UNIVERSITATEA "BABEŞ-BOLYAI" CLUJ-NAPOCA

FACULTATEA DE STUDII EUROPENE

ŞCOALA DOCTORALĂ „PARADIGMA EUROPEANĂ"

CAMEROON : ANALYSIS OF THE FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE CONSOCIATIONAL FAILURE

SUMMARY

Coordonator științific:

Prof. dr. Sergiu Mișcoiu

Absolvent:

Roxana Mădălina Mateș

Cluj-Napoca

2021

Contents

Summary

The thesis illustrates and analyzes the paramount factors which contribute to the consociational failure in Cameroon. In this regard, there was highlighted the idea according to which the lack of consensus regarding the identification itself of these factors represents the first reason which accentuates the absence of cooperation within the state. The first identified factor is reflected by the colonial tensions, which are symbolized by the current anglophone crisis in society. The anglophone minority, feeling marginalized, protests against the dominant position of the francophone majority, claiming the reintroduction of federalism or even secession. The absence of any dialogue in this context is based on the fact that the regime justifies its inflexibility with the purpose of protecting the national unity and integration. The second analyzed factor, which also contributes to the consociational failure, is the one of the ethnic tensions in society. Although the regime has tried to neutralize these tensions through the inclusion of various elites into the structure of power, the ethnic identification increased inasmuch as the integration was achieved based on one's ethnic origin and not on competencies and skills. Moreover, this thesis also highlights the socio-political consequences of the anglophone crisis, which enhanced the dissatisfaction and radicalization of the population. In this context, there are analyzed the demands of the anglophone community and the corruption practices perpetuated by the regime.

Regarding the methodology used, there were taken six interviews with both anglophone and francophone Cameroonian experts in the political field. There was chosen the semi-structured interview inasmuch as it enabled a certain flexibility in the direction of the discussions, which developed according to the initial position of the interviewee. Through the presentation and interpretation of the interviews, there were emphasized the distinct and even opposing positions of the experts regarding the tensions in society and the regime's management of these tensions.

The thesis entails three chapters, which concentrate on the theoretical concepts, on the history of Cameroon and on the analysis of the above-mentioned factors. Thus, within the first chapter, there was tackled the concept of consociationalism, which represents the establishment

of a dialogue among the various elites of a society in order to prevent the development of the dominant position of the majority. The consociational democracy reflects, therefore, the harmonious sharing of power by all the political elites representing the various segments in a plural society. This chapter highlights the idea that the failure of consociationalism in different African states is based on the master and slave paradigm, inculcated in the colonial period and symbolically perpetuated in postcolonialism. Based on the inequalities created, the approach of violence became a vital element, used especially by the marginalized communities, as a form of catharsis. The issue of violence was also analyzed in the thesis as a characteristic of the authoritarian regimes, which may favor the dominant position of the majority to the detriment of the minorities. There was also established a radiography of the authoritarian competitive regimes, which reflect the illusion of democracy, but whose significant root remains authoritarianism. The other characteristics identified and applied in the third chapter are the ones of neopatrimonialism and clientelism.

The second chapter of the thesis illustrates the significant moments in the history of Cameroon, these events being emphasized with the purpose of justifying the failed integration of the anglophone minority into the structure of power, as it had been initially established or promised. Cameroon was, firstly, under the German colonial influence until World War First, when the African territory was unequally divided between France and Great Britain, the last one having received a minor region in the west of the country. The strategy embraced by the French was the assimilation of the local population, while the British approach was the indirect rule. However, both the colonial powers have managed to inculcate at the level of the local population a process of cultural alienation and at present, the differences among the citizens represent constructions of the European imperialism.

After the French side of Cameroon achieved independence in 1960, the citizens from the British territory voted in a 1961 UN organized referendum the union with the already independent Republic of Cameroon. The problem of that referendum was the absence of the independence alternative, which was not considered appropriate at that time in order to prevent the development of microstates in Africa and also because Great Britain did not consider the anglophone regions as developed enough in order to accomplish the necessary conditions for reaching independence. The union of the British Cameroon with the already independent French Cameroon crystallized in the form of a federation, which promised to protect the anglophones' particularity.

The federation established at the Foumban constitutional conference eventually proved to be a false construction. The president of the Republic of Cameroon refused any international involvement in the constitutional debates, having considered that the establishment of a constitution depended only on the Cameroonian elites. As such, the Foumban conference was dominated by the francophone leaders, who ignored the demands and expectations of the anglophones, finally developing a false federalism. The power asymmetry was also reflected in the unilateral choice of the place, the constitution drafting and the general management of the negotiation process. Thus, the anglophone leaders had to negotiate an already written constitution, having been too passive to provide their own constitutional project. In this regard, it can be indubitably emphasized that the negotiation process between the French-speaking and the English-speaking leaders was defined by multiple drawbacks for the anglophone side, which entered into a negotiation with predictable and controlled results.

After the establishment of the structure of the state, the francophone president of the federation, Ahmadou Ahidjo, took more measures through which he diminished the anglophone essence and specificity in the state. For instance, the federal states were provided with only limited powers and their existence had gradually acquired an artificial purpose. Another strategy through which Ahidjo tried to diminish the influence of the anglophone system within the federation was the establishment of a one-party state. This change was embraced by both the anglophone and francophone leaders inasmuch as they needed to maintain their power and influence by any compromise. Encouraged by the passivity of the anglophone leaders, the president organized, in 1972, a referendum whose purpose was the change of the structure of the state. The aim was to consolidate a unitary state, this measure absolutely neglecting the provisions of the 1961 constitution. Article 47 of the federal constitution stated that any proposal which could have affected the unity and integrity of the federation was and had to remain inadmissible.[1] The measure was finally implemented, despite the protests of the English-speaking population and of the irregularities found in the organization of the referendum. The message perceived by the anglophones was that federalism was, from the very beginning, an ephemeral strategy, whose ultimate goal was its own dissolution.

The unitary state represented the period which enhanced the marginalization and exclusion feelings of the anglophone minority in Cameroon. This aspect was accentuated in

---

[1] Constitution of the Federal Republic of Cameroon, available at: https://condor.depaul.edu/mdelance/images/Pdfs/Federal%20Constitution%20of%20Cameroon.pdf, accessed on 18.09.2021.

1984, when president Paul Biya changed the name of the state, from the United Republic of Cameroon to simply the Republic of Cameroon, which was the name of the French Cameroon before the formation of the federation. The change was perceived as a strategy of homogenizing the two distinct colonial identities, by assimilating the anglophone minority.

At the beginning of the 1990's, constrained by the international context, president Biya had to introduce various measures of political liberalization in the country, including the multiparty system. Hence, the anglophone population itself enjoyed the freedom to organize and develop different associations, which had the purpose of protecting the anglophones' rights and interests. Furthermore, there were also formed the first opposition parties in the country, such as the Social Democratic Front. At the same time, the anglophone associations had the goal of making their demands known, both at the national and international level. Nevertheless, the government reacted with indifference to the anglophones' requests of returning to the federal structure of the state, the authorities having sustained that these demands represented a threat for the fragile unity of the country. Therefore, the impact of the anglophone organizations was significantly diminished by the regime, which began to develop the construction of an artificial and negative peace in society. This image was shattered by the beginning of the anglophone crisis, in 2016.

The third chapter of the thesis illustrates the anglophone crisis in Cameroon, analyzed, on the one side, as a cause of a minority's marginalization and exclusion. Through this perspective, there was also emphasized that the anglophone problem had dominated the politics in Cameroon for a long period of time, but the regime constantly ignored its existence. The refusal of the regime to accept this problem determined the impossibility of initiating a dialogue with the anglophone elites. The second presented perspective reflects the current conflict as a consequence of the anglophones' refusal to belong to the nation. Promoted by a part of the francophones, this direction supports the fact that the demands of the anglophones are, in fact, symbolic for all the population in the country and that there is no particular anglophone problem. The two distinct approaches suggest that finding a solution for the anglophone conflict is not at all easy to achieve as long as there is still no consensus regarding the causes and even existence of the problem.

In addition, within the third chapter, there were presented the ethnic tensions in society, which also justify the absence of consociationalism in Cameroon. Thus, the regime in Cameroon contributed to the importance of ethnic belonging, which became a method of obtaining a position of power in the state. The principle of integration was achieved based on

the ethnic origin and not on skills or transparent competition. Although there was made an attempt to achieve the regional balance principle by integrating and co-opting the various elites of the different ethnic groups, the ethnicities of the two presidents were eventually favored, this aspect materializing especially during Paul Biya's rule.

This chapter also highlights the socio-political consequences of the current conflict in Cameroon. From a political point of view, the crisis may be perceived as an opportunity of the unheard voices in society to express their dissatisfaction in relation to the regime and to the undemocratic practices perpetuated in the country. The internal situation has particularly drawn the attention of the international community inasmuch as at the national level, the freedom of expression is violently restricted, especially when it threatens the false stability constructed by the regime. Among the undemocratic practices used by the regime to maintain its power, there are highlighted the ones of neopatrimonialism, clientelism and gerontocracy. Hence, president Biya has managed to uninterruptedly rule the country since 1982 due to the fact that he surrounded himself with the same loyal and devoted individuals (the so-called creatures)[2], whose perennial positions block the implementation of the stringent necessity of change in the state. Another highlighted consequence is the higher lack of trust of the citizens in the institutions of the state, this political apathy having been created by the legitimate use of violence by the authorities. With the purpose of fighting against terrorism, the regime justifies the use of violence, considering that it represents the only solution for the protection of the national unity and security. Regarding the social consequences of the current conflict, there can also be illustrated that the violence of the authorities has, ineluctably, led to the radicalization of the anglophones, who began embracing the option of secession. On the other side, the violence of the secessionists has also contributed to the increased radicalization, isolation and alienation of the population.

Although Cameroon is dealing with this double identity crisis, the research has stressed that the citizens perceive these issues differently, this distinct interpretation representing the first reason of the failure of reaching consociationalism in the country. On the one hand, regarding the current anglophone crisis, there can be said that the anglophones' perspective is not itself unitary or homogenous inasmuch as there have been developed three main positions in this regard. Firstly, the radical anglophones do not identify with the Cameroonian identity anymore and they fight for an independent country called Ambazonia. The more moderate

---

[2] Sergiu Mișcoiu and Louis-Marie Kakdeu, "Authoriatarian clientelism: the case of the president's 'creatures' in Cameroon", Acta Politica, 2021, p. 5, doi: https://doi.org/10.1057/s41269-020-00188-y.

anglophones also support the idea according to which they have been marginalized and excluded within the state, but they still consider that the reintroduction of federalism may solve the political crisis which the country tackles. The third category of anglophones is represented by the so-called clients, who are pleased with the status quo and who do not agree with the veracity of the protesters' demands. This vision is also shared by the more inflexible or radical francophones, who deny or totally minimize the dimension of the conflict. There can be mentioned a second category of francophone Cameroonians who are more supportive and neutral in relation to the anglophone situation, but this solidarity is perceived as subjective, being based only on the need to change the perennial regime. Last but not least, the thesis emphasizes the fact that the ethnic tensions in society are also perceived differently. While a significant majority claims that the regime has used the ethnic acrimony as a strategy of consolidating its power, there are citizens who promote the achievements of the regime, which is, in this regard, defined as unifying. The individuals who identify the regime as a mediator of all the ethnic groups currently sustain the idea that it was the leader of the opposition group who reactivated the ethnic hostility in Cameroon.