Minority Question (Issue): The Root of Political Entanglement and Social Dilemma in Cameroon

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***Abstract*: In social organisations, the interpretation of 'minority' as a concept or notion is a difficult task, in that the perception of minority is not only multidimensional, but also depends on the context in which it is applied. Many believe that the use of the term is synonymous with conflict. For some, it is a pejorative and stigmatising word. It creates hatred and bitterness within the community. This paper argues that minority issues discourage unity and cohesion among people who are supposed to have a common destiny, interests and vision. Taking the case of Cameroon, no community thrives by remaining indifferent to minority issues. Furthermore, the question of the establishment of minority groups, and the determination of the extent of the privileges they can derive from their status, is an issue that policy makers must address. In a historical context and perspective, this article attempts to examine the problem. The bone of contention is that the application of special rights and privileges to minority groups is inappropriate, leading to conflicts and blockages. In addition, political entanglements and social dilemmas are commonplace due to a plethora of unanswered questions about the minority issue. Drawing on primary and secondary sources, the chronological approach is favoured in this study to examine the problem and come to the conclusion that minority issues need to be addressed in time to enhance progress, unity and development of a better Cameroon.**

***Keywords*: Minority issue, political entanglement, social dilemma, Cameroon.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Conceptual Framework and Definition of Term (Minority)

The term ‘minority’ as mention earlier, is defined variously and the variance depict the different contexts and settings that people apply the term. Many are those who believe that the effective application of the word (minority) is synonymous to conflict. To some it is a derogatory and stigmatizing word. It generates hatred and bitterness amongst people. It is within this backdrop that our study provides a historical discuss that will enhance a comprehensive understanding of some practical realities of the notion of minority as applied in Cameroon and its communities.

The word minority has an academic and colloquial connotation and usage. Academically it refers to power differences among groups (Barzilai, 2003, 22). According to Mughal, a minority group has five characteristics: (1) suffering discrimination and subordination, (2) physical and/or cultural traits that set them apart, and which are disapproved by the dominant group, (3) a shared sense of collective identity and common burdens, (4) socially shared rules about who belongs and who does not determine minority status, and (5) tendency to marry within the group (Mughal, 2012, 675).

Historically, minority is a term that points out the differences among different groups based on the degree of oppression and domination experienced. Sociologist Louis Wirth, defined minority as "a group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination" (Wirth, 1945, 34).

Consequently, every large society contains ethnic and linguistic minorities. Their life style, language, culture, religion, race and origin can differ from the majority. The minority status is conditioned not only by a clearly numerical relations but also by questions of political power. In some places, minorities may be migrant, indigenous or landless nomadic communities (Smihula, 2009, 48). In many states, features of minorities will include some communities numerically smaller than the rest of the population in the state.

In the politics of some countries, a minority is an ethnic group that is recognised as such by the laws of the land and therefore has some rights that other groups lack. For example speakers of a legally-recognised minority language, might have the right to education or communication with the government in their mother tongue. Minority groups often are not given identical treatment. Some groups are too small or too indistinct compared to the majority. Hence they either identify as part of the same nation with members of the majority or they identify as a separate nation but are ignored by the majority because of the costs involved.

In other instances, many contemporary governments prefer to assume that the people they rule all belong to the same nationality (nation) rather than separate some basedon identity, culture or ethnicity (Smihula, 2008, 76). However, some minorities are historically important that the state system is set up in a way as to guarantee them comprehensive protection and political representation. Ironically, these aspects may not include election or appointment to a range of high political positions amongst which is the presidency (Ibid.).

Another point is that the application of special rights to minority groups may be inappropriate in some countries. In Africa for instance, during colonialism, some minorities or specific groups were recognised and accorded rights by the

colonial masters. At independence, the newly created states (founded on the European nation-state model), needed to establish a cohesive identity. This was hampered by the resistance or inability of the minority to integrate itself into mainstream society thus creating a path to separatism or supremacism (Henrard, 2000, 221). Ethno-centric tendencies became common place in the local communities and states.

One particularly controversial issue here is about government action in the management of minority problems. As a panacea, some governments for example, can program or pass a law to provide minority groups who primarily feel marginalised with extra privileges and rights so that they can march with the majority. Such an action is considered necessary because the minority group in question is socially disadvantaged and if it is poorly handled, conflict can ensue. Another action is the allocation of quotas, where a percentage of places at university, or in employment in public services, are set aside for minority groups because they have had a history of exclusion in society (Ibid.). However, such actions in some states, have turned out to be a bait for systematic assimilation and coercion of the minority thus generating conflict in the society.

Hence, minority in our study (article) is defined and discussed within the context of groups suffering discrimination and subordination due to politics and power differences within the community. They suffer prejudice from cultural traits that set them apart. The term minority here also points at the degree of oppression and domination experienced by the affected group. Again, minority is perceived from linguistic background because of the language a group of people speak, they are discriminated upon. It is the case with the English language speaking minority in Cameroon. In our study migrants and landless nomadic community was tagged with the status of minority given that their quest for rights and political power entangled them in a web of conflict with their landlords and indigenes. Such is the case of the Mbororo of Northwest Region of Cameroon.

Minority in this study is also discussed from the angle of government action in the management of minority problems or questions. Poor management of the problems made minority groups to feel marginalised. In some cases government action turned out to be baits for systematic assimilation and coercion of the minority thus generating conflict in the society. The conflicts assume various dimensions. In our study, we settled on the politically masterminded entanglements and stalemates (dilemmas) that often develop in relations and advancement of a community due to issues linked to minority groups. Here, government machinery and action is at the centre of events (https://www.accord.org.za*)*.

In Cameroon, there exist groups of people who by dint of their numbers and because they suffer the pain of the treatment mentioned earlier, they have been ‘baptised’ with the status of minorities (minority groups). The struggle for their rights and the desire to be liberated from ‘ill-treatment’ provoked a number of problems or unanswered questions that need solutions and attention. We referred to them in our study as the minority question. Some of the problems occur largely within the ambit of ethnic groups and settings, as well as the search for settlement and cohabitation within the national territory. An understanding of these ethnic groups and their setting gives us a wider view of minority problems and origin in the state of Cameroon.

II. MAJOR ETHNIC GROUPS AND SETTING IN CAMEROON

Cameroon is home to more than 250 ethnic groups and sub-groups, many of which spread across neighbouring countries. These can be classified into five major regional-cultural groups. Western highlanders, also called grassfielders, form the largest of these with about 38 per cent of the population. They include the Bamiléké, Bamoun and other north-western peoples (Ngoh, 1996, 8). In a region of fertile soils, the Bamiléké are noted and frequently resented for their success in farming and commerce.

Southern tropical forest peoples make up 18 per cent of the population and include the Ewondo, Bulu and Fang, all of which are in the Beti cluster of peoples (Ibid, 11). Nomadic forest peoples, commonly referred to as Pygmies' eke out precarious livelihoods in the shrinking forests of the south-west and south-east. These groups include the Baaka, Bakola, Bagyeli and Bedzam. They have faced pressure from the government to settle in pilot villages' and along roadways, and have been exploited by logging companies to assist in the destruction of their forest environment.

Kirdi is a collective name for several non-Muslim peoples in the north who constitute a greater number of the total population. They apparently outnumber the Muslim population of the north but are much less organised politically. Islamic peoples of the northern Sahel include the Peulh, who are cotton and rice farmers, as well as livestock herders. Peulh elites have gained national political prominence.

Coastal tropical forest peoples make up around 12 per cent of the population and include Bassa, Douala and smaller groups of the south-west (Ibid.:10). This ethnic setting permits us to have an understanding of discussions on minority questions in Cameroon given that in every group there are minority issues in one way or the other. Some of the issues amongst the groups generate conflict of measurable concern. The level of conflict in each situation or community largely depends on the history or background of the sub-groups, which are made to live together. Living together automatically calls in social cohesion which in extreme cases leads to stalemates in relations amongst the people. This we referred to in our study as dilemma and entanglement. Overlaying Cameroon's rich ethnic diversity is a split between Anglophone and Francophone Cameroon, a legacy of the country's divided colonial history. Both English and French are official languages, but Francophone Cameroonians out number

Anglophone Cameroonians by about four-to-one (Eyongetah and Brain, 1974, 95). This too, partly constitute the pivot of minority issues and conflict around which political entanglement and social dilemmas revolve in Cameroon.

III. POLITICAL ENTANGLEMENT

History reveals that the first inhabitants of Cameroon were hunter-gatherer groups such as the Baaka. Bantu speaking groups followed. Peuhl moved into the north of present-day Cameroon in the early 18th century. The Peuhl captured many Kirdi for sale through slave trade and introduced Islam. Europeans first arrived the south in the 16th century and established trading posts along the coast. Germany established a protectorate (Kamerun) in 1884. This was later divided between Britain and France after Germany's defeat in World War I under the auspices of the League of Nations (Ibid, 99).

British Cameroon, in the north and south, was ruled from Lagos, Nigeria, in a typical English culture while French Cameroon, which made up 80 per cent of the territory, was divided among other French colonies, with a remnant ruled from today's capital, Yaounde. French Cameroon was equally ruled in a typical French culture. French Cameroon gained independence in 1960 as the Republic of Cameroon. The following year, the people in the northern part of British Cameroon, mostly Muslims, voted to join Nigeria in a referendum sponsored by the United Nations.

The southern part of British Cameroon, home to mostly Christians, opted to join French Cameroon, now called the Federal Republic of Cameroon. Under the 24-year rule of the country's first president, Ahmadou Ahidjo, a Peulh from the north, various ethnic groups vied for power through his patronage network. Ahaidjo established one-party rule in 1966, and proceeded to a constitutional amendment in 1972 which ended the federal system and renamed the country the 'United Republic of Cameroon' (Fanso, 1989, 175). All these were done in disfavour of the minority English speaking Cameroonians who were either manipulated, or entangled in Ahidjo's political game and manoeuvres.

Ahidjo resigned in 1982, and handed power to his prime minister, Paul Biya - an ethnic Bulu. In 1984, Biya changed the name of the country back to *la republique du Cameroun* (Republic of Cameroon). He has remained in power ever since, and has maintained close ties with France, a feat which irked the English speaking minority (who feel side-lined in such relations). President Biya's ethnic group, the Bulu, has dominated politics and the military. Beyond the exclusion of other ethnic groups, government action and the political system under president Biya seem to favour Francophones over Anglophones more or less treated as second-class citizens fit only for the crumbs of the national cake (Orock, 2022, 6).

In the 1990s, in the face of increasing hostility and repression by the Yaounde central government, Anglophone pressure groups persisted in challenging their second-class status and calling for greater regional autonomy. A group called the Southern Cameroon National Council advocated for secession of the country's two English-speaking provinces, and was promptly banned. Top Governance in Cameroon is run by the president. He appoints governors, local officials, judges and cabinet ministers. He also oversees other elements of a vast patronage network, appointing and firing heads of large state companies. (Kah, 2010, 20). In all these, very few heads of minority Anglophones can be counted.

The Anglophone minority dilemma in Cameroon is seen in the grievances and pain they have expressed or gone through over the years from the inception of the union with *La Republique du Cameroun* in 1961. Historically the plebiscite turned out to be a poorly conducted re-unification, based on centralisation and assimilation, which led the Anglophone minority to feel politically and economically marginalised. Their cultural difference is largely ignored within the nationhood and state system (Orock, 2022, 10). The government's violent repression of protests amongst Anglophones almost became a policy adopted by the Yaounde regimes thus putting the Anglophones on a serious dilemma.

The Cameroon state machinery is imbued with prejudice that reinforces "neglect" and "marginalisation" of the two English-speaking regions. The system focused on the appointment of Francophones to head important administrative structures in Anglophone areas as part of the government's gradual but steady process of "francophonisation" of the state (https://www.crisisgroup.org/). In the Francophone regions such as Douala and Yaounde, which host large communities of Anglophones, French is often the only language that can be used to access vital public services. Disaffected Anglophones are resentful of the chasm between the official claim that Cameroon is a bilingual state and the reality of Anglophones' de facto second-class citizenship. This is evidenced in the barriers they face due to language thus reinforcing the social dilemma of Anglophones in the nation (https://www.researchgate.net/).

Anglophone Cameroonians have long complained about the almost total domination of public life by the Francophone Cameroonians. The Francophone elites are believed to have used their power to marginalise Anglophone regions when allocating resources for economic development (https://cameroonpostline.com/). The authoritarian rule by the country's mostly Francophone leadership radicalised the Anglophone Cameroonians given that whenever protests were staged, they were met with force. This happened first under Ahmadou Ahidjo's administration (1960–1982) and then under Paul Biya (from 1982 onwards) (htttps://www.jstor.org/). The violent suppression of the Anglophone protests over the years had two important consequences. It had made the mainstream Anglophone elite fearful of speaking out and it has further radicalised Anglophone youth and rallied support from Anglophone Cameroonians in the diaspora.

Another important grievance of Anglophones is what they claim to be the "coloniality" of their union with the French

Cameroon state. Anglophone nationalists question the UN-imposed plebiscite of 11 February 1961. They argue that by compelling British Cameroonians to choose between Nigeria and French Cameroon as the route to their independence, the UN's implementation of its own provisions for decolonisation in Article 76 (b) – regarding the attainment of independence for former trust territories, was flawed. The choices offered by the UN to decide between French Cameroun and Nigeria ignored the people's desire and wishes for self-rule, which contravenes the very fundamental provisions of the UN's decolonisation framework. As a consequence, Anglophone Cameroonians claim that the Francophone majority views and treats them as a colonial appendage and that, they are not an equal part of Cameroon with them (https://www.cameroonconcordnews.com/).

Hate Speech against Anglophones in recent times has increased bitterness and the social dilemma. This hate speech flares up social conflict and damages the image of persons or groups. Xenophobic statements such as 'Anglofou' were rife in Cameroon. For instance, Alex Ndikum intimates that he was scandalised when some French-speaking Cameroonians called him an Anglofou, a term derived from "Anglophone" that means uncivilised. He could not imagine how in the same country one citizen will refer to the other as 'Biafra' (Nigerian activist). All these made one to feel so bad belonging to a country called Cameroon (Ndikum, Personal Communication, 2021; https://www.voanews.com/). Hate speech in Cameroon generally had a political element that heightened tensions between ethnic groups. Its derogatory effect on the Anglophone minority was enormous.

From every indication, it is clear that the Anglophone crisis is in part a classic problem of a minority, which has swung between a desire for integration and a desire for autonomy, and in part a more structural governance problem. It shows the limits of centralised national power and the ineffectiveness of decentralisation program in Cameroon. The weak legitimacy of most of the Anglophone elites in their region makes the people they represent to be vulnerable to all vices of discrimination, exploitation and marginalisation by the strong. Under-development, tensions between generations, and patrimonialism are ills common place alongside bad governance and identity issues. As a solution to the Anglophone minority question many are of the opinion that the government and senior administration should be re-organised to better reflect the demographic, political and historical importance of the Anglophones.

Another dimension of minority and political entanglement ensued in Cameroon following the rebirth of multiparty politics in the 1990s. Dibussi Tande called it 'the concept of indigenous minorities and political pluralism' (*http://www.minorityrights.org/*). To him this concept was used to refer to ethnic groups located primarily in the coastal and urban areas of the Southwest, Littoral and Centre regions of Cameroon. The common notion among the ethnic groups here is that they were numerically outnumbered in their native lands by non-natives who have emigrated from other parts of the country. The numerical superiority of these non-native communities (whose members are commonly referred to as "strangers") is usually accompanied by their domination of the political, economic and social life in these areas. In the face of political pluralism, the indigenous minorities feared that majority rule will institutionalise their minority (marginal) status within their respective communities, and exclude them from the decision-making centres within these communities in favour of the demographically superior and more influential "stranger" community.

The fear of non-native majority in certain regions of Cameroon caused the minorities to insist that any new political system must include clear constitutional provisions that give them at least a representative, and why not the predominant political voice within their local communities (Horowitz, 1991, 28*).* Francois Sengat Kuo, a native of the minority Duala ethnic group, argued back in 1985 that Indigenous Minorities needed special political protection and privileges, particularly in the selection and election of candidates running for multicandidate positions within the ruling single party, the CPDM. He argued that the electoral choices of individuals from the Cameroonian western grasslands such as the Bamileke (who constitute the single largest ethnic group resident in Douala) were determined solely by ethnic solidarity rather than by ideology or competence.

This meant that in practice, grass landers running for elective office in areas such as Douala would always have an "automatic majority" on their side because of the ethnic factor. He, therefore, insisted that the only way to protect the rights of the indigenous minorities against the "automatic majority", was to give them a participatory voice within their own local communities. To achieve this, a careful selection of indigenous candidates over non-indigenous ones (by consensus rather than through majority vote) has to be done. This principle was effectively applied during the 1985 multi-candidate elections within the CPDM party. As a result of "consensus" a candidate of Bamileke origin was forced to abandon the race for the top party position in the Douala region in favour of a "son of the soil" candidate who eventually won (*http://www.dibussi.com/*).

In 1991, it was the turn of Yaounde University law professor, Gabriel Nlep, who argued that the best way to solve the problem of under-representation of indigenous minorities in their local areas was to constitutionally oblige all Cameroonians to vote and run for office only in their respective regions of origin, which he referred to as their "Electoral Village". This, he emphasised, would eliminate the potentially explosive grievances stemming from predominant political role that "stranger" elites generally play in their non-indigenous areas of residence, at the expense of the native elites who rarely have any control over the majority and politically decisive "stranger" votes. (Le Cameroun Eclatée, 1991, 106-7). The main question, therefore, is whether

Cameroonians can successfully come up with an acceptable/workable formula for political coexistence that takes into account the clamour for minority rights protection by the coastal and urban indigenous people sandwiched by dominant 'stranger population (http://www.dibussi.com/). While this was taking place in the coastal communities of Cameroun, the Mbororo dilemma (stalemate) to integrate in the indigenous communities of the North West Region of Cameroon intensified. Their clamour for minority rights in the area also intensified. This caught our attention and thus constituted part of our investigation in this paper.

IV. THE MBORORO DILEMMA IN NORTH WEST CAMEROON

The Mbororo minorities of the North West Region of Cameroon is another bone of contention. According to Jabiru Muhammadou Amadou, the Mbororo are predominantly nomadic people located almost exclusively within the savannah zone of West and Central Africa, and whose original home is said to be the Senegambia region. From Senegal, the Mbororo continued their movement alongside their cattle and headed to Northern Nigeria. The 19th century Jihad movement and epidemic outbreaks forced them to move from Northern Nigeria to Northern Cameroon. From Northern Cameroon, they moved south and started penetrating the North West Region in the early 20th Century (Jabiru, 2017, 37).

The Mbororo were welcomed by their hosts because of their economic input through the cattle they introduced in the region and the heavy taxes paid to the government. The quest for grazing land in an environment of increasing population of farmers puts the Mbororo on daily conflicts with their neighbours (mostly farmers). Henceforth, the Mbororo were regarded as "undesirable aliens" and the local farming population clamoured for their expulsion. The farmer-grazier conflict kept on being a recurrent issue in the North West Region. This fact, coupled with others had sustained xenophobic feelings towards the Mbororo (Ibid, 42). This constituted what became known as the Mbororo Problem in the North West.

The Mbororo problem, is all about marginalisation, under representation or non-representation; the problem of becoming permanently settled, the problem of free movement and free interaction with the early settlers (indigenes). There is also the problem of stigmatisation by non-Mbororos given that they have made the Mbororo victims of exploitation, oppression, harassment and humiliation. In fact there exist a web of political entanglement and social dilemma around the Mbororo in the area.

With the rebirth of multi-party politics in Cameroon in the 1990s, the Mbororo had the opportunity to engage in the political life of the nation and to express their interest and grievances directly to the state. The 1992-1997 presidential elections led to high levels of political tension in the North West Region. The Mbororo voted CPDM believing that only the government could protect them. State-led intimidation eventually placed the Mbororo in conflict with their neighbours who were predominantly SDF supporters. The antagonism worsened when the SDF promised to give farmers more land should they gain power. Violent attacks on Fulani communities rose sharply. Many Mbororo compounds were destroyed especially after the presidential elections in 1992. All the harassment and molestations experienced by the Mbororo made their integration into the society very difficult (Ibid, 45). Political entanglement made things worse for them as they could not see eye to eye with their neighbours.

In the midst of political confusion, the Mbororo opted to distance themselves from party politics that had to do with the top contenders in the region that is, the SDF and the CPDM. This option was manifested in the 1997 presidential election where most Mbororos avoided taking sides and voted for the Muslim, (northern Cameroonian candidate) Bello Bouba Maigari of the NUDP. This further entangled the situation as many Mbororos were seen by their neighbours as traitors and political sell-outs imbued with tribalistic tendencies and ethnic affinity (Ndele, 2014, 10).Some politicians embarked on manipulating the Mbororo youths for political interest thus aggravating a spoiled situation. For instance in 1992, in the heat of highly contested presidential elections, a group of Mbororo youths met in the capital Yaounde and formed MBOSCUDA, the Mbororo social and cultural development Association.

Later on, another alternative association SODELCO was formed with Alhaji Baba Dan Pullo at the head. These Mbororo associations instead of working for the interest of their community, they got entangled in leadership wrangles, each claiming to be the rightful representative of the Mbororo people. This portrayed an ugly face of the Mbororo minority, not only in the North West, but in Cameroon at large. In fact the Leadership struggle did not only help in further marginalising the Mbororos, but equally pushed them to being citizens at the margin (Jabiru, 2017). That notwithstanding, in 2002 the Mbororo of the Grassfields counted two members of government as ambassadors of their cause, namely Peter Abety, Minister for Special Duties (designated as Waziri of the Mbororo by Lamido Sabga) and Manu Jaji Gidado, Attaché at the Presidency.

As mentioned earlier, the social dilemma of the Mbororo lies in the difficulty to squarely integrate in the social, economic and political life of their region of settlement. To begin with, the first Mbororo who entered the Bamenda Grassfields were about thirty families under Ardo Sabga. They settled in Babanki Tungo and the settlement was later named Sabga. The pastoral livelihood, Islam, dispersed and fragmented socio-political structures, distinguished them from the local population. Since then, the Mbororo have been viewed as "Strangers" by both their neighbours and successive state regimes (Nkwi and Warnier, 1982, 84). Some people and communities went further to declare that the Mbororo will never be regarded as natives in the North West (Mallam

Oumarou, Personal Communication, June 10, 2009). Mbororo settlement could be found in areas such as Sabga, Santa, Wum, Nkambe, Banso, Fundong, Ndop, Bali, Bafut, and Bali among others. Local Grassfields chiefs welcomed the pastoralist's establishment on their land as long as they paid tributes and allegiance to their hosts (Ngwa, 2010, 64). The Mbororo practice of extensive grazing and seasonal transhumance coincided with the local population system of shifting cultivation. This brought about what later became known as the farmer-grazier problem. As a result, local farmers looked on the Mbororo pastoralist settlements with reservation, and occasionally responded with public protest and violence.

During the late 1940s and early1950s, the colonial administration issued a series of Natives land and Right Ordinance that declared all land "native", with a native defined as "a person whose parents were members of any tribe or tribes indigenous to the Cameroons" (File Ja/a (1962)2, 1963). Some District Officers qualified the Mbororo as essentially hostile immigrant and strangers. Others advised against granting the Mbororo any rights, and mooted the prospect of removing the Mbororo from the province completely. In 1948, the Senior District Officer restricted grazing to specific permits which could be withdrawn at any time by the issuing Native Authority. The Mbororo became more marginalized from political powers as colonial authorities viewed them as "the most intractable of the native population" and the most difficult to control under "native administration" (Jabiru, 2017, 41).

Democratisation in the later part of the colonial era came with mixed experiences for the Mbororo who lacked the educated urban elites required to form or participate in state politics, affairs and the flourishing development associations. The lukewarm attitude and distrust for 'Western' education, and its incompatibility with pastoral lifestyle and nomadism, meant that very few Mbororo attended school. This on a general note, had a further marginalizing impact on the Mbororo. Amadou intimates that some progressive elements amongst the Grassfields Mbororos attempted to use the political opportunities of the time to forward citizenship claims in the form of a petition to the United Nations. The petition complained that, "we are considered to be strangers… We have no security of tenure", and demanded that "we may be treated as part of the community, as inhabitants of Bamenda", few efforts by administrators to indigenize the Mbororo into the area through development projects led to widespread "Mbororophobia" (Amadou, 2004, 10-13).

In 1961 the UN plebiscite was organised. Mbororo people did not fully participate in the voting exercise. Majority of them were considered as strangers. Even among the Mbororo, opinions differed while some of them were in support of reunification, (with the hope of attaining full citizenship) many favoured the alternative of joining Nigeria as they were already familiar with political and ecological condition there. With the pendulum swinging toward reunification; Mbororos became the targets of local Grassfields' animosity against perceived foreigners from Nigeria (http://dvkq.free.fr/saintdensi93/). Mbororos in post-colonial North West Cameroon, were confronted with a situation of political insecurity to which many responded with flight.

In terms of citizenship formation amongst the Mbororo, the first decades of post-colonial rule (after 1961) were in part characterised by a return to the margins. The Mbororo council collapsed and the traditional leaders (Ardos) of the Grassfields Mbororo would not gather again for nearly thirty years. The two most prominent Mbororo leaders (Ardo Sabga and Ardo Umaru of Wum) participated in the West Cameroon House of Chiefs until its closure in 1972 (Samah, 2006). The state administration was inaccessible to the generally unschooled Mbororos most of whom continued to see formal education as irrelevant to their mode of livelihood. Largely settled by now as either minorities in 'native' communities, or dispersed in peripheral settlements, interaction with the state became limited to local meetings with divisional officers concerning jangali or cattle tax collection, farmer grazier conflicts or as a means for administration to communicate government policy.

Eventually, constitutional changes in 1972, granted full Cameroonian citizenship to the Mbororos. For most of them in the grassfields, their migration trajectories ended in the 1970s. Despite the attempt to nationalise land through the 1974 Land ordinances, customary norms continued to prevail, whereby 'natives' "have rights to land by virtue of citizenship in the chiefdom. The effect of this on the Mbororo was enormous (Hickey, 2000, 115).

Some of the local populations in the Grassfields are not happy with their chiefs for selling their lands out to those they called 'strangers' or outsiders' (Samah, 2006). Their reactions on the poor Mbororos in the form of retaliation have been so violent. The advent of nationalism among the locals also meant that some Mbororo had to lose grazing lands to expanding farm and urban populations, while most remained subordinate 'tenants' rather than 'citizens' in North West Cameroon.

Another serious problem the Mbororo faced was their inability to establish permanent settlements, which they could call theirs. Consequently they were described as landless intruders in search of grazing land, who moved away whenever the pastures were exhausted. The Mbororo on their part remained very sceptical about the attitude of their farming neighbours where ever they settled in the Northwest and even towards the central government. This cautious attitude made them to be given less attention by government and other stakeholders.

In the 1970s; local communities in the Grassfields attempted to integrate the Mbororos into their socio-political structure via host guest relations which constituted source of dependency and exploitation (Simo Mope, 2011). The Mbororo were subsumed under the category of 'northerners' on account of their Muslim identity and Fulbe ethnicity. Hence those who were born and grew up in the North West

were still counted as 'strangers' with limited rights to the region's natural and state resources.

The Mbororo community in the North West Region have also in one way or the other been responsible for their non-integration in the area. Some Mbororos feared that western education would lead to assimilation and loss of their Islamic tradition and culture. This has greatly contributed to their exclusion from the socio-political development of communities in the area. Pulaaku, and Mbororo code of conduct also acted as an obstacle to their integration (Nyenchu, 1981, 52). The farmer-grazier conflict, ethnic differences, lack of communion in the domain of community development put the Mbororo and the indigenes in conflicts, as such hindering the smooth and holistic integration of the Mbororo in the area.

The Mbororos in the North West can be situated at the intersection of citizenship, clientelism and marginality in contemporary Cameroon. They have simply been excluded from the local definitions and practices of citizenship. Their role and status as 'resident aliens', is characteristic of the relationship of marginal groups to 'mainstream' notions of citizenship. Mbororo graziers in the North West have tended to use their relative wealth to cultivate patrons in the local state, thus reinforcing their reliance on informal pattern client relationships (Simo Mope, 2011). This pattern has been attacked, by the new Mbororo social movement advocating for Mbororo rights on the basis of their residence rather than their belonging. This again reveals the possibility of progressive politics emerging from the margins. However, MBOSCUDA organised a one-week workshop for Mbororo leaders of the North West to discuss their contemporary socio-political and administrative role within Mbororo society and in relation to the state. The participants agreed on the need for regular workshops and for a joint forum to pursue their communities' welfare.

In 2000 new computerised identity cards were issued, MBOSCUDA encouraged the Mbororo population to register. In the previous system, Mbororo were generally registered as being born in Northern Cameroon; the new identity cards indicated their actual birth place in the region. Mbororo henceforth qualified as regional citizens with claims and rights to natural resources and political representation in their home area. MBOSCUDA went a step further and portrayed the Mbororo as an endangered minority whose cultural survival had to be protected. In December 2004, it was publicly announced that the Cameroonian government recognises the Mbororo as "indigenous minorities". In line with this decision, MBOSCUDA officials were enrolled to participate in Government programme for the development of indigenous minorities and autochthonous peoples (Jabiru, 2017).

V. THE QUESTION OF CITIZENSHIP: AN ONGOING DILEMMA

The problem around citizenship for the Mbororo is in fact the same problem expressed by other minorities in Cameroon. It is a crucial issue and ongoing dilemma that needs to be addressed squarely for peace to reign in the country. Under British colonial rule, Mbororo citizenship and access to land was uncertain because of the Native Land and Rights Ordinance that declared all land 'native' territory, defining a native as someone whose parents belonged to a tribe indigenous to the Cameroons – a classification that effectively left the status of many Mbororo uncertain due to their relatively recent arrival and nomadic lifestyle. Their situation did not improve in the wake of independence, though Mbororo were in principle recognised as citizens, (as what was then West Cameroon's land ordinance) that was only a slightly amended version of the colonial Land and Native Rights Ordinance (Ngwa and Kah, 2016, 48). Consequently the definition of a "Cameroonian" under the land law closely resembled that of a 'native' during the British administration, meaning that once again the citizenship of Mbororo was not fully recognised.

The Anglophones on their part lament that in a post-colonial state of Cameroon, they are treated as second class citizens. This status goes with all the vices of discrimination, exploitation and marginalization. Their citizenship in Cameroon is therefore uncertain. This explains the reason that caused many Anglophone youths to leave the country from the late 1980s in search of greener pastures elsewhere. Today they constitute a huge Anglophone diaspora seeking for a home land. It is a serious bone of contention for the Cameroon government (Ddobegang, 2021, 69-79). It is also an indication that the issue of citizenship rights which all members of a state should enjoy is very much questionable in Cameroon and has hardly been resolved. The summary of citizenship right is simply the desire to have a homeland. Human beings irrespective of colour, status and size need a home land. Home land according to Lund means having privileges and rights (advantages) to live and enjoy the natural and manmade resources that the land is endowed with (Lund, 1998). The question now is whether the Mbororo and Anglophones in Cameroon are free or have the liberty to enjoy the resources on the land on which they are settled.

The distinct social code of the Mbororo, their nomadic traditions and predominantly Muslim faith, as well as the existence of other settler communities in the areas where they migrated, keeps the Mbororo to this day on the 'margins of citizenship' in Cameroon. Research among the community has repeatedly highlighted how they continue to be widely regarded as 'settlers' and that their nomadic practices make many to believe that they may in future leave the territory again.

The distinct social code of the Anglophone minority is the English language and culture that they inherited from their colonial masters (the British) for posterity (Eyongetah and Brain, 1974). At independence, the French oriented governments (regimes) reluctantly adopted English as an official language for use especially in state machinery. Since then the English language had seldom made meaning to state

authorities. The French language dominates and of recent it was used as a vector of assimilation and conquest unleashed by the French oriented state government against Anglophones. A re-bounce of the Anglophone crisis in 2016 was the immediate response to this threat and attitude of our francophone brothers. Eventually, it is glaring that Anglophones by dint of their language and culture, became subjects of ridicule and hate speech. They were regarded as 'biafras' or Nigerians because they have the same English culture and language with them. This shows that Anglophones remain to this day on the 'margins of citizenship' in Cameroon. Citizenship issues have undermined the ability of minorities to access public services or even secure employment. All these vices have their roots from the very inception of the Cameroon nationhood. Ardener did not mince words when he directed the blame of this situation on the nature of the reunification of Cameroon (Ardener, 1967).

In fact, minority access to professional schools, job opportunities or even engagement in the political processes in the country' remains a serious social dilemma. These challenges have been reinforced and exacerbated by a broader context of protracted human rights violations against minorities. From our discussions above, it is evident that the Mbororo have been in a decade's-long conflict with a powerful landowner in the North West that has seen hundreds displaced from their land through a campaign of harassment and evictions. Such actions which are common place in the North West pricked Simo Mope to question the role of elites in land deals, governance and social peace-building issues in the North West and Cameroon in general (Simo, 2011). The two Anglophone minority regions since 2016 have been involved in a serious blood battle with the Cameroon military. While the cost to these minority communities has been high, it has also strengthened their political activism in the face of continued abuses.

There are a number of things that we need to understand about minority problems or issues. They are however general truths which can be of interest to the Cameroon nation and stakeholders. First, it should be noted that minority status is conditioned not only by numerical relations but also by questions of political power (Smihula, 2009; Wirth, 1945). Minorities also need political power which in the case of Cameroon is highly discriminatory. Most often the situation turns out to be that minorities are fit only for the crumbs of power. Second, minorities have a culture, language, etc. This has to be respected, ordained and ratified by all stakeholders as an inalienable right (to existence) for the people and community in question.

Third, in the politics of some states, minority groups are identified and recognised by the laws of the state and are attributed rights that other groups do not have or lack (Smihula, 2008; 2009). In Cameroon, many voices argue that the problems that minorities have are common in all other groups and are found everywhere. Such arguments do not make things better than aggravate the waling tears of the marginalised minorities. Fourth, Many contemporary governments assume that the people they rule all belong to the same nationality rather than separate some based on identity, culture or ethnicity. In this case, according to Smihula, the state identifies minorities that are historically important and the state system is set up in a way to guarantee them comprehensive protection and political representation (Ibid.).

The issue of protection and political representation has been the cry of the Anglophone minority in Cameroon. Even with the recent special status granted them, they are not convinced about the protection and political representation that the state has given to such a historically important minority. To them, the state system remains centralised, coercive, exploitative, and oppressive; it is void of a defined social and economic security agenda for them. However, some Anglophones think that a federated system of administration can permit them to be free or more liberal in their emancipation and development.

Still on political representation, the minorities in Cameroon think that the centralised appointment mechanism from Yaounde limits them in all efforts to rise to higher political positions including the presidency. Henry Kah paints a picture of the appointment culture in Cameroon in what he called 'chop broke pottism.' (Kah, 2010, 19-35). In this context, the allocation of special rights to minority groups and the equitable distribution of the national cake is farfetched.

VI. CONCLUSION

Our study is on the minority question (issue) in Cameroon. The search for an answer, revealed the political entanglement and social dilemma that surround minorities in the state. First, minority status in Cameroon has no clear definition. Second, when minority issues are linked to power, they become entangled for always there is the urge to cause power politics and interest to triumph. We can therefore say that members of minorities require specific provisions and rights to ensure that they are not marginalised within society and that rights for minorities, far from weakening the nation-building project or process, actually strengthen it. Where members of minorities see that their specific needs and ambitions have been acknowledged and catered for, they will commit themselves more willingly to accepting the legitimacy of the nation and their integration within it. This is possible in states where assimilation is totally ignored as a tool for nation-building, integration, unity and development.

We therefore recommend to the Cameroon government to set up a scheme or political agenda that will improve on the rights and privileges of minorities in the state. This can only be achieved through an inclusive dialogue or frank talk with victims of minority issues in Cameroon. It is true that government organised a national dialogue recently but this created no impact because government hand-picked participants for the dialogue. The affected minorities felt that government selected acolytes to defend her course. The representation fell short of reflecting the aspirations of the victims of minority problems in the state. A Frank talk and

inclusive national dialogue is recommended for peace to reign in Cameroon.

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