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ONE COUNTRY, THREE COLONIAL LEGACIES: THE POLITICS OF COLONIALISM, CAPITALISM AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE PRE- AND POST-COLONIAL CAMEROON

Abstract

Cameroon is usually misconceived of as a former French colony due to its geographical location which is at the intersection of what used to be called French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa. This misconception clouds the country's triple colonial heritage that has shaped and continues to shape Cameroon's historical path and its agro-political landscape. The colonial heritage of Cameroon contributes to an understanding of key socio-economic, political and developmental challenges the country has been facing and continues to face. This article discusses the history of Cameroon's early contacts with Europeans (Germans, French and British in particular) and how these encounters influenced and shaped the country's economic history. It highlights how colonialism was a vehicle used to incept capitalism in the country with an emphasis on cash crop farming. The article also discusses the legacy of these heritages and the strategies that were successively adopted to address economic development challenges.

Keywords: Cameroon; colonialism; coffee farming; development; capitalism; economic development.

Sleutelwoorde: Kameroen; kolonialisme; koffieverbouing; ontwikkeling; kapitalisme; ekonomiese ontwikkkeling.

1. INTRODUCTION

Cameroon is often misconceived of as a former French colony. This is firstly due to the country's geographical location in an area where many countries with French as their main official language are clustered. Secondly, the majority of the Cameroonian population speak French as their first European language. This misconception overlooks the country's triple colonial heritage that shaped Cameroon's historical path and brought about some of the key socio-economic, and political issues the country faces. This article discusses the history of Cameroon's early contacts with Europeans (Germans, French and British

in particular)[1] and how these encounters influenced and shaped this African country's economic history. The article highlights that the country was colonised by Germany (not France) from 1884 to 1916, but was then placed under the mandate of the League of Nations and divided between the French and the British. With the demise of the League of Nations, the two Cameroons fell under the tutelage of the United Nations (UN), although still administered by the British and French, whose mission was to prepare the country for independence. Between 1914 and 1961 "French Cameroon" and "British Cameroon", as they were then called, followed two distinctive and sometimes conflicting colonial policies with different outcomes (Fombad 2011; Lee and Schultz 2012). As will be explained later, during a plebiscite organised in February 1961, Southern Cameroon voted to be reunited with the independent French Cameroon. Despite its reunification, which created a perception of a homogenous entity, the country remained significantly characterised by its internal cultural, linguistic, and socio-political contradictions, usually categorised along the Anglophone and Francophone binaries, or what has been dubbed the "Anglophone problem". The article commences with an overview of Cameroon's colonial history, before discussing the economic trajectory the country has attempted to follow after independence and the impact on its people.

2. OVERVIEW OF CAMEROON'S PRE-COLONIAL HISTORY: GERMAN'S "KAMERUN" 1884–1916

Following its annexation by Germany in 1884, *Kamerun* (the German spelling) previously conceived as part of the "informal British Empire" was taken over by the Germans and became its colony. Upon seizing the Cameroonian territory, the first modern international protectorate treaties were negotiated and signed between the Douala Chiefs (Chiefs Akwa and Bell) and the German traders on 12 July 1884. Two days later, on 14 July, *Kamerun* officially became a German colony. This was confirmed during the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885. Although German colonial rule lasted only 30 years, ending with the outbreak of World War I in 1914, the Germans used those years to establish the country's boundaries, introduce a monetary system, set up structures for administration and governance, lay the foundations for significant infrastructure, and accelerate the creation of cash crop plantations, including cocoa, coffee, bananas, palm oil, cotton, and rubber (McFerson 1983; Fanso 1999; ICG 2010).

When the German colonial masters discovered that some areas of the country were suitable for coffee production, they distributed the seeds to local

1 The Portuguese explorers were the first to reach the coast of Cameroon in the 15th century. They were struck by the abundance of shrimps in the river and named the coast Rio dos Camarões (river of shrimps), which became Cameroon or Cameroun respectively in English and French.

households and made use of the existing traditional authorities to force them into growing them. However, they restricted coffee farming to a maximum of 500 coffee trees, provided that farmers willing to farm coffee owned a large amount of land. The aim was to avoid coffee farming acting to the detriment of food crops that could have resulted in a food crisis or even famine in the country (Amougou-Awoumou 2008). By 1908, the need for Cameroon to become a producer of export crops was emphasised.

Slowly, but surely traditional food crop farming households became coffee farming households. Peasant-grown cash crops can therefore be seen as the real engine for the penetration of capitalism into Cameroon. It is argued that crop production in Cameroon brought both opportunities and challenges. It offered heads of households the opportunity to become petty commodity producers, while subjugating them to the whims of the colonial master and the market. The introduction of cash crops, particularly coffee and cocoa, reorganised the social life of communities in Cameroon's rural areas around a particular crop, depending on the geographical location.

The German administration was made possible by the exploitation of the well-established indigenous administrations, centred on the chiefs. Ndobegang (2009:45) contends that, "because the colonial authorities were short of personnel and ignorant of the local milieu, they were obliged to depend on African leaders to achieve the control required by the imposition of alien rule". The chiefs were used as law enforcers, tax collectors, mobilisers of labour for public works projects, and as suppliers of food and a work force for the construction of roads and railways. However, the chiefs were not simply passive pawns; they used their privileged position to advance their own interests (Ndobegang 2009). Using their privileged position as colonial intermediaries to satisfy their own particular interests was common practice in many colonies in Africa. In his discussion on the genesis of the state in Africa, Jean Francois Bayart (1989) explains that the shadow of these practices still haunt the postcolonial state in Africa and is one of the reasons that best explain its failure.

In his assessment of the development of African society from the 1800s, Freund (1998:97) argues that, "the imperial conquest of Africa was undertaken to tap African resources in order to help resolve the economic problems of Europe". It can be argued that "the cash-crop phenomenon", to use Freund's words, changed the fate of the Cameroonian society and conditioned the structure of the cash crop farming household. This can be explained by the fact that, "social, if not technical aspects of the production and reproduction relationships changed substantially to allow for the cash crop phenomenon. The simplest way to explain these changes is in terms of capital penetration, the investiture of commodity relationships ever deeper within the necessary transactions of life. Extended families and communal work obligations gave way to more individual relationships, or at least became ever more nakedly conducted in cash terms

[…] This gave way to production that operated more freely in terms of the market mechanism: producers sold to traders because they needed cash to survive. They could no longer withdraw from commercial interchange. A man's productive and reproductive capacity depended on marriage, marriage depended on bridewealth payments and bridewealth had to be produced in cash. Crudely speaking, over much of Africa, this development accelerated after World War I" (Freund 1998:112).

In light of this, it could be argued that the history of capitalism in Cameroon can be traced back to the introduction of export-oriented agricultural commodities, starting with the Germans and carried over by the French and the British during the early days of the country's colonial history (Rudin 1938).

To facilitate the transportation and export of these commodities, the Germans constructed many roads, railways and the Douala port. Infrastructure for telecommunications, such as telegraph and telephone lines, was also built. To fulfil their commercial and agricultural needs, it was necessary for the Germans to have an educated indigenous population who knew how to speak and write German and had the skills to meet the needs and vision of the colonial master. To this end, a German trader, Adolf Woerman suggested guidelines for education in 1886 with a specific focus on, "arithmetic, reading and writing German, Christian doctrine, and agricultural education" to Chancellor Otto von Bismark (Allo Allo 2003:5). Following Woerman's guidelines, the Germans opened the first school in Douala two years later in 1888, followed by several others in the different regions in the country (Rudin 1938; Allo Allo 2003). Freund (1998:172) explains that the spread of schools, which was not universal anywhere before the independence of many countries in the early 1960s, "was a powerful force in integrating African youth into wider colony-wide political networks". According to Allo Allo (2003), by the end of the First World War, graduates from mission schools were working as clerks, teachers, translators and soldiers.

In his assessment of their endeavours in Cameroon, Fombad (2011:2) argues that the Germans were the first to unite the inland and the coastal ethnic groups of the country into a single cohesive modern political entity. He explains that they expanded and consolidated their hold on the territory through raids against disobedient and unruly ethnic groups, "co-optation of traditional chiefs through friendship pacts, and military expeditions. It was actually during [the] colonial period that Cameroon's international boundaries were fixed and the foundation for a modern economic structure was laid down with the establishment of a network of roads and railways."

The Germans were defeated by the Allies during World War I, particularly the French-British coalition, which then shared Cameroon according to the areas they had occupied. France got the lion's share, corresponding to about 80% of the national territory (Amatala 2011). For both economic and strategic reasons, the British had to content themselves with the remaining 20% of the country (ICG

2010). Fombad (2011) argues that they had to settle for the smallest portion because of their fear of assuming the financial cost of a new colony and, more particularly, because they wanted to protect their Nigerian colony by controlling the Western portion of Cameroonian territory. Despite attempts by both powers to integrate these new territories into their existing colonies, the former German colony was placed under a League of Nations' mandate and administered as an integral part of British and French colonial territories (Fombad 2011; Lee and Schultz 2012). Although there was no predetermined time for independence, under the League of Nations Cameroon had privileged status that allowed the country to slowly, but surely move towards independence. It is clear that the League of Nations did not impose a particular form of colonial administration, thereby enabling the British and the French to administer the territory as they saw fit. This explains why British Cameroon was administered as part of British Nigeria and French Cameroon as part of the French colonial empire. In today's administrative geography, these entities represent Cameroon's two English speaking regions and the eight French speaking regions respectively.

3. CAMEROON UNDER FRENCH AND BRITISH RULE, 1914–1961

3.1 British Cameroon

The British divided their share of the Cameroonian territory into two parts, the North and the South, administered separately, but as an integral part of British Nigeria. The northern part of British Cameroon was subdivided and integrated into the three administrative provinces of Northern Nigeria, while the southern part was included in and administered by the provinces of Southern Nigeria. These areas were respectively known as "Northern Cameroon" and "Southern Cameroon". The latter was incorporated into the eastern provinces of Nigeria when the southern provinces of Nigeria split into Southern and Eastern Nigeria (Fanso 1999; Ndobegang 2009; Fombad 2011). The administration of Northern and Southern Cameroon as an integral part of Nigeria by the British colonisers was not synonymous with fusion or integration into the Nigerian territory, despite the fact that these territories were administered as such (Fombad 2011). Konings (1999) highlights that the administration of the Southern Cameroons as a portion of the Nigerian territory led to flagrant neglect of its development. Moreover, these territories were characterised by the strong economic dominance of Igbo and Efik-Ibibio migrants, causing a gradual rise in the number of nationalist and autonomist activists calling for self-government for the region. Responding to the political pressure, the British granted Southern Cameroon quasi-regional status

with a limited degree of self-government, and later full regional status within the Federation of Nigeria.

It should be noted that French Cameroon gained its independence when British Cameroon was still under the administration of Nigeria. This posed the question of the status of British Cameroon. The key issue was whether to incorporate British Cameroon into Nigeria, or consider it part of Cameroon. This was a bone of contention due to the fact that the two key political elites of the British Southern Cameroons under the leadership of Emmanuel Endeley of the Kamerun National Convention (KNC) and John Ngu Foncha of the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP) were seriously divided on the matter. This division was typified by Endeley's radical stance in favour of the integration of Southern Cameroon into Nigeria, while Foncha was a staunch supporter of its unification with French Cameroon.

Konings (1999) argues that this radical shift by Endeley, who had previously supported reunification with French Cameroon, was influenced by the promulgation of the Nigerian Constitution which could have resulted in Southern Cameroon's integration within the Federation of Nigeria. Endeley's position was also influenced by the outbreak of anti-colonial rebellion in French Cameroon. He believed that regional status would give Southern Cameroon the autonomy to rule itself, be the master of its own development, maintain its British heritage, and "avoid the violence and chaos of the war in French Cameroon" (Konings 1999:292). In contrast, Foncha was not concerned with regional status and continued to advocate the incorporation of the region into French Cameroon. Foncha's support for reunification with French Cameroon faltered due to the resistance of some elites who were sceptical about uniting Southern Cameroon with a territory that had a different colonial legacy and was torn by civil war. He threw his efforts into promoting either a period of continued trusteeship, or total autonomy instead of reunification.

Due to the leadership's failure to reach a compromise on the future of British Cameroon, a referendum was organised and sponsored by the UN on 11 February 1961 and citizens were called upon to express their wishes. They were given two options: be independent as part of Nigeria or be independent as part of French Cameroon. Voters were presented with the following dichotomous choice:

1. Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the Independent Republic of Cameroon?
2. Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the Independent Federation of Nigeria?

The people of Southern Cameroon were sceptical about choosing between these two options only. John Ngu Foncha was tasked to lead a delegation to London in November 1960 to voice the concern of the population who wanted a third option of independence as an autonomous political entity (BAPEC 2016).

This option of complete independence was excluded by the UN because it feared that this would lead to a new balkanisation of the colonial territories in Africa (ICG 2010). The Muslim majority in Northern Cameroon voted 60% in favour of Nigeria, while the Christian majority in Southern Cameroon voted 70,5% in favour of integration with French Cameroon. Northern Cameroon officially became part of Nigeria and Southern Cameroon became part of Cameroon on 1 October 1961.

3.2 French Cameroon

Following the Germans, the French made use of traditional systems of governance to administer the country. Communities were centred on these well-functioning traditional systems of governance, administered by the chiefs and their assistants. These local institutions allowed the French to continue running the public work programmes started by the Germans. Forced and unpaid labour was used on public works programmes which required a massive work force. In collaboration with local chiefs, colonial officials used kidnapping and corporal punishment to compel the population to participate in these programmes. Lee and Schultz (2012) comment that both colonial officials and chiefs were usually very keen to enforce these policies because they offered them the opportunity to divert part of the labour force to their private farms and plantations. Some of the worst forms of abuse were abolished due to international pressure in 1930. Despite the abuse, it is argued that these policies were very successful as they contributed to a fivefold increase in the country's economy between 1922 and 1938 (ICG 2010).

Unlike British Cameroon, the population in French Cameroon did not have to vote for or against their integration into either the British or the French colony. They enjoyed full autonomy. This was due to France's policy of assimilation. Assimilation aimed to gradually transform indigenous people into their European counterparts; this entailed the gradual imposition of French cultural values and practices. Amatala (2011) contends that assimilation was also a subtle way of erasing the 32 years of Germany's colonial legacy in Cameroon. The assimilation policy allowed native Cameroonians who had been educated according to French standards, the so called évolués, to receive French citizenship and the legal rights of a French citizen, such as participating in elections (Lee and Schultz 2012). The French term évolués was used in the colonial era to categorise indigenous people who had accepted and assimilated the European lifestyle, particularly through education. They could speak French and followed French law. They were primarily urban dwellers and were projected as the desired products of the French assimilation policy. Consequently, they received several privileges from the colonial administrators.

Both the traditional chiefs and the évolués were used as intermediaries between the colonial administrators and the rest of the population. Due to the

fact that the first plantations started by the Germans were under the British mandate, the French promoted a form of Cameroonian rural capitalism based on small-scale cash crop farming. This was done under the assumption that cash crop farming, "would lead to the *embourgeoisement* of a significant number of Cameroonians, who would constitute a social anchor for French rule" (Eckert 2003:304).

Coffee farming in the Western highlands serves as an illustration of this policy. Farmers were obliged to register their farms and to follow the regulations set by the colonial administrator. Many farmers who did not comply with these prescriptions were threatened with the destruction of their farms. Eckert (2003) argues that these policies were a means to create a local bourgeoisie mainly constituted of chiefs that, as noted earlier, were already part of the colonial administrative system. These policies favoured a marginal portion of the population which benefited from their privileged position as chiefs or notables, and the évolués, many of whom found employment in the colonial administration (ICG 2010). These colonial policies shaped Cameroon's socio-economic and political development in line with the interests of the colonial powers, and contributed to the rise of the nationalist movement in the 1950s and the struggle for independence. According to Atangana (1997), despite the fact that Cameroon was ruled as an ordinary colony by France, the new Cameroonian elites were well aware that their country was not an ordinary colony because of its League of Nations' mandate and therefore could not be subjected to exploitation and abuse by the French colonial administration. This was particularly important given that the French colonial administration was characterised by a lack of interest in creating a viable political environment in which locals could decide their future. Between 1950 and 1955, "little or no progress was made towards granting legislative power to the Territorial Assembly, establishing a democratic local government system, or holding free elections in the territory" (Atangana 1997:97).

The disparity between an economy that was mostly beneficial to the French and to the detriment of the local population, and a lack of political will to create democratic institutions in which people participated in shaping the future of their country, created a hostile environment that led to waves of anti-colonialism, culminating in the outbreak of armed conflict in early 1955. These political struggles led to the independence of French Cameroon, which became *La République du Cameroun* on 1 January 1960 with Ahmadou Ahidjo as its first president. Following the plebiscite held in the British zone, Southern Cameroon and *La République du Cameroun* merged to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon on 1 October 1961. In 1972, the Federal Republic was substituted by a more centralised unitary state through a nationwide referendum (Neba 1987). Cameroon then became the United Republic of Cameroon. However, in 1984, a

presidential decree abolished the United Republic of Cameroon and re-instituted the Republic of Cameroon.

Despite these shifts towards a unified country, the Francophone and Anglophone parts of Cameroon remained under the influence of their previous colonial masters' legal and education systems with strong attachments to their language and culture (Neba 1987; Ndobegang 2009). The legacies of the two Cameroons' colonial past are still very much characteristic of today's Cameroonian society polarised around Francophone and Anglophone's categories or, more importantly, the dominant features of the political agenda in Cameroon, the "Anglophone Problem".

4. THE ANGLOPHONE PROBLEM

One of the current problems in contemporary Cameroon's politics that is intimately connected to Cameroon's triple colonial past, is the Anglophone Problem. Judging by the growing popularity of federalists and separatists' movements and discourse among members of the Anglophone community, there is no doubt that there is an Anglophone Problem that is posing itself as a political ticking time bomb. The Bamenda Provincial Episcopal Conference (BAPEC 2016) points out that the causes of dissatisfaction include the marginalisation of the Anglophone Cameroonians in the country's human resource development and deployment in favour of their Francophone counterparts; the marginalisation of the English language in the public life of the nation; the deployment of Francophone administrators and workers without knowledge of Southern Cameroon culture and language; the mismanagement of the Anglophone Patrimony; the exclusion of qualified Anglophones in admissions into state professional schools, even in the Anglophone regions; the "Francophonisation" of the English educational subsystem and the Common-Law system, to cite some of the most salient ones, and is seen as an institutionalised marginalisation aiming at gradually eroding the "Anglophone Identity". The next section focuses on the economic and development trajectory adopted since independence.

5. CAMEROON'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AFTER INDEPENDENCE

Cameroon's political evolution is intimately connected to the various economic development policies adopted by the government led by Cameroon's first president, Ahmadou Ahidjo. The history of economic development after independence can be broadly divided into four main periods: the pre-oil boom from independence to 1977, the oil boom between 1978 and 1986, the economic crisis and adjustment between 1987 and 1993, and devaluation and post-adjustment from 1994 onwards (Ndoye and Kaimowitz 2000; Benhin and Barbier

1999). The pre-oil boom and the oil boom period also witnessed the movement towards a highly centralised state and increased state intervention in agriculture.

5.1 The pre-oil boom period, 1960–1977

The pre-oil boom period was characterised by the continuation of some of the policies and institutional structures, reflecting Cameroon's double colonial heritage. With about 85% of the population residing in rural areas, the main concern of the country's first government was the development of the agricultural sector, the lifeblood of the economy and the source of livelihood for almost the entire population (Fonchingong 1999; Ntangsi 2008; Tina 2012). In an attempt to bring about a prosperous Cameroon, the first president introduced a series of five-year economic and social development plans, the famous *plans quinquennaux*. These plans laid out how development was to be accelerated within each sector of the economy (Amin 2002). Cash crop exports featured prominently in these plans, as Cameroon's agricultural development was geared toward exporting these crops to the former colonial masters (Tina 2012). The first five-year plan covered the period between 1960 and 1965. Its main objective was to double GDP per capita by 1980. So 45,8% of the country's investment fund of 53,18 billion CFA Francs was allocated to infrastructural development, and 18,8% to rural development (Moussala 2010). De Lancey (1989) notes that emphasis was also put on nationalising the economy and reducing its dependence on France, while moving toward a more multilateral approach to trade, aid and investment. The same focus would be adopted in later plans.

The second five-year plan, which ran from 1966 to 1971, was entitled the "farmer's plan", because its objective was to improve the living conditions of the rural population. To encourage the production of export crops, such as coffee, cocoa, cotton and rubber, the government provided a number of incentives, including agricultural credit, fertiliser, building equipment, free training undertaken by extension workers, and prizes for the best farms and harvest to farmers during agricultural shows (Ngwainmbi 2000). The cooperatives system and various rural development projects were reinforced as channels to empower farmers (Willame 1985). It was during this second plan that the Mbakaou Dam was constructed and agro-industry companies, such as the sugar company (SOSUCAM), the first cocoa-based consumer products company (CHOCOCAM), the first textile industry (CICAM) and the first metal industry involved in aluminium transformation (SOCATRAL), were established. The longest railway line connecting Yaoundé to Ngaoundéré, the so-called *Transcamerounais,* also took shape.

The main criticisms levelled against these first two plans were that they were a product of the French foreign experts employed by the government. As such, they were crippled by various shortfalls, including lack of accurate information, the foreign expatriates' inability to take the country's social and

cultural values into consideration in their planning, and its administrative practices. This was made evident by the plans' failure to include the former British Cameroon, the Anglophone Cameroon, in their planning (De Lancey 1989). These concerns were taken into consideration in the preparation and design of the third plan.

The third plan was executed between 1971 and 1976 and benefited from the lessons learned from the two previous plans. Because it was based on Cameroon realities, and particular ministries played a larger role in its preparation, it was more effective than the previous plans (De Lancey 1989). This third plan targeted the development of industries, mines, energy, the construction of the railroad between Douala and Yaoundé, and the extension of the Ngaoundéré Line. At the same time a paved road was planned between Douala and Bamenda, as well as the, "extension of feeder roads to connect productive areas to the main road and railroad" (De Lancey 1989:117). To facilitate rural development and to increase agricultural production, the Food Development Authority (MIDEVIV) and the National Fund for Rural Development (FONADER) were created in 1973. The key objective was to base Cameroon's sources of funding on domestic savings, taxes, and high returns on export crops, rather than relying on foreign borrowing. This was an effective policy that might explain why in the late 1980s, Cameroon's international debt burden was very small. In their summary of the third plan, Achancho and Lothoré (2008) and Willame (1985) point out that the plan was built around the promotion and development of the state owned agro-industries, which received a total share of 60% of the country's public investment. Although the global economic crisis of 1973, as well as the drought in the northern part of the country presented a challenge to the third plan, its major key emphases continued in the plans that followed it.

The fourth plan (1976-1981) overlapped the pre-oil boom and the oil boom and was characterised by the notion of *développement autocentré* (Moussala 2010), a highly centralised development strategy regulated by the state. Launched during the previous plan, this plan aimed at infrastructure modernisation and the improvement of the agricultural sector and agro-industry with greater attention to food crops and their processing. Government planned to intensify the country's economic development during this phase (Achancho and Lothoré 2008). From the 715 billion CFA Francs investment budget, 31% was allocated to the industrial and energy sector, 21,6% to infrastructural development and 17,27% to rural development (Ella-Menye Ekotto 2007). The rural development strategy's main objective was a growth of 5% in GDP per capita. Research and development, as well as mineral exploitation, were also prioritised. Amongst the key projects realised during the fourth plan were the construction of hydro-electric power stations at Songloulou, Lagdo, and Bamendjin; the extension of the aluminium company (ALUCAM),

the cement company (CIMENCAM), and the development of the paper industry (CELLUCAM).

The fifth five-year economic, social and cultural development plan was carried out between 1981 and 1986. This ambitious plan aimed to change the face of Cameroon by the year 2000 through a significant increase in real income per capita. The agricultural sector was again one of the key features of the plan which called for annual growth in food production of 3%, the improvement of the healthcare sector through training medical personnel, the revitalisation and expansion of educational capabilities, as well as curriculum changes, development of infrastructure, and redistribution of industrial locations to correct the imbalances between urban and rural areas (De Lancey 1989). The fifth plan coincided with the production of petroleum, which raised expectations of a much higher national income than in the previous plan. This is reflected in the stark contrast between the budget for the fourth plan of 68,5 million CFA Francs and the fifth plan's budget of 2,3 billion, a more than 300% increase (De Lancey 1989). The plan was launched during the first president, Ahmadou Ahidjo's, term of office, and ended under the second president, Paul Biya. Despite its greater emphasis on agriculture and rural development projects, the fifth plan significantly expanded infrastructural development with the key goal of linking all major cities with paved highways. At that time, a gravel road, often unusable during the rainy season, connected the major cities of Yaoundé and Douala.

5.2 The oil boom period, 1978–1986

As noted above, the fourth and fifth economic development plans cut across the pre-oil boom period and the oil boom period. The sixth plan, which was considerably bigger that the fifth (7,83 billion CFA Francs compared with 2,3 billion), marked the continuation of the programmes started in the fifth plan, with the rural sector receiving a quarter of the total budget. A land allocation scheme was developed to allocate about 3 000 farms of about ten to 15 hectares mainly (about 50 to 60%) to youth and new farmers, as well as those already farming. This strategy aimed to encourage private, as opposed to traditional communal ownership. Land ownership was to be accompanied by literacy campaigns to educate farmers to run their farms efficiently. Also of importance was the transformation of the industrial sector by turning large scale foreign-financed projects into medium and small-scale businesses that relied on local capital and management and locally available technology and raw materials. This aimed to encourage the growth of local entrepreneurs and to employ local labour (De Lancey 1989). The continuation of the previous plans was characterised by the expansion of the Douala Port, highway development, and the restructuring of the Douala-Nkongsamba Railway, among others.

Cameroon discovered oil in1978. The oil boom had a significant impact on the fifth and sixth plans. Besides the cash injection the oil boom provided to the

plan, the overall economy flourish during this period. Cameroon's unprecedented economic performance during the oil boom is usually attributed to a combination of factors, including the rapid growth in oil production, high international prices for both oil and agricultural products, and an influx of foreign loans (Ndoye and Kaimowitz 2000). These factors both improved Cameroon's economy and contributed for a short period to the rapid expansion of the agricultural sector. The country recorded a growth rate of 14,2% in 1981 and 6% annually between 1981 and 1986. High coffee and cocoa prices during the oil boom period provided an incentive for farmers to extend their farms and to increase their production of cash crops (Ndoye and Kaimowitz 2000; Bamou and Masters 2007). However, although the oil boom accelerated Cameroon's economic growth, it also contributed to a relative stagnation of the agricultural sector. Ndoye and Kaimowitz (2000) explain that, although oil production significantly increased Cameroon's GDP and accounted for about 20% of total GDP, its agricultural share decreased from 29,3% to 20,5%. At the same time, the agricultural sector's share of exports fell from 87% to 27%. Ndoye and Kaimowitz (2000) further explain that most of the country's new oil revenues were diverted to finance the public sector, resulting in a hike in government spending from 16,5% of total GDP in 1978 to 21,2% in 1985. This represented an increase of about 640,5 billion CFA Francs. At the same time, public employment rose from 205 500 in 1976 to 292 900 in 1985. Discussing other impacts of the oil boom, Ndoye and Kaimowitz (2000:13) report that the government's agricultural finances witnessed a sudden increase from an average of 42 billion CFA Francs in 1971-1975 to 336 billion CFA Francs in 1981-1985. Page (2002) notes that in 1977 cash crops accounted for about 72% of the country's export earnings, while oil accounted for only 1,4%. In 1985 cash crop production dropped to 21,4%, while oil rose to 65,4% of total export earnings.

An assessment of the impact of the five-year development plans points out that in the pre-oil boom period private and public consumption and Gross Domestic Investment were all positive, with real income per capita increasing from 47 749 CFA Francs in 1971 to 103 080 CFA Francs in 1977 (Amin 1996). However, Ntangsi (2008:40) notes that by the mid-1970s it was evident that the interventionist approach had not produced the desired results in its attempt to create a modern sector. He explains that the, "proliferation of new institutions and structures while still maintaining the old ones resulted in the widespread overlapping of institutional functions and competences". Achancho and Lothoré (2008) highlight some of the factors that contributed to the unsustainability and, thereafter, to the death of the five-year development plans. These include highly subsidised programmes; the fact that a number of the structures and institutions created lacked clear coordination of their activities and were sometimes duplicating or running overlapping programmes; and that there were disconnections between research, information diffused, and the farmers. As a

consequence, various bodies that were running similar projects were competing, creating conflict and general confusion among stakeholders. Ntangsi (2008:40) concludes that this situation was, "exacerbated by the fact that the agencies were supervised by different government ministries with little or no provision for the coordination of activities". The poor performance of this strategy finally led donors to retreat, leaving many projects unfinanced. By the late 1970s changes were afoot, including the fragmentation of the institutions in charge of development; the high costs involved in their financing; and the neglect of the agricultural sector, especially small scale farmers. This led to increasingly poor economic performance from the late 1970s. There was a dire need for an evaluation of these policies to reorient in the right direction. This was not done, leading to their demise, leaving the door wide open to the neoliberal policies that the country adopted in the second half of the 1980s.

5.3 The economic crisis and structural adjustment period, 1987–1993

If the two first decades after independence can be considered Cameroon's golden decades due to the country's unique and unprecedented growth, the 1980s were characterised by the collapse of the country's economy and the increasing impoverishment of its people. As noted by Amin, Douya and Mbeaoh (2002:155), 1985–1986 marked, "the end of the era of rapid growth and the onset of a deep economic crisis that still plagues Cameroon". The severe decline in GDP growth from an average of 8% to less than 5% during that period, combined with a 65% deterioration of the country's terms of trade between 1985 and 1988, posed many challenges to the economy. Both external and internal factors contributed to this economic crisis. These include, among others, the sharp fall in world prices of Cameroon's main export commodities (oil, cocoa and coffee), the depreciation of the US dollar, which was the country's main export currency, by about 40%, an increase in foreign debt, and poor domestic management of the economy. The crisis caused the balance of payments to change from a surplus of 4,4% of GDP in 1984/1985 to a deficit of 8,8% in 1986-1987 (Amin, Douya and Mbeaoh 2002).

In response to the severe economic crisis, Cameroon's government was forced to adopt a series of macroeconomic reforms designed by the Bretton Woods institutions, the IMF and the World Bank. In 1989/1990, coffee and cotton prices were reduced by 60% and 32% respectively (Blandford *et al*., cited in Ahmed and Lipton 1997). This marked the beginning of the implementation of the SAPs which advocated a free market to solve the crisis and to re-establish the necessary conditions for the resumption of economic growth. Trade barriers were gradually removed, the economy was liberalised, subsidies were lifted and the role of the state was substantially restricted, and the currency was devalued

(Ojong 2011). The restriction of the role of the state in the economy led to the closing down of the national product marketing board, ONCPB, and various other institutions that were set up to support farmers. Before the rolling-back of the state from the economy and the shutting down of these organisations, agricultural subsidies amounted to 80% of the total price of inputs. With the sudden removal of subsidies, famers had to pay the total cost of key inputs. As if these drawbacks were not enough, cash crop farmers had to face the constant fall and volatility in producer prices. In the process, the farmers were obliged to seek ways to survive, or to improve their livelihoods in the new country's liberalised economy.

5.4 The devaluation and post-adjustment period from 1994 to date

One of the key objectives of devaluation in Cameroon was to generate more income from export products, especially for cash crop farmers. However, due to the fact that agricultural inputs were no longer subsidised, their market price rose sharply, offsetting the relatively marginal increase in cash crops income after devaluation. For example, a bag of 50 kg of subsidised fertiliser which cost about 4500 CFA Francs before devaluation rose to 10 000 CFA Francs with liberalisation and devaluation, a hike of 110%. According to Amin, Douya and Mbeaoh (2002), despite improvement in the profitability of Robusta coffee producers in the Moungo region of Cameroon, the devaluation probably increased coffee production costs by 35%. According to Janin (1999), the change in agricultural policy contributed significantly to a reduction in the quantity of fertiliser used, which plummeted from an average annual consumption of 450 kg to 190 kg, a reduction of about 58%. Table 1 captures the price variations for selected inputs in the pre-adjustment, post-adjustment and post-devaluation periods.

Table 1:Variation of the Price of Inputs in the Post-adjustment and Post-devaluation Periods.

Product	Pre-adjustment price	Post-adjustment price	Price after devaluation
Cost of 50 kg bag of fertiliser	1800 to 2500 CFA F.	3000 to 3500 CFA F.	5000 to 7000 CFA F.
Cost of a machete	1000 CFA F.	1500 CFA F.	2000 to 2500 CFA F.

Product	Pre-adjustment price	Post-adjustment price	Price after devaluation
Cost of weeding per hectare	10 000 to 20 000 CFA F.	5 000 to 10 000 CFA F.	8 000 to 15 000 CFA F.
Cost of harvest per bag	800 to 1000 CFA F.	300 to 400 CFA F.	500 CFA F.

Source: Stabex Data 1994

Moreover, Janin (1999) notes that the greatest proportion of fertiliser was diverted toward food crop farming. The withdrawal of government subsidies, liberalisation of the coffee trade, and the devaluation of the CFA Franc forced many coffee farmers to abandon the crop or to diversify their agricultural activities (Fonjong 2004; Molua 2008).

Following the World Bank and IMF recommendations, Cameroon adopted the Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper in 2003. However, during its implementation between 2003 and 2007, average GDP fell from 4,23% from 2000 to 2003, to 3,32% during the years of the implementation of the PRSP. This clearly shows once again that the country's economy had deteriorated and that it was unable to achieve its objective of poverty reduction. A new macroeconomic paper, the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP) replaced the PRSP. It aimed to address the challenges of growth and the creation of employment opportunities as a solution to poverty. It is considered a, "vector of the search for growth and redistribution of its fruits right down to the most vulnerable segments of the population with special emphasis on women and the youth" (GESP 2010). This once again points to the gloomy reality that the various economic policies adopted in Cameroon have not been able to improve the conditions of the citizens. Instead, they have increasingly witnessed deteriorating livelihoods.

6. CONCLUSION

This article discussed the history of Cameroon's early contacts with Europeans (Germans, French, and British in particular) and how these encounters have influenced and shaped Cameroon economic and political history. It has been pointed out that one of the key legacies of Cameroon's triple colonial history remains the division of the country along Anglophone and Francophone lines, and more importantly, what is now termed the "Anglophone Problem". The article has also argued that the misconception of Cameroon as a French colony tends to cloud the country's triple colonial masters' legacies that had shaped and continue to shape Cameroon's development trajectory and economy. One of the

key focal areas of the article is the various developmental policies and strategies that Cameroon adopted since its independence, spanning from the quinquennial plans where the economy was regulated by the visible hand of the state to the adoption of the neoliberal policies characterised by state withdrawal from the economy. It was observed that the severe economic crisis of the 1980s and the adjustment reforms were particularly detrimental to rural commodity producers. Intended to improve the economy, these measures went awry, greatly affecting the agricultural sector by inflating the price of inputs and, ultimately, leaving farmers at the mercy of the market forces.

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