REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY)	2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)
04-29-2021	Master of Military Studies (MMS) thesis		AY 2019-2020

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE	5a. CONTRACT NUMBER
Mishandling Strategic Communication : The Anglophone Crisis In Cameroon	N/A
	5b. GRANT NUMBER
	N/A
	5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER
	N/A

6. AUTHOR(S)	5d. PROJECT NUMBER
Koumnde Mbaga, Guy Olivier Lt-col, IMS/Cameroon, Air Force	N/A
	5e. TASK NUMBER
	N/A
	5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER
	N/A

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)	8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
USMC Command and Staff College Marine Corps University 2076 South Street Quantico, VA 22134-5068	N/A

9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)	10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)
N/A	
	11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)
	N/A

12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for public release, distribution unlimited.

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT
This paper provide an understanding of the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon through the lens of strategic communication. Through the use of strategic communication in its corporate and governmental meanings, in addition to the framing theory, the research emphasizes the importance of strategic communication, and how it contributed to generate the problem between Anglophones and the government, as well as its contribution to the pursuit of violence.

15. SUBJECT TERMS
Strategic communication; disinformation; framing

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE			USMC Command and Staff College
Unclass	Unclass	Unclass	UU	27	19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (Include area code) (703) 784-3330 (Admin Office)

United States Marine Corps
Command and Staff College
Marine Corps University
2076 South Street
Marine Corps Combat Development Command
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068

MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

MISHANDLING STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION:
THE ANGLOPHONE CRISIS IN CAMEROON

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

LtCol GUY OLIVIER KOUMNDE MBAGA/Cameroon

AY 2020-21

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Date: 4/15/21

Executive Summary

Title: Mishandling Strategic Communication: The Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon

Author: Ltcol Guy Olivier Koumnde Mbaga, International Military Student/Cameroon

Thesis: Ineffective strategic communication is the core of the Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon.

Discussion: The majority of scholars who write about the conflict in Cameroon have looked to politics, society, or culture as a reason for its intensity and continuation. This paper gives a different answer by looking at the strategic communication on both sides and analyzing its impact on the crisis. The research demonstrates that the Anglophone problem in Cameroon has nothing to do with the willingness of the government to oppress the English-speaking people, and it has nothing to do with the desire of the Francophone majority to marginalize the Anglophone minority. Furthermore, it is not the culture that impedes peaceful relations among Cameroonian ethnicities. This paper states that the problem has been created by strategic communication between the Anglophone and Francophone parties.

Conclusion: Strategic communication is used to achieve specific goals. The Anglophone crisis in Cameroon demonstrates a case of misunderstandings that has resulted in conflict.

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In the memory of my father…

An anonymous official who expressed the willingness to remain such said, "There is an Anglophone crisis in Cameroon, but no Anglophone problem."[1] The Anglophone crisis is the armed conflict waged between Cameroon's Government and a group of Anglophone people in that country. However, there is not an Anglophone problem in terms of identity, marginalization, stigmatization, or assimilation. The source added that all minorities and ethnicities in Cameroon could claim autonomy according to their history, language, or beliefs[2]. The anonymous official maintained that the problems facing Anglophone people are the same for all other Cameroonians: misery, poverty, and bribery[3]. An English-speaking person from Buea has neither more, nor less issues in his life than a Bassa, Fulbe, Bamum, Bamileke, Eton, Ewondo…all these latter are Francophone people. The essence of his speech is that, instead of trying to divide the country in a desperate manner, all Cameroonians should gather and seek the ways to fight the real problems: misery, poverty, and bribery. For instance, the Anglophone diaspora could use its relations on the international scene to effectively implement different projects in Anglophone regions. If the intent is to help Anglophone populations, and not to gain power for individual interests, they may redirect all this wasted energy to fight bribery.

Prosperity keeps away division. Instead of wasting so much energy and resources on a fight that is causing desperation and increasing poverty in the country, the government should probably start to fight corruption radically. It is a fact that the majority of Anglophone people are against violence and aspire to peace. However, the difficulties of daily life with an increasingly narrowed hope in the future explain, somehow and somewhere, the tacit sympathy that some of them grant to separatists. A large majority of Anglophone people want to remain inside Cameroon. There is no doubt in my mind that the enemy of Cameroon's overall population,

including Anglophone people, is first bribery. I'm also convinced that the diaspora in general, and the Anglophone one in particular, will be happy to help and participate in a strong, unified Cameroon, where children will have the desire to remain and not to leave. Therefore, my firm opinion is that the Anglophone problem, or Anglophone crisis, is in all aspects a matter of communication between the federal government and Anglophone political leaders. On both sides, there are a lot of persons with good intentions for Cameroon's people in general, but oddly enough they have not been able to merge their dreams. Having grown up in Cameroon, in both Anglophone and Francophone regions, still having a lot of friends from all these regions, I can certify without any doubt that there is no problem between Anglophone and Francophone people. They are all facing the same difficulties, including (but not limited to) stigmatization depending on ethnicity (for all Cameroonians), corruption in public administrations, corruption in daily life, poverty, and harassment.

The best way to fight regional nationalism[4] is the establishment of prosperity. Regional nationalism is a threat for all countries, especially for poor ones. Cameroon might certainly disintegrate if each of its 272 ethnicities ask for independence. When the European Union for instance is trying to create one entity in order to enter the superpower circle, it would be foolish to tend towards Nano-states in Africa.

Introduction

Despite issues of poverty, unemployment, and bribery, the Anglophone crisis has emerged as one of the most important issues in Cameroon, largely because it resurrects the question of the state's unity. The ongoing struggle between the government and the separatists can be scrutinized through the lens of strategic communication. Strategic communication, as used in this paper, refers to the deliberate conveyance of a message through the most suitable media[5] to a designated audience at the appropriate time to contribute to and achieve a desired long-term effect.[6] Ineffective strategic communication is the core of the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon.

There are many actors that have had or still have, in one way or another, an influence on the current events in Cameroon's Anglophone crisis. On the domestic scene one can mention the clergy, in particular Cardinal Christian Tumi[7], archbishop emeritus of Douala, now retired, who was kidnapped by separatists.[8] The clergy pleads for the peace and dialogue between Cameroonians.[9] Political parties and civil society are also involved in the Anglophone crisis. Among the actors on the international scene, there are the former colonial powers, France and Britain, but also the United States, the United Nations, and of course Nigeria. All these actors, in one way or another, have or have had a certain influence on the Anglophone crisis. However, the present paper will focus essentially on the two main stakeholders in the conflict: Cameroon's government and Anglophone separatists.

The first part of this paper presents a literature review of strategic communication. Next, events in Cameroon are analyzed through three types of strategic communication: strategic communication used in its corporate sense, strategic communication in its governmental

understanding, and the framing theory. The fourth part of this paper provides background to the conflict. This is followed by an analysis of the strategic culture of the crisis.

Literature Review

Strategic communication can be examined with a corporate or governmental perspective. In the case of the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon, all these perspectives have been used, as will be shown further in this paper.

Corporate Strategic Communication

In the corporate context, strategic communication is depicted as the need to give the best image of the company.[10] Some scholars contend that viewing strategic communication in the corporate sense is not the most effective approach. Brooks explains that the need to be appreciated is not a strong basis for communication.[11] She argues that the role of the government is not to seek followers; instead, governments must aim for a "shallow *liking*" that generates confidence and respect.[12] Brooks also argues that a government is not a corporation. She says that the government does not exist to sell a product or maximize profits, and its strategic communication should act accordingly. She maintains that by importing the corporate term in government, it creates a lot of confusion "leading to inappropriate assumptions."[13]

Governmental Strategic Communication

Governments, unlike corporates, cannot base their strategic communication in the sole willingness to please. According to Brooks, one should understand the governmental strategic communication in the following manner:

In the government sense, strategic communication refers to the engagement of

key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of (government) interests, policies, and objectives through the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all instruments of national power.[14]

Rather than approaching strategic communication in a corporate sense, Brooks describes it as best used in a governmental capacity. In her analysis of the U.S. Government, she says it should be focused on "efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of United States Government interests, policies, and objectives."[15] She adds that these conditions should be achieved or be preserved "through the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all instruments of national power."[16] Mason agrees with this understanding, since he declares that strategic communication is about dealing with issues that may threaten an entity's survival. It has "nothing to do with marketing."[17] As depicted by some Anglophones, their struggle for their independence regards their existence as a people, a nation. This is the view of Nicodemus Fru Awasom[18] who declares that "the English-speaking peoples of the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon have been subjected to unprecedented repression of genocidal dimension;"[19] he also stresses that "the war for the survival of Ambazonia[20] had started."[21] Awasom uses strategic communication to emphasize the extreme jeopardy that Anglophones are facing.

The difficulties in reaching an agreement do not come exclusively from the corporate strategic communication. Creswell explains that strategic communication may not be enough to resolve some problems because the different positions are irreconcilable. He adds that "there are some issues that cannot be overcome just by framing them cleverly" and communicating them

clearly.[22] Creswell highlights the limits of strategic communication, explaining that some

problems need to be effectively identified, and concrete solutions applied. There is a logic to

these methods when applied to the African continent. As one scholar explains, during the years

immediately following independence in Africa, governments focused on stability, or the

appearance of stability. In doing so, problems that could threaten that stability were ignored. As

Francois Evembe argued, "Media will be free when Cameroon is an industrial and democratic

nation. At present, freedom of the press would only cause anarchy."[23] Therefore, strategic

communication was used to emphasize the notion that a free press could harm stability and the

establishment of democracy.

Framing

Framing is a method of strategic communication that refers to how the media or

individuals present information. By highlighting certain aspects of an issue, the media can

encourage or discourage certain interpretations.[24] Thus, this is an exercise of selective influence

and can affect how people view politics or any social event. According to Bateson, framing

refers to "a spatial and temporal bounding of a set of interactive messages."[25] However, some

argue that framing is a "fractured paradigm" that lacks a clear definition.[26] The concept is useful

as a way of understanding tools of influence. Tarrow advocates that media can be used to create

a dynamic in a move toward consensus. This might explain tendencies of governments in Africa,

and even in the world, to create and to fund media with the aim to enhance their strategic

communication. In Cameroon, the government has embraced this strategy in 1963, and has

created Radio-Cameroon while prohibiting private broadcasting.[27]

Background to the Conflict

The decolonization that occurred across Africa after the Second World War led to the independence of Cameroon from France on January 1st, 1960. Following a referendum on whether to join either Cameroon or Nigeria, Southern Cameroon broke from Britain on October 1st, 1961 and joined the federation with Cameroon.

Balance between the government and Anglophone separatists has been difficult to achieve since the early years of the federation, with more than 80% of the country's population speaking French and the rest using English as an official language. On one hand, for various economic, historic, and political reasons, the government wanted to unite the nation. Regarding the economy, it was difficult for the young state to support two systems, which encompassed several institutions. The federal state included four legislative assemblies instead of the normal one; the judiciary had three jurisdictions instead of one; and there were two prime ministers instead of one.[28] Historically, the central Cameroonian government claimed that Southern and French Cameroon were one nation divided following the end of WWI.[29] Therefore, a return to one system-one nation appeared a natural progression. Politically,[30] the multiparty system was, for President Ahidjo, "as a leaven of division and the catalyst of ethnic dissension."[31] A unitary state appeared to be the best way to unite the more than 200 ethnicities in Cameroon.

On the other hand, many Anglophones wanted to safeguard their British heritage and culture. For these people, the federal state remained the best system since they had been denied independence in 1957.[32] In addition, the federal system was the only way to make their voices heard at the same level as the French-speaking population. Some Anglophones pointed out their growing frustration at their marginalization and forced assimilation. Anglophones expressed these frustrations following the end of the federation in 1972, and after the 1996 constitution, which introduced decentralization.

The so-called Anglophone crisis in Cameroon started in the late 2016, when English-speaking teachers and lawyers protested their alleged marginalization by the government. Their grievances were due to the appointment of Francophone judges and the hiring of Francophone teachers in Anglophone regions.[33] With the escalation of unrest, students in Anglophone regions joined protesters, and incidents with security forces reportedly caused several deaths.[34] Some Anglophones started to publicly express their desire for more autonomy, and even independence.[35] The response of the government came from the Head of State in his speech to the nation, when he stated that Cameroon is "one and indivisible."[36] On October 1st, 2017, thousands of Anglophones took to the street to proclaim their independence.[37] The political crisis turned to the armed conflict.

Analysis of Strategic Communication in Cameroon's Current Conflict

Since 1961 and the unification between the two Cameroons (Anglophone and Francophone), strategic communication has played a key role, allowing political leaders on both sides to implement and justify policies. On one side, the government used strategic communication to try to stabilize and unify the country, while the Anglophones used their strategic communication to rally support for separatism. The government depicts Anglophone separatist as terrorists[38], a threat to national unity, and ensures that no negotiation will be held regarding the integrity of Cameroon. In addition, the strategic communication of the government assures the international community that everything is under control in the country.[39] Actually, these strategies minimize the gravity of dissensions amid communities and ignore the willingness of Anglophones to safeguard their identity. This further increases frustration, leading people to extremism and violence.

Separatists use strategic communication to claim that they have control[40] of some areas, and to highlight the alleged atrocities by state security forces. They advocate the existence of the imaginary state of "Ambazonia,"[41] inside the internationally recognized borders and lands of Cameroon.[42] Moreover, in the seeking of external support and to convince the international community of the gravity of the situation, separatist leaders encourage violence[43] finance armed groups[44], and refuse to discuss anything other than independence.[45] On the international scene, they depict the government as dictatorial, mostly through social media and a banned propaganda channel called SCBC.[46] Furthermore, separatists dismiss negotiations if not about their independence. The result is the radicalization of authorities and the fostering of the military option.

Strategic Communication as a Means to Reunification

The years prior to Cameroon's unification were tense in both Francophone and Anglophone areas; there was uncertainty regarding the outcome of struggles for independence. In British Southern Cameroon, at this time a part of Nigeria, there were two political parties: the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP) led by John Ngu Foncha[47] and the Kamerun National Congress (KNC) led by Emmanuel Mbela Endeley.[48] The former asked for secession from Nigeria first before joining French Cameroon, while the latter wanted a plebiscite on reunification with Nigeria or Cameroon.[49] An agreement between the two leaders on October 29, 1959 during the fourth Committee of the United Nations called for a plebiscite in March 1961.[50] To convince voters of their stances, both camps framed their strategic communication in certain ways. To influence the voters in Southern Cameroon, leaders of the KNDP and CPNC (an alliance between the KNC and KPP in 1960) created two newspapers – the *Kamerun Times* and the *Cameroons Champion* – to support their ideas and spread their unification policy.[51] For

instance, the integrationists (who advocated the integration in Nigeria)[52] of CPNC led by

Emmanuel Endeley published in the *Cameroons Champion* that "twenty-five thousand

Cameroonians have fled that territory, but none has fled British Cameroon for French Cameroon

[and] people are killed daily on the streets of Douala and Yaoundé."[53] The goal was to support

the politics of integration that "attached to the question of insecurity and the party's belief that

terrorist threats on the Southern Cameroons were sufficient to woo the electorate to choose union

with Nigeria."[54] Political leaders looked for means to convey their messages.

Strategic communication in general, and especially in the corporate sense requires media

messaging in line with an organization's general communications and marketing strategy.[55] In

the example above, the *Cameroons Champion* served as the propaganda tool for CPNC. The

championing of the Cameroon's cause was widely communicated in urban areas.[56] In spite of the

fact that the KNDP became the biggest political party in the British Cameroons[57] and despite the

lack of support for Nigerian Ibos from the majority of the population, integrationists gained the

requisite number of votes, making the issue of the referendum unsure. Considering the relatively

small difference in the outcome of the 1961 plebiscite[58], one can argue that the strategic

communication of these political parties was crucial in determining the winner.

The corporate type of strategic communication provides an understanding of the

hardening of positions in the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon. Seeking to present the best of the

government policies and ignoring the realities of some Anglophones, the government often

ignored the claims of federalists (the appellation of Anglophones who were pro-federalism). The

government implemented the concept of "living together"[59] as an example of how the two

Cameroons could live as one state.[60] The aim was to prove that Anglophones, as other

communities, are Cameroonians and treated as such. In the same way, President Ahidjo

emphasized the stability of the country, notwithstanding the claims of some Anglophones. For instance, on behalf of integration, on 20 October 1961, Ahidjo reorganized the federal territory into administrative regions including the Anglophone Cameroon, and he appointed a federal Inspector, who was more powerful than the elected prime minister.[61] [62] Anglophones claimed that they could not be a federal state while also existing as an administrative region by decree.[63] A few years later, in 1966, Ahidjo took advantage of dissent among Anglophone leaders and established the single party system in the country (creation of the Cameroon National Union-CNU) on the behalf of unity.[64] In spite of the opposition of some Anglophones, other parties were dissolved. Corporate strategic communication did not consider the rightness of the claim, and it ignored the ability to fulfill suggested policies as well. Instead, it focused on the appearance of peace and stability. This made some Anglophones feel ignored or dismissed.

In many ways the union between French and British Southern Cameroon in 1961was the default choice. During the fourth Committee of the United Nations, the KNDP spoke of "the historical links which existed between the Bamoum sultanate of French Cameroun and the Tikar Chiefdoms of the British Cameroon,"[65] as well as the narrow affinity between the Balong and Mbo Bakossi who had been divided and ended up on either side of British or French Cameroon.[66] It appeared here that the strategic communication of the KNDP stressed the historical events that concurred with its political objectives. Meanwhile less favorable facts were hidden or debunked, a typical byproduct of the corporate character of strategic communication and framing theory. Tthe KNDP mentioned that after WWI, the Bamoun and Tikar[67] peoples were divided between French Cameroon and British Cameroon, along with the Balong and Mbo Bakossi[68] peoples.[69] However, the KNDP deliberately omitted the fact that Ejagham people were divided by the border between Cameroon and Nigeria.[70] This message aimed to push a

consensus on unity of both Cameroons while ignoring the reality of people living in Cameroon with roots in Nigeria. Less favorable facts such as the commitment of Ibos in the development of Southern Cameroon were debunked. The KNDP depicted Ibos as liable for "the seizure of all important jobs and the enslavement of Cameroonians."[71] This frame aimed to reinforce the desire of British Cameroonians to leave Nigeria.

The KNDP also emphasized the hatred of Ibos and their seizure of crucial jobs, as well as the past enslavement of Cameroonians by the Ibos.[72] Thus, the British Cameroonians framed the issue as a need to help the KNDP with an unfriendly Nigeria. The unification of Cameroon was presented as justice to reconcile treatment of Southern Cameroon since WWI. Indeed, Southern Cameroon was hitherto considered in Nigeria as less than Nigeria, even if both colonies were under the British administration. For Francophones, Southern Cameroon was "colonie d'une region d'une colonie."[73] So, they suffered more than French Cameroonians who had the direct support of France, but also more than Nigerians who had the support of Britain. The narrative depicts unification as an answer—something that needed to be done because it was the right thing to do, a demonstration of corporate strategic communication.

Neither French Cameroon nor British Southerners were prepared to unify in 1961.[74] French Cameroonian authorities were worried about federalism.[75] During negotiations, French Cameroonian authorities attempted to focus attention away from their part in seeking federalism so they would not be accountable to it at a later time. [76] Their goal was to reacquire the territory lost following WWI, minus the large British heritage that came along with the area. Each side agreed on a federal system, which provided a veil of equity. The decision attempted to address the concerns of both parties: it was not the confederal system that the KNDP expected, nor was it the centralized system the French Cameroonian authorities suggested; it was a demonstration of

governmental strategic communication. Indeed, because the ultimate goal of the government was to reacquire Southern Cameroon, authorities set conditions that would help to achieve that objective. In their path to regain the Anglophone territory, authorities emphasized the end of colonization to Anglophone populations, changed legislation in French Cameroon, conceded a federation to the Anglophone counterpart with a blocking minority, but did not sign a written agreement during the Foumban conference from 17 to 21 July, 1961.[77] The synchronization of government actions was in line with the communication provided thus far.[78]

One can argue that the way Nigeria was framed to Cameroonians was important in gaining unification. During their campaign for the 1961 plebiscite, the KNDP focused on rejecting Nigeria. According to Johnson R. Willard,[79] the propaganda of KNDP stressed that in Southern Cameroon, "Nigeria and not United Kingdom was the real colonial power in the territory."[80] Moreover, the campaign of KNDP also revealed that a part of financial aid sent by the United Kingdom to Southern Cameroon ended up in Nigeria.[81] Therefore, the grievances of populations of Southern Cameroon against Nigeria were exacerbated, and the reasons fostering the desire to secede from Nigeria grew in the minds of Southern Cameroonians.

The Centralization of Power

After unification, the federation moved progressively toward a unitary state and the centralization of power. Federal authorities convinced both Anglophone and Francophone populations of the benefits of a united party, at times assisted by the dissensions between political leaders.[82] The message conveyed to the Anglophone community was the capacity of the government to achieve its objectives. The government presented the unitary party system as the best choice for all Cameroonians despite the presence of federalists among the Anglophone political leaders.

Some Anglophones saw the integration as denying their British legacy. Efforts made by the government to unify the country and build a single nation were unappreciated by the whole population. To debunk this policy, some Anglophone leaders framed the integration process in its conception and implementation. When in 1984 the official name of the country changed from the United Republic of Cameroon to the Republic of Cameroon the Anglophone people essentially lost their identity and became an indistinguishable part of the former Republic.[83]

The integration ignited a call for the creation of Ambazonia, a vehicle to support the Anglophone identity. In this particular case, Anglophone leaders used a combination of framing and strategic communication in its governmental sense to seek a long-term objective: secession.

The lack of strategic communication in some aspects of political life contributed to the problem between some Anglophones and the government. Because Francophones were used to the centralization of power and Anglophones to the multiparty system with free debates and consensus, misunderstandings on the government's decisions were likely to happen. In 1968, President Ahidjo appointed Honourable Salomon Tandem Muna to replace Honourable Augustine Ngom Jua as prime minister of the federal state, in spite of the disapproval of many Anglophone leaders.[84] Whatever the reasons for this appointment, the lack of communication to prepare and convince the Anglophone community made the decision appear "dictatorial and undemocratic."[85] It appears that synchronization required for good strategic communication in the government sense was not carried out, since the appointment was not made with the endorsement of parliament. The Anglophone crisis was not only a mishandling of strategic communication, but also its plain absence in what people felt was a dictatorial system.

Framing has been used by the national media in Cameroon to help the government in the conveyance of its policy (especially during the shift to the unitary party in 1966 and the

reunification in 1972). The journalist Francois Evembe explains that "the government distrusts and channels the news media."[86] It can be logically inferred that the framing was intensively implemented to advance the government's objectives, but Anglophone leaders have also used this theory to satisfy their policy. Victor Julius Ngoh explains in his book *The Political Evolution of Cameroon, 1884-1961,* how the KNDP used the framing against Ibos' settlement in southern Cameroon, to convince voters during the 1961 referendum.

However, in the era of social media, framing has been progressively replaced by disinformation. In Cameroon, the government used the media to support the development of a united Cameroon and to educate the public about this.[87] During the years following their independence, the first concern of almost all governments in Africa, including Cameroon, was not to give the image of a democratic country, but rather to focus on unity and development. The government applied restrictions on media on behalf of unity and development. According to D.G. Lavroff, "most African leaders regarded the one-party system as the only way to avert anarchy and build national unity."[88] The stability of the whole nation was more important than the freedom of the press.[89] The idea was to neutralize anything that could jeopardize the new institutions, a matter much more important than marketing. The government used journalists and media as tools of the national strategic communication by determining what could be broadcasted or not. For the Ministry of Information officials, editing the news meant "[to] make sure [that] what journalists print or broadcast is true."[90] Many Cameroonians saw this as the government's way of ignoring the difficulties of populations. The government's restrictions employed through the media did not convince many Cameroonians to believe what they read in newspapers, and this mistrust will foster the spread of social media.

Mobilization

A lack of public awareness and the paucity of an effective strategic communication on the part of the government and Anglophone leaders is a part of the misunderstanding between the two parties. These conditions generated a discontent among the Anglophone people and led to mobilization[91]. In 2016, the corporatist claims of Anglophone lawyers and teachers led to violent unrest, following what they considered an inappropriate response of authorities. While protesting against the alleged marginalization of English in the country and in the two Anglophone regions in particular, the response of the government to these specific claims was not immediate. This time enabled students to join protesters while demonstrations started to engage the public, forcing authorities to react with force.[92] The silence regarding the initial claim seems to be the real mishandling of strategic communication, since a peaceful concern was transformed into armed conflict. The strategic communication of the government failed to avoid the current violence, which was certainly not the desired end state. Measures implemented by the government such as the creation of the National Commission for Bilingualism and Multiculturalism, the creation of a Common Law Section at the Supreme Court, the recruitment of 1,000 bilingual teachers, the recruitment of Anglophone magistrates, and the reestablishment of the internet after 92 days of interruption were too late for Anglophone leaders.[93]

Unlike the government, the strategic communication of separatists succeeded in turning the corporatist claims into a political matter. By the means of framing, and sometimes disinformation, they succeeded in framing the so-called Anglophone crisis into an international concern. By using corporate strategic communication, they tried (and almost succeeded) to frame the country in the worst image possible. This negative propaganda changed the original conflict. In exaggerating the supposed crimes in the conflict, both camps began to radicalize. The struggle

of strategic communication here has certainly turned into an advantage for the Anglophone separatists.

Radicalization decreased the possibility of dialogue. Indeed, separatists put more importance at seeking international support in establishing communication with the government. For instance, separatist leaders dismissed the major dialogue called by the government on 10 September 2019,[94] arguing about the pointlessness of the meeting. Their renouncement to participate in any dialogue emphasized their lack of willingness to achieve a peaceful solution. Thus, the militarized nature of the conflict increased.

One way in which Anglophone activists mobilized support for their cause was to strategically spread disinformation. Ion Mihai Pacepa and Ronald J. Rychlak define isinformation as false information spread deliberately to deceive[95]. The deliberate nature of the spread delineates the difference between disinformation and misinformation. The broad use of social media has facilitated the spread of disinformation in the world, including Cameroon. According to Julie Owono,[96] "The current conflict in Cameroon [is] fueled by disinformation propaganda inciting hatred."[97] The calls for genocide and revenge, for example, are growing. For example, on the night of 10 to 11 February 2019, in Kumba,[98] several men burned the public hospital, killing at least four people.[99] According to the witnesses and the government, separatists were responsible for the slaughter.[100] However, separatists argued that soldiers were responsible for the attack, pointing to the slow reaction of the firemen.[101] The disinformation became a reason for the increased intensity of the conflict.

Disinformation is spread by secessionists in order to gain international support. The strategic communication of separatists seeks to relay the idea that there are organized Ambazonian groups with a political agenda, which have control of part of the country.[102]

Through this strategic communication, separatists try to demonstrate that they constitute a legitimate organization, and in doing so they gain support from international actors. If disinformation cannot be classified in this paper as strategic communication, it remains that this strategy enabled secessionists to exist and even to challenge the traditional strategic communication of the government.

Declaration of Ambazonian "Independence"

The secessionist declaration of "independence" on October 1, 2017 marked a point of no return in the negotiations with the government.[103] This declaration also provided extremists among the Anglophones a modicum of victory.[104] Indeed, if not a territory, they gained a wider audience as the world started to monitor events in the Anglophone regions in Cameroon. This decreased the ability of the government to use certain types of communication. Secessionists gained international recognition for their fight. The declaration of independence also hardened the government's stance and made negotiating nearly impossible, as dialogue with the separatists symbolized an admission of weakness on the part of authorities. In the end, the announcement of independence strengthened extremism on both sides and left the parties no other choice than the use of military force, especially after acts of terror against populations and national emblems.[105]

Nigeria's strategic communication regarding the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon

The Nigerian government uses a governmental strategic communication to cope with the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon. Since the beginning of the conflict in 2016, Nigeria has tried not to get sucked into its neighbor's problems. However, some fundamental elements seem to be the core of the Nigerian government's policy regarding the Anglophone crisis. First, the most important for Nigeria seems to be its partnership with Cameroon in the fight against Boko Haram[106], which controls several lands in the north. Being the most affected by the terrorist

group, Nigeria has greatly welcomed the involvement of Cameroon in the battle against Boko Haram. The second point that might influence the decision of Nigerian government is the willingness to establish trust between the two countries, following the Bakassi Peninsula conflict, which ended in 2006[107]. The third concern in Nigeria regarding the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon, and not the least, is the possibility that this conflict emboldens separatist activists of Biafra.[108] The country cannot bear another high-intensity insurgency, in addition to Boko Haram. All put together, the strategic communication of Nigeria tends to support Cameroon's government. The ten Cameroon separatist leaders arrested and detained in Nigeria on January 5, 2018, before being extradited in Cameroon aim to achieve the long-term objectives of the Nigerian government.

The path toward the end of the conflict

The strategic communication of both Cameroon's government and Anglophone separatists should encompass an effective understanding of the roots of the mistrust and seek a long-term stability. According to the findings of this research paper, the use of strategic communication in the corporate sense enabled the two stakeholders to achieve the 1961 unification. Following that achievement, the framing theory has been added to the strategic communication in the corporate sense to hide or to ignore expectations of Anglophone peoples as well as the government's objectives. To establish a long-term trust between the government and Anglophone leaders, a strategic communication in the government sense should be broadly implemented, with the original goals of the 1961 unification in mind. Both Anglophone and Francophone people decided to build one country, with the wellbeing of all in mind. The strategic communication in the government sense may help to gather the desire to safeguard their identity expressed by some

Anglophone people, and the willingness of the government to build a strong, stable, and prosperous Cameroon.

Conclusion

The Anglophone crisis in Cameroon is, in many aspects, the result of strategic communications by both camps, which led to misunderstanding, mistrust, frustration, and finally violence. On the one hand, Anglophone leaders of the KNDP have hidden the real conditions of the unification from their populations. They worked to focus the attention of Anglophone populations on the advantages of unification, choosing to ignore the likely difficulties. That corporate strategy of communication contributed to the victory of pro-unification during the 1961 elections. Because Anglophone populations of Southern Cameroon felt oppressed and frustrated, leaving Nigeria as soon as possible was their ultimate objective, and they agreed to join Cameroon despite little preparation. By the means of strategic communication, the KNDP convinced Southern Cameroon's populations of the necessity to join Cameroon.

On the other hand, the strategic communication of the government has contributed to the establishment of a federation encompassing Anglophone Cameroon, while maintaining the Francophone structure of the state. Moreover, this strategic communication has ignored the frustration and claims of Anglophone populations. The desired end-state of the government was to achieve one state and one nation. A combination of strategic communication in the corporate and governmental senses has permitted the government to pursue its objective of integration of all communities inside a single nation.

The outbreak of violence in 2016 showed the failure of the strategic communication used between the government and Anglophone political leaders. To be effective, strategic communication should accompany concrete actions, instead of trying to support an ideal. The

Anglophone crisis began with strategic communication in the corporate sense, trying to provide a positive image of unification while hiding its difficulties. The end of unrest is likely if strategic communication is directed at solving the root problems of all communities.

As Brooks mentioned, strategic communication is "less about what we have to say than it is about considering what others hear and understand."[109] In other words, both the government and separatists, whatever are their grievances, should pay more attention to what the counterpart has to say; the narrative of a stakeholder is the reflection of what has been understood from the strategic communication of its counterpart. Whatever could be the strangeness of a narrative, it is most often the response to a previous strategic communication.

Authorities and separatists should start a sincere dialogue, with some fundamentals. Basically, the unity of Cameroon is not negotiable, and the Anglophone identity should be considered as such, in the spirit of the unification.

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