

# Political Discourse on Southern Cameroons Security Situation, 1959 -1961: A Historical Appraisal

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**Abstract:-This article examines the pre-plebiscite and the post plebiscite discourse that culminated into the creation of a police force in West Cameroon. The discussions which gained added impetus from 1959 was part of Southern Cameroons quest for security guarantees in the context of the struggle for statehood. The paper argues that Southern Cameroons debated her security situation from a disadvantageous standpoint and finally attained independence with a police force that could not adequately address security challenges and so had to be succored by the gendarmes from the Republic of Cameroun. British partial commitment to the task of creating an indigenous police force for Southern Cameroons, lack of cohesiveness amongst West Cameroonian politicians and the influence of President Ahmadou Ahidjo informed the conclusions of Southern Cameroons' security debate.**

## I. INTRODUCTION

Southern Cameroons that later became West Cameroon consequent upon the 11 February 1961 plebiscite, was administered as part of Nigeria, where, the outbreak of the First World War had coincided with the crystallisation of British rule. Before 1914, the British colonial administration had established the first police in 1861 in their Nigerian Protectorate. The one-hundred-man contingent was a consular protection force based in Lagos, which later became known as the "Hausa Force". This appellation stemmed from the fact that the force comprised of recruits from the Hausa ethnic group originally from the North, and who were freed slaves, resident in Lagos. According to H.S. Freeman, Governor of the Lagos Colony:

The men [Hausa] being from the interior and professing the Mussalman religion (Islam) are hated by the natives of these parts who have hitherto only known them as slaves. They are disliked also by Europeans as being of a more independent character than the government to depend on, and if properly managed, will prove a valuable resource to this settlement.<sup>1</sup>

Consequent upon the partial acceptance of the "Hausa Force" by the public, British colonialists formed additional police forces constituted largely by conscripts from without the communities in which they were to serve as they expanded the realm of their control to the East and North of Nigeria.

<sup>1</sup> Cited in Etannibi E.O.Alemika, "Colonialism, State and Policing in Nigeria," in *Journal of Crime, Law and Social Change*, Vol. 20, 1993, 16.

Chukwuma explains that the practice of alienating the police from the communities they served was to ensure that such officials, when deployed to execute punitive expeditions, would act as an army of occupation and deploy maximum violence on the communities.<sup>2</sup> These latent forces were therefore noted for their abuses and violations of the law. Even the Governor of Lagos Colony consented in 1897 that the police, no doubt, behaved very badly in the hinterland by looting, stealing and generally taking advantage of their positions.<sup>3</sup> The common epitaph associated with the police therefore, was "The Forty Thieves in Police Uniforms".<sup>4</sup> The leading purpose of this colonial police was to protect British political and economic interests. The brutal subjugation of indigenous resistances to British incursions therefore, aided in accomplishing that objective.

In 1906, the British merged the Lagos colony and the Southern Protectorate of Nigeria while in the North, the Charter granted to the Royal Niger Company in 1886 and which enabled her to form the Royal Niger Company Constabulary was revoked earlier in 1900 and the British formalized the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria.<sup>5</sup> Officers from the Royal Niger Company Constabulary Force were enlisted to form the Civil Police. With the merger of the Lagos Colony, the Southern and Northern Protectorates in 1913 which was christened Nigeria, the main security unit charged with maintaining law and order was the Civil Police.

When Britain took over the administration of British Southern Cameroons in 1922 as a mandated territory, the Civil Police was extended to the territory. Bamilekes, Bamums, resident in Southern Cameroons, Southern Cameroonians and recruits from the Yola ethnic groups were added to the Hausa and other Nigerians already serving in the

<sup>2</sup> Innocent Chukwuma "Police Transformation in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects in Crime and Policing in Transitional Societies," Seminar Report No 8, Johannesburg: South Africa Institute of International Affairs, 2001,127.

<sup>3</sup> Alemika, Colonialism, State and Policing in Nigeria, 205.

<sup>4</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Everyone's on the Game," Corruption and Human Rights Abuses by the Nigerian Police Force, available on <http://www.hrw.org>, consulted on 13 February 2019, 13-14. The appellation 'forty thieves' is reminiscent of Owen Forsyth's work on the first and oldest New York City criminal street gang – The Forty Thieves, formed in 1825 with an established leadership and the story of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 190-194.

forces.<sup>6</sup> In 1930, the Southern and Northern regional police forces were fused to constitute the colony's first national police known as the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) with national jurisdiction, Nigeria. In this light the administration of the police in British Southern Cameroons was an extension from Nigeria.

The Cameroon Police Province constituted the former Bamenda and Cameroons administrative provinces. From 1922 to 30 September 1954 when Southern Cameroons attained the status of a quasi-federal territory, the force was commanded by a Senior Superintendent of Police,<sup>7</sup> resident in Buea and recruits from Southern Cameroons were posted to serve in the territory. Reports from the various police stations in the British Southern Cameroons between 1930 and 1959 indicated that the security force in the Cameroons was inadequate to salvage her security needs. For example, in 1934 the District Officer for Bamenda Division, in a letter to the Commissioner of Police, resident in Buea explained that:

I have to inform you that it is very necessary that the present strength of the Bamenda detachment is augmented by three constables. Police duties in outlying areas during the last nine months have frequently resulted in the station strength being reduced to the barest minimum, often at the expense of station beats. I shall be glad if the residents' approval can be obtained as early as possible.<sup>8</sup>

In Mamfe Division where security challenges were more serious owing to the fact that it was a border town hosting a complicated network of trading activities, Sergeant H.N. Harcourt, on behalf of the Divisional Officer sent a letter to the Commissioner of Police on 17 July 1935 explaining the consequences of the numerical inferiority of the Mamfe detachment thus:

The present strength of the detachment... is just adequate and no more to carry on ordinary duties. But with 4 or 5 men absent in addition to 10 days of every month, it will be hardly possible to carry on. The station has in fact of late been (at times) so denuded of Police, that I have had to use native court messengers to effect Protectorate court service, while the other day I had to delay 3 days before

sending out to investigate a crime as there literally was not a man to send.<sup>9</sup>

Other reports from the Districts officers for Kumba, Wum, Mamfe and Nkambe in April 1956 and 1957 to the Governor-General of Nigeria and the Commissioner resident in Buea respectively hinged on the need to increase the personnel in their constituencies did not yield fruits. The Commissioner observed that the Senior Superintendent of Police in the various Districts would have to submit a strong recommendation if an increase in establishment was to be considered.<sup>10</sup> The rise of Foncha as Premier added steam to the arguments for the need of more security personnel or an indigenous security unit in the territory. It is against this background that the paper examines the pre and post plebiscite security discussions and the intervening British and French Cameroon's positions which affected the nature of the West Cameroon Police Force that was created in September 1961.

## II. PRE-PLEBISCITE SECURITY TALKS

Security talks in British Southern Cameroon which prefaced the 11 February 1961 plebiscite was motivated by three major factors. Firstly, in 1959, amidst southern Cameroonians demand for more police officers to mitigate insecurity in Nkambe, Wum, Mamfe and Kumba, British and Nigerian authorities started suspending some ongoing police project in Southern Cameroons on grounds that, the future of the territory was not certain<sup>11</sup>. Secondly, the rise of J.N Foncha, a reunificationist, as Premier in the 1959 elections reduced the probability of Southern Cameroons becoming part of Nigeria at independence. The quest for a security architecture was not estranged from the the general struggle for independence. Thirdly the independence of Nigeria was slated for 1 October 1960 while the fate of Southern Cameroons rested on a probability – to be decided by the February 1961 plebiscite. These considerations necessitated a clearer definition of Southern Cameroon's security destiny.

The British authorities systematically prepared Nigerian Security (Police) in view of independence, but technically amplified the danger of Southern Cameroons achieving independence outside Nigeria. In the 1957 and 1958 constitutional conferences, they discussed in a detailed manner the arrangements for the NPF. Permanent and interim principles were drafted by the United Kingdom (UK) delegation. This was triggered by their belief that in

<sup>9</sup>Pb 1959/1, Letter No M. 83 vol. 111/479, 17 July 1935, NAB.

<sup>10</sup>Pb 1957/2: Police Force Strength, June 1956. Also see file No 304/11/37, NAB.

<sup>11</sup> In 1959 The Governor-General gave instructions to the effect that the project to construct an office for the Assistant superintendent of Police, one Inspectors' quarter and twelve other Ranks' quarters in Mamfe estimated at £ 13,800 be suspended. In Tombel, construction of an immigration office and four other Ranks' quarters at the cost of £ 5000 was also suspended. These projects were suspended and work could only start when the future of the Southern Cameroons could be "more clearly seen." See Annual Reports on the Police, 1959.

<sup>6</sup>Dinga Vincent Fokum, "The marriage of two Families" in *Sevir: Revue de la Police Camerounaise* (Julliet 1988), 30.

<sup>7</sup> Report by Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the General Assembly of the United Nations on the Cameroons Under United Kingdom Administration for the year 1954 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office 1955), 16.

<sup>8</sup>Pb 1959/1, Police Force Strength, file No. B.18/557, NAB.

discharging their final responsibility to Nigeria, they must ensure that after independence, the Federal Government should be able to carry out their responsibilities under the constitution and ensure the order and good government of the country. This entailed a restructuring of the Police and in this wise they noted as follows:

The United Kingdom Government has found it necessary for the good government of the country to maintain a single Nigerian Police. The newly independent Federal Government will be subject to pressures both internally and externally much greater than those borne by the present Federal Government so that they will have a much greater need than the present of an instrument adequate to ensure, without question or challenge the peace and stability of the country.<sup>12</sup>

It is important to bear in mind that British authorities mandated themselves to set up a constitutional framework that would preserve internal and external security based on the fact that the new would be subjected to “pressures” greater than those borne at present. Concerning British Cameroons the Secretary of State noted that when the federation would become independent and administration of the territory under the Trusteeship Agreement as an integral part of Nigeria obligatorily comes to an end, the onus would be on the people to say freely their wishes for the future.<sup>13</sup> In a Summitonference held in 1959, the Acting Commissioner reminded Southern Cameroonians about the options opened to them and the British position as intimated by the Secretary of State for Colonies. Alan Lennox-Boyd stated that:

Among the options open to them [Southern Cameroonians] would be to continue under the Trusteeship administration of the United Kingdom. I must in fairness add the other warning that you would not thereby be given the golden key to the Bank of England. But many of the best friends of the Cameroons do not forsee a destiny more likely to promote her happiness and prosperity than in continued association with Nigeria.<sup>14</sup>

In view of Nigerian independence scheduled for 1 October 1960 and British official stance vis-à-vis British assistance in a situation of Southern Cameroons not remaining as an integral part of Nigeria, anxiety developed in Southern Cameroons pertaining to her security.

<sup>12</sup> Nigeria Constitutional Conference -1958: memorandum by the United Kingdom Delegation, 29<sup>th</sup> September 1958, NAB. Also see police forces in Nigeria: memorandum by the Action Group Delegation, signed by Obafemi Awolowo, September 1958, NAB

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Address to the Summit Conference by Acting Commissioner of the Cameroons, VC/b/1961) 28 NAB.

### III. SECURITY TALKS IN THE SOUTHERN CAMEROONS HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY (SCHA)

Foncha, in view of the anxiety and hopelessness in the territory’s security position after Nigerian independence on 1 October 1960, choose to present the security question in the House of Assembly. He passed a motion in the SCHA on March 1960 calling on Her Majesty’s Government to set up a Southern Cameroons militia as soon as possible in view of the fact that the Southern Cameroons “must separate from the Federation of Nigeria on a date not later than 1 October, 1960<sup>15</sup> and become a separate British territory. In Foncha’s opinion therefore, the motion was part of the preparation for separation from Nigeria when the territory would revert wholly under Her Majesty’s Trusteeship as a separate entity. The presence of a Southern Cameroons militia under the aegis of Southern Cameroons and the United Kingdom would substitute the Nigerian militia stationed in the territory.

The Premier noted further that the motion was a reminder to Her Majesty’s Government of her responsibility to the UN regarding the defense of the Trust territory of Cameroons in line with Article 5(c) of the Trusteeship Agreement. He clarified that the motion was not a request for Her Majesty’s Government to establish military bases or naval fortifications. Rather it was a simple request for “a small, well-disciplined force, composed of Cameroonians to help keep order in the Southern Cameroons”<sup>16</sup> because it would be improper to use Nigerians in the defense of the territory at such a crucial and critical moment in her history. He hoped that Cameroonians under training in the military academy of Sandhurst and others who held positions of responsibility in the military forces of Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra-Leone and the Gambia could constitute the nucleus of the Southern Cameroons’ militia.<sup>17</sup> This motion, aimed at mitigating the security challenge in Southern Cameroons, was criticised by the opposition party- the Kamerun National Congress (KNC) and Kamerun People’s Party (KPP) alliance which in May 1960 merged to form the Cameroon Peoples National Convention(CPNC) led by E.M.L Endeley.

The opposition group passed an unsuccessful dilatory motion to adjourn the debate for six months. The move, to them, was premature and tended to prejudge the issues of the pending plebiscite and a militia established by Her Majesty’s Government would become redundant when the plebiscite results in favour of Nigeria or the Republic of Cameroun would be known. They expressed fear that it would be difficult to disband or remove the established “alien troops” even when they had outlived their usefulness.<sup>18</sup> Motomby Woleta, the opposition chief whip argued forcibly that, an alien militia piloted by Britain could not be more loyal to the

<sup>15</sup>Press Release, No 733. 24 March 1960, also see House of Assembly Debates: Motion to Establish a Cameroons Militia Passed, March 1960. NAB

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 1.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

government of Southern Cameroons than the Nigerian Army constituted by Ekois and Bokis who were part Nigerian and part Cameroonian. He thus accused Foncha for “trying to sell off our defense to Britain” and like J.M Boja,<sup>19</sup> beckoning on Britain to establish and control the defense force, was doing “exactly what Cameroun Republic in French Community has done.”<sup>20</sup>

Ando Seh on his part was firm in his conviction that the territory should have self-government before possessing militia while E.M.L Endeley, the opposition leader, wondered why Britain should be requested to establish a force in the territory. To him the Trusteeship Agreement mandated Britain to establish military bases without wanting to be called upon to do so. Reflecting on the situation in Cyprus at that time when it was alleged that British troops were meddling with the Cypriot’s demand for independence, Endeley, supported by J.C Kangson, suggested that, if the motion was predicated on the need to ensure that the plebiscite was supervised by natural troops, the UN troops should be invited to keep the peace.

S.N Tamfu and N.N Mbile, Deputy opposition leader added that the motion was illogical and absurd and Britain would be foolish to establish a military force in the territory in view of the undefined future of Southern Cameroons. In their opinion if Britain must concede to the request it would be only on the basis of an ulterior motive because if Southern Cameroons would join the Republic or the Federation of Nigeria, none would permit the territory to run her own army

The postulations and arguments of the opposition however did not dent or deter the government stance on the motion. The intention of the motion which was in consonance with the UN decision to separate Southern Cameroons from Nigeria, in their thinking, was misconstrued by the opposition. P.N Kemcha specifically noted that, within the interim period (between separation and end of Trusteeship), there was need for an instrument to maintain peace. The militia would not become redundant after the plebiscite but would rather as S. Mofor explained become part of the militia of the Republic of Cameroun or Nigeria as dictated by the plebiscite results<sup>21</sup> and that since the Queen was the Titular head of all the Armed Forces of the Commonwealth, it was necessary to consult her as the Southern Cameroons would be administered directly by Her Majesty’s Government after 1 October 1960.

J.M Bokwe, Minister of Cooperatives and Community Development was of the opinion that the motion to establish a militia should be interpreted within the context of the Government pursuance of the policy of Cameroonisation which according to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State for Works and Transport, M.M Monono, meant that Southern Cameroonians should be

given the first opportunities of employment and when employed they should work hard and do their best at all times.<sup>22</sup> It was therefore a Southern Cameroons and not a British militia and the presence of some British in the militia would not make it less Cameroonian since British also served in the public service of Cameroon. Based on this, J.H Nganje, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Local Government could not fathom why the motion was indicted and downplayed by the opposition. He urged the House to forge on since the opposition could always have their say but the “Government would always have its way”<sup>23</sup>

Evidently, the motion attracted a lot of anxiety from the opposition because of the Nigeria Factor. They hoped to maintain Nigerian personnel who could hardly oppose Nigerian interest in Southern Cameroons led by the opposition party. The Government party on its part feared that Nigerian personnel in the territory could influence the pending UN organised plebiscite results. The search for a Cameroonian militia to maintain order before and after the plebiscite was however a primary concern to the government. Both parties thus viewed the presence of UN troops only as a last resort alternative. In the meantime, however the Government was bent on defusing the opposition standpoint. A.N Jua, Minister of Social Service thus clarified the motion and warned the opposition in the following words:

The motion sought to establish a Southern Cameroons and not a British militia. Britain ... was duty bound to help the Southern Cameroons to establish a militia of its own. If Britain could help establish an Army in Nigeria for which the British Government was responsible up to 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1959 without the Nigerian Government paying a penny for it, why could not the same thing be done for Southern Cameroons... [The opposition wants] the Nigerian Army to remain here so as to influence the forthcoming plebiscite... the Government would vehemently oppose such a move.”<sup>24</sup>

#### IV. FONCHA TALKS WITH NIGERIA AND THE CAMEROUN REPUBLIC

Against the hassling in the House of Assembly, Foncha approached the Governor-General of Nigerian on April 1960 with a request from the Southern Cameroons Government that consideration should be given to the establishment of a Cameroons militia before 1 October 1960.<sup>25</sup> This request was understandably genuine considering that by October 1960, the future of Southern Cameroons would not have been decided and the Police officers in Southern Cameroons were part of

<sup>19</sup>J.M Bojainscribed his legacy in the history of Southern Cameroons by crossing the carpet- from the government Party to the opposition party

<sup>20</sup>Ibid. 2.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid. 1.

<sup>22</sup> Press Release, No 686, 1 March 1960.

<sup>23</sup> Press Release, No 733.

<sup>24</sup> Press Release, No, 734, 25 March 1960.

<sup>25</sup> Press Release, No 773, 20 April 1960.

the NPF administered from Nigeria. The Governor-General responded to Southern Cameroons' request by stating that he had been advised that:

There were many difficulties-particularly by the provision of training facilities- in the way of raising such a militia at an early date and that the whole question of the defense of Southern Cameroons during the interim period was being given careful consideration by Her Majesty's Government.<sup>26</sup>

He however, promised to inform Her Majesty's Government of Foncha's suggestion. It is not clear whether Foncha's request was directed to her Majesty's Government or not but British authorities at a Nigerian Independence Conference, held in London in May 1960, agreed to accept Southern Cameroons as a fully self-governing region equal in all respects with the other regions, should they decide in the forthcoming plebiscite to join the Nigerian Federation. Meanwhile Nigerian military forces in the Southern Cameroons were to be withdrawn by 1 October 1960. The Secretary of State for Colonies, Macleod made it clear in the conference that "should it be necessary for the defense and internal security of the territory, they would be replaced by United Kingdom forces"<sup>27</sup>

It should be recalled that British authorities committed themselves to the framing of a constitutional instrument with permanent and interim measures to ensure internal and external security for the state of Nigeria while the security situation in Southern Cameroons by 1960 was not yet decided. However, Southern Cameroons officials were assured by Sir Andrew Cohen, Britain's Chief Delegate in the Trusteeship Council, that, after Nigerian independence, the Commissioner of the Cameroons would be responsible directly to the UK Government in London as separation of the Trust territory from Nigeria would have been complete. Considering that the future of Southern Cameroons was to be decided by a plebiscite, J.O Field, British Special Representative for the territory, clarified Southern Cameroonian authorities that Federal Government power would be held in trust by the Commissioner under whom the use and disposition of the police would devolve entirely with no Federal Government Control over them.<sup>28</sup>

In hope of a future union with the Republic of Cameroon and the uncertainty that punctuated Southern Cameroons security space, the leaders of the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP), the ruling party in

Southern Cameroons, engaged in talks with the President of the Cameroun Republic in order to ascertain the form the union would take. In this light, the High Commissioner of Cameroons, Sir James Robertson, informed the House of Assembly in Buea on Monday, 19 September 1960 that the views of the interlocutors be published before the plebiscite, so that the enfranchised citizens of Southern Cameroons could make an informed choice between the two solutions because with separation on 1 October 1960, Nigerian help would cease and 'you will have to look elsewhere.'<sup>29</sup>

This much needed security assistance then, could not come from Ahmadou Ahidjo either. As the British packed out of Southern Cameroons, they requested Ahidjo to 'foster' the territory, but he turned down the offer on grounds that the Yaoundé government had neither the military nor the economic wherewithal to accept responsibility for internal security in British Cameroons. Patrick Johnson, the British Ambassador to the Republic of Cameroun touched on this in a report to the Governor-General of Nigeria as follows:

The defense question is obviously the most difficult and a great deal depends on the length of time the present disturbances continue. I did not understand Mr. Ahidjo to say in Buea, as Mr. Field reports that the Cameroonian Government could not accept responsibility for internal security in the British Cameroons Certainly Mr. Foncha would wish to keep the police... because (soldiers of Republic of Cameroon) as a result of French training and ...the emergency are inclined to methods which we consider rather deplorable"<sup>30</sup>

Evidently, the intervening period (1 October 1960 - 11 February 1961) for Southern Cameroons was a difficult one owing to anxiety over security issues and the well understood message that the territory would not be entitled to help from the UK or Nigeria. The High Commissioner understood the stakes and hoped that unreserved respect for the forces of law and order that would monitor the pending plebiscite would serve as a momentary respite mood. He described the situation and calmed the charged atmosphere thus:

This interim period is going to be a difficult one for every body in your country, for your Ministers, for your officials and for the British government which is now about to assume direct

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Press Release, No. 832, 23 May 1960.

<sup>28</sup> Press Release, No 982, 19 September 1960, 1.

<sup>29</sup> Press Release, No 833, 23 May 1960.

<sup>30</sup> See Cos 554/2249xc 3406, Patrick Johnston to the Governor-General of Nigeria. Note that in a further correspondence, Ahidjo promised to give Southern Cameroons top priority after clearing existing problems. See Footnote 270 in Anthony Ndi, *The Golden Age of Southern Cameroons: Prime Lessons for Cameroon* (Denver: Spears Media Press, 2016), 240.

responsibility for this trustee territory. I therefore call upon you all to maintain the highest degree of cooperation with the forces responsible for ensuring law and order, so that the country will remain peaceful and so that the plebiscite can be carried out in good order and in a friendly atmosphere...Her Majesty's Government has sent a force of British troops to take the place of Nigerian soldiers who have been protecting your frontiers. The British Government unlike the Nigerian Government has no interest in the outcome of the plebiscite and is quite unbiased .... It has therefore been considered fairer to employ British troops to protect the boundaries of the territory rather than Nigerians for they have a direct interest in the result of the plebiscite.<sup>31</sup>

The assertions of the High Commissioner assuaged the anxiety that fraught the minds of many Southern Cameroonian authorities especially the ruling KNDP. This was because his emphasis on Nigerian interest in the result of the plebiscite defused or vitiated the potency of the oppositions' argument in the House of Assembly in March 1960 for the maintenance of a Nigerian force in Southern Cameroons.<sup>32</sup>

The troops sent to protect the boundaries of Southern Cameroons were the King's own Border Regiment. They were employed on behalf of the UN to foil any terrorist activities that could affect the plebiscite scheduled for February 1961. The regiment came with over 500 ancillary troops drawn from the Sappers, the Royal Signals, the Royal Army Medical Corps, the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, the Army Catering Corps, the Royal Pioneer Corps and the Royal Air Force (RAF).<sup>33</sup>

With the presence of this regiment on Southern Cameroon's border lands, Southern Cameroonian politicians dominated by the KNDP and CPNC parties exploited opportunities in the territory to campaign for the plebiscite. The UN- organized and supervised plebiscite led to the victory of the KNDP by 233,571 votes against 97,741 votes for the CPNC.<sup>34</sup> Southern Cameroons therefore was to achieve

<sup>31</sup>Press Release, No 982, 19 September 1960, 1.

<sup>32</sup>It should be noted that Nigeria recognised in essence that it would be difficult for Southern Cameroons Government to make its own staff available for services provided by the Nigerian Federation. They also reasoned that should the plebiscite results favour association with Nigeria, she would again be responsible for services that would remain Federal in line with the constitutional instrument in force. The Nigerian Government thus agreed to provide such services provided by the Federation as agents of the Southern Cameroons Commissioner. The cost of the agency services for the period 1 October 1960 to 31 March 1961 was estimated at £ 393650, The police alone cost at £134.270, The highest. See Press Release, No 1002, 30 September 1960.

<sup>33</sup>Press Release, No 1305, 25 April 1961.

<sup>34</sup>The Campaign leading to the Plebiscite, the role of the U.N and the analysis of the results with its concomitant effects on Southern Cameroons

independence by reunification with the Republic of Cameroon.

#### V. POST PLEBISCITE TALKS IN LONDON AND CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCES

The several constitutional talks that culminated to reunification mooted either in a detail or in a cursory manner the security situation of Southern Cameroons while the intervening British actions accentuated the need for the creation of a police force in West Cameroon. The Kings' Own Border Regiment, used to maintain law and for the months left for British rule in Cameroon to cease was replaced by the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Grenadier Guards from Britain in May 1961. Discussions then took place at the Colonial Office between Macleod, the Colonial Secretary, Foncha, J.O Field, Commissioner of the Southern Cameroons and Ntumazah, leader of the One Kamerun (OK) party who was in London expressing his disquiet at the turn of events in Cameroon, centered on the process of implementing the plebiscite.

The gist of Ntumazah's complaints and demands startled British attendants at the conference. He evoked the political crisis in the Republic of Cameroon and demanded inter alia, the evacuation of foreign troops from Cameroon soil - French troops in the Republic and British troops in the Southern Cameroons.<sup>35</sup> According to Ntumazah, implementation of the demands was preliminary to union of the two Cameroons. Undoubtedly, this action by the OK party was a concern to British officials and Foncha who returned to Cameroon thereafter with a burgeoning desire to discuss the security of Southern Cameroons.

At the Buea Tripartite Meeting, 15-17 May 1961, Foncha sought to guarantee the *status quo ante* of Southern Cameroons which, among other things, meant the retention of police powers and the creation of a Southern Cameroons military Force.<sup>36</sup> Ngoh observed that the Republic of Cameroon's delegation to the conference which lasted for three days, played the role of a polite listener.<sup>37</sup> This suggests that the deliberation took place in an atmosphere of conviviality in sharp contrasts with the findings of Ndi who noted that there was a clash between Ahidjo and Foncha at the conference over security matters. According to him, the unbalanced representation at the conference did not favour Foncha as British and French representatives combined to impose on the Foncha Cabinet. This became so flagrant and thus obliged Foncha to point out to a "barefaced collusion that

are well researched aspects of Cameroon history. The works of ChemLanghee, Ngoh and Fanso have addressed these issues.

<sup>35</sup> Press Release, No 1330, 11 May 1961. Also see *London Times*, 5 May 1961.

<sup>36</sup>The conference was chaired by J.O Field and representatives came from the Governments of the UK, the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons.

<sup>37</sup>V.J Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons 1922-1961: A Constitutional History* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2001), 154. Ngoh's treatise is an authoritative document for the constitutional history of Cameroon especially from Southern Cameroons' perspective.

had developed between Britain and Republic of Cameroon over several issues especially concerning defense.”<sup>38</sup>

Six days after the Buea Tripartite talks Foncha crossed over to Yaounde for a meeting with the president of the Republic of Cameroon during which he presented an agenda of eight points for discussions. The second item concerned the training of a security force for the Southern Cameroons. Ahidjo requested for a brief of the talks that hinged on security of the Southern Cameroons during the Buea Tripartite Meeting. Foncha responded that a total of five hundred police in the territory could not effectively and efficiently deal with the security challenges in the territory. He also intimated Ahidjo on the security threat posed by the OK party and emphasized the need to have a security force that could deal with acts of terrorism “that might be launched by the OK, whose activities in the training and importation of arms were well known”<sup>39</sup>

Foncha went ahead to explain that the colonial Secretary, had stated that if a joint demand from the governments of the Republic of Cameroon and the Southern Cameroons were made, the British Government would favourably consider undertaking the conscription and training of the Southern Cameroons Security Force.<sup>40</sup>Foncha wished Ahidjo would endorse such a demand to the effect that an indigenous force be created for Southern Cameroons. Ahidjo, however, reminded Foncha in response that:

Security and defense were matters over exclusive responsibilities; and for that reason... the technical officers of both sectors must be kept in the picture all the time... officers from the Republic should, for instance join the British officers who will be responsible for the recruitment and training of Cameroonians... the Cameroonian officers among the 290 Cameroonians in the Nigerian armed forces should be sent to the Republic to acquaint themselves with the officers and the rank and file of the army and also to know the country ...<sup>41</sup>

Foncha conceded to Ahidjo’s view and the latter promised to notify the British Government about the consensus with Foncha via the British Ambassador in Yaounde. It is not clear

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<sup>38</sup>Ndi, *Golden Age of Southern Cameroons: Vital Lessons for Cameroon*(Denver: Spears Media Press, 2016), 241. Ndi observed that other than the high suspicion that there was collusion between the British delegates and those of the Republic of Cameroon, attendance at the conference was equally unbalanced with Britain, France, Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons fielding some twenty delegates only four of whom represented Southern Cameroons with the three other partners frequently combining to impose on the Foncha cabinet.

<sup>39</sup> Meeting held in Yaounde on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> May, 1961 between the President of the Republic of Cameroon and the Premier of the Southern Cameroons, NAB.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid, 2.

whether the British Government was informed about what transpired in the Foncha-Ahidjotalks by her Ambassador to the Republic of Cameroon but it is possible that Ahidjo engaged in an accord to allow the British authorities have a free hand in the training of a Southern Cameroons force.<sup>42</sup>

The British authorities had a clear understanding about the future of the British forces stationed in Southern Cameroons. The Secretary of State for Colonies on 7 February and 4 May 1961 in an effort to provide answers to questions in the House of Commons, stated unequivocally that British troops in Southern Cameroons would be withdrawn when UK Trusteeship over the territory would end on 1 October 1961. On the other hand, doubts existed with regards to the situation of the force in the unfolding of events in Southern Cameroons.<sup>43</sup>The confusion and dubiety that fraught the Southern Cameroons socio-political atmosphere explains Foncha’s predilection and quest for a security instrument indigenous to the territory. This was predicated on his desire to Cameroonise the Civil and Security services in Southern Cameroons territory. This climate of opinion was not abated at the time the Southern Cameroons’ delegates were called upon to express their views on the form of constitution that would shortly unite the Southern Cameroons with the Republic of Cameroon into a Federation.<sup>44</sup>

The conferees had barely settled down on the real business of the Bamenda ‘AllParty Constitutional Conference,’26-28 June 1961, when the British unambiguously and loudly announced that they were withdrawing their defense forces from Southern Cameroons on 30 September 1961, when their trusteeship over the territory was to officially come to an end. In essence, the Secretary of State for Colonies was proffering answers to the doubts that hitherto, loomed large in Southern Cameroons. In order to completely obliterate any vestige of hope on the part of Southern Cameroonians that the decision could be revoked, the Secretary stressed that “I have been advised that there has been no change in Her Majesty’s Government to withdraw the British troops on 1<sup>st</sup> October.”<sup>45</sup> Up to that date, however, the British Battalion was to remain fully operational.

It is obvious that this declaration caused perturbations in the ongoing conference. It is also possible that the British were quite aware of the fact that their avowal would destabilize the conference. This is because the Commissioner for Southern Cameroons ruled the Attorney General to suggest in a council meeting which prefaced the Bamenda Constitutional Conference that; “it would not be suitable for him to preside at a conference such as this... it would be better for him to remain in the background, ready...

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<sup>42</sup>It should be noted that the British carried out a spurious training of some ex-service men in Jakiri, who constituted the first cream of the West Cameroon Police Force in 1961.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Press Release, No 1416, 27 June 1961.

<sup>45</sup> Press Release, No 1414, 27 June 1961

to try to reconcile differing opinions.<sup>46</sup> The representatives of Southern Cameroons surely realised the need for greater unity. Both the opposition and the Government representatives at the end of the conference, tabled two memoranda on 30 June 1961 on the security of the territory. The memos expressed Southern Cameroonians' disappointment with the decision to withdraw British troops without training an indigenous force by Britain especially after several requests for the training of a security unit in the territory before 1 October 1961 were made. In fact, the first memorandum expressed the disenchantment in Southern Cameroons as follows:

The Press Release by the Commissioner of the Cameroons on the United Kingdom Forces in Southern Cameroons left no doubt in our minds that on October 1, the United Kingdom Government will leave the Southern Cameroons undefended. We are certain that on the advice of the British Administering Authority a request for training an indigenous security force for the Southern Cameroons by Her Majesty's Government was made jointly before the plebiscite by the president of the Republic of Cameroun and the Premier of the Southern Cameroons, and that after the plebiscite further requests were made. It is therefore with deep regret that we protest against this action of Her Majesty's Government to withdraw its forces from the Southern Cameroons without any arrangement for other security measures.<sup>47</sup>

The frustration in Southern Cameroons no doubt emboldened the politicians in their quest to fill the security gap that would be created by the withdrawal of British forces. The memoranda indicated two approaches. This first memorandum stressed the need to still appeal to Her Majesty's Government to undertake the training of a force in the territory thus:

In pursuance of the great necessity of ensuring the Security of the Southern Cameroons after October 1, we still request her Majesty's Government as long as it remains the Administering Authority for the next few months to undertake speedily the training and equipping of a military force which will provide security for the Southern Cameroons...such a force will form part of the future forces of the Federal Government of the new Federal Republic of Cameroon placed initially under the charge of the Minister of

Defense in the Southern Cameroons Government.<sup>48</sup>

Southern Cameroonians thus recognised that it was Her Majesty's juridical right to train an indigenous force for the territory as long as she remained the sovereign administrator of the territory. According to the second memorandum, the indigenous politicians declared that:

Having now understood that the British forces in the Southern Cameroons will withdraw...and having not been told that any form of replacement of these forces will be undertaken by Her Majesty's Government, we are left with no alternative but to fall back on any resources of our own that might be available.<sup>49</sup>

For this introversive approach to be effective, the signatories of the memoranda (J.N Foncha for the KNDP, and N.N Mbile for the CPNC) advised the Government of Southern Cameroons to act as follows:

- a) Immediately procure funds by effecting savings from existing budget and/or looking for any external financial assistance.
- b) To undertake to call up all able-bodied ex-service men of all ranks for crack training.
- c) To make approach to the Nigerian Government to repatriate all willing Cameroonians in the Nigerian Army for service in the Southern Cameroons.
- d) Create a Ministry of Defense forthwith in the Southern Cameroons.<sup>50</sup>

These measures clearly showed that 'desperate times deserve desperate measures' to assuage the degree of desperation. Though it was a laudable approach in view of the prevailing circumstances, a security force constituted of "able-bodied ex-service men," qualified by 'crack training,' would only have been a force bereft of professional vitality.

That, notwithstanding, the quest for men to establish a force in Southern Cameroons was a need indeed. Foncha, accompanied by Muna (Minister of Finance, Commerce and Industries) and Bokwe (Minister of Cooperatives and Community Development) met with Ahidjo, who was assisted by Charles Assale (Prime Minister of the Republic of Cameroun), Charles Okala (Minister of Foreign Affairs) and the Minister of State in charge of the National Economy, in Yaounde on 11 and 12 July 1961 to discuss issues bordering on security in Southern Cameroons. The political actors resolved, among other things, that the President of the Republic of Cameroun and the Premier of Southern Cameroons would approach the Nigerian Government without delay on how to get Southern Cameroonian soldiers serving in

<sup>46</sup> Press Release, No 1416, 27 June 1961.

<sup>47</sup> Vc/b 1961/28, 16 NAB.

<sup>48</sup> Press Release No. 1428, 1 July 1961.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.



Nigeria to return to Cameroon. As a motivation, the soldiers who chose to return were to still be entitled to all the advantages acquired in their careers. The latest date for the expatriate soldiers to make their intentions known to the Government of Southern Cameroons as to whether they would continue serving in Nigeria or return to Cameroon was 15 August 1961.<sup>51</sup> In wait for the response of the Nigerian Government, Southern Cameroonian politicians turned their focus on preparations for the Fouban Conference slated for 17 July 1961 and the follow up Tripartite conference held on August 1961 in Yaounde.

The Fouban Conference, 17-21 July 1961 was attended by delegates from Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroun led by Foncha and Ahidjo respectively.<sup>52</sup> The object of the conference was to draw up a constitution for the soon to be reunited Cameroon. In line with the provision of the Fouban Constitution of July 1961, National Defense, internal and external security of the Federal state fell under the powers of the Federal Authorities. The President and not the Minister of Defense, was the Head of the Armed Forces charge among other things to uphold internal and external security of the Federal Republic.<sup>53</sup> The implication of these provisions in the constitution on Southern Cameroons was that any security force that would be established in Southern Cameroons would come under the president's jurisdiction or power.

Perhaps, because of this, Iain Macleod, Colonial Secretary, when answering questions in the parliament in late July 1961 on what action the British Government was taking to help Southern Cameroons to set up a security force of its own, stated:

Arrangements for the security of the Southern Cameroons after October 1<sup>st</sup> would be a matter for the successor Authorities of the territory. These arrangements... would be among the subjects to be discussed at a further meeting between the Southern Cameroons, the Republic of Cameroon and the British Government in Yaounde....<sup>54</sup>

Doubtlessly, this 'further meeting' was the Yaounde Tripartite talks which held from 2 to 7 August 1961. The aim of the talks was to give a legal form to the issues discussed at Fouban and to tidy any unfinished work. It was more or less a continuation of the Buea Tripartite talks and was attended by representatives of the United Kingdom, the Republic of Cameroun and the Southern Cameroons' Governments. President Ahidjo opened the Tripartite Talks with a six-point agenda.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Vc/b 1961/28 also see Press Release No. 1453, 13 July 1961.

<sup>53</sup> Ngoh, *Constitutional History*, 156

<sup>54</sup> Federal Constitution cited in Ngoh, *Constitutional History*, 180-

On it, items one and five focused on the situation and position of Cameroonians serving in the Nigerian Armed forces and the Police, National Defense and security respectively.<sup>55</sup> In a bid to avoid the lack of military security following the withdrawal of British troops from Cameroon, decisions were reached regarding the maintenance of law and order. A mission led by Muna and N. Black, a high official of the Republic of Cameroun's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was set up to go to Lagos<sup>56</sup> to contact Southern Cameroonian soldiers in Nigeria and ascertain whether they wanted to join the Cameroonian Army and Police.<sup>57</sup> This indeed was a determinant measure to the security question in Southern Cameroons. The cream of Southern Cameroonian professional military men who were to be extracted would form the first generation of the security forces in Southern Cameroons. Before the force was created, British officials once more mooted Southern Cameroons intractable security conundrum.

The discussions were triggered by George Thomson, an opposition member, in the House of Commons. He expressed concerns about the arrangements related to the maintenance of law and order in Southern Cameroons after 1 October 1961. He even urged that the Minister for colonies should seek for the consent of the Republic of Cameroun to an urgent meeting to arrange some "breathing space for dealing with the problems involved"<sup>58</sup> To his preoccupations, Frazer, among other issues, responded thus:

Naturally there must exist among the British Civilian population anxiety about the security situation. We are all aware of them but the fact that this anxiety exists does not alter the fact that our responsibilities must come to an end on October 1<sup>st</sup>.<sup>59</sup>

Frazer expressed hope that the situation in Southern Cameroons after 1 October would not be as gloomy as Thomson had postulated of a 'Congo-like chaos' in the territory when British trusteeship would be terminated.<sup>60</sup>

The thought of a 'Congo-like chaos' in Southern Cameroons after the end of British trusteeship was a testimony that British officials albeit the opposition were aware that Southern Cameroons would accede to

<sup>55</sup> Press Release, No 1477, 2 August 1961.

<sup>56</sup> Press Release, No. 1488, 5 August 1961. The other issues discussed included: The Situation and position of Cameroonians serving in the Armed Forces and the Police in Nigeria; services which at the time were considered to be federal, such as customs, ports, meteorological, post and telegraphs, federal public works and others which were under the authority of the Commissioner of the Southern Cameroons; civil servants and foreign agents actually serving in ranks of the administrative service of the Southern Cameroons; the Nigerian currency which was legal tender in Southern Cameroons and the procedure to be decided and adopted for the transfer of sovereignty.

<sup>57</sup> Press Release, No 1492, 8 August 1961.

<sup>58</sup> Ngoh, *Constitutional History*, 164

<sup>59</sup> Press Release, No. 1498, 10 August 1961

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

independence unprepared after thirty-nine years of British rule. In spite of all these, Foncha assured the Southern Cameroons' populace on the eve of independence by way of a statement in the press that:

Everything has been so arranged that when the British troops leave on the first of October there will be no security gap whatsoever. We have suitable and trained units of the Federal Cameroon Republic Army, Gendarmeries to take off the security position.<sup>61</sup>

According to Foncha, the Army and the Gendarmerie institutions were to assume the responsibility of fostering the security of Southern Cameroons. His was a clear indication that the Police was inadequate alone to guarantee law and order in the territory. Meanwhile in a Press Release dated 15 September 1961, Southern Cameroonians were informed that the Advance Party - almost 100 strong of the first Battalion of the Grenadier Guards would leave for UK in Britannia aircraft of the Royal Airport Transport, under the Command of Major, the Honourable P.R. Freyberg. They were drafted from the constituent elements of the Grenadier Guards in Cameroon and were due to leave the territory on the eve of independence and reunification. The precocious departure of part of the forces widened the security gap and increased the feelings of insecurity in the territory. Foncha once more encouraged the fretting Southern Cameroons' officials that their departure would have no effect on the role of the Battalion that was to remain in Cameroon until mid-night of 30 September.<sup>62</sup> The departure of a section of British stationed troops in the territory however, dawned with the celebrations marking reunification and independence on 1 October 1961. A month after - 1 November 1961, ex-service men, Cameroonian soldiers and policemen who opted to return from Nigeria in the main, were constituted to form the West Cameroon Police Force headed by a Commissioner of Police and seconded by an Assistant Commissioner.<sup>63</sup>

## VI .CONCLUSION

The security debates that dovetailed into the creation of a police force in West Cameroon in 1961 had many twists and turns because of the attitudes and interests of the interlocutors. Southern Cameroonians had not succeeded in getting the Governor-General of Nigeria and the resident Commissioner in Buea to concede to their consistent demands for additional security personnel in the territory when Foncha, a reunificationist, won the 1959 elections and became Premier under the banner of the KNDP. His victory had tremendous impact on the territory's security future for his platform of ultimate independence and reunification with French Cameroon scared British and Nigerian authorities who hoped

for a Southern Cameroon's future within the Nigerian Federation. Exasperated by the uncertainty of the territory's future, some ongoing security projects were suspended, until the future could be "more clearly seen." Considering that Nigerian independence was scheduled for 1 October 1960, the onus was on Foncha to define Southern Cameroon's security prospects before the February 1961 plebiscite.

If Foncha advocated association with Nigeria, the security of Southern Cameroons would not have been a challenge as the 1957 and 1958 constitutional arrangements for Nigeria would have covered the territory. Anxiety thus developed in Southern Cameroons since she could not initially depend on Britain, Nigeria and the Cameroun Republic for security guarantees. The option available for Foncha, was an introspective approach. He passed a motion in the SCHA in March 1960 calling on Her Majesty's Government to set up a Southern Cameroons Militia as part of her responsibility to the UN regarding the defense of the Trust territory. The pre-plebiscite discussion in the SCHA in March 1960 between the Government party-KNDP and the Opposition-CPNC revealed the polarities in Southern Cameroonian conception of security architecture for the territory. The opposition party which favoured association with Nigeria wanted the Nigerian personnel in the territory to be maintained since they could hardly oppose Nigerian interest while the government party fussed over the presence of Nigerians in the territory which could influence the UN organised plebiscite results. Party interest thus prevailed over national interest and made it possible for external forces to determine the nature of security agency that was created for the territory.

The fretting Foncha turned to the Governor-General of Nigeria who unfortunately noted that while Her Majesty's Government was giving a 'careful consideration' to the whole question of defense of the Southern Cameroons", British authorities would accept the territory as a fully-self-governing region at par with other regions in Nigeria if they decide in the forthcoming plebiscite to join the Federation. Ahidjo at this time also refused to 'foster' the territory because the Yaoundé government lacked the military and economic resources to accept responsibility for internal security in Southern Cameroons. Before and during the plebiscite therefore, Britain, Nigeria and the Republic of Cameroun were not ready to help create a unique security system or support her with forces unconditionally to maintain internal security. Even the King's Own Border Regiment kept in the territory to monitor the plebiscite was only employed on behalf of the United Nations.

The paper has shown that after the plebiscite, British action towards Southern Cameroons was harder because of her decision to attain independence by reunification with the Republic of Cameroun. They repeatedly announced the withdrawal of their forces stationed in Southern Cameroons without recruiting and training a Southern Cameroons force which they could leave to take care of security in the territory. This British attitude made the hitherto disunited Southern

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Statement to the Press by the Premier of the Southern Cameroons Honorable J. Nfoncha, on the Eve of Unification and Independence, NAB.

<sup>63</sup> Press Release No. 1546, 5 November 1961.

Cameroonian politicians to become unanimous on the way out of their security challenge. They agreed on the creation of an indigenous security system, especially during the Bamenda constitutional conference in June 1961. Ahidjo also became interested in the security situation in the territory and insisted among other things that the Southern Cameroonian officers culled out of the NPF to create an indigenous police be sent to the Republic of Cameroun, to be acquainted with the officers, rank and file of the army and also to know the country. It should be noted that, the same requirements were not demanded from the Republic of Cameroun's military and security personnel. Hence before the Foumban Conference which placed internal and external security under federal services, Ahidjo was already, in a technical advantage, preparing the ground to dominate security matters of a reunified Cameroon.

British lack-lustre attitude towards the creation of an independent security unit in Southern Cameroons and the plebiscite vote in favour of reunification thus placed Southern Cameroons in a difficult situation wherein she could not independently determine her security concerns and take care of them. This opened the way for Ahidjo to become involved in the creation and making of the West Cameroon security arrangement. The result was that the Police Force that was created in West Cameroon was inadequate to maintain security in West Cameroon. This explains why the French-styled Gendarmerie were introduced in the territory to complement the police. However, this force worked hard to foster Ahidjo's policies in West Cameroon between 1961 and 1972.

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