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**PUBLIC DISCOURSE, GOVERNANCE AND  
PROSPECTS FOR THE NATION-STATE PROJECT IN  
CAMEROON**

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## **1.0 Introduction**

Cameroon, like almost all other African countries especially in Sub-Saharan is faced with the challenge of nation-building or nation-state construction. The problematic of the nation-state construction project in Cameroon can be appreciated from at least two main perspectives. Firstly, the country is made up of a multiplicity of ethnic and linguistic groups. Secondly, there is the difficult task of managing the legacies of French and British colonialism as manifested especially by differences in political culture and language (English and French). As such, the nation-state construction project in Cameroon has been underpinned by a policy of national integration or national unity.

Elite discourses at various levels of the state hierarchy either underscore or seize every opportunity to remind citizens of the need/importance of national integration/unity or to reiterate their unflinching commitment to it. However, developments in governance policy in the public realm especially since 1982 seem to betray or contradict the discourse of the governing elite as regards their unwavering or genuine commitment to national integration/national unity.

The paper is divided into four sections. Section 1 is a brief review of the literature and conceptual framework. Section 2 presents the nation-building environment in Cameroon. Section 3 reviews some of the official discourse on nation-building and section four establishes the fact that the official discourse on nation-building is not reflected in the governance policy of the country. The paper wraps up with a conclusion.

### **1. Literature review and conceptual perspectives**

#### *Nation-States and Nation-Building States*

There is some controversy as regards the meaning of the term 'nation-state' (Kymlicka, 2004; Boyce, 1999). According to Boyce, the term nation-state is largely a misnomer. Very few states, if any, are able to lay legitimate claim to being nations, if by nations we mean ethnically homogenous political entities (Boyce, 1999:233). Kymlicka (2004) also argues that the term 'nation-state' could be misleading. There are about 190 independent states in the world today and more than 5000-8000 'peoples' or 'nations' It is clear that most states (at present over 90 per cent) will be shared by more than one national group and often by dozens (Kymlicka, 2004:54). Yet the term 'nation-state' is still appropriate or relevant because modern states typically aspire to be nation-states, and have in fact adopted various

nation-building programs to achieve greater national integration and homogeneity. They may not be nation-states, but they are certainly *nation-building*<sup>1</sup> states (Kymlicka, 2004:54).

According to Boyce (1999), advocates of the nation-state thesis (radical nationalism) have conceded that the so-called developing world does not fit their neat conceptual framework. For these, the prescribed solution has been – “nation-building”, the implementation of policies to achieve rapid and effective integration and assimilation of peoples especially national minority groups. The consequences of these actions have often been disastrous. Therefore to state that nation-building was unproblematic would be false (Boyce, 1999:233). In fact the process of nation-building ipso facto limits the options of minority groups. They are generally faced with the following three basic options (Kymlicka, 2004):

- (i) they can accept integration into the majority culture, and perhaps attempt to renegotiate the terms of integration;
- (ii) they can seek the sorts of right and powers of self-government needed to maintain their own societal culture – i.e., to create their own economic, political and educational institutions in their own language;
- (iii) they can accept permanent marginalization (Kymlicka, 2004:56).

Kymlicka (2004) asserts that national minorities have often been the first target of majority nation-building programs, since one of the aims of nation-building states is to deny that there is more than one ‘nation’ within the state. To achieve this aim, nation-building states often seek to (a) pressure national minorities to integrate into the majority’s societal culture; and (b) undermine the majority’s ability to reproduce its own societal culture (for example, by replacing its traditional educational, political and legal institutions with majority-controlled institutions), (Kymlicka, 2004:57).

This approach of liberal democracies to nation-building has however changed. In fact it is increasingly recognized that the suppression of minority nationalism was mistaken (Kymlicka, 2004). Pressuring national minorities to integrate into the dominant national group has simply not worked. Western states misjudged the durability of minority national identities. Despite centuries of legal discrimination and social prejudice, national minorities have maintained the sense of forming distinct nations, and the desire for national autonomy (Kymlicka, 2004:58).

According to Kymlicka (2004), nation-building in a liberal democracy could be legitimate under the following conditions:

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<sup>1</sup> Emphasis in the original text.

(a) no groups of long-term residents are permanently excluded from membership in the nation. Everyone living in the territory must be able to gain citizenship, and become an equal member of the nation if they wish to do so.

(b) insofar as immigrant groups and other ethno-cultural minorities are pressured to integrate into the nation, the terms of integration should leave room for the expression of individual and collective differences, both in public and private, and public institutions should be adapted to accommodate the minority's identity and practices. That is, if minorities are pressured to integrate into dominant institutions, these institutions must be adapted to accommodate these minorities.

(c) national minorities are granted self-government to maintain themselves as distinct societal cultures (Kymlicka, 2004:63).

Kymlicka, (2004) concedes that these three conditions have rarely been met within Western democracies, but asserts that there is growing acceptance of them. The general trend is clear: *Western states today exhibit a complex pattern of nation-building constrained by minority rights. On the one hand, Western states remain 'nation-building' states: all Western states continue to adopt the sorts of nation-building policies ... discussed in the American context. On the one hand, these policies are increasingly modified to accommodate the demands of minorities who feel threatened. Minorities have demanded, and increasingly been accorded, various rights which help ensure that nation-building does not exclude metics, and racial caste groups, or coercively assimilate immigrants, or undermine the self-government of national minorities ((Kymlicka, 2004:63).*

Kymlicka (2004) questions the relevance/applicability of this emerging pattern of nation-building and minority rights in the African context. Firstly, are African states nation-building in the Western sense? It seems they are not because in the West, state nation-building has been a matter of *majority*<sup>2</sup> nation-building. Even if nation-building policies have been elite-initiated, they nonetheless have involved diffusing the majority (or dominant) group's language and culture throughout the territory of the state. The majority's language and culture are imposed on national minorities, indigenous peoples and immigrants (Kymlicka, 2004:64). *In Africa, by contrast, most states do not have a majority in this sense. They are composed of several ethno-cultural groups, none of which form more than 25 or 30 per cent of the*

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<sup>2</sup> Emphasis in original text.

*population. This has enormous consequences both for the groups and for the state (Kymlicka, 2004:64).*

From the point of view of the ethnic groups, few have had the power or aspiration to form 'nation-states' in the Western sense, in which their language and culture would monopolize public space and public institutions. And just as ethnic groups cannot aspire to their own nation-state, so too states cannot attempt to integrate citizens by diffusing a particular ethnic group's language and culture throughout the territory of the state (Kymlicka, 2004:64-65).

Of course,

*most African states are interested in developing a common identity, and developing common public institutions and a common public sphere operating in a common language. But this has not typically involved diffusing the majority's language, history, and identity (since there is no such majority). Rather, it has typically involved diffusing the colonial<sup>3</sup> language as the language of state institutions, and trying to develop pan-ethnic bases for state identification (or 'patriotism' if you like) which would appeal to most or all ethnic groups in the territory of the state (Kymlicka, 2004: 65).*

In Western states, 'nation-building' has typically meant 'nation-destroying': national minorities were often the first target of majority nation-building campaigns. But in Africa, by contrast, where there are no majority groups, state nation-building is not majority nation-building, and may not privilege the largest group over smaller groups. Where nation-building does not privilege a hegemonic majority group, there may be less need for specific rights to protect minorities from the injustices which arise as a result of majority nation-building<sup>4</sup> (Kymlicka, 2004:65).

According to Kymlicka (2004), ethnic conflicts can still arise in this form of *post-colonial pan-ethnic nation-building*<sup>5</sup>. But they are likely to take the form of struggles for a share of state power at the central level, rather than ethnonationalist struggles for self-government and autonomy at regional level Kymlicka (2004:66).

Insofar as ethnic conflicts in Africa take the form of conflicts between 'communal contenders' for a share of state power, consociationalism is the most relevant Western model. Consociationalism has been tried in Africa with mixed results (Kymlicka (2004:66) :

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<sup>3</sup> Emphasis in original text.

<sup>4</sup> This sort of nation-building can be seen as a threat to all ethnic groups, large or small, since it privileges the colonial language, and provides little public space or public support for local languages and cultures. Indeed, this sort of nation-building has often been seen as requiring, not only indifference to local ethnic identities but hostility towards them. State leaders in Africa have often supposed that pan-ethnic identification can only be achieved by trying to suppress more local ethnic identities (Kymlicka, 2004:65).

<sup>5</sup> Emphasis added.

*It is however one important pattern of the relationship between state nation-building and minority rights in Africa. Where state nation-building is based on a colonial language and pan-ethnic symbols that are neutral amongst the various ethnic groups, minorities will mobilize as communal contenders to ensure that they are not excluded from a share of state power. Consociational forms of minority rights are one possible outcome of this struggle (Kymlicka, 2004:66).*

However in some countries, state-nation building is not neutral amongst ethnic groups, but is shaped by the dominant ethnic group to reflect its language, history and culture. This is closer to Western-style forms of *majority* (or dominant-group) nation-building (Kymlicka, 2004:66-67).

(Kymlicka, 2004:67) asserts that like in the West, African states have generally tried to suppress minority nationalisms and have often given the same justifications for doing so – i.e., that national minorities are likely to be disloyal; that the minority is backward and uncivilized and so needs to be brought into the modern world; and that the minority's territory contains land and resources needed for the country's economic development. This mixture of security concerns, paternalism and desire for resources permeates state relations with national minorities all over the world. However as in the West, suppression has had limited success in Africa (Kymlicka, 2004:67-68).

Kymlicka, (2004) identifies a second pattern of nation-building and minority rights in Africa. Where state nation-building is based on the language, culture or religion of the dominant ethnic group, territorially concentrated minorities may mobilize as ethnonationalists to gain some form of autonomy and self-government (which in turn leads to demands by internal minorities for protection of their rights from self-governing minorities). Multination federalism is one possible outcome of these struggles Kymlicka, (2004:68).

Boyce (1999) is opposed to the view that any movement towards unity in a plural society is not only moral but necessary and desirable. He prefers the concept of constitutional patriotism to that of state nationalism and questions the view that unity necessarily means uniformity (Boyce, 1999:231). Boyce underscores the fact that inherent in a process of nation-building is the danger that it can become an elite process. The construction of enduring social, and political entities requires the organization of state as well as societal organizations' input at grassroots level. The task of nation-building is affected by and should grow out of the nature of the constitutional system the country has embraced (Boyce, 1999:231).

## 2. The nation-building environment/context in Cameroon

The nation-building environment or ‘context’ in Cameroon is characterized by a number of factors. Prominent among these are – ethnic diversity and the issue of Anglophone identity.

### 2.1 Ethnic diversity

Kymlicka (2004:64) asserts that most African countries are composed of several ethno-cultural groups. Cameroon is a typical example. It is estimated that there are over 200 ethnic groups and 24 major African language groups in Cameroon, in addition to English and French which are the official languages (Molem & Gemandze, 2007). Ngwa (2006:40) talks of about ‘250 ethnic cleavages with diversified origins, cultures and traditions.’ Prominent amongst the ethnic groups in Cameroon are – the Bamileke, the Bassa-Bakoko, the Bata, the Choa Arabs (Shuwa Arabs), the Duala, the Fang-Pahouin/Beti-Fang/Beti-Pahouin (Ngwa, 2006:48), the Fulani, the Kirdi, the Pygmies, and the Tikar (Tikari) (Ngwa, :41-63). However in spite of this diversity (or perhaps because of this diversity?), none of them constitutes or has so far constituted a dominant group capable of diffusing its language and culture throughout the territory of the state.

In fact the point underscored by (Kymlicka, 2004) applies squarely to the situation in Cameroon i.e:

*while the state may be neutral (i.e.,its language, culture and symbols are not tied to any particular ethnic group), access to the state<sup>6</sup> remains ethnified. Access to state power is tied to networks of clientelism/patronage and to political parities that are predominantly defined along ethnic lines. The state itself may be more or less neutral, but the avenues for accessing state power go through ethnic parties and networks. And this raises the danger that some ethnic groups will have much better access routes to the state, while other ethnic groups are excluded Kymlicka (2004:66).*

This is further confirmed by the Cameroonian literature on the subject (Sindjoun, 1992, 1994; Mentan, 1996; Zongnong et Mouiche, 1997; Amundsen, 1999; Jua, 2004; Awasom, 2004).

For the purposes of this paper we would dwell briefly on the Fang-Pahouin ethnic group because it is the ethnic group to which the Head of State, President Biya belongs. The Fang-Pahouin (Beti-Fang or Beti Pahouin) is a large ethnic group also known as the *Mpongwe*. They are also found in neighbouring Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and the Republic of Congo (Ngwa, 2006:48). In Cameroon, the territorial space is divided into 10 administrative provinces – the Adamoua, East, Centre, Far North, Littoral, North, North West, West, South

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<sup>6</sup> Emphasis in original text.

and South West Provinces. These Provinces are further divided administrative divisions, sub-divisions and districts. The Beti-Fang constitute the dominant ethnic group in three of these Provinces – the Centre, South and East Provinces (Ngwa, 2006:48). Biya hails from the South Province. This South Province was established as an administrative unit by decree No. 83/390 of 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1983 (i.e. less than one year after Biya's accession to power). In terms of territorial size and population (estimated at about 600,000)<sup>7</sup>, it is the smallest of the 10 Provinces. The South Province is made up of four Divisions – *le Dja et Lobo*; *la Mvila*; *L'Océan*; and *la Vallée du Ntem*; 28 sub-divisions, and one district (Eyene, 2007:41). Biya hails from the Dja et Lobo Division which consists of eight sub-divisions – Bengbis, Djoum, Mintom, Meyomessala, Oveng, Sangmélina, Zoétélé, and Meyomessi (Eyene, 2007:42).

## 2.2 The question of Anglophone identity

Mawhood (1993:178) states that Cameroon is a country still showing the signs of its fragmented history in which the state boundaries inherited from colonial rulers have contributed as much to division as to unification. In fact in 1916, Cameroon (hitherto a German colony) was divided by Britain and France into occupation zones and in 1922 they received a League of Nations mandate to administer their respective occupation zones. In 1946, Cameroon became a United Nations Trusteeship territory. The larger part of this territory – East Cameroon fell under French administration, while the smaller part Southern Cameroons, fell to British rule and was for quite some time, administered as an integral part of Nigeria.

East Cameroon gained independence in 1960 as the Republic of Cameroon (République du Cameroun). In 1961, and through a UN plebiscite, Southern Cameroons (West Cameroon), opted for independence through reunification with East Cameroon.

The question of identity per se in Cameroon has its roots in the historical evolution of the state and the nation-state construction project. Chiabi, (1997) asserts that the problem of identity in Cameroon began in 1914 when German kamerun was partitioned into two unequal regions and administered separately by Britain and France. By employing their different colonial systems, these colonial powers produced cultural hybrids in Cameroon that became identified as Anglophone and Francophone (Chiabi; 1997: 209). During the period of divided existence, the two territories acquired different languages (English and French), for their international relations, different elite cultures, and different expectations in matters of government and administration (Mawhood), 1993: 189). With the advent of reunification, the

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<sup>7</sup> Estimates based on the 1987 National Population census.

view was prevalent (especially among Anglophones) that the positive elements of the French and British colonial legacies would be blended together to offer Cameroon a unique political and administrative system in Africa. Unfortunately, and contrary to Anglophone expectations upon reunification, federalism, far from providing for equal partnership between Anglophones and Francophones, and guaranteeing cultural continuity for the former, turned out to be nothing more than a comma in a long sentence of assimilation of the Anglophone community (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997). Over the years, there has been an intensification of strategies for neutralising Anglophone identity as well as the adoption of measures to clamp down or proscribe any event organised to celebrate Anglophone identity by Anglophone scholars and activists (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2000). According to Mawhood, the voter's choice in 1961 went in favour of unifying the two Cameroon's into a federation but the subsequent history was one of increasing domination by the government at Yaoundé and the elimination of such political autonomy as the West Cameroon state possessed (Mawhood, 1993: 189).

### **2.3 Nation-building model**

The state elite in Cameroon have adopted the *post-colonial pan-ethnic model* of nation-building Kymlicka (2004). A major characteristic of this model is that state nation-building is based on a colonial language and pan-ethnic symbols that are neutral amongst the various ethnic groups. Article 1(3) of the constitution provides (*inter alia*) that: '*The Official languages of the Republic shall be English and French, both languages having the same status*'.

### **3. Nation-building discourse in Cameroon**

According to Howarth et al., (2000:4), discourse analysis refers to the practice of analyzing empirical raw materials and information as discursive forms. This means that discourse analysts treat a wide range of linguistic and non-linguistic data – speeches, reports, manifestos, historical events, interviews, policies, ideas, even organizations and institutions – as 'texts' or 'writing'.

This section however is not concerned with discourse analysis or Critical Discourse Analysis, (van Dijk, 1998) of the 'discourses' on nation-building/national integration in Cameroon. It simply identifies some of the important discourses on nation building in Cameroon since 1982. An invaluable source of nation building discourse in Cameroon is the constitution of January 18<sup>th</sup> 1996. Firstly, the preamble of the constitution proclaims as follows:

*Proud of our linguistic and cultural diversity, an enriching feature our national identity, but profoundly aware of the imperative need to further consolidate our identity, solemnly declare that we constitute one and the same nation, bound by the same destiny, and assert our firm determination to build the Cameroonian Fatherland on the basis of ideals of fraternity, justice and progress.*

Article 1(2) provides that: ‘The Republic of Cameroon shall be a decentralized unitary state’; and that it shall (inter alia) ‘be one and indivisible’. Finally, article 64 stipulates that: ‘*No procedure for the amendment of the constitution affecting the republican form, unity and territorial integrity of the state and the democratic principles which govern the Republic shall be accepted*’.

From a governance and public policy perspective, another invaluable and authoritative source nation-building discourse in the Cameroonian polity is the President of the Republic. Article 5(1) of the constitution provides that ‘The President of the Republic shall be the Head of State’. He shall be ‘elected by the whole nation’ and shall ‘be the symbol of national unity’ (article 5(2)).

On his taking of oath of office in November 1982, President Paul Biya stated that: ‘The great and arduous task of nation building which has been so well conceived and pursued by His Excellency Ahmadou Ahidjo is a task for all and calls for all hands on deck’ (SOPECAM, 2002:21). He therefore ‘solemnly’ called on ‘all Cameroonians to translate into reality their commitment to this great task of unity, peace and progress and to adhere to it resolutely with the legitimate determination to remain a great, united, hard-working people’ (SOPECAM, 2002: 21-22). Biya declared that he would (*inter alia*) ‘ensure the respect of the Constitution, independence, sovereignty, security and *unity*<sup>8</sup> of the State’ (SOPECAM: 20). He further asserted his commitment to ‘*independence and national unity*’, within the framework of the policy of Planned Liberalism, self-reliant development, social justice and mastery (SOPECAM, 2002: 21). On a much more personal note, he concluded with a pledge: ‘As far as I am concerned, with the trust and cooperation of every Cameroonian, I pledge to devote all the strength of my patriotism and commitment to the accomplishment of this task’, (SOPECAM, 2002: 21).

Furthermore, in his 2002 New Year Message to the nation Biya underscored the fact that ‘the vast majority of our compatriots object to any challenge of our national unity as this would pave the way for disquieting drifts. The ills which plaque some countries in the grip of civil

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<sup>8</sup> Emphasis added.

war and anarchy must lead us to reflect and appreciate the true value of the stability that our country enjoys' (SOPECAM, 2002:404).

In his book *Communal Liberalism (1986)*, Biya proposes 'political change' focusing on 'three basic guiding principles: achieving National Unity, promoting real democracy and contributing to the advent of a more peaceful and harmonious international community' Biya (1986:27). Biya asserts that: 'a great destiny awaits Cameroon' but he concedes that the: 'realization of this dream still encounters a major obstacle, that is the absence of a real nation due to persisting ethnic, religious and linguistic particularisms' (Biya, 1986:27-28). Therefore, 'I consider national integration, which is the ultimate step towards national unity, to be the cardinal, historic task of the highest priority which I have to carry out with all Cameroonian people'(Biya, 1986: 28). Biya underscores the fact that:

*History, which is far from being complacent with this requirement, reveals that all great peoples, who have bequeathed great, material and spiritual benefits to humanity, have been and remain solid nation-states. Such Nation-States perfected the most powerful organization of political power, namely the state, the framework of human solidarity, which is the nation, (Biya, 1986:28).*

#### **4. Nation-building discourse and the reality of Governance**

##### **4.1 Instrumentalization and politicization of ethnicity**

Governance has been defined as the 'traditions and institutions that determine how authority is exercised in a particular country' (Kaufmann et al., 2000:10).

This includes (1) the process by which governments are selected, held accountable, monitored, and replaced, (2) the capacity of governments to manage resources efficiently and formulate, implement, and enforce sound policies and regulations, and (3) the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions (Kaufmann et al., 2000:10). A most appropriate complement to this definition is offered by Boeninger, (1991) who identifies three dimensions of governance: political, technical and institutional:

*Establishing objectives and exercising leadership clearly come under the political dimension. The constraints imposed by natural resources, levels of education, manpower skills, and installed industrial capacity represent the technical dimension, and the ability to get things done involves the institutional and managerial dimensions (Boeninger, 1991:268).*

The brief review of the state/nation-building discourse in the preceding section would seem to establish the total and unflinching commitment of the governing elite to nation-building. However, from a governance perspective, this view is untenable in the light of some policies implemented by the Biya regime. Firstly, the instrumentalization and politicization of ethnicity (Mentan, 1994). In fact it could be argued that during the First Republic (1960–1982) Cameroon’s first Head of State Ahmadou Ahidjo adopted an ethno-clientelist strategy of governance as a matter of political expediency. However in the Second Republic (since 1982), Cameroon’s second Head of State Paul Biya, has apparently abandoned Ahidjo’s ethnic balancing strategy in favour of what now seems to be mobilized ethnicity (Mentan, 1994). The politicization of ethnicity has been compounded by the politicization of the civil service and the instrumentalisation of ethnicity in the governance of the public sphere. For instance as regards ethnicity in the official media, Mentan (1994), reproduces an election day broadcast on the Government owned Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV) as follows:

In studio, I am *Jean Atangna*<sup>9</sup>. I will be assisted by *Antoine Marie Ngono*. We have deployed a special squad for this occasion. *Pascal Mebe Abah* is in the O.B. van; *Hughues François Onana* is in Maroua; *Alain Belibi* is in Garoua; *Pierre Le Bon Elanga Ate* is in Ngaoundéré; *Roger Betala* is in Ebolowa; *Jean-Pierre Efouba Onana* is in Buea; *Alphonse Atsama* is in Bafoussam; *Severe Amougou* is in Bamenda, etc. (Mentan, 1994:158).

All members of this <<special squad>> belong to President Biya’s Pahouin ethnic group (Mentan, 1994:158).

Ethnicity has also been institutionalized in the electoral system. For instance following the 1992 Presidential elections, President Paul Biya appointed a 13-member ‘National’ Vote Counting Commission. Of these 13 members, 11 (see table 1 below) were from the Centre and South Provinces (i.e. Biya’s ethnic folks), (Mentan, 1994:170).

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<sup>9</sup>Emphasis added

Table 1: Members of National Vote Counting Commission for the 1992 Presidential elections.

S/N	Name	Province of Origin
1.	Nomo Ndi Jean (President)	South
2.	Nguimba Magloire	South
3.	Mvondo Jérôme	South
4.	Foumane Akame	South
5.	Belombe André	South
6.	Atangana Clément	Centre
7.	Moundolock Ignace Bertrand	Centre
8.	Ngae à Noubeké Moïse	Centre
9.	Nomo Avono	Centre
10.	Mengouna Nkani Patrice	Centre
11.	Mbida Victor	Centre
12.	Nkaifon Pefura	West
13.	Hans Ngalame Kome	South West

Source: Mentan (1994:170)

This trend is also reflected in the Public Service. During the Ahidjo regime, there existed a quota system for recruitment into the Public Service. However in 1993, the Biya regime abolished the quota system (see Decree of 25<sup>th</sup> June 1993), (Mentan, 1994:170), resulting in the dominance of the Centre and South Provinces in virtually all sectors of the Public Service (table 2 below).

Table 2: Percentage representation (per Province) in various sectors of the Public Service

Province	Population (%)	Civil Administration (%)	Finance (%)	Higher Education (%)	Plan & Territorial Administration (%)	Defense (%)	National Security (%)	Presidency (%)	Foreign Service (%)	CRTV (&)	SOPECAM (%)	Public paraarapublicx Enreps. (%)
C.S	19,3	36,60	30,09	38,14	25,40	34,07	50,00	47,42	40,41	27,93	34,78	
G.N	30,3	21,90	5,57	3,09	7,41	7,69	8,82	5,15	7,43	9,01	0,00	
W	12,6	17,58	24,70	15,46	33,86	21,98	14,71	13,40	15,75	27,03	19,57	
S.C	19,8	10,59	16,70	14,95	7,41	10,99	14,71	10,31	12,33	26,13	17,39	
Lit.	12,9	8,93	17,91	23,71	17,99	21,98	11,76	15,46	15,07	6,31	19,57	
East	4,9	3,46	1,39	0,52	6,35	3,30	0,00	1,03	1,37	2,70	4,35	

Key:

- C.S. = Centre/South Provinces
- G.N. = Adamaoua, North and Far North Provinces
- W = West Province
- S.C. = North West and South West Provinces
- East = East Province

Source: Adapted from Mentan (1994:171)

Table 2 above shows that the Centre and South Provinces, with 19,3% of the national population dominate the Armed Forces (34,07%) and the National Security Services (Police), (50%) as compared for instance with the Grand North Provinces with 30,3% of the national population (7,69%) in the Armed Forces and (8,82%) in the National Security Services. According to Mentan (1994:172), this underscores both Biya's mobilization and institutionalization of Beti ethnic hegemony.

The institutionalization of ethnicity by President Biya has recently been underscored by Eyene (2008). According to Eyene (2008:41-70) elites of the South Province have dominated public sectors governance since 1982 when Biya became President. In fact the mobilization of ethnicity by Biya at national level has degenerated into intra ethnic mobilization within his Province of origin, - the South Province (Eyene, 2008: 58-70). Thus many more Ministers, Provincial Governors, and General Managers of State-Owned Enterprise for instance have been appointed from his Division of origin – Dja et Lobo, than from the other three Divisions of the South Province.

#### 4.2 Anglophone marginalization and exclusion from governance

Today Anglophones constitute approximately one-fourth of the population of Cameroon estimated at about 17,340,702. What is generally referred to as the Anglophone problem in Cameroon has received extensive treatment in the literature (Balancie Jean-Marc & de La Grange, 1996; Jua, 2001; Jua & Konings, 2004; Mbuagbo, 2002; Eko, 2003; Konings, 1999; Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2003; 2000; 1997; Nkoum-Me Ntseny; 1999; Benjamin, 1972). According to Konings & Nyamnjoh (1997), the root cause of the Anglophone problem may be traced back to 1961 when political elites of two territories with different colonial legacies – one French and the other British – agreed on the formation of a federal state. Contrary to expectations this did not provide for equal partnership of both parties, let alone for the preservation of the cultural heritage and identity of each, but turned out to be merely a transitory phase to the total integration of the Anglophone region into a strongly centralised, unitary state Konings & Nyamnjoh (1997:207). Gradually, this created an Anglophone consciousness: the feeling of being 'marginalised' 'exploited' and 'assimilated' by the francophone-dominated state, and even by the francophone population as a whole (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 1997:207). Konings & Nyamnjoh (2003:192-193) have analysed Anglophone grievances from three main perspectives – political, economic and cultural (Molem & Gemandze). The Anglophone 'consciousness' is embodied and/or articulated with various degrees of intensity by a number of Anglophone movements. Prominent among them is the Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC), (Balancie Jean-Marc et de La Grange, 1996)

and its youth wing, - the Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL). The SCNC was founded in April 1993 at the All Anglophone Conference (AAC) in Buea. It strongly advocates the restoration of the statehood and independence of Southern Cameroon (Nfor, 2002:63). In fact the SCNC defines itself as an irredentist movement, representing the mainstream Cameroonians working for the Restoration of the Sovereign independence of the Southern Cameroons.

The governing elite have so far responded to Anglophone grievances mainly by adopting strategies aimed at suppression of nationalism of the Anglophone minority and repression has been identified as one of these strategies (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 2003:133-136). In fact (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 2003:133) assert that most of the strategies employed by the government to deconstruct Anglophone identity have tended to be accompanied by ruthless repression of Anglophone population and Anglophone activities. As such, the SCNC has so far borne the brunt of Government repressive machinery<sup>10</sup> even, though it ‘stands’ for ‘The Force of Argument and not the Argument of Force.’<sup>11</sup> For instance, Amnesty International reports that in December 2005, the Appeal Court in Yaounde decided on appeals by imprisoned members of the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) against their 1999 convictions by a military tribunal. The prisoners had been sentenced to between eight years and life imprisonment after an unfair trial before special courts directly controlled by the Ministry of Defense, on charges in connection with armed attacks in the North West Province in 1997. The prisoners had been denied an appeal for more than five years. Most of them looked sick and frail as a result of life-threatening prison conditions and medical neglect (Amnesty International, 2006). In fact one of the prisoners, Julius Ngu Ndi, who had been serving a 20-years prison sentence, died from tuberculosis in July. He had reportedly been denied adequate and prompt medical treatment for several months and was taken to hospital only days before he died (Amnesty International, 2006).

Furthermore, peaceful political activities organized by members of the SCNC are often met with arbitrary arrests and unlawful detentions. For instance on January 15<sup>th</sup>, as many as 40 SCNC activists were detained and the Intervention Unit Officers in Buea reportedly assaulted the group’s leader, Henry Fossung. Meanwhile, Ayamba Ette Otun and about 20 other SCNC

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<sup>10</sup> See the *Eden* Newspaper No. 038 of 31/10-07/11/2005 “New Mezam SDO told to Fight Secessionists”; and *Le Front*, No. 121 of 21/09/2006 p. 4: “1er Octobre: Etat d’urgence dans la zone anglophone”, reports that between 5000 and 7000 troops were deployed to pre-empt independence commemoration activities by the SCNC in the North West and South West Provinces of the country.

<sup>11</sup> See *The Post*, No. 0803 of 6/10/2006 p. 3, “SCNC leaders are not Cowards”, Prince Hitler Mbinglo, Northern Zone Chairperson of the SCNC reiterated the “SCNC Motto: The Force of Argument, not the Argument of Force, vowing that no amount of force will deter them”; *The Post*, No. 0713 of 31/10/2005 p. 8, “SCNC as Passive Resisters”.

members were arrested during a meeting in October and detained for up to two weeks (Amnesty International, 2006). The Post, reports that Mr. Titiahonjo Mathew, a teacher by profession and SCNC activist was arrested in Ndop with several other activists, tortured and transferred to Bafoussam Central Prison, where he died under undisclosed circumstances.<sup>12</sup> Also, five SCNC activists (Henry Nshadze, Edwin Limfonyuy, Moses Komban, Thomas Kongso and Joseph Jumran), from Bui Division were taken to Bafoussam in September 2002 after being detained and severely tortured by Kumbo gendarmerie led by Captain Becklen. At the Bafoussam Central Prison, Nshadze was suffering from severe cough, Limfonyuy and Komban had swollen legs as a result of torture.<sup>13</sup>

### Conclusion

It is clear from a review of the official discourse on nation-building in Cameroon that the governing elite is committed to nation-building. However there is a contradiction between the official discourse on nation-building and certain national policies especially in the area of governance. Firstly, the instrumentalization and politicization of ethnicity has resulted in marginalization and exclusion from governance of members of other ethnic groups in the country. Secondly, the governing elite have not been able to come up with a viable/sustainable strategy to accommodate Anglophone nationalism. The policy elites have hijacked the nation-building agenda and adopted the pan-ethnic nation-building model (Kymlicka, 2004) as there is no ethnic group big or strong enough to impose its hegemony and diffuse its language and culture throughout the national/state territory. This model is however inappropriate and unsustainable because it involves suppression and repression of minorities as well as the emergence of ‘communal contenders’ (Kymlicka, 2004) for state power.

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<sup>12</sup> See The Post, No. 0400 of 26/08/2002 p.2 “British High Commissioner Alarmed by Reports on Torture”; and p. 3 “Court Orders Retrial of SCNC Case.”

<sup>13</sup> See The Post, No. 0410 of 30/09/2002, p. 6: “SCNC detainees complain of ill health/malnutrition”

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