentions are located in the North-West region (Echu and Kiwoh, 2012: 21-42). Alain Takam goes on to use the concept of linguistic governmentality to show the context in Cameroon where English is relegated to second place, or even excluded, as is the case in the army (Takam, 2012: 43-64).

2- Government action in the face of the outbreak of the Anglophone crisis

On 11 October 2016, a strike by lawyers demanding the translation of the revised OHADA uniform acts and the rejection of the application of the French-speaking civil code in the English-speaking part of the country broke out. The government imposed a contemptuous silence when it did not violently repress, thus radicalizing a strike that was planned to last a week (Mbiam, 2016: 7). But a few weeks later, on 21 November, Anglophone teachers also launched a strike demanding the removal of Francophone teachers from schools and the removal of Francophone administrators from the universities of Bamenda and Buea. This other episode of the strike turned into a confrontation with the army and the forces of law and order, especially as some people took advantage of the strike to resurrect the marginalization and the old Anglophone separatist sentiment, even in the diaspora. But beyond the police violence, the government tried to negotiate with the Anglophone corporatist movements, but failed. It also created a common law section at the National School of Administration and Magistracy (ENAM) after translating the OHADA texts as requested by the lawyers. Believing that the Anglophone problem had identity-based roots, the government decided to create the National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism. It is clear that the management of the Anglophone linguistic minority has been a failure in Cameroon so far. It remains to be seen what the CNPBM would bring to this climate of social crisis.

4. The CNPBM: assessment and challenges after four years of existence

It is appropriate here to present the objectives of the National Commission for Bilingualism and Multiculturalism (CNPBM) at the time of its creation; and to assess its functioning, especially in terms of the promotion and protection of the English-speaking minority, and to present the challenges facing this structure.

A- Objectives and challenges of the creation of the CNPBM and assessment of its functioning

The missions assigned to this body are clearly defined in the presidential decree that created it. Based on these missions, we can consider the issues at stake.

1- The missions assigned to the CNPBM

By decree number 2017/013 of 23 January 2017, the president of the republic of Cameroon created the national commission for the promotion of bilingualism and multiculturalism. Placed under the authority of the President of the Republic, this structure is a legal person with financial autonomy. According to article 3 of this decree, the missions of this commission are as follows: to work for the promotion of bilingualism and multiculturalism in Cameroon, with a view to maintaining peace, consolidating the national unity of the country and strengthening the will and daily practice of living together of its populations (Presidential

Decree No. 2017/013 of 23 January 2017 on the creation, organization and functioning of the national commission for the promotion of bilingualism and multiculturalism). The commission has an essentially consultative role and in this regard, it shall

- submit reports and opinions to the President of the Republic and the Government on issues relating to the protection and promotion of bilingualism and multiculturalism;
- ensure the monitoring of the implementation of the constitutional provisions regarding the practice of French and English, particularly in public services and any other services receiving State subsidies
- propose measures to strengthen bilingualism and multiculturalism in Cameroon;
- To prepare and submit to the President of the Republic draft texts on bilingualism;
- Conducting any study or investigation and proposing all measures likely to strengthen the bilingual and multicultural character of Cameroon.

This structure must also receive requests denouncing any linguistic discrimination and popularize the regulations on bilingualism. This structure is composed of 15 members, all of whom are appointed by the President of the Republic, headed by an Anglophone president from the South West of Cameroon, peter Mafany Musonge, who is a former Prime Minister of Cameroon. The main challenge of the creation of this structure is to consolidate living together, which has been undermined by a violent conflict marked by secessionist impulses since 2016 in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon. In addition, other identity-based aspirations exist and are manifested by an ever-growing tribalism in the public space. The CNPBM receives requests from all sections of the population on a daily basis, aimed at denouncing the non-respect of constitutional provisions relating to bilingualism and multiculturalism, or at making suggestions. The CNPBM is therefore ideally placed to stem the tide of this social cancer. In the following, we attempt to present the Commission's assessment after three years of existence.

2- Actions and projects of the CNPBM

The CNPBM is a particularly young institution that is waiting to prove itself with regard to its missions. After three years of operation, it has nevertheless tried to make its mark. It has made courtesy and working visits to the major government bodies in order to seek their support. The most important activity just after its creation was the visit to the 37 ministerial departments of the Republic to ensure the sound application of the constitutional provisions on the promotion of bilingualism (Messi, 2017: 9). As part of its projection logic, the members of the Commission met with the Canadian High Commissioner in Cameroon to discuss collaboration modalities and thus benefit from Canada's experience in the management of bilingualism. In addition, the chairman of the commission met with the Secretary General of the Commonwealth in order to benefit from the contribution of this organization and thus participate in the "promotion of a healthy cohabitation between Anglophones and Francophones". The reports and proposals resulting from these meetings were transmitted to the President of the Republic.

From 24 to 26 April 2018, the Commission conducted a listening mission in the South West. Academics, civil society, parliamentarians, traditional and religious authorities and many other actors from the social stratum echoed the poor practice of bilingualism in Cameroon. The recriminations revolved around corruption, the centralization of economic and political power. In this string of actions, the CNPBM organized from 24 to 25 April 2019 at the Mont Febe Hotel in Yaoundé, a colloquium on the theme "Cameroonian multiculturalism at the crossroads: between tradition and modernity". The summaries of the papers were submitted to the President of the Republic. Just before this scientific meeting, the commission organized a "day of reflection on living together" on 11 April 2019 to reflect on ways of improving living together. It emerged from these two meetings that it is absolutely necessary to provide a better legal and

institutional framework for living together. These initiatives led to the proposal and vote by the National Assembly of Law n°2019/019 of 24 December 2019 on the promotion of official languages in Cameroon. This law outlines the scope of application, defines bilingualism and the incentives for its practice and other national languages. These provisions enrich article 1 al.3 of the Cameroonian constitution which stipulates that English and French are official languages of equal value. Following this provision, Law 2019/020 of 24 December 2019 amending and supplementing certain provisions of Law 2016/007 of 12 July on the Penal Code was adopted. It deals with the criminalization of acts of tribalism and racism. Even if it is not the result of the Commission's initiative, it is one of its stated objectives for the year 2020. The Commission had begun information and awareness caravans on these laws before the Covid-19 pandemic intervened to put an end to this program, which should be extended to the ten regions of the country.

From 30 September to 4 October 2019, the great national dialogue was held in Cameroon. The members of the Commission took an active part in order to implement their roadmap on the issues of bilingualism, decentralization and living together. Despite the commendable efforts, many challenges remain, especially with regard to the Anglophone minority.

B- The challenges of managing English-speaking minorities

The management of the Anglophone minority presents many challenges related to the establishment of the CNPBM as a consultative structure, and the social environment in Cameroon characterized by over 200 ethnic groups.

1- Challenges related to the construction of the CNPBM

The National Commission is an organization with financial autonomy and is directly attached to the Presidency of the Republic. It is only an advisory body and therefore cannot take any decisions. Only the instructions of the president of the republic are binding. This commission therefore does not have enough independence, as it remains totally subordinate to the will of the president of the republic. It remains rather weak in relation to the missions entrusted to it. Its members are appointed by the president of the republic. While some of them are recognized by the population as a whole as being of good character, many of them only represent the senior members of the ruling party, which the Anglophone population considers to be the source of their misfortune. Thus, the mere fact of having been a member of the central committee of the CPDM (ruling party) discredits certain members in the eyes of the Anglophone population. Furthermore, in popular imagery, commissions have never been created to truly solve social problems, but are 'money pits' or 'means to reward' friends. These stereotypes are challenges for the CNPBM.

It should also be noted that the issue of the Anglophone minority has existed since Cameroon's independence and politicians have never taken concrete decisions to resolve it. Thus, creating this commission in the midst of a war when many Anglophones are clearly in favor of secession is already a handicap. Whatever the sincerity of the government, this organization is weakened from its creation.

2- Challenges related to the administrative and ethnic organization

In a country with more than 200 ethnic groups, the challenge is to encourage people to live together while recognizing the particularities of each one's identity. Except that the Anglophone case is more profound. If, despite the social and economic malaise, history links the different ethnic groups of the country, this is not exactly the case for Anglophones who, grouped together in several ethnic groups, nevertheless recognize a singular identity. This identity is reflected in the administrative system, education, and the less centralized model of political

governance inherited from Great Britain, of which language is only one vector. The CNPBM must absolutely take this into account.

It should be noted that the notion of *Anglophony* in Cameroon transcends linguistic issues. Indeed, the Anglophone in Cameroon cannot be the one whose first language of communication is English (Tchinda, 2018). In reality, this notion is based more on an ethnic, regional and geographical substratum (Guimatsia, 2010). It excludes at the same time all those Francophones living in the Anglophone regions of the country, regardless of their cultural anchorage in these regions, or their educational system. This means that the promotion of language alone is not enough to solve the problem of Anglophone minorities. The Anglophone dilemma goes further. The Anglophone populations believe that the basis for reunification has been distorted. According to them, the negotiation of the basis for reunification was not based on equality, but rather on a logic of absorption of the English-speaking part. The CNPBM must therefore work to reduce the effects of this strong trend. This will require greater autonomy for the regions. As a consultative body, the CNPBM should not ignore possible proposals on the form of the state, which, if it is not very decentralized, could move towards a federation. This is all the truer since the crisis that is shaking Cameroon is not an opposition between Anglophones and Francophones, but rather the absorption and assimilation of an Anglophone minority by a centralized Francophone power. Moreover, the criminal acts of the Anglophone separatists are not particularly aimed at Francophones, but at all those who pledge allegiance to the Yaoundé regime, including civil servants, administrators, and soldiers sent to the area, without any distinction of origin. It should therefore be noted that the notion of the Anglophone minority incorporates a set of historical particularities that cannot be ignored in the resolution of the Anglophone problem and the management of this minority.

Conclusion

The issue of protection of minorities, particularly the Anglophone minority in Cameroon, is a regalian mission of the state. But it can come up against political positions, the system of governance and historical constructs. The management of Anglophone minorities in Cameroon is entangled in all these realities. The creation of the CNPBM by the Cameroonian government was therefore intended, among other things, to address the issue of the linguistic marginalization of Anglophones in the light of the Anglophone crisis that erupted in 2016. However, given its structure and the anchoring of Anglophone demands, it is difficult to envisage effective action by this structure, especially in the management of Anglophone minorities. After four years of operation, its results remain rather mixed if one is to measure the impact on the Anglophone crisis and the practice of bilingualism in public spaces. In reality, the conflict has not been resolved and bilingualism in public spaces in French-speaking areas is still a pipe dream. In the light of digital technology and the rapid expansion of social networks, it is clear that the Commission does not communicate enough, or does not make sufficient use of digital means to popularize what it does among young people. Its role, which remains consultative, is in itself a problem if it is to have legitimacy of action, since it is the politicians whom Anglophone people do not trust who determine the opportunity to act, including the modalities of action. The commission has no means of enforcement. Furthermore, decision-making is highly centralized at the level of the presidency and greatly hampers the implementation of proposals made. In other words, the commission can submit projects that are not taken into account by the government, or are only taken into account belatedly when the situation has degenerated as was the case in 2016. It can therefore be clearly observed that the political conditions are not in place for the optimal functioning of this structure, which nevertheless has good projects.

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