



# Insurgency and national security: a perspective from Cameroon's separatist conflict

Manu Lekunze

To cite this article: Manu Lekunze (2023) Insurgency and national security: a perspective from Cameroon's separatist conflict, Third World Quarterly, 44:6, 1155-1173, DOI: [10.1080/01436597.2023.2177149](https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2023.2177149)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2023.2177149>



© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 20 Feb 2023.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 777



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

# Insurgency and national security: a perspective from Cameroon's separatist conflict

Manu Lekunze 

Politics and International Relations, University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, UK

## ABSTRACT

This study examines the nature and factors associated with the onset of the conflict in Cameroon's North West and South West regions to contribute to conceptual, theoretical and methodological debates in war/conflict studies. It used an explorative approach, examining the immediate political tensions prior to hostilities and major government policy areas. It shows that teachers' and lawyers' protests (beginning in 2016) and strategic miscalculations by the government and rebels are the immediate factors associated with the onset of the conflict. The underlying factors include greed, colonial heritage, a history of insurgencies, an internal geography conducive to group conflict and guerrilla warfare, poor macroeconomic performance, the ability to finance authoritarianism without relying on taxes, political decay, slow political development, a turbulent regional neighbourhood and unfavourable international relations. The results enable four main contributions to longstanding debates in war/conflict studies. First, an insurgency is a distinct type of war. Second, insurgencies occur due to several immediate and underlying factors unique to each case. Third, studying insurgencies requires a holistic approach, examining immediate and underlying factors. Finally, although rebel victory is impossible in an insurgency, multiple and widespread insurgencies can nullify the essence of a state, making insurgencies important national security threats.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 5 August 2022  
Accepted 2 February 2023

## KEYWORDS

War  
insurgency  
counterinsurgency  
Anglophone problem  
Cameroon  
Africa

## Introduction

Small and irregular wars remain a complex and important security problem globally. Internationally, the insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan show that states exploit internal conflict in other countries to promote their foreign policy objectives. Iran exploited intrastate conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan against the US to limit the US military's freedom to attack Iran, following statements in George Bush's 'axis of evil' speech (Guzansky 2011; Rahimi 2012). In response, states like the US, predominantly focused on conventional warfare, are interested in irregular capabilities to confront state and nonstate adversaries in irregular warfare (Gray 2007; Nagl et al. 2008). Regionally, African states mainly experience intrastate wars of irregular character (Williams 2017). Those wars are their most common security threat, making irregular warfare capabilities their most needed.

**CONTACT** Manu Lekunze  [manu.lekunze@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:manu.lekunze@abdn.ac.uk)

© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group  
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

From 2018, Cameroon engaged in a conflict (from now on, 'the conflict', because identifying the type of conflict is part of this article's contribution) in its North West (NW) and South West (SW) regions. The conflict pits government forces against several nonstate armed groups (locally known as 'Amba rebels'). The rebels seek to create a state called 'Ambazonia' out of Cameroon's English-speaking regions. The conflict has 'killed over 6,000 people, displaced 765,000 people, of whom over 70,000 are refugees in Nigeria, 2.2 million need humanitarian support and 600,000 children have been deprived of effective schooling'.<sup>1</sup> Such insecurity in Cameroon negatively impacts Nigeria (Africa's economic and population giant). Nigeria's insecurity diminishes its ability to contribute to regional security, leading to growing insurgencies (as seen in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin (LCB) sub-regions).<sup>2</sup> Also, insecurity in Cameroon negatively impacts Central African security. Cameroon is the largest economy in Francophone central Africa. Chad, the Central African Republic (CAR), Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon rely on Cameroon for agricultural products, infrastructure (ports, telecoms and roads), and a shared currency. Therefore, examining Cameroon's security is an important national, regional and international security endeavour. It enables an understanding of the onset and character of armed conflicts in different parts of the world, contributing to better security provision.

This study examines the conflict to identify its type and explain its causes. The new knowledge from a new case contributes to the rich and ongoing debates around types of war, their causes and security provision, which primarily focuses on preventing, deterring and prevailing in war (when war is unavoidable). The article answers the central questions: (1) What type of conflict is the conflict in Cameroon's NW and SW regions? (2) What factors contributed to its onset? (3) In what ways does the new case contribute to ongoing debates in war/conflict studies?

The research shows that: (1) The conflict is an insurgency consistent with the definitions by the *US Army and Marine Corps Manual on Counterinsurgency* and other theorist-practitioners of an insurgency (Nagl et al. 2008, 2; Guevara 2006; Galula 1964). (2) Immediate and underlying factors unique to Cameroon caused the insurgency. (3) The immediate factors associated with the insurgency are teachers' and lawyers' protests originating from long-standing grievances of Cameroon's English-speaking minority (from now on, 'the protests') and strategic miscalculations by the government and rebels. (4) The underlying (environmental) causes include several factors at different levels. At the individual level: President Paul Biya's president-for-life aspiration (like Ahmadou Ahidjo, Cameroon's first president, before him), English-speaking elites' greed, and a feeling of marginalisation among English-speakers. At the national level: history (colonial heritage and previous wars), internal geography conducive to group conflict and guerrilla warfare, poor macroeconomic performance, authoritarianism (the ability to finance authoritarianism without relying on taxes), slow political development, and political decay. At the international level: 'regional disorder' in Central and West Africa and the unfavourable nature of the US-led international order, especially the international political economy. (5) Heavily impacted parts of Cameroon show that insurgencies can nullify a state's essence.

I therefore argue that insurgencies occur because of several immediate and underlying factors unique to each case. They only occur if feasible, irrespective of the nature or seriousness of the grievance/s or opportunity. Consequently, methodologies for the study of insurgencies should take a holistic approach to assess immediate and underlying causes – focusing on major government policy areas like domestic order-making, macroeconomics, security

and defence, and international relations. Insurgencies are serious national security threats because although they cannot achieve their political objectives (without changing to larger forms of war), multiple and widespread insurgencies can nullify a state's essence, imperilling its survival. Therefore, preventing insurgencies and preparing for counterinsurgency should be integral to statecraft at all times – not only in crisis or limited to the military mechanics of killing insurgents. Insurgency begets insurgency. No insurgency is always better than a minor (peripheral) insurgency. Governments, therefore, should prioritise prevention over counterinsurgency.

Despite the extant literature in war/conflict studies, scholars note that conceptual, theoretical and methodological problems persist, especially in the literature focusing on the Global South (Florea 2012; Blattman and Miguel 2010). Scholars often use terms like 'civil war' and 'intrastate war' interchangeably (Levy and Thompson 2011). This leaves the question: are all intrastate conflicts civil wars? Could there be several types of intrastate wars? If yes, would their causes, character and goals be different? These questions show a gap in the literature for further conceptual development. Moreover, although several scholars show many factors associated with the onset of intrastate war, each set/group of literature ignores core variable/s that others consider crucial. For instance, strategic studies emphasises history, geography and strategic calculations/miscalculations (Wright and Wright 1983; Baylis, Wirtz, and Gray 2013; Gray 2015); anthropology, group dynamics (intra and inter-group) (Posen 1993); political science, state failure or fragility (Walter 2015; Barkawi 2017; Fearon and Laitin 2003); economics, the cost/ease of raising a rebel army, war as a means to profit and the tendency for governments of resource-rich states to behave in a martial/authoritarian fashion (Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Collier and Sambanis 2002). Furthermore, although there is an abundant literature on Cameroon's 'Anglophone crisis/problem', there is only a limited literature on the study of the conflict following the 2016 crisis and escalation into an armed conflict around 2017/18 (Awason 1998; Chem-Langhëë 1995; Dicklitch 2011; Fanson 1999; Jua and Konings 2004; Konings and Nyamnjoh 2019). This article, therefore, contributes in three ways. First, it increases knowledge of the conflict, which began after the 2016/17 protests. Second, it contributes to conceptual development in war studies by identifying and describing the conflict's unique (distinguishing) features. Third, it contributes theoretically by explaining the causes of insurgencies and the relationship between insurgencies and national security. In turn, conceptual and theoretical contributions enable methodological contributions.

Methodologically, I adopted an explorative approach, seeking to answer the questions: (1) What type of war is the conflict in Cameroon's NW and SW regions? (2) What are the factors associated with its onset? I chose the case principally because, (1) it is new; (2) on the surface, it did not appear to be an 'ethnic or ideological conflict' (common in the existing literature on conflict in Africa); and (3) it affects a pivotal state in West and Central African security. I collected data from (1) documents: media reports, relevant press releases from the ministries of Defence and Communications, President Paul Biya's speeches, International Crisis Group (ICG) security reports, US State Department Human Rights (US SDHR) reports and published academic literature; (2) social media: credible video, audio and photographs on WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter; (3) statistics from World Bank Data. I included all official documents, media reports, videos, audio, photographs, and ICG reports I could find on the conflict. I selected every fourth US SDHR report from 2000 to 2020. I spaced the selection to ensure enough time for the selected reports to be sufficiently different but without discontinuities.

I added 2021 for the most recent information. In documenting the respect for human rights, the US SDHR reports provide extensive details on life, politics, law, law enforcement and internal security in Cameroon. The textual data, videos, audio, photographs and statistics make it possible to establish a comprehensive image of Cameroon, focusing on security. I also conducted semi-structured interviews in 2021 and 2022. Interviewees included street traders, taxi drivers, government officials, armed forces members, prisoners, internally displaced persons (IDPs), separatist activists, ex-insurgents, security analysts and academics. I travelled to relatively safer parts of the SW region to observe the conflict environment (to understand the nature and impact of the conflict). I used convenience sampling for the interviews because of the sensitive nature of security in Cameroon. Researchers can only speak to individuals who are willing and able to speak.

### On the road to armed conflict

This section focuses on the immediately preceding events leading to hostilities. It shows that, first, the protests beginning 8 December 2016 initiated high political tensions that contributed to hostilities. The protests originated from longstanding English-speaking minority grievances, widely referred to as the 'Anglophone problem'. As shown earlier, there is an extensive literature on the Anglophone problem. The 'underlying factors' section discusses the historical and geographical dimensions of the problem. Second, military miscalculations (by the government and rebels) initiated and escalated the hostilities, leading to the armed conflict.

The government's heavy-handed response to the protests precipitously increased the number of unemployed, poorly educated, aggrieved, young and poor people in English-speaking societies. The increase swelled the 'insurgent recruitment pool' contributing to the feasibility of the armed conflict. During the protests, initial government repression disproportionately impacted motorcycle taxi (*okada*) drivers and their passengers (*Okada* drivers and their passengers are usually poorer members of society). In 2016/17, during the negotiations between the government and protesters, motorcycle convoys rode on the main streets in towns like Bamenda and Buea, carrying supportive slogans. Mostly men on motorcycles enforced 'ghost towns' (*ville mort*) – the protesters' main civil disobedience tactic. Consequently, the government banned motorcycle taxis in several English-speaking towns. The government indiscriminately arrested *okada* users, sometimes seizing and destroying the *okadas*. Reports abound of gendarmes incinerating *okadas* as the owners watched.<sup>3</sup> Destroying an *okada* immediately renders the rider unemployed. It could also push the rider into significant debt if he (mostly) purchased the motorcycle on loan.<sup>4</sup> The military arrested several drivers and their passengers. The military brutalised and extorted the arrested, angering their friends and family members. This further expanded the aggrieved and insurgent recruitment pool.<sup>5</sup> The current most active (and perhaps most violent) 'Amba general' (as the armed separatist leaders are known), General No Pity (Mr Clement Mbashie), was an *okada* driver in Buea, now operating mostly in the NW.

The Cameroonian government miscalculated (underestimated) the resolve of some separatists to use war to achieve their political objectives. The government thought the usual repression tactics would pacify, as they had in the past. Several government members believed the protesters lacked the temperament or resolve to fight a war. For example, experts raised concerns about fundraising in the diaspora and its potential to fund armed conflict in

discussions with a high-level Cameroonian government delegation in London in April 2017. Comments from the delegation demonstrated that they were unconvinced an armed conflict was imminent.<sup>6</sup> Even non-government political leaders were not convinced of the threat of war. There is a video of John Ndi (Chair of the Social Democratic Front, formerly Cameroon's main opposition party) saying, 'you are talking of war; can you even handle a gun?' The crowd responded, 'we will learn.'<sup>7</sup> Even when the levels of rebel violence increased, the government continued to believe that extreme violence pacifies. At the beginning of the conflict, the scorched earth tactics resulted from the logic that acute violence would shock the rebels into surrendering.<sup>8</sup> Such miscalculations swelled the rebel ranks and escalated the conflict. Five years on, the level of violence shows that the government's calculations were wrong.

Similarly, the separatists overestimated their ability to 'reach Buea' (their euphemism for independence). Several miscalculations emboldened the rebels to believe in using war to 'reach Buea'. First, the rebels underestimated the strength of Cameroon's government and the natural resolve of any government – even weak ones – to maintain territorial integrity. The age of President Biya and longevity in office encouraged the rebels to believe that significant political pressure and violence could stress the regime and precipitate its collapse, leading to a resistance-free 'road to Buea'. Second, military commitments in the fight against Boko Haram (BH) and Cameroon's eastern border security challenges convinced the rebels that Cameroon could not fight back. The rebels believed the Cameroon military would dissipate once they mounted compelling force. The rebels' social media messages repeatedly remarked on the Cameroonian military weakness. Initial successful attacks on Cameroonian soldiers galvanised significant momentum. Third, the rebels overestimated the strength of the Anglophone identity in bridging ethnic divisions. Fourth, the rebellion's political leaders overestimated their ability to secure diplomatic support. They thought they would easily gain diplomatic support and sympathy from the international community once they exposed the Cameroonian armed forces' atrocities and demonstrated the ability of an alternative government – better than Biya's government.<sup>9</sup>

On the contrary, the Biya government has not collapsed. The Cameroonian military has strengthened its capacity through additional personnel recruitment and equipment procurement. Infighting among the Amba political and armed groups demonstrates that the current strength of the 'Anglophone identity' is insufficient to provide the necessary military discipline and loyalty to prosecute a serious war. There are currently 12 rebel groups, most with fewer than 500 fighters.<sup>10</sup> Diplomatically, no government has made any meaningful diplomatic offer to the rebellion. Nigeria, the most important diplomatic target of the rebels, arrested and repatriated Ayuk Tabe (the putative 'interim leader' of Ambazonia) and most of his Ambazonian 'interim government'. Therefore, the protests and strategic miscalculations initiated the armed conflict. But why now (2017/18)?

### **Cameroon's conducive environment for conflict**

This section discusses underlying factors that complicated the smooth persistence of peace, leading to conflict. It shows four categories of factors, from the individual level to the international, making Cameroon a conducive environment for conflict. The first is Cameroon's history – colonial heritage, several small wars and recurrent civil strife. The second is geography – political, human and physical (terrain and location – regional neighbourhood). The third is economics – a combination of poor macroeconomic performance, greed (the

instrumentalisation and commodification of the 'Anglophone problem' by individuals in and outside the regime, elite and non-elite, and local and diaspora populations for financial gain), and the ability to finance authoritarianism without depending on taxes. The fourth is government – insufficient capacity because of slow political development and increasing political decay.

## History

The protests have their roots in Cameroon's colonial history. The different 'colonial heritage' between French Cameroon and British Cameroons sowed the seeds for a clash in independent and reunified Cameroon. The Cameroons problem (how to manage parts of Kamerun seized from Germany) emerged in 1916. It persisted in colonial Nigeria as the Cameroons (Northern and Southern Cameroons) problem and in *Afrique Equatoriale Française* (AEF) as the 'one Cameroon' problem. The one Cameroon problem partly contributed to the UPC (*Union des populations du Cameroun*) anti-colonial insurgency. The UPC's objectives included reuniting all the Cameroons. The problem morphed into the West Cameroon (W.Cameroon) problem and, subsequently, the 'Anglophone problem' in reunified Cameroon (Le Vine 1964; Rechniewski 2017; Fanso 1999; DeLancey, Mbu, and DeLancey 2010). Solutions to the problem proposed by the French, British and Cameroonian governments invariably cause grievances that foster continuous agitations.

The disproportionate power difference between *La Republic du Cameroun* (Cameroun) and Southern Cameroon (S.Cameroon) made reunification seem like a *de facto* occupation of S.Cameroon by *Cameroun*. *Cameroun* was the larger (population and territory) part of former Kamerun. From 1916, it remained a political unit in AEF, enjoying a degree of self-government and a developing French institutional framework. *Cameroun* gained independence nearly two years before reunification (Awasom 1998; Chem-Langhèè 1995). From 1916, however, S.Cameroon became an integral part of colonial Nigeria (Owona 1973; Takougang 1994). It only gained autonomy in 1954 (Torrent 2012). At reunification in 1961, therefore, *Cameroun* was more powerful than S.Cameroon. Several protesters maintain that reunification feels like occupation and integration of S.Cameroon into *Cameroun* (a form of colonialism).<sup>11</sup> Those feelings are the seeds of the demands for self-determination for S. Cameroon, which eventually resulted in the conflict.

Cameroon's historical incidents of small wars create a conducive environment for the onset of insurgencies (Collier and Sambanis 2002). For most of the nineteenth century, the Cameroon area experienced high levels of small wars because of the expansion of the Sokoto empire, slave trade-inspired wars, expanding ideas from Europe and the Middle East and migration caused by all the wars. From 1884 to 1911, Germany created Kamerun through wars of conquest and resistance. World War I (WWI) allowed the Kamerunians to rebel against Germany, leading to an insurgency in 1916 (Le Vine 1964; Schler 2005; Fanso 1999). Different forms of violent resistance persisted throughout the French and British occupations. Also, the UPC mounted a fierce anti-colonial insurgency lasting until the 1970s (Deltombe, Domergue, and Tatsitsa 2016). People of S.Cameroon and later W.Cameroon, especially the Grassfield people, supported UPC's anti-colonial insurgency (Rechniewski 2017). Although declining in frequency recently, inter-tribal/ethnic/communal violence is common in Cameroon's history.

In 2008, Cameroon experienced nationwide civil strife. The run-up to the modification of the constitution and rising inflation sparked significant nationwide civil strife, leading to

several deaths and the destruction of property.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, in the 1990s, Cameroon experienced nationwide civil strife, including widespread violence (particularly in Bamenda, an English-speaking town). The 1990s civil strife exposed several Cameroonians, especially the post-colonial generation, to violent and non-violent revolt against the government, sowing seeds for future conflict. Some separatist political leaders and armed fighters are veterans of the 1990s crisis. Ebenezer Akwanga, one of the first to politically lead an armed group in this current conflict, is a veteran of the 1990s crisis, including a long stint in Cameroon's maximum security prison in Kondengui, Yaoundé. Therefore, Cameroon's long history of small wars and civil strife renders it conducive to further conflict.

### Geography

Fundamental mistakes in reunification strengthened the 'Anglophone identity', creating minority (Anglophone) – majority (Francophone) group dynamics conducive to the onset of conflict (Collier and Sambanis 2002). Ahidjo's government made fundamental mistakes that strengthened the Anglophone identity, sowing seeds for this war. It maintained S.Cameroon as an internal geopolitical unit (renamed West Cameroon (W.Cameroon)), with a separate authority/state, education and legal systems and language (English). In 1972, even after disbanding the W.Cameroon authority, the English speakers remained in two provinces within the borders of the former W.Cameroon. The mistakes made it challenging to forge a common Cameroonian identity in the context of separate languages, political geography, and institutional frameworks. It inadvertently strengthened the 'Anglophone' identity, allowing separatism and threats of violent attempts at self-determination.

An unhealthy bifurcation is emerging in Cameroon's population between *paysans* (Cameroonians resident in Cameroon) and *bushfallers* (Cameroonian residents abroad). The government denies *bushfallers* dual citizenship. That means Cameroonians who acquire foreign citizenship (for administrative ease in their countries of residence) cannot participate in Cameroonian politics. English-speaking *bushfallers*, already feeling 'marginalised' (Anglophone problem), feel even more excluded. To them, the current political system limits their civil rights as English-speaking Cameroonians and denies them citizenship as *bushfallers*. To them, destroying that system, therefore, is a noble cause. *Bushfallers* provided the charismatic leadership necessary for the onset of the armed conflict.<sup>13</sup> The arrests of the protest leaders transferred leadership to *bushfallers*. New technology – satellite television, recorded video and audio messages shared on WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter – enabled the *bushfaller* leaders to circumvent the government's traditional media control, communicating directly to their audience in Cameroon. Turning off the internet in NW and SW in March 2017 demonstrated the impact of *bushfallers'* charismatic leadership and the government's inability to control information (Murrey 2022). *Bushfallers* also provided the start-up capital necessary for the onset of the armed conflict. The initial capital to source or locally fabricate guns and import short gun cartridges came from *bushfallers*.<sup>14</sup> Although the insurgents quickly developed independent funding streams, the initial external funding tipped the balance from peaceful protest to armed conflict. As the conflict shows, the political exclusion of *bushfallers* (a growing section of Cameroon's population) is dangerous.

Parts of Cameroon's terrain are perfect for guerrilla warfare. One of the insurgency's most resilient armed separatist groups was the 'Lebialem Tigers'. Lebialem (its operational stronghold) is hilly and forested and has several cave-like structures. It has only one road



descending into and ascending out of the Division (*Departement*). The military finds it difficult to descend into Lebialem (especially in places like Menji, Lewoh or Bamumbu) without information on their approach reaching the insurgents. The hills, forests and caves make using large and heavy military equipment (like tanks, armoured vehicles and artillery guns) difficult.<sup>15</sup> Even aerial bombing could be futile, given the forest and cave protection. In such geographies, the rebels' local knowledge and support give them an advantage over government forces.<sup>16</sup>

Regional disorder contributes to Cameroon's internal challenges. Cameroon is in the turbulent LCB, Sahel, and Gulf of Guinea sub-regions. These sub-regions have some of the most dangerous terrorist and pirate groups globally. The separatists received weapons, training in guerrilla warfare, and improvised explosives from armed groups operating in Nigeria. A limited number of Nigerians are involved in the fighting, especially in operational leadership and administering *odeshi* (charms believed to make combatants bulletproof).<sup>17</sup> Also, the Libyan civil war from 2011 has pumped fighters, skills and weapons into several insurgencies across West Africa, contributing to lowering the cost of military skills and weapons, making insurgencies easier to initiate across Central and West Africa.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, Cameroon's commitments in fighting against Boko Haram (originating from Nigeria) and armed incursions from rebels in CAR reduce its capacity to mount sufficient military pressure against separatists in the NW and SW regions. Those commitments encouraged the rebels' strategic miscalculations, contributing to the onset of the conflict.

## Economics

Poor economic performance led to high unemployment and low per capita income amidst a rapidly growing population. This lowers the price of labour and the potential opportunity cost of joining an insurgency. Economic growth from the 2000s has not been sufficient to close the gaps opened in the 1990s. For example, despite steady average gross domestic product (GDP) growth from 2000, in 2016 (the year of the crisis), Cameroon's per capita gross national income (GNI) was only \$260 more than in 1988.<sup>19</sup> Cameroon's GDP dropped from \$36.387 billion in 2014 to \$32.21 billion in 2015 (a year before the crisis). It remained below 2014 levels until well into 2018. GNI also dropped in 2014 and did not reach 2014 levels again until 2019, and it dropped again in 2020.<sup>20</sup> Since 1960, the population has only grown, with a steeper gradient from the 2000s.<sup>21</sup> Education remains poor and insufficient, lowering the cost of labour. Since 1970, the ratio of pupils to teacher (primary and secondary) has remained significantly above the global average.<sup>22</sup> About 8% of Cameroon's primary school-age children were out of school in 2019. This proportion was 15.29% in 2008 – meaning some of the rebels fighting in the conflict, of primary school age in 2008, were not in school.<sup>23</sup>

The English-speaking elite's greed – the desire to hold important government positions as a means of enrichment – is an important motivating factor for 'separatism' and constant demand for a 'special status', risking conflict. Separatism is a tried and tested approach to gaining lucrative positions in government. The former S.Cameroon elite used separatism as a bargaining tool to advance their interests within colonial Nigeria and later independent Cameroon. For example, the demand for autonomy within colonial Nigeria resulted from concerns that small S.Cameroon and its people could easily disappear within eastern Nigeria. That leaves prestigious government positions to larger groups. Separatists emphasised their Kamerun origin, League of Nations mandate and later United Nations Trusteeship status,

allowing S.Cameroonian elites to differentiate themselves from the Igbo (especially) and other eastern Nigerian groups. The designation of S.Cameroon as an autonomous region within colonial Nigeria meant an S.Cameroonian could be a regional premier. Otherwise, it would have been almost impossible for an S.Cameroonian to be a regional premier in Eastern Nigeria. Also, the fear of losing privileges accorded by regional autonomy (in 1954) motivated the S.Cameroonian elite's insistence on W.Cameroon's autonomy in reunified Cameroon.<sup>24</sup> The W.Cameroonian authority had ministerial and parliamentary positions and directorships of local parastatals. The holders of political positions or directorships enjoyed relative wealth and prestige. The position of Vice President of Cameroon was reserved for an English speaker. Even after the dissolution of the federation, the government reserved the position of speaker of the National Assembly and later the prime minister for an English speaker. The English speakers constitute less than 20% of Cameroon's population. Their ability to reserve important government positions proves longstanding and impressive identity politics. As seen in 2016, the political gymnastics to remain politically relevant (for economic gain) increases the risk of violence. The 'Anglophone problem to some is still that 'there has never been an Anglophone minister of [insert an important ministry (with a large budget)] in Cameroon.'<sup>25</sup>

Cameroon's ability to maintain an authoritarian political system without relying on tax revenue contributed to the conflict. Only two individuals have been Cameroon's presidents in 63 years of independence. Both presidents built authoritarian regimes and prioritised regime longevity (expressing president-for-life tendencies). They built a presidency, the most important government organ, largely independent of tax revenue. Since independence, the management of timber, gas and oil exploitation is the preserve of the presidency. It is difficult to gain any sizeable timber exploitation licence without the personal blessing of the president.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, SNH (*Société Nationale des Hydrocarbures*) manages Cameroon's involvement in the oil and gas industry. The secretary general at the presidency is the board chair of SNH. The oil, gas and timber sectors generate enough cash for the presidency to finance the military and control political competition. Therefore, the presidency's financial independence makes it impervious to general political and economic conditions. It can easily disregard the opinion or desires of ordinary people. The protest leaders claimed to have repeatedly written to the government without response before initiating the protests in 2016.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, poor macroeconomics, greed and authoritarianism made Cameroon a conducive environment for the onset of the conflict.

## Government

Political development (when governments gain more capacity to manage society and provide public goods like security) in Cameroon has not kept pace with the demand for more complex public goods, leaving gaps for conflict. At independence, the domestic order policy of combining new government institutions (the police gendarmerie, army, courts, prisons, and prefects) with existing chiefships ('traditional authorities') provided 'sufficient' internal political and social order to prevent serious armed conflict (Lekunze 2019; Terretta 2010). The defeat of the UPC insurgency and the absence of other insurgencies until 2014 (when Boko Haram began in Cameroon) demonstrate sufficient government capacity to maintain domestic order between 1970 and 2014.

Societies, however, are organic (living) organisms. They constantly change and have their own interests. Governments must constantly develop to retain the capability to manage a changing society peacefully. Changes in society led to more demand for specific public

goods. Incapacity to meet the demand, resulted in the conflict. The current system cannot meet political participation and representation demands, for example, which contributes to conflict. As shown earlier, political participation is linked to economic means in Cameroon, making it more important. Cameroon witnessed significant demand for political participation and representation in the 1990s, especially from the NW region. Despite some initial political space opening (multiparty competition in the 1990s), since the 1990s, the ruling party (the Cameroon Peoples Democratic Movement (CPDM)) has dominated all elections.<sup>28</sup> That dominance limits participation in elected parts of government. Corruption and nepotism in the entrance exams (*concours*) into 'institutions of state', like ENAM (*Ecole Nationale d'Administration et de Magistrature*), the feeder school of the prefecture system, limit participation in appointed parts of government (Lekunze 2019). Chiefships are non-participatory institutions because largely hereditary traditions decide participation. The limited participation has created an elite political class largely unrepresentative of ordinary people, especially the young and poor.

The feeling of exclusion and non-representation is worse in the NW and SW, where people already feel excluded due to their inability to speak French, their distance from the centre of political power and the historical issues mentioned earlier. Combined with the other factors, it made an armed conflict more likely to emerge in the NW and SW than in other parts of Cameroon. Creating the Universities of Buea and Bamenda (where tuition is predominantly in English) exacerbated the problem. It reduced the need to migrate to French-speaking regions for higher education. Previously, universities were located only in French-speaking regions, and tuition was predominantly in French, forcing English speakers to migrate to French-speaking regions and learn French to access higher education. Also, living in Yaoundé (Cameroon's political capital and home to its main university until the 1990s), for example, expanded networking opportunities, which could result in a job or at least knowing the right person to bribe for a job. Over time the universities of Buea and Bamenda produced a large population of degree-holding provincial youth, mostly illiterate in French. Their university degrees create high expectations, but their illiteracy in French and distance from Yaoundé exclude them from meaningful political and economic participation. Several Amba rebels have university degrees.<sup>29</sup>

Similarly, Cameroon's foreign policy developed slowly, leaving gaps for regional disorder to impact Cameroon negatively. Foreign and defence policy remained largely in France, with little agency from Ahidjo's government. The Biya government increasingly exercised more agency. It successfully diversified Cameroon's external partners to include friendly relations with major and great powers like Israel, the UK, Russia, China and the US. The weathering of several crises in the West and Central African regions, including peacefully resolving the Cameroon–Nigeria Bakassi border dispute, demonstrates sufficient foreign policy capacity until 2014. Increasingly, however, visible negative implications of regional disorder and an unfavourable international political economy demonstrate Cameroon's diminishing ability to shape events in its region and the international system (Lekunze and Page 2022).

Important government institutions are experiencing political decay (when government institutions lose the capacity to produce public goods), reducing the overall government capacity to maintain domestic order. Despite the sufficient government capacity (mentioned earlier), the government significantly relied on the social order of local customs and locally organised vigilante groups of chiefdoms to provide internal order (Lekunze 2019). But the colonial and post-colonial governments relegated chiefships to 'the traditional realm'

– unchangeable ways. An unchanging institution in a dynamic social and physical environment eventually becomes unfit for its environment – it decays. Education and external ideas also discredited the mysticism that undergirded the power of chiefs. The conduct of some chiefs, succession disputes and open party-political participation reduced the traditional prestige of chiefs. Many chiefships have become ineffective in providing social order through the reinforcement of norms, customs and community forms of justice. In the NW and SW regions, several chiefs can no longer visit their chiefdoms, not to mention contributing to governance.<sup>30</sup> No graded chief currently lives in Lebialem, for example. Amba rebels have kidnapped several chiefs and killed others.<sup>31</sup> Physical violence to chiefs was previously sacrilegious, especially in the ‘Grassfield’ parts of the NW and SW.

Also, previous civil strife, like the pro-democracy protests of the 1990s, had more violence in urban areas with weaker chiefships and the still developing new state structures. The words ‘ghost town’, not ‘ghost village’, prove the epicentre of the 1990s’ violence. Rural and semi-rural areas – where chiefships were stronger – were less affected. In the 1990s crisis, the flow of IDPs was from urban to rural. Several people moved from towns like Bamenda to their inner NW region villages.<sup>32</sup> The reverse is true in the current conflict. Now, it is more accurate to speak of ‘ghost villages’ than towns.<sup>33</sup> The rebels are stronger in rural and semi-urban areas. Chiefs are among their main targets.<sup>34</sup> The conception of chiefs as enemies of the people evidences the decay of chiefships as respectable social and political order institutions. Therefore, chiefships (as institutions of social and political order) have decayed, reducing Cameroon’s overall government capacity.

The nature of Cameroon sets a high ‘government capacity threshold’ for the peaceful management of society. The level at which a state is strong enough (‘not weak, fragile, failing or failed’) depends on the specific circumstances of that state. Cameroon’s high threshold of ‘strong enough’ increases the probability of gaps for ‘non-peaceful’ conflict. Cameroon is a multi-ethnic, linguistic and religious society (previously a multi-polity/authority). It has a hybrid institutional framework. Its physical geography is diverse, including terrain suitable for guerrilla warfare. Cameroon is located in a turbulent regional neighbourhood with an unfavourable international environment. Consequently, Cameroon requires high levels of government capacity in several policy areas to close all the possible gaps that conflict entrepreneurs could exploit to foment conflict. Cameroon’s complex nature means governance is like juggling several balls simultaneously. The probability of dropping one ball at some point is high, regardless of the juggler’s effort and skill.

The peaceful management of Cameroon requires advanced political development in many government policy areas. First, equal treatment of French and English requires teachers to staff the bilingual education system. Second, consistent protection of the English-speaking minority’s rights requires a highly developed legal system, with enough civil rights laws, lawyers, police, magistrates, judges and prisons. Third, equal access to the state for French and English speakers requires a more sophisticated bureaucracy. Fourth, equal opportunity for minorities, meaningful employment for a growing youthful population with limited education, expensive infrastructure for national physical integration and denying haven to guerrillas, and money to finance the complex government, require robust economic performance. Fourth, intensive policing (to limit insurgent recruitment), counterinsurgency (to fight current insurgencies), and diplomatic power (to shape regional and international events to protect national interests) require significant military power. Perhaps the levels of economic and military development necessary for peace are inaccessible to peripheral states

in the international political economy of the US-led international order. In other words, insecurity from the international system is the nature of things in weak and minor powers.

## Insurgency and national security

This section discusses the implications of the results for debates in conflict/war and national security studies. In light of the conflict in Cameroon's NW and SW regions, it answers the questions (1) what is an insurgency? (2) Is an insurgency a distinct type of war? (3) How do you study insurgencies? (4) What general statement (theory) explains the onset of insurgencies? (5) What is the relationship between insurgencies and national security? The answers contribute to conceptual, theoretical and methodological debates in war/conflict and national security studies.

### The concept

What is an insurgency? I label the unique type of political violence observed in Cameroon an insurgency (from now on, the separatist insurgency). It fits what the *US Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Manual* refers to as 'an organised movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict – in other words, 'an organised, politico-military struggle designed to weaken the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power, or other political authority while increasing insurgent control' (Nagl et al. 2008, 2).

An insurgency (as observed in Cameroon's NW and SW regions) is war in Clausewitz's sense because at least two politically organised groups fundamentally disagree on their political objectives, at least one of them is an established government, all believe in the threat or use of military force in resolving the disagreement, and they are committed to using sustained and coordinated military force to resolve their disagreement. The Cameroonian government disagreed with the increasing demands of the protesters, and the protesters disagreed with the government's offer. Then the government believed it could use force to compel the protesters to do its will, and did so. A section of the protesters responded with force, attempting to compel the government to do their will. The Amba rebels are committed to coordinated and sustained violence in pursuing their strategic objective, 'independence of Ambazonia'. They engage in gun battles, bombings (mainly improvised explosives), torching, executions and kidnappings. That interaction between government and rebel forces has 'killed and injured people and destroyed military and economic resources', demonstrating typical war behaviour (Levy and Thompson 2011, 5).

An insurgency is a distinct type of war for three fundamental reasons. First, a nonstate actor usually declares an insurgency. States use violence routinely, especially authoritarian states like Cameroon. What turns a violent interaction into an insurgency (as in NW and SW regions of Cameroon increasingly from 2018) is sustained and coordinated nonstate violence aimed at achieving a political objective against the will of an established government. In other words, an insurgency occurs when ordinary citizens respond to government violence with sustained and coordinated violence (Levy and Thompson 2011). Cameroon's separatist insurgency commenced when armed sections of the protesters responded to the government's use of force with sustained and coordinated force. The number of combatant deaths (as coded in the correlates of war studies (Singer and Small 1994)) is irrelevant because

casualties rise and fall without necessarily reflecting the cessation of hostilities or resolution of the political differences.

Second, irregular warfare characterises the conduct of insurgency (rebel fighting) and counterinsurgency (government fighting) (Gray 2007). Cameroon's separatist insurgency includes multiple nonstate armed groups, with none the size of a conventional battalion. Amba rebels use predominantly guerrilla and terrorist tactics, and Cameroon's special forces spearhead the fight against Amba rebels. The fighting does not have traditional physical front lines. The Amba rebels do not distinguish between military combatants and ordinary civil servants. They see '*black legs*' (ordinary citizens they consider to be associated with the government) as legitimate targets. The rebels attack civil and military installations. Similarly, the government forces often terrorise the population in search of Amba rebels. A common government tactic is '*bouclage*' – where they close a section of a city/town/village, search all houses and arrest everyone 'looking suspicious'.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, an insurgency generally cannot achieve its political objectives without transforming into a larger, more conventional war (Nagl et al. 2008). In other words, the type of war observed in Cameroon's NW and SW regions does not lead to nonstate actors achieving their political objectives (independence or changing the government). The Amba rebels cannot achieve their stated objective of independence without transforming into a regular military. For example, they need a military capable of pushing government forces to the current borders between the French-speaking and English-speaking regions to gain independence. Supposing the Cameroonian and Nigerian militaries choose to cooperate to defeat the separatist threat (common to both countries), the rebel forces should also be capable of simultaneously holding Cameroonian and Nigerian forces outside the 'Ambazonian' borders in the east and west. Irregular warfare cannot suffice in such an enterprise. It requires regular/conventional warfare – army divisions (not platoons), heavy weapons and equipment, air and maritime capabilities (not only light land infantry capabilities) and clear lines of communication between factory and front lines (not unpredictable clandestine smuggling and sporadic seizure of weapons from government forces). Conventional warfare does not characterise the war in Cameroon's NW and SW regions. Therefore, wars that lead to independence or rebel victory differ from insurgencies (the conflict in Cameroon).

### **Theory and methodology**

In light of Cameroon's separatist insurgency, what explains the onset of insurgencies? The evidence from Cameroon supports the overarching theoretical proposition that immediate and underlying factors, unique to each case, cause insurgencies. It supports Collier, Hoeffler, and Rohner's (2008) 'feasibility hypothesis' – where an insurgency is feasible, it will occur. The immediate causes lead to an insurgency only if underlying factors exist that make the insurgency viable. The underlying problems are often in existence long before the onset of the insurgency. They are usually related to gaps or failings in major government policy areas, like domestic order-making (creating a political community, policing, national integration and territorial administration), macroeconomics, defence and security, and international relations. In Cameroon, the protests and strategic miscalculations in the context of (1) authoritarianism, (2) poor macroeconomics, (3) political decay and slow political development, (4) past insurgencies and a history amenable to historicisation of grievances, (5) conducive geography for group conflict and guerrilla warfare, (6) the availability of charismatic

leadership and start-up capital from *bushfallers* and (7) underdeveloped foreign policy, conspired, in a 'perfect storm', to initiate the insurgency.

How do you study the onset of insurgencies? The study of insurgencies requires a qualitative case study of immediate and underlying factors (factors without which the insurgency could not occur because it would not be feasible). Each insurgency requires a unique study of its root cause/s (Nagl et al. 2008). The Cameroon case shows that a unique government capacity threshold for the peaceful management of society is an important factor in insurgency onset, for example. In other words, necessary or sufficient state/government strength is unique to each country and not generalisable. It depends on the unique geography, history, composition of society, the structure of political order, government policy (choice), the nature of international order and relations (underlying factors) of a specific state. For example, the strength of the UK government may not be sufficient in Cameroon because Cameroonian society, environment and problems are different. Therefore, just as physicians carefully examine each patient to diagnose the correct ailment, scholars must carefully examine each insurgency within its specific context/environment to identify its associated factors.

Analysts must ask two questions: (1) What immediate triggers initiated hostilities? (2) What made protesters' (the aggrieved) response to violence with violence feasible? As shown earlier, an insurgency cannot occur without nonstate violence, irrespective of the conflicts and grievances in society. Nonstate violence cannot occur if it is not feasible. Therefore, the story of the onset of an insurgency is incomplete or only partially true without a study of the underlying factors. 'Why now', therefore, is an essential question in the study of the onset of insurgencies. It leads to examining the underlying causes of the insurgency. The immediate factors in Cameroon's separatist insurgency are not new. As shown earlier, the Anglophone/W.Cameroon/British Cameroons problem goes back more than a century (to 1916). Cameroon's authoritarianism (which permitted government repression and strategic miscalculations) also goes back several centuries. From the 1980s, several violent skirmishes around the problem show a longstanding wish in sections of agitators to use violence to achieve their aims (Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997; Mehlera 2014). However, the first insurgency emerged only around 2018. Why 2018?

### **National security**

What does the Cameroon case tell scholars about the relationship between insurgencies and national security? Realists see security as the security of the state. A secure state survives, preserving and enhancing its 'way of life' in perpetuity. In the realist logic, human security is a derivative of state security (national security). Historically, war is the prime killer of states (the cause of non-survival or disruptor of 'our way of life'). It also devastates human security. Thus, 'doing security' is preventing, deterring or prevailing in war (when war is unavoidable) (Walt 1991, 2017; Waltz 2010). In other words, Cameroon's security means the survival of Cameroon (as a distinct political community, with its way of life, and within its current borders), the security of Cameroonians is a derivative of Cameroon's security, and the responsibility for that security is the prime objective of Cameroon's government.

Following the realist logic, an insurgency (as a type of war) is a national security threat. Although an insurgency cannot defeat and conquer a state or a government, widespread insurgencies can nullify the essence of a state, imperilling its survival (existence). Multiple and widespread insurgencies can return a territory and its people to Hobbes' state of nature. Cameroon's history shows that insurgency begets insurgency. Also, Cameroon's commitment to the fight against BH constituted part of the Amba rebels' strategic considerations in initiating the separatist insurgency. The history of insurgencies and ongoing insurgencies (the BH insurgency) made the separatist insurgency likely. In turn, the history of insurgencies and the current BH and separatist insurgencies would make other insurgencies likely, creating a vicious cycle of insurgencies. Widespread and multiple insurgencies would make it difficult for competing governments within Cameroon to credibly claim to be the legitimate and sovereign government. As seen in heavily affected villages and towns of the NW and SW regions, the insurgency can discredit the Yaoundé government's claim of sovereignty. Additionally, the conflict's casualties, destruction and displacement show that insurgencies devastate human security. No insurgency is always better than a small insurgency, even in the periphery.

Therefore, preventing insurgencies (ensuring they never occur) and preparing to counter insurgencies (fighting them when their occurrence was unavoidable) should be important components of statecraft. Good, sustainable and comprehensive national security policies/strategies should include insurgency prevention and counterinsurgency. The multiplicity of factors (immediate and underlying) associated with the onset of the separatist insurgency means Cameroon cannot isolate and 'counter' the insurgency in a vacuum. Countering the separatist insurgency would require more than appeasing the English-speakers or killing all Amba rebels. It requires addressing issues rendering Cameroon a conducive environment for insurgencies. The resolution of the problems includes indirect policies relating to economic growth, political inclusion and representation, and national physical integration. Reducing Cameroon's susceptibility to any insurgency and addressing English-speakers' grievances should align.

## Conclusion

This article shows that the immediate causes of Cameroon's separatist insurgency are protests in 2016–2017 and strategic miscalculations by the rebels and government. The underlying factors include colonial heritage, history of insurgency, a turbulent regional neighbourhood, internal geography conducive to group conflict and guerrilla warfare, poor macroeconomic performance, greed, and the ability to finance authoritarianism without relying on taxes in the context of insufficient government capacity and slow political development.

The Cameroon case enables several contributions. First, an insurgency is a unique type of war because it is declared by a nonstate actor, it lacks clear physical front lines, rebels cannot realise their objectives (without transforming to a larger type of war), and its character is predominantly irregular. Second, insurgencies arise from several factors (immediate and underlying). Its study, therefore, requires a holistic assessment of immediate and underlying causes. Immediate causes are found in the issues around the high political tensions leading to initial hostility. Underlying causes are generally associated with gaps/poor performance in vital government policy areas. Third, the level of enough state/government strength or



political development is unique to each state (not transferable or generalisable). Finally, insurgencies are a national security threat because multiple and widespread insurgencies nullify the essence of a state, imperilling its survival.

Therefore, a sustainable resolution to Cameroon's separatist insurgency should consider peace in Cameroon as a whole. It is no use attempting to create peace in NW and SW through methods that could plunge other parts of Cameroon into similar insurgencies. The understanding of the factors associated with the onset of the insurgency – which this article provides – should inform national security strategy development, aiming to address all of Cameroon's insurgency-causing factors. Resolving problems through institutionalisation (appropriate to Cameroon's history and physical, social and political environment) remains the sole sustainable means of preventing and countering insurgencies to ensure national security. *Ad hoc*, nonstate, external and temporal interventions could provide a reprieve, but sustainable national security requires local and 'permanent' (institutionalised) solutions that governments of states generally embody. The necessary political development (to sustainably resolve the conflict) requires 'multi-generational time' that external interveners often do not have (Huntington 1968). This is the preserve of a permanent and local government – staffed with patriotic individuals who are personally invested in the outcomes of their work.

Finally, the Cameroon case shows that issues outside Cameroon significantly contributed to the feasibility of the insurgency. Foreign policy, therefore, should not be an afterthought, a secondary consideration, or outsourced to a foreign state. It is as important as macroeconomic or domestic order policies. These policy areas are interdependent and difficult to isolate in practice. Foreign policy includes international collaboration/cooperation, competition and, often, confrontation. Therefore, developing foreign policy capacity should include military power. The words 'diplomacy without force is like music without instruments' remain as true today as when Frederick the Great of Prussia uttered them. Strategy is for all, weak and strong. The weak pursue Davidian strategy, and the strong Goliathan strategy (from the Bible story of David and Goliath). As the twenty-first century progresses, African states, like Cameroon, that cannot or are unwilling to significantly improve their positions in the international system (especially the international political economy) will find themselves experiencing widespread and persistent insurgencies (Lekunze and Page 2022).

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## Notes on contributor

*Manu Lekunze* is Lecturer in international relations at the University of Aberdeen, United Kingdom. His research interests include security theory, political order (domestic and international), maritime security, African security, counterinsurgency strategy and complexity science. He has authored books, peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters and op-eds that cover national security, strategy, intelligence, political economy, complexity science and ideology. His monographs on security in Cameroon (2019) and contemporary challenges to African security (2020) were published in paperback in 2021.

## Notes

1. International Crisis Group, *Cameroon*. Available at: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon>.
2. The International Crisis Group (2014). *Curbing Violence in Nigeria (II): The Boko Haram Insurgency*. Brussels: The International Crisis Group.
3. Document: Several prefectural orders banning motorcycle taxis in several towns.
4. Interview: Several (Bamenda Resident-1: Ex-insurgent-1, Buea Resident-1, Separatist Activist-1, for example).
5. Interview: Cameroon Academic-2, August 2021; Former prisoner-3, July 2021.
6. Interview: Government Official-4, April 2022.
7. Social media: Video-7.
8. Interview: Military Officer-7, July 2021.
9. Social Media: WhatsApp Text.
10. Document: ICG report.
11. Interview: Cameroon Academic-2, August 2021.
12. Interview: Cameroon Academic-3, August 2021; Separatist Activist-3, August 2021.
13. Social media: Thousands of messages, text, videos and audio.
14. Interview: Cameroon Intelligence Officer-1, July 2021.
15. Interview: Bataillon d'Intervention Rapide Counterterrorism Officer-1, June 2022; BIR Counterterrorism Officer-2, June 2022.
16. Ibid.
17. Interview: Separatist Activist -3, August 2021.
18. Interview: West African security expert-1, August 2021.
19. World Bank Data, available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=CM>.
20. World Bank Data, available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.MKTP.CD?locations=CM>.
21. World Bank Data, available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=CM>.
22. World Bank Data, available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.SEC.ENRL.TC.ZS?locations=1W-CM>.
23. World Bank Data, available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRM.UNER.ZS?locations=CM>.
24. Interview: Cameroon Academic-1, July 2021.
25. Interview: Anglophone elite, August 2021.
26. Interview: Security Analyst-2, August 2021.
27. Interview: 'Consortium' Member-1, August 2021.
28. Document: US SDHR reports.
29. Interview: Ex-insurgent-1, July 2021.
30. Interview: Chief-F, July 2021; Chief-H, June 2022; Government Official-4, April 2022.
31. Social media: Videos and WhatsApp messages.
32. Interview: IDP-6, July 2021.
33. Interview: IDP-8 June 2022.
34. Social media: Several videos and texts denouncing chiefs.
35. Interview: Police Officer-4, July 2021.

## ORCID

Manu Lekunze  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3979-180X>

## Bibliography

Awasom, N. 1998. "Colonial Background to the Development of Autonomist Tendencies in Anglophone Cameroon 1946-1761." *Journal of Third World Studies* 15 (1): 163.

- Barkawi, T. 2017. "War and Politics." In *The Globalisation of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, edited by J. Baylis, S. Smith, and O. Patricia, 223–237. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baylis, J., J. Wirtz, and C. Gray. 2013. *Strategy in the Contemporary World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Blattman, C., and E. Miguel. 2010. "Civil War." *Journal of Economic Literature* 48 (1): 3–57. doi:10.1257/jel.48.1.3.
- Chem-Langhèè, B. 1995. "The Road to the Unitary State of Cameroon 1959-1972." *Paideuma: Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde* 41: 17–25.
- Collier, P., and A. Hoeffler. 2004. "Greed and Grievance in Civil War." *Oxford Economic Papers* 56 (4): 563–595. doi:10.1093/oep/gpf064.
- Collier, P., A. Hoeffler, and D. Rohner. 2008. "Beyond Greed and Grievance: Feasibility and Civil War." *Oxford Economic Papers* 61 (1): 1–27. doi:10.1093/oep/gpn029.
- Collier, P., and N. Sambanis. 2002. "Understanding Civil War: A New Agenda." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46 (1): 3–12. doi:10.1177/0022002702046001001.
- DeLancey, M. D., R. N. Mbuh, and M. W. DeLancey. 2010. *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Cameroon*. 4th ed. Plymouth: The Scarecrow Press.
- Deltombe, T., M. Domergue, and J. Tatsitsa. 2016. *La guerre du Cameroun: L'invention de la Françafrique 1948-1971*. Paris: La Decouverte.
- Dicklitch, S. 2011. "The Southern Cameroons and Minority Rights in Cameroon." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 29 (1): 49–62. doi:10.1080/02589001.2011.533059.
- Fanso, V. 1999. "Anglophone and Francophone Nationalisms in Cameroon." *The Round Table* 88 (350): 281–296. doi:10.1080/003585399108153.
- Fearon, J., and D. Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *American Political Science Review* 97 (1): 75–90. doi:10.1017/S0003055403000534.
- Florea, A. 2012. "Where Do We Go from Here? Conceptual, Theoretical, and Methodological Gaps in the Large-N Civil War Research Program." *International Studies Review* 14 (1): 78–98. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2486.2012.01102.x.
- Galula, D. 1964. *Counterinsurgency Warfare*. Westport: Greenwood Publishing.
- Gray, C. S. 2007. "Irregular Warfare: One Nature, Many Characters." *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 1 (2): 35–57.
- Gray, C. S. 2015. *The Future of Strategy*. London: John Wiley & Sons.
- Guevara, C. E. 2006. *Guerrilla Warfare*. Milton Keynes: Penguin Random House.
- Guzansky, Y. 2011. "Made in Iran: The Iranian Involvement in Iraq." *Strategic Assessment* 13 (4): 90–90.
- Huntington, S. 1968. *Political Order in Changing Societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Jua, N., and P. Konings. 2004. "Occupation of Public Space Anglophone Nationalism in Cameroon." *Cahiers d'études africaines* 44: 609–633. doi:10.4000/etudesaficaines.4756.
- Konings, P., and F. Nyamnjoh. 2019. "Anglophone Secessionist Movements in Cameroon." In *Secessionism in African Politics*, edited by L. de Vries, P. Englebert, and M. Schomerus, 59–89. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Konnings, P., and F. Nyamnjoh. 1997. "The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 35 (2): 207–229. doi:10.1017/S0022278X97002401.
- Le Vine, V. 1964. *The Cameroons: From Mandate to Independence*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lekunze, M. 2019. *Complex Adaptive Systems, Resilience and Security in Cameroon*. London: Routledge.
- Lekunze, M., and B. Page. 2022. "Security in Cameroon: A Growing Risk of Persistent Insurgency." *Canadian Journal of African Studies*. Online.
- Levy, J. S., and W. R. Thompson. 2011. *Causes of War*. Oxford: John Wiley & Sons.
- Mehlera, A. 2014. "Why Federalism Did Not Lead to Secession in Cameroon." *Ethnopolitics* 13: 48–66. doi:10.1080/17449057.2013.844435.
- Murrey, A. 2022. "A Decolonial Political Geography of Resistance and Digital Infrastructural Harm in Cameroon and Ethiopia." *Globalizations*. doi:10.1080/14747731.2022.2149162.
- Nagl, J., J. Amos, S. Sewall, and D. Petraeus. 2008. *The US Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Owona, A. 1973. "La naissance du Cameroun 1884-1914." *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 13: 16–36. doi:10.3406/cea.1973.2724.
- Posen, B. R. 1993. "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict." *Survival* 35 (1): 27–47. doi:10.1080/00396339308442672.
- Rahimi, B. 2012. "Iran's Declining Influence in Iraq." *The Washington Quarterly* 35 (1): 25–40. doi:10.1080/0163660X.2012.641917.
- Rechniewski, E. 2017. "Decolonisation in the Shadow of the Cold War: The Case of French Cameroon." *Australia and New Zealand Journal of European Studies* 9 (3): 52–67.
- Schler, L. 2005. "History, the Nation-State and Alternative Narratives: An Example from Colonial Douala." *African Studies Review* 48 (1): 89–108. doi:10.1353/arw.2005.0038.
- Singer, D. J., and M. Small. 1994. *Correlates of War Project: International and Civil War Data, 1816-1992*. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research.
- Takougang, J. 1994. "Chiefs Johanness Manga Williams and the Making of a Native Colonial Autocrat among the Bakweri of the Southern Cameroons." *Transafrican Journal of History* 23: 9–31.
- Terretta, M. 2010. "Chiefs, Traitors, and Representatives: The Construction of a Political Repertoire in Independence-Era Cameroon." *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 43 (2): 227–253.
- The International Crisis Group. 2014. *Curbing Violence in Nigeria (II): The Boko Haram Insurgency*. Brussels: International Crisis Group.
- Torrent, M. 2012. *Diplomacy and Nation-Building in Africa: Franco-British Relations and Cameroon at the End of Empire*. London: Tauris Books.
- Walt, S. 1991. "The Renaissance of Security Studies." *International Studies Quarterly* 32 (2): 211–239. doi:10.2307/2600471.
- Walt, S. 2017. *Realism and Security*. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*. Oxford University Press, Online.
- Walter, B. 2015. "Why Bad Governance Leads to Repeat Civil War." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59 (7): 1242–1272. doi:10.1177/0022002714528006.
- Waltz, K. 2010. *Theory of International Politics*. Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press.
- Williams, P. 2017. "The Struggle for Security in Africa." *Prism* 6 (4): 32–45.
- Wright, Q., and L. L. Wright. 1983. *A Study of War*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.