The "Anglophone crisis" in Cameroon: cultural diversity as governmentality of (post)colonial divide

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ABSTRACT

This article attempts to highlight the challenges of the discourse of diversity in Cameroon. It shows the strategic function of diversity as governmentality of the Anglophone-Francophone conflictuality of which the war of secession in Anglophone Cameroon is the manifestation. The notion of diversity and the communication that accompanies it are at the center of a major issue here: neutralizing the Franco-British colonial heritage and bringing English-speaking secessionist forces back into the national arena. The discourse of diversity serves to build consensus around national unity. The article also shows how the question of diversity arises in Cameroon less in terms of race, gender, sexual orientation, immigration, social class, and age – categories particularly mobilized in studies on diversity in the West. In Cameroon and in much of Africa, the notion of diversity refers to precolonial and (post)colonial ethnicity.

Keywords: Postcolonial state, Anglophone-Francophone divide, Discourse of diversity, Governmentality, Intercultural communication in postcolony.

INTRODUCTION

In Cameroonian context marked by political demands of an ethnic nature over the last decades (Collectif 1992; Ngoh, 1999, Konings & Nyamnjoh, 2003; Zognong & Mouiche, 2002), "diversity" has appeared as an instrument of governing ethnicity (Sama, 2007). The aim of this article is to highlight the challenges of the discourse of diversity in Cameroon. By discourse of diversity, we mean all the socio-political narratives having as their object the question and the notion of diversity. It is a set of discursive and semiotic productions having as their lexico-semantic core the notion of diversity (Aboussier and *al*, 2023; Tatchim, 2023). The article sheds light on the way in which the postcolonial State produces and puts into circulation in the public space a set of formulations around "diversity" for the purpose of building consensus around State power and the national community. Recently emerging from the colonial experience (Mbembe 2000), the nation-state throughout Africa is in the process of construction. In the case of Cameroon, how does intercultural state communication operate in its overall policy of building the postcolonial nation-state? This fundamental question structures our thinking. One of the hypotheses of this research is that the Cameroonian government is attempting through the discourse of diversity to neutralize different centrifugal ethno-identity forces. The article shows that diversity in Cameroon is at the center of a national discursive system, and that in this context, it takes the form of an injunction towards the populations. We thus show a strategical use of the discourse of diversity. This functions, as we will demonstrate below, for example as a regime of governmentality of the conflict between Anglophones and Francophones of which the ongoing war of secession in Anglophone Cameroon is the manifestation[1]. The notion of diversity and the communication that accompanies it are here at the center of a major issue: to bring English-speaking separatist forces back into the national arena. Its discourse serves to build consensus around national unity within a "stationary state" where power finds itself "in an atmosphere of end of reign"[2] (Eboko & Awondo 2018). More clearly, this article understands the discourse of diversity in Cameroon in its relationship with the Franco-British colonial history of the country, that is to say as a communication device caught between the issues of pacification of cultural relations between Anglophones and Francophones and the construction of a postcolonial nation-state.

In the lines that follow, we first provide an understanding of the elements of the socio-historical context of the discourse on diversity in Cameroon. A set of survey data from archival and/or documentary corpora shed light on the process of building the postcolonial nation-state in Cameroon as well as the socio-discursive trajectory of "diversity". The division of Cameroon between France and England in the colonial context largely contributed to the emergence of the discourse on diversity in the public space in Cameroon in the aftermath of independence and the Reunification of the two Anglophone and Francophone Cameroons.

We then show how, in the absence of government responses to the "Anglophone problem", that is to say the discomfort of the Anglophone minority (around 20% of the population) in cohabitation with Francophones since Reunification in 1961, this mutated from

2016 into a war of secession in the English-speaking regions. This military phase will force the state not only to recognize the existence of an "Anglophone problem" but also to put it into public policy. Surveys by interviews, documentary research and ethnographic observation in the English-speaking regions (2016-2022) show the entry of cultural and linguistic diversity into the state agenda. Diversity then appears as the governmentality of the "Anglophone crisis".

In the discussion section, we show how the question of diversity arises in Cameroon less in terms of race, sexual orientation, gender, immigration, social class, and age – categories particularly mobilized in studies of diversity in the West. In Cameroon and in much of Africa, the notion of diversity refers to precolonial and (post)colonial ethnicity. We also highlight the issues and theoretical challenges of studies on diversity in postcolonial French-speaking Africa.

THE DISCOURSE OF DIVERSITY BY THE POSTCOLONIAL STATE IN CAMEROON

SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

Cameroon is a state which, in its precolonial configuration, is made up of more than 230 ethnolinguistic groups. Because of its forced openness to the West, in the context of triangular trade and colonization, the postcolonial authorities inherited at the dawn of the "independence" of a bicultural, bilingual, even bi-territorial Cameroon (English-speaking and French-speaking). A German colony until 1914, Cameroon was placed by the League of Nations (SDN) under Franco-British administration after the First World War (Le Vine, 1934). An almost logical decision given the Franco-British military expedition against Germany on Cameroonian soil, and the sharing of the territory by the two allied powers. At the dawn of "independence", Cameroon is therefore an ethnically diversified state at the peripheral or regional level. At the national level, it is politically and linguistically bipolarized (Anglophone and Francophone).

FIGURE 1. Map of Cameroon after Independence and the Reunification of the English-speaking and French-speaking territories

Faced with the challenge of nation-state building faced by young African states, postcolonial authorities implemented a hegemonic political project where national unity was a political religion (Fogui 1990). In the speech, national unity was sacred. Any demonstration of an ethno-regional nature was considered an unpatriotic act. The ethnocidal state (Coulon 1978) was deployed until the beginning of the 1990s – the so-called democratic transition period, characterized internally by struggles for the liberalization of political and public life (Monga 1995; Vubo 2011), and at the global level, the multilateralization of cooperation relations, due, among other things, to the collapse of the Soviet bloc (Dieng 1996).

Thus, we observed during the 1990s the emergence of a discourse on cultural pluralism (Collectif 1992; Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003; Tatchim, 2023, 2020). After several years of political struggles between the State and the re-emerged opposition political parties, notably with the support of international partners in favor of democratic opening, the country resulted in the adoption of a new Constitution in January 1996. Cameroon introduces in its fundamental law the question and the notion of "linguistic and cultural diversity" and expresses the will to "enhance this heritage". Here is an excerpt from the preamble to the 1996 Constitution:

> The Cameroonian people, proud of their **linguistic and cultural diversity**, the element of their national personality which it helps to enrich, but deeply aware of the imperative need to perfect their unity, solemnly proclaim that they constitute one and the same nation...

The beginning of the 1990s was particularly marked by the construction of legitimate ethno-identity issues, what Cameroonian political scientist Luc Sindjoun (2002) calls the

politicization of ethnicity. This is reflected notably in the political formulation of the "Anglophone problem", that is to say the construction of the "Anglophone malaise" as a political problem (Konings 1996; Konings and Nyamnjoh 2003; Sama 2007; Tatchim, 2023, 2021). The political use of ethnicity also concerns precolonial identity groups previously forced by the repressive state apparatus to become invisible (Collectif 1992; Vubo 2011). The political construction of the "Anglophone problem", coupled with the injunction to democratic openness and ethno-identity pluralism on the part of international partners, made the 1990s a unique period in the historical process of state construction. -nation in Cameroon. Endogenous and exogenous upheavals shape diversity issues. The injunction to cultural diversity issued by supranational organizations appears, however, much more clearly from the 2000s, with the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) and the eponymous Convention in 2005 (Sholomon-Kornblit 2019). It is reflected in Cameroon by the entry of the term "cultural diversity" into official discourse. The 2010s, and especially the outbreak of the Anglophone secessionist crisis (2016), allow us to see a political instrumentalization of the notion as well as the discourse that carries it. A diachronic reading of the political discourse shows, from the mid-2010s, a democratization of the discourse of diversity within the state apparatus. The notion of diversity and the discourse surrounding it constitute an issue of neutralization of internal ethno-identity conflict. The notion works as an operator for building consensus around national unity.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS, METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

Thus, this research attempts to shed light on government strategies for building the national community in a multi-ethnic context. How does the state proceed to neutralize the colonial heritage through communication and build consensus between the Anglophone and Francophone communities around national unity? To what extent does the notion of diversity and the discourse surrounding it contribute to the intercultural communication of rapprochement between Anglophones and Francophones? These are the main questions that structure this research. Beyond the Cameroonian case, the problem posed by this article is that of the challenges of the state discourse of diversity in a postcolonial context. Methodologically, the article is based on qualitative surveys carried out as part of our doctoral thesis on the issues of the discourse of diversity in the process of building the postcolonial nation-state in Cameroon. The thesis favored a diachronic approach to the discourse and policies of cultural diversity in Cameroon since the postcolonial period. Various surveys were conducted between 2015 and 2022 to shed light on the research problem. The analysis is based on a corpus of interviews and archival speeches, i.e. institutional documents collected as part of our investigations. Regarding the corpus obtained by interview, we had long discussions with public officials serving or having served at the highest level of the State: a former minister and a former secretary general at the presidency of the Republic (both members of National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism)[3]. We also had interviews with officials at the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Secondary Education, and the management of the national museum in Yaoundé. All the interviewees were selected on the basis of their functions or former functions of State agents responsible for implementing the

"diversity policy" as well as the discourse that accompanies it. The objective of the interviews was to understand the endogenous logics, that is to say the reasons which govern in depth the state discourse on diversity. Regarding archive discourse, the analysis is based on a set of institutional documents. We have collected from the ministries mentioned above a set of documents and speeches, the characteristics of which are as follows: solemn speeches by the President of the Republic and the Ministers of Culture; decrees and legal texts; about ten issues of the information and communication magazine of the Ministry of Culture (*Culture Infos*). The documentary and interview survey are supplemented by a media watch of more than five years which has enabled us to collect press interviews of State agents at national and local level (ministers, prefects, sub-prefects)[4] between 2016 and 2021, a period of high political-military tension in English-speaking Cameroon. What guides the selection of interviews is the fact that the notion of diversity is clearly mentioned there. The analysis is therefore thematic and the approach qualitative and critical. The corpus provides an overview of the dynamics of the State's discourse on diversity. Through this approach, research contributes to shedding light on the processes allowing organizations to implement various enunciative strategies (Gobin 2004). State discourse carries and establishes the question and the notion of diversity. It has, by its nature, a strong normative dimension.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As indicated above, the article explores the hypothesis of cultural diversity as governmentality of the Francophone/Anglophone divide and more specifically of the Anglophone secessionist crisis. The reflection is informed by the conceptual framework defined by Michel Foucault around the notions of governmentality and system (Foucault 1980, 2007, 2008). Taken up and worked on in recent years, various works show their operability in the analysis of the management of ethno-racial diversity and conflict (Doytcheva 2020b, 2021; Auboussier et al. 2022). Indeed, the definition of diversity as a paradigm for managing ethno-identity conflict appeared in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States. Diversity is central in the management of the issue of ethnic minorities. *Affirmative action* grants preferential treatment to communities defined according to their ethno-racial identity and having historically been subjected to a discriminatory legal regime: African Americans, Hispanics, and descendants of indigenous populations, among others (Sabbagh 2012, 2000). In Europe, studies on diversity have particularly been carried out on what John W. Berry calls "settler societies" (2018, 27) and which are largely based on immigration. Here, diversity is an instrument of governing postcolonial immigration (Bosma et al. 2012; Doytcheva 2021). In recent decades, it has contributed to the emergence of multicultural spaces that are the subject of public policies (Fossum et al. 2020). Diversity is central to the governance of integration and multiculturalism (Rea et al. 2018). In France, it is used to address the issue of the integration of North African and sub-Saharan populations and more broadly racialized groups such as the Roma (Doytcheva 2021). In England, it influenced policies around the massive influx of people from the South, particularly in the context of the 1990s marked by political crises in certain African and West Asian countries (Barkawi & Brighton 2013; Thandi 2012; Karatani 2003; Joppke 1999). The

situation is roughly similar in Germany, where the question arises of the integration of populations originating from the former territories of the Germanic Empire (Layne 2022; Joppke 1999).

Contrary to Western societies – for the most part industrialized and where the question of diversity often appears in connection with the racial problem – the question arises in the African context mainly in terms of precolonial and (post)colonial culture (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Mhlanga 2013). Governing diversity in many postcolonial African states amounts to governing a political community in its dual relationship to the precolonial and (post)colonial past. In Namibia, for example, governing diversity means on the one hand governing the German-speaking culture and on the other hand governing a dozen ethnolinguistic communities with pre-colonial roots. The situation is roughly similar in South Africa and Tanzania where there is a cohabitation of German-speaking, English-speaking and Zulu-speaking cultures. In Cameroon, governing diversity means governing, on the one hand, the Francophone/Anglophone cleavage inherited from the double French and British colonization, and on the other hand, building consensus between more than 230 ethnolinguistic groups whose establishment precedes the colonial expansion (Vubo, 2006).

Understanding diversity in terms of device involves discursive and extra-discursive elements (Foucault 1977). Diversity appears not only as language (Ahmed 2007) but also as production including non-language elements (Milena 2021). Diversity is then considered as a "system of relations" (Foucault 1977), that means a heterogeneous set of discursive and non-discursive elements[5]. In the Cameroonian context, this refers both to the sloganization of "diversity" through communication campaigns, to the legalization of diversity or to the establishment of a diversity observatory.

Rooted in state discourse analysis, this research also explores the theoretical issue of the production and circulation of discourses (of diversity) in the public space (Auboussier et al. 2023), and therefore, the devices that ensure its social mediation. One of the strategies for circulating the discourse of diversity seems to be sloganization. In 2004, the European Union made "United in diversity" its motto. This political choice, which aims to bring together around a common ideal the 27 countries of the union, has a communication advantage: to facilitate media coverage and the circulation of expression for the construction of an intercultural European public space (Dacheux 2001). A similar observation can be made in Cameroon.

THE "ANGLOPHONE CRISIS": CULTURAL DIVERSITY AS AN OPERATOR FOR NEUTRALIZING CONFLICT

THE "ANGLOPHONE CRISIS"

In the history of societies, we often observe great moments of political upheaval, historical periods of great social transformations. These moments of profound rupture are accompanied, on the discursive level, by the renewal of the political lexicon. This bears witness to the social changes taking place. Michel Foucault speaks of "discourse events" (1994: 706) to

qualify these moments of rupture in the socio-discursive trajectory of a society. In Cameroon, the ''Anglophone crisis'' marks a turning point in political and social discourse. At the same time, it is the event that gives the notion of cultural diversity and the discourse that accompanies it a strategic function in the resolution of the crisis.

The ''Anglophone crisis'', as described by the media, is initially (October 2016) the expression of a historical malaise experienced by English-speaking teachers and lawyers in the exercise of their profession daily – they mainly talk about the Francophonization of the English school and judicial systems (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 1997). Badly managed by the state (repression, arrest, torture, humiliation, etc.), the demonstrations organized by the latters gave way to an armed secessionist movement (Pommerolle & Heungoup, 2017; Bouopda, 2018). The "Anglophone crisis" is an armed conflict between Anglophone secessionist forces and the Cameroonian army which has already caused, according to NGOs, nearly 6,000 deaths and hundreds of internally and externally displaced people, mainly refugees in Nigeria (Ketzmerick, 2022; Tatchim, 2023). The "Anglophone crisis" is the culmination of a political and discursive struggle led by part of the Anglophone elite since the reunification of the former English and French Cameroons in October 1961 (Tatchim, 2020, 2021, 2023). It also results in street demonstrations and protests. Every Monday, for example, has been declared a ghost town in the English-speaking regions for 8 years. Through the placards, the demonstrators denounce the political, economic, cultural and linguistic marginalization of English-speaking Cameroonians. They define themselves as second-class citizens.

FIGURE 2. Street demonstrations. Screenshot of the socio-digital networks of separatist leaders, by the author, 2023.

The ''Anglophone crisis'' is the manifestation of a "historical malaise" experienced by English-speaking Cameroonians in cohabitation with French speakers (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 1997; Konings & Nyamnjoh, 2003; Ngoh, 1999). In their speeches[6], the English-speaking separatists denounce the Francophonization of central power, the monopolization of collective resources by the latter, the moral and economic corruption inherited from the French colonizer, the Francophonization of English-speaking educational and judicial systems, among others (Tatchim, 2020, 2023). In terms of the production of political discourse, the "Anglophone crisis" has given the notion of diversity a "formular destiny", (Tatchim, 2023; Auboussier et al.

2023) that is to say an expression which functions as a discursive operator for neutralizing conflicts (Krieg-Planque 2010).There are several modes of circulation of the notion and the discourse it structures in the public space: the direct discourse of the elite in power (of the press interview type), sloganization (which is a government speech delegated to youth as we will see below) and the implementation of diversity, that means the adoption of new managerial practices governed by the issue of cultural and linguistic diversity.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY AS A NATIONAL ASSET TO BE PROTECTED

After the outbreak of the ''Anglophone crisis'', there was an intensification of the media speaking out by public authorities, which allowed the dissemination of the discourse of diversity throughout the national territory. Faced with the secessionist discourse which denounces the policy of colonization of English-speaking Cameroon by the French-speaking part, the government develops the argument that cultural diversity constitutes the identity of Cameroon. It is built as a wealth, a common heritage to be protected and promoted by all Cameroonians. At the Ministry of Culture, the mission is clearly to work "in the direction of the conservation of the cultural diversity of Cameroon", indicates the director of cultural heritage[7]. The authorities present diversity as a means of building peace and national unity. In the press, state personnel speak as follows:

> Our homeland is built on the foundations of its cultural diversity. This cultural diversity has its roots in a glorious past, the one made, built by our ancestors and who bequeathed to us a tangible and intangible cultural heritage[8].
> Our cultural diversity is a wealth. I ask all the populations of the department who have communicated with those of the other departments and regions of our country to always keep in mind that Cameroon must remain united, and it is in its unity that it keeps its strength[9].
> Antoine de Saint Exupéry said "the difference enriches rather". This is why we must be proud of the contribution of each other for a better construction of society[10].

We note through this sample a heterogeneity of enunciators and places of enunciation within the state apparatus. The first statement is that of the Minister of Culture. The second is that of a civil administrator. The last statement is made by an official of the National Education – national education precisely where, "at this moment, the teaching of cultural and linguistic diversity to our youth is the priority of priorities", explains the National Inspector of Arts, Languages and National Cultures at the Ministry of Secondary Education[11]. Indeed, with the Anglophone crisis, the notion of diversity spread within the State apparatus and made it possible to observe a phenomenon of recovery going as far as the local representations of the administration (prefects, deputy prefects, heads of districts, mayors).

It should be noted that in its discursive strategy which proceeds by neutralizing the colonial heritage and the ethnic identity bipolarity of the State (Anglophone-Francophone), the public authorities almost never use the terms "Anglophone" and "Francophone", or any other

expression that can highlight the cultural and linguistic difference between the English-speaking and French-speaking regions. Government rhetoric on the crisis favors the notion of "diversity" or "cultural diversity" which appears to be neutral and conciliatory (Auboussier & al., 2023). In addition to traditional media, it circulates through other types of media and forms of discourse.

THE SLOGANIZATION OF "DIVERSITY"

Another mode of circulation of discourse (of diversity) in the context of the ''Anglophone crisis'' is sloganization – a process that Maurice Tournier (1985) defines as "the set of moments when discourse turns back on itself". This is organized around a slogan, explicit or not, which serves to mobilize people through its ability to touch affect (Tournier, 1985). The sloganization, associated with the national holiday and the civil and military parade, in a situation of war as it is the case in English-speaking Cameroon, gives the speech a propagandist character. It enriches state communication with epideictic political speech (Nicolas 2009).

Indeed, with sloganization, the discourse of diversity is a particularly strategic discourse. It remains the discourse of power, but the enunciation is here delegated to Cameroonian youth, particularly within the framework of the civil and military parade which marks the national and youth holidays, respectively on May 20 and February 11. In addition to patriotic songs magnifying Cameroonian cultural and linguistic pluralism, primary school children, young people in secondary and higher education carry different messages on placards in the middle of which the syntagm "diversity" figures prominently. These speeches and slogans are produced by the Ministry of Youth and Civic Education, in charge of organizing the civil parade. The speech shows the sloganization of the formular and its co-referents as shown in the following images:

FIGURE 3. Schoolchildren marching as part of Cameroon's National Day, May 20, 2017, in Yaoundé (Screenshot of the website of the Presidency of the Republic, by the author, 2023).

This first image shows a banner that reads "*Cameroon is one and indivisible, proud of its cultural diversity*". The banner is worn by schoolchildren as part of the civil parade (May 20, 2017). The event takes place at Boulevard du 20 mai, in Yaoundé, and is chaired by the Head of State. There are also in the stands all the members of the government, the diplomatic corps accredited in the capital and many other personalities. This parade is the very first after the outbreak of the ''Anglophone crisis'' in October 2016.

The sloganization of "diversity" continued in the following years as shown in the following image taken from the sky of Yaoundé. It is a large banner crossing the Boulevard du 20 mai and on which we can read: "*Our living together in diversity, our identity, our wealth*". It is a support produced as part of the national holiday, edition of 2018. The banner overlooks the Boulevard du 20 mai. It welcomes official and non-official spectators in the sky. It is mainly aimed at young parties from all the districts of the capital to take part in the patriotic event. This is the second civil and military parade since the outbreak of the ''Anglophone crisis''.

FIGURE 4. Banner in the sky of Yaoundé, May 20 comic strip, as part of the civil and military parade, May 2018. Screenshot, report on national television, by the author, 2018.

The discursive strategy of the State within the framework of the instrumentalization of the national holiday and the civil and military parade, also shows a sloganization of the co-referents of "diversity". Thus, and as can be seen in the following image, the notion of "multiculturalism" has the same functioning as "diversity". It is sloganized. It is inscribed on a banner which reads: "*Youth, Multiculturalism, Peace and National Unity*". The banner is carried by students from the University of Dschang, in West Cameroon, as part of the civil parade on May 20, 2018.

FIGURE 5. Civil parade, students of the University of Dschang, National Day, May 20, 2018. Screenshot of the University of Dschang website, by the author, 2018.

Several observations can be made regarding these different images. First, the state seizes the national holiday as a moment of political communication on cultural diversity and links it to the Anglophone secessionist crisis. The government instrumentalizes the civil parade and particularly school youth for its crisis communication. Public authorities elaborate a discourse that euphemizing the Anglophone/Francophone bipolarity and delegates the enunciation to very young schoolchildren – very probably unaware of the historical stakes of the political struggles at work.

From the point of view of the discourse itself, we note in substance as in form, a rapprochement between "diversity" and "indivisibility" of Cameroon, between "diversity" and "living together". More generally, we note other syntagmatic constructions such as "bilingualism, peace and national unity", "unity in diversity", "multiculturalism for peace" which reflect the competing trajectories of formulations. The sloganization of "multiculturalism" thus constructs the same relationship between cultural pluralism, peace, and national unity. Through sloganization, words are at the center of resolving the "Anglophone crisis". "Diversity" is the lexical and semantic core of a network of discourses that euphemize historical tensions and the bi-cultural state recalled by the Anglophone secessionist war. The notion of diversity and the discourse that accompanies it criss-cross the national territory because the civil and military parade takes place simultaneously in all the capitals of regions, departments, boroughs, and districts and is chaired by the leaders of each of these administrative units. There is an injunction to diversity, or, more precisely, a discursive strategy of delegating the discourse on diversity and national unity to young people. The approach shows a self-injunction of youth to cultural diversity (Tatchim, 2020; 2023).

IMPLEMENTING CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

In his definition of the concept of device, Michel Foucault (1977) shows the articulation of heterogeneous elements including the discursive and the non-discursive. In Cameroon, in fact, the Anglophone crisis has shown, beyond speeches, the inclusion of diversity in the agenda

of government action. With the "Anglophone crisis", the issue of ethno-identity pluralism has become very clearly institutionalized. The State is developing new management practices integrating cultural and linguistic diversity with the aim of responding concretely to Anglophone regions claims. The end of the 2010s was characterized by the establishment of a set of politico-legal and discursive systems. Diversity as governmentality of the "Anglophone crisis" ranges from the creation of a National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism to the adoption of a law on the promotion of official languages (English and French), passing, among others, by setting up a kind of "cultural and linguistic diversity label" for public administrations and companies.

THE BILINGUALISM AND MULTICULTURALISM COMMISSION OR THE NATIONAL DIVERSITY OBSERVATORY

Only a few months after the outbreak of the "Anglophone crisis", the government set up a national commission for the promotion of bilingualism and multiculturalism which functions as an observatory of cultural and linguistic diversity. The Vice-President of the Commission explained to us in the context of our investigations that the institution makes evaluation

> On the equal use of French and English in communication and daily work in the administrations. We already have a few observations and proposals. So, our report will go to the Head of State this week[12].

The Commission was created by presidential decree in January 2017 when the "Anglophone crisis" was clearly turning into an armed confrontation between secessionist and government forces. Chaired by Peter Mafany Musonge, former Prime Minister and native of English-speaking Cameroon, the Commission's mandate is "*to work to promote bilingualism, multiculturalism in Cameroon, with a view to maintaining peace, consolidating national unity […] and living together*" (art 3 paragraph 1). As of 2018 – and in order to strengthen coexistence between Anglophones and Francophones, and more broadly, between all ethno-regional communities – the Commission has provided citizens with a toll-free number (1518) so that they can denounce any act of discrimination of an ethno-identity nature, in particular. The Commission thus appears as a "diversity observatory", or a "diversity barometer" (Guerfel-Henda and Broussillon, 2011) through its work of evaluating diversity in companies and public institutions.

In this same perspective, the Commission is working on the establishment of a *National Multiculturalism Day*. On February 26, 2021, it launched the first activities of this Day at the headquarters of the institution in Yaoundé. On this occasion, one can read on its website, "*all, including the staff, wore traditional outfits highlighting the cultural diversity of Cameroon*"[13]. The Commission criss-crosses the regions, organizes meetings with media actors, administrative, religious, and traditional authorities, youth groups, women's associations, in order to "*discuss the causes, consequences and means of combating hate speech and xenophobia in Cameroon*", it says[14]. These visits to the field allow the Commission to ensure the effectiveness of bilingualism (French and English) and diversity within organizations, as it was the case within the electricity distribution company, ENEO Cameroon, on November 03,

2021, in Douala – return visit, indicates the Commission's website[15], as part of the evaluation of the practice of bilingualism in companies. The initiative thus makes it possible to issue a sort of diversity label to "good companies".

<div align="center">LAWS TO ENSURE THE EQUAL USE OF ENGLISH AND FRENCH</div>

The implementation of diversity, since the outbreak of the "Anglophone crisis", is also reflected in the adoption by Parliament of Law n° 2019/19 of December 24, 2019, promoting the official languages (English and French). In its article 5, paragraph 1, it is indicated that the law

> "aims to ensure the equality of the use of English and French in the administrations and public bodies, and to encourage Cameroonian citizens to express themselves in English and French". Specifically, the law "guarantees the right of every citizen to exchange freely with the public administration, and to benefit from the services that he requires from it in the language of his choice" (article 5, paragraph 2).

For the President of the Bilingualism Commission, responsible for monitoring the application of the said law, his interest is that it "*enshrines the principle of equality in the use of the two official languages*"[16]. It must be said that the "Anglophone crisis" also arises from the feeling among English-speaking Cameroonians of being treated, linguistically for example, as second-class citizens. Because in public administrations, French is the most spoken language. In the capital Yaoundé, headquarters of the institutions, English speakers are most often forced to express themselves in French, which they have always experienced as a form of injustice.

This situation of discrimination is also observable in the field of justice where Anglophones denounce the Francophonization of the judicial system inherited from Great Britain: *The Common Law*. It is in response to this denunciation, clearly formulated since the 1990s (Konings, 1996; Konings & Nyamnjoh, 2003) and by English-speaking lawyers in 2016, that the government has made "*English and French (languages) used interchangeably before ordinary and special law courts*" (see art. 26, paragraph 1, of the law promoting official languages). The second paragraph specifies that "*court decisions are rendered in one or the other official language, according to the language of preference of the litigant*". It should be noted that these measures are direct responses to the denunciations of English-speaking lawyers concerning the inability of certain magistrates to render justice in English in the courts of English-speaking Cameroon. These denunciations, among others, were at the root of the "Anglophone crisis" in 2016.

Other policies aimed at promoting cultural and linguistic diversity as a response to the "Anglophone crisis" have been taken by the authorities. We will content ourselves here with listing a few of them: strengthening the network of bilingual high schools (English-French); the overhaul of school programs in order to better train young people in "bilingualism and multiculturalism", in the "consolidation of national unity", in "the promotion of living together and national solidarity"[17]; the granting of a special status to the English-speaking regions – a status of quasi-autonomy, necessary for the preservation of their cultural and linguistic identity.

As we can clearly see, the set of normative measures taken by the State accounts for the articulation of a heterogeneous set of elements, both linguistic and extralinguistic.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This research has attempted to respond to the issue of cultural diversity as governmentality of (post)colonial ethno-identity conflict in the State in Cameroon. We have shown the challenges of diversity, particularly in terms of neutralizing the English-French divide and the euphemization of the British colonial heritage in the English-speaking regions. The State has put in place a communication strategy that mobilizes a set of socio-technical devices to disseminate its discourse in the social body. The discourse on diversity circulates through different platforms: mainstream media, banners, signs, digital platforms, etc. In all the statements, the notion of diversity is very clearly identifiable. It is accompanied in its socio-discursive trajectory by co-references such as "multiculturalism", "bilingualism and national unity", etc.

What should also be noted is the fact that the discourse of the State faces, as a hegemonic production, the Anglophone dissident discourse which, despite the strategies of governmental neutralization, finds the means to exist, notably through alternative media or digital social networks. It is, moreover, this English-speaking dissident discourse that has succeeded in politically formulating the "Anglophone malaise", in transforming it into a public problem, thus calling for public policy. He imposed in the political debate the question of the bicultural and bilingual national identity, taboo since the "decolonization" and the Reunification of the former British and French Cameroons.

This "Anglophone discourse", like the "Anglophone crisis" itself, shows the limits of government discourse on the issue of the peaceful coexistence of cultures. As in other socio-political contexts, the state in Cameroon sinks into a romantic vision of diversity (Doytcheva 2021; Pavlenko 2018). This is imagined as a miracle solution to the crisis of integration of the English-speaking minority into the nation-state under construction. The state narrative on diversity implicitly participates in, and at the same time betrays, a kind of Francophono-centrism, i.e., the fact of considering the French language and Francophone culture as national. The state must decolonize its approach to diversity and its relationship with the periphery, especially the English-speaking regions. We note that contrary to the diversity or racial inequality that can be perceived, the "Anglophone malaise" continues to be denied by the power and a part of Cameroonians for the most part of French-speaking culture. Opponents of the "Anglophone cause" place Anglophone demands in the social and economic register and not in ethnicity. They defend the idea that the difficulties experienced by English speakers are those experienced daily by the entire Cameroonian people.

This research also shows that the issue of diversity arises in Cameroon less in terms of race, sexual orientation, gender, immigration, social class, or age – categories particularly mobilized in studies of diversity in the West. Here, as in much of Africa, the notion of diversity refers to precolonial and (post)colonial ethnicity. In Cameroon, this is appreciated in terms of French-speaking and English-speaking culture. We observe, however, in the context of the

English-speaking secessionist war, to arise according to an intersectional analysis, the (post)colonial question and that of gender, that is to say on the one hand the relations of domination of Francophones over Anglophones minority, and on the other hand, the abuse and exploitation, particularly sexual, of which are victims of English-speaking women and girls displaced by war and in situations of internal and external migration. Because beyond the thousands of deaths, the "Anglophone crisis" has made hundreds of thousands of refugees as far as Nigeria.

We thus think that beyond the articulation of the precolonial and the (post)colonial, understanding the question of diversity in relation to gender, social class, and intra-African immigration, among others, presents itself as a challenge for both public policy and academics. It constitutes a challenge, as well as a research perspective to be developed in French-speaking Africa in particular. This involves the development of innovative survey concepts and methods. Critical works on diversity are little developed in French-speaking Africa. By following the perspective of critical diversity theory (Zanoni and al. 2010), this article also contributes to making this theoretical field known in a cultural and geographical area that is not very open to the international scene on these issues. It invites the development of a critical reflection on the policies of diversity.

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[1] We will define and characterize the "Anglophone crisis" from the contextualization section below. On diversity as governmentality, read Milena Doytcheva, "Diversity as Immigration Governmentality: Insights from France", Social Sciences, n°10(7): 237, 2021. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10070237, consulted in December 2022.

[2] President Paul Biya, 91 years old, has been in power for 42 years.

[3] Structure created by presidential decree in January 2017 and whose mission is to provide responses to the Anglophone crisis and "promote living together" in the context of the rise of ethnicist discourse. Its "main objective [can we read in the decree], is "to maintain peace, consolidate national unity, strengthen the will and the daily practice of living together".

[4] Interviews with prefects and sub-divisional officers mainly take place within the framework of the national holiday (May 20) and that of Youth (every February 11) which take place throughout the national territory.

[5] See for example the thematic file of the Journal *Mots. The languages of politics*, which deals with this problem. https://www.cairn.info/revue-mots-2023-1.htm. Read this article in particular: Auboussier, J., Doytcheva, M., Seurrat, A. & Tatchim, N. (2023). La diversité en discours : contextes, formes et dispositifs. *Mots. Les langages du politique*, 131, 9-26. https://doi.org/10.4000/mots.30824

[6] Here are the links to online secessionist media: https://www.abcambatv.com; YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/@ABCAmbaTV/videos, consulted in march 2024.

[7] Interview conducted in Yaoundé on October 18, 2017.

[8] Narcisse Mouélé Kombi, Minister of Arts and Culture, interview given to the 8:30 p.m. newspaper on state television, CRTV, April 20, 2018, edition.

[9] Antoinette Zongo, prefect of the Koung-khi department, interview given to the 8 p.m. newspaper, Equinoxe Television, edition of May 20, 2018.

[10] Adélaïde Mvondo, principal of Akwa high school (public high school, Douala), interview given to the 8 p.m. newspaper of Equinoxe TV, November 15, 2018, edition.

[11] Interview conducted in Yaoundé, October 23, 2017.

[12] Interview conducted on November 20, 2017, in Yaoundé.

[13] https://www.cnpbm.cm/fr/actualites/journee-du-multiculturalisme-a-la-cnpbm, consulted in December 2022. See its website: https://www.cnpbm.cm/fr/actualites/une-delegation-de-la-cnpbm-est-en-mission-dans-la-region-du-centre-contre-les-discours -hatred-and-xenophobia, consulted in December 2023.

[14] See its website: https://www.cnpbm.cm/fr/actualites/une-delegation-de-la-cnpbm-est-en-mission-dans-la-region-du-centre-contre-les-discours -hatred-and-xenophobia, consulted in December 2023.

[15] Ibid. https://www.cnpbm.cm/fr/actualites/le-secteur-prive-invite-a-promouvoir-le-bilinguisme, consulted in December 2022.

[16] See its editorial in the Journal de la Commission, *Le Compatriote*, n°004 January-February-March 2020, p. 6.

[17] See Circular n°002/CAB/PM of November 23, 2017, Principles governing the book, textbook and other teaching materials sector in Cameroon.