



Cameroon: A Land of Disturbing Paradoxes

Kijem Joseph Yuh

ABSTRACT

This article is an attempt to show that Cameroon is experiencing some disturbing paradoxes in the following domains: the Anglophone Problem and Crisis; bilingualism; cabinet meetings; presidential presence in the field; the culture of resignation; intellectualism; natural resources as well as the forces of law and order. There is need for the Cameroonian Government and Cameroonians to cooperate for purposes of overcoming the said disturbing paradoxes for the welfare of life in Cameroon.

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Just like many African countries, Cameroon is experiencing a good number of disturbing paradoxes. This situation is conspicuous in almost all domains of life (political, economic, cultural, scientific, economic, financial etc). It is in this light that worrisome paradoxes appear in the following domains: the Anglophone Problem and Crisis; bilingualism; cabinet meetings; presidential presence in the field; the culture of resignation; intellectualism; natural resources as well as the forces of law and order.

The Anglophone Problem and Crisis have glaringly portrayed Cameroon Government's unwillingness to make good use of some elementary rules in conflict management and resolution. It wrongly and strongly believes that it can handle the said problem and crisis unilaterally.

In this connection, it has taken some absurd steps. For instance, in 2020, it organized a ridiculous national dialogue, a dialogue which never involved its main opponents in and out of Cameroon. Furthermore, it has put the cart before the horse in issues dealing with disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in the English-speaking areas affected by the aforementioned problem and crisis. In other words, it has embarked upon three processes without the end of hostilities in numerous conflict areas of the English-speaking part of Cameroon. Worse still, it is both a party to, and judge in, the said crisis, a judge which has wilfully refused to take the first step in problem solving.¹

¹ William J. Stevenson, *Introduction to Management Science*, 2nd ed., Boston, Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1992, p.9.

Cameroon is a **bilingual country**. Its two official languages are English and French. Thus, all official documents, press releases, legal instruments (decisions, orders, decrees, etc), etc should be published in these languages. A good number of its citizens, especially public authorities, should endeavour to master these two languages. They should speak and understand them as well as produce written materials in them.

Unfortunately, not all Cameroon's official documents, press releases, legal instruments, etc are published in both French and English. The dominant language in government business is French. Most government officials speak and write mostly in French. The Head of State (President Paul Biya) always speaks in French. Furthermore, training in military, paramilitary and police institutions is done mostly in French. Worse still, a good number of English-speaking Cameroonians take delight in speaking mainly in French!

Any rational or reasonable government knows the value or essence of **cabinet meetings**. They are meant to assess and guide government action, to foresee political and other happenings in the light of Raymond Boudon's and François Bourricaud's commendable Principle of Political and Other Projections, to provide a systemic road map for government action, etc.² In responsible political systems, they are held frequently and regularly for the sake of societal welfare. In such systems, their omnipresence is a necessity.

In Cameroon, President Paul Biya's Government does not see the need to hold cabinet meetings frequently and regularly. In his opinion, Cameroon can be managed without laying emphasis on this need. It is in this light that he convenes cabinet meetings once in a while (most often, after intervals of one, two, three or more years). Cameroon has been managed without frequent and regular cabinet meetings for quite a very long time. This type of management can only be rash and haphazard.

The presence of a good leader should be felt in the field in all domains. Such a leader should be present in the field at the physical, moral, psychological, material, pedagogic, political and other levels. He or she should be close to his or her people in times of sorrow and joy. His or her people should feel protected by this

closeness. The said closeness should substantially ease the upholding of human rights as perceived by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.³

Unfortunately for Cameroonians, their president is completely absent from the field. He ludicrously believes that a president can rule his or her country mainly through speeches, presidential orders and decrees, instructions, etc. He strangely believes that he can be represented in almost all great occasions. He does not visit his people (Cameroonians). He handles their problems nonchalantly. Worse still, he mysteriously thinks that he can rule Cameroon through silence!

In any society worth its salt, the **culture of resignation** is taken very seriously. A State authority of dignity or integrity should resign whenever he or she feels that his or her action warrants the need for a resignation. This act portrays a high sense of humility and responsibility. It contributes to the welfare of societal activities.

Conversely, a good number of Cameroonians strangely believe that a State authority – especially a manager of State funds- who resigns is a fool! They irrationally think that he or she does not love his or her family's and friend's welfare. They do not bother much about issues pertaining to the validity or justification of cases of resignation concerning State officials. Worse still, many State authorities are afraid of resigning since the government considers the act of resigning as sabotage or an act of rebellion. These authorities believe that those who resign end up in prison.

Cameroon is a country that is replete with **intellectuals**. They are present in almost all domains of life (health, educational aspects, cultural issues, financial matters, transport, religion, road construction, political issues, research, etc). A good number of them have a good national and international reputation.

This very positive situation is not commensurate with the expected level of development in Cameroon. In other words, Cameroon is not willing to harness the abilities of its numerous intellectuals for purposes of enhancing its developmental process. This unwillingness has prompted many Cameroonians to

William J. Stevenson rightly states that the first step in problem solving is a careful problem definition.

² Raymond Boudon and François Bourricaud, *Dictionnaire Critique de la Sociologie*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2011, p.466

Raymond Boudon and François Bourricaud rightly claim that in life, there is nothing we can do without making projections or forecasts.

³ United Nations Human Rights (Office of the High Commissioner), "Human Rights Education and Training", Available at:

www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/Pages/HREducationTrainingIndex.aspx

Consulted on: 30/4/16

According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, human rights can be upheld only through an informed and continued demand by people for their protection.

leave their country. They are helping other countries to develop in various domains; they are doing so at the expense of the development needs of their own country, a country which has directly and indirectly discarded their services.

Cameroon is one of the few countries in the world that are blessed with great quantities of **natural resources**.⁴ It has mighty quantities of forest resources such as timber. It contains a good amount of minerals in some of its regions. These forest resources and minerals can tremendously contribute to Cameroon's welfare.

Paradoxically, the level of development in Cameroon is a far cry from this reality. In other words, the aforementioned resources are not playing a substantial role in Cameroon's development process. Most of the areas (a good number of them are in the East, South, Littoral and South-West Regions) in which these resources are found have very serious development problems, problems concerning health, education, water and electricity supply, employment, roads, etc. They are amongst the poorest parts of Cameroon.

In any respectable country in the world, the **forces of law and order** play a noble role, a role which enables citizens to feel secure in their private and public activities. Citizens respect members of these forces because they protect their security rights in a dignified manner. These uniformed security men and women are polite to the public and do play an educative and counselling role.

Conversely, in Cameroon, many members of the forces of law and order (gendarmes and police officers) play a very destructive or damaging role. They are violent with the public. They collect bribes from innocent citizens through extortion, etc. In some areas in Cameroon (especially in some conflict-affected spots such as the North-West and South-West Regions), they are considered as scarecrows. When members of the public see them, they are frightened or scared. They run away. They do not feel safe at all! In a nutshell, a good number of Cameroon's uniformed security men and women (gendarmes and police officers) are a disgrace to their corps in particular and Cameroon in general.

Finally, it should be noted that the foregoing discussion is just the tip of the iceberg as far as disturbing

paradoxes are concerned in Cameroon. There are many other disturbing paradoxes. They are found in the following domains: transportation, education, public service, justice, housing and town planning, public contracts, sports, etc. There is need for the Cameroonian Government and Cameroonians to cooperate in various ways (practical and non-practical) in order to seriously handle the said paradoxes.⁵

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⁴ KPMG Global Mining Institute (Cameroon/Country Mining Guide), "Executive Summary"

Available at:

assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/pdf/2014/06/Cameroon-mining-guide.pdf

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KPMG gives an idea of the type of minerals in Cameroon. It states that Cameroon has oil, gas, aluminium, bauxite, cobalt, diamonds, gold and iron ore.

⁵ This handling exercise should be regular and frequent.