



# **Mestrado em Desenvolvimento e Cooperação Internacional**

## **Trabalho Final de Mestrado**

Dissertação

The Colonial Legacies and their Impact on Current Conflicts and  
Development in Africa: The Case of Cameroon

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## **Abstract**

In this dissertation I explore how the colonial legacies contributed to the dynamics and persistence of current conflicts in the African continent, by using a postcolonial approach. I argue that there are three main factors that explain the influence of colonial legacies on contemporary conflicts. Firstly the imposition of artificial borders that didn't respect the pre-existing structures of African societies. Secondly the exploitation of natural resources by the colonial powers resulted in deep economic disparities in the territories in the global south, and finally the implantation of governmental structures that followed a westphalian model, in pre-colonial communities ignoring the authorities of local chiefs and local governance trends. Overall I explain how these elements contribute to current conflict and consequently they also have an impact on development. I illustrate how this phenomenon manifests in reality by analyzing the case of Cameroon and the Anglophone crisis.

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	1
Abstract	2
Introduction	3
1.Literature review	5
1.1 Postcolonial Theories and Perspectives	5
1.2 The impact of colonialism on modern african conflicts	7
1.2.1 The role of slave trade	8
1.2.2 The role of artificial borders	9
1.2.3 - The role of colonial imposing rules	11
1.3 Impact of Conflict on African Development	13
1.3.1 - Impact on economic performance	14
1.3.2- Impact on neighboring countries and displacement	15
1.3.3 - Impacts on governance and state institutions	16
1.3.4 - Consequences on social cohesion	17
1.3.5 - Inequality and violent conflict	18
2.Methodology Chapter	19
3.Internal Conflict: The Case Cameroon	22
3.1 - A country's overview	21
3.2 - Land and Borders	24
3.3 - The role of economic Interests	27
3.4 - Ruling Differently	29
3.5 - Contemporary Conflict: The Anglophone Crisis	29
5. Results and Discussion	31
6. Conclusion	34
7. Bibliography	35

## **Introduction**

Currently out of the 54 African countries, only 8 of them have a high state of peace, that means that the rest of the 46 countries either have medium, low or very low states of peace, according to the Global Peace Index of 2023. The fact that only 14.8% of the continent is considered peaceful is very concerning. Conflicts unleash a multitude of devastating effects on the development of nations, wreaking economic advancement, fostering political turmoil, and inflicting irreparable harm on societies. In order to find solutions for these questions it is fundamental to understand the roots and causes of the conflicts. There are several causes of conflict and for lower development both internal and external to the dynamics of a certain country. However one factor that has major influence on the promotion of conflicts and consequently affects development and is very often neglected is the impact of colonization.

I intend to explore the profound and lasting effects of colonial legacies on the persistence of contemporary conflicts and development in the African continent. I focus specifically on the case of Cameroon and the Anglophone Crisis, a problem that has been affecting the country for decades. Within the country complex colonial past - being ruled by Germany, Britain and France - is a fundamental example of how colonial legacies continually shape political, economic and social landscapes. This is a key illustration of how the colonial past of a nation can deeply influence its future.

In order to stress that this is the case of Cameroon, I argue that there are three main points that help to explain the relation of causality between those two elements. Firstly I argue that the imposition of artificial borders by European colonizers in the African continent, was extremely harmful, since it destroyed entire communities, either by separating them or by doing the opposite and merging different tribes into one. This created massive instability and violence among African societies originating from multiple ethnic conflicts. Secondly I state that the exploration of natural and human resources by the colonial powers created systemic inequalities in the African continent, and not only promoted conflict but also completely crippled development. At last, the implementation of a governmental structure that was not aligned with pre-colonial institutions and cultures, which had detrimental consequences in the African continent.

The research follows a postcolonial framework, using a historical contextualization to examine how colonial policies contribute to the fuelling of conflicts since the post-independence period of the 60s of the last century and lasting into the 21st

century. Overall the main purpose of this research is to establish a direct link between colonial practices and contemporary conflict dynamics. The methodology used in this research is qualitative in its nature, using the case study method to investigate more profoundly the interaction between the colonial past and modern conflicts. This approach allows for a holistic view, providing in-depth insights in how various factors contribute to the perpetuation of armed violence.

Regarding the structure of this dissertation, the first chapter provides a literature review of postcolonial theory alongside existing bibliography regarding the colonial roots of conflicts and also the effects of conflicts in development. This chapter is followed by the methodology chapter where I further explain the methods used to study this subject. The next chapter is the case study of Cameroon where I apply the theory previously presented to the case of the Anglophone crisis. In the results/discussion chapter I delve into how the colonial influence in armed violence still affects development.

## **Chapter 1 - Literature Review**

### **1.1 - Postcolonial Theories and Perspectives**

The persistence of violent conflict in the African continent has profoundly impacted the continent development trajectory. Conflicts have devastated economies, destabilized governance, erode social cohesion and promoted an endless cycle of inequality. In this chapter I will provide a review of the existing literature on what are the main causes of conflict in Africa, how they are directly connected to the colonial legacies and how armed conflict keeps on disrupting development today.

According to Ania Loomba “colonialism can be defined as the conquest and control of other people's land and goods”. However the colonial practices that the Europeans started in the early fourteenth century altered the world dynamics in a way that other forms of colonization and conquest have never been able to do (Loomba, 1998:8). The main reason for this was because earlier colonizers were pre-capitalist, in the case of the Europeans, colonialism established itself alongside capitalism. European colonialism had a pattern of domination that produced an economic imbalance that was necessary for European capitalism and industry (*Ibidem*, 1998:9).

Modern colonialism did more than extract tribute, goods and wealth from the countries that it conquered—it restructured the economies of the latter, drawing them into a complex relationship with their own, so that there was a flow of

human and natural resources between colonized and colonial countries (*Ibidem*, 1998:8).

During the second half of the twentieth century, there was a massive change in the discourse when it came to the history of the Global South, with all of the liberation movements, the postcolonial gradually gained more relevance (Vasiliev *et al* 2021:3). The postcolonial theory is geographically dispersed, around the Global South, the theory is held together by a set of writings that challenge cultural, political and economic hegemony from the West (Mcewan, 2019:47). Instead of viewing postcolonialism as a structure or the period of time right after colonialism it is helpful to think postcolonialism as ongoing efforts to contest and address the enduring effects and legacies of colonial rule (Loomba, 1998:14/16).

There isn't a single origin of postcolonialism, the theory is composed by a diverse set of approaches and strategies that attempt to provide an understanding to colonization, decolonization and liberation movements (Mcewan, 2019:46). However we can identify some pillars of postcolonial theory, first being the influence of writers involved in anti-colonial politics, especially in the African continent, there was a clear focus against racism, an affirmation of black identity and culture and liberation politics. In this pillar we can include the Pan-Africanist Movements, the Negritude Movements from the mid twentieth century, Anti-Colonial Literature and also the Frantz Fanon's vast literature on Colonialism and Racism (*Ibidem*, 2019:49/50/53/57).

A second important moment in the history of postcolonialism was the emergence of women's anti-colonial movements and critique of western feminism. Until the 1970's and 1980's western feminist believed that their struggle was universal, however, besides the gender gaps there was also division when it came to race, class, nationality, religion and other factors that challenged the western hegemony (*Ibidem*, 2019:67-68). Lastly, an important part of the post colonial theory emerged in India in the 1980's, the Subaltern Studies. These studies were focused on post-colonial societies and the developing world, bringing to attention the experiences of the subalterns that were oppressed by the colonial elitism and bourgeois-nationalists (*Ibidem*, 2019:74). The perfect example for that is the work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in the paper "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (*Ibidem*, 2019:82).

Ultimately it's impossible to discuss postcolonialism without mentioning the work of Edward Said, that it's one of the main basis of modern postcolonial studies. In his best known book *Orientalism*, Said explains that the domination of the West goes beyond the political, economic and military realms, it's deeply connected to knowledge and power. Said illustrates how there is a discourse domination from the West, and that is

not merely a matter of language, but rather a discursive regime of oppression (*Ibidem*, 2019:76).

An important association that needs to be made, is the relation between postcolonial theory and development studies. The relation between these two fields of study is complex, multifaceted and field with mutual criticism. Postcolonialism tends to argue that Development Studies impose ideas and practices without listening to the people in the Global South, that consequently become objects of development interventions by the western powers (*Ibidem*, 2019:90). Postcolonialism goes even further and describes, the development projects of the north as a neocolonial program, while development specialists may try to improve the conditions of life in the South, conscious ou unconscious they promote imperialist solutions and discourses into the fragile communities of the South (*Ibidem*, 2019:140). Postcolonialism sees a major necessity in understating the notions of power relations and agency. Postcolonial scholars argue that the western agendas for development can often marginalize local knowledge, cultures and practices, as it did in the past (McFarlane 2006)<sup>1</sup>

## **1.2 - The impact of colonialism on modern african conflicts**

European colonial legacies have been linked to almost all of Africa's problems. Since the slave trade period in 1400 until the independence movements in the second half of the twentieth century (Michalopoulos and Papaioannou, 2018:3/4). The colonial violence has taken multiple forms through the centuries, the colonial legacy of violence is expressed through massacres, bombing, genocides and extermination of indigenous communities (Persaud and Kumarakulasingam, 2019:199). Those legacies of abuse, violence and oppression, continue to shape the everyday life of the African continent, by impacting the political, economic and cultural grounds. It's impossible to understand contemporary violence in the global south, without taking in consideration colonial heritage and historical legacies. In that sense the colonial heritage still has a major influence on the development of Africa (Parashar and Schulz, 2021:2/7). As the authors describe:

The contemporary problems of Africa, including the ongoing conflicts, governance challenges and entrenched inequalities, can be traced to colonial practices and legacies that have been sustained through neo-liberal, neo-colonial networks and global institutions dominated by the

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<sup>1</sup> McFarlane, C. (2006) 'Traditional development networks: bringing development and postcolonial approaches into dialogue' *Geographical Journal* vol. 172, n°1, pp. 35–49 in McEwan, C. (2019). *Postcolonialism, Decoloniality and Development* (2nd ed.). Routledge.



Global North and through the local elites who are supported by Western powers (Parashar and Schulz, 2021:11)

The colonial project was an extremely violent process, followed by decolonial and postcolonial periods, that also unleashed multiple forms of violence (*Ibidem* , 2021:6) The western-style of state building in Africa was particularly aggressive, “the process of ‘becoming’ has unleashed its own structures of violence” in that sense, violence was an intrinsic element of the formation of the nation-state system that western powers imposed in Africa. All thought belonging to the nation state is a violent imposition, the resistance to it can be even worse (*Ibidem* , 2021:7). The colonial violence was planned to facilitate the establishment of various systems and structures that granted rights to the colonizer while depriving the colonized of those very rights. (Persaud and Kumarakulasingam, 2019:200). The continuity of violence was the result of colonial encounters and their legacies, however these elements keep on being ignored when it comes to the analysis of contemporary conflicts (Parashar and Schulz, 2021:7).

### **1.2.1 The role of slave trade**

A important element that justifies the effect of colonial legacies on current african conflict, is the slave trade. Slave trade has the most common type of trade in the pre-colonial era, exporting roughly 18 million enslaved people (Nunn, 2008)<sup>2</sup>. Around the sixteenth century, European countries would only accept slaves for trade. As the demand for slaves kept on growing european rulers, would provide guns and gunpowder to africans for them to acquire additional slaves through armed conflict, consequently fuelling this cycle of violence (Whatley, 2018)<sup>3</sup> and (Boxell *et al*, 2019:8).

During the pre-colonial period, conflicts were common as tribes engaged in warfare to capture their rivals, whom they would then sell to European traders (*Ibidem*, 2019:7). However in the colonial period Europeans had control over the human resources and the natural resources so they were able to control the conflict dynamics over both resources by detaining the state monopoly of force. There was only conflict if the Europeans would allow it to happen. During the colonial period, Europeans represented a common enemy that took the attention of inter-ethnic conflict between

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<sup>2</sup> Nunn, Nathan, (2008), “The long-term effects of Africa’s slave trades.” *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol 128 n°1:139–176 in Boxell, Levi, *et al*. "The Slave Trade and Conflict in Africa, 1400-2000." MPRA Paper No. 94468, (2019) pp.5.

<sup>3</sup> Whatley, Warren C., (2018), “The gun-slave hypothesis and the 18th century British slave trade. Explorations in Economic History” , vol 67 pp. 80–104. in Boxell, Levi, *et al*. "The Slave Trade and Conflict in Africa, 1400-2000." MPRA Paper No. 94468, (2019) pp.7.

African groups (*Ibidem*, 2019:22). Even though there was a reduction of active conflict from pre-colonial to the colonial period, the slave trade conflict has persisted in time, into the post-colonial period (*Ibidem*, 2019:20).

Regions with higher slave trade exports, currently are more prone to experience violence. The intensity of current political violence is 18.4% higher in regions that were affected by slave trade, comparing to regions that were not affected. Also, slave trade can substantially increase the risk of riots and other violent disturbances (Zhang *et al*, 2021:781/787). As I mentioned before, enslaved people were often obtained through ethnic conflict, between different tribes. Consequently, countries with a higher prevalence of slave trade tend to exhibit weaker national identities. Individuals are more inclined to develop a strong sense of ethnic identity rather than national identity, largely due to historical experiences that foster a strong sense of belonging within a specific community and a perception of other communities as enemies. Those feelings of ethnic identity have persisted through time, into the colonial and post-colonial period. As a consequence, not only do current states have weaker national identities, they also have a higher risk of developing ethnic conflict (*Ibidem*, 2021:790).

In the post-colonial period the common enemy was no longer present, leaving space for the reappearance of inter-ethnic conflict. In the postcolonial era ethnic groups engaged in conflict again not over human resources, but over natural resources and access to them. Colonialism, particularly the slave trade, gave rise to institutions that prioritized and perpetuated conflicts over resources. As tribes were obligated to fight each other to be able to acquire enslaved people and sell them, since the Europeans have completely monopolized the trade economy. Following the departure of Europeans from African countries, a multitude of unresolved issues were left behind, contributing to a significant increase in armed conflicts (Boxell *et al*, 2019:24).

### **1.2.2 The role of artificial borders**

An important element that helps to explain the lack of peace in the African continent, was the physical demarcation of state borders in Africa by the European rulers. During the colonial period, as European powers competed for control over the continent's natural resources, delineating boundaries became imperative to assign governance of specific territories to each European power. However the delimitation of those frontiers had severe consequences on the political life of the continent (Robinson, 2019: 5).

The Berlin Conference in 1884-1885 was the official beginning of the scramble of Africa, and officially initiated the colonial period. The conference tried to establish a few borders and created some very vague rules for occupation (Pain *et al*, 2021:5/12).

Some authors claim that the division of Africa was made randomly, without any previous consideration, Nevertheless, that was not the case as the scramble for Africa was an accident, by the contrary, Europeans thought strategically to divide the continent and its resources (*Ibidem*, 2021:34).

The formation of African colonial borders happened at a macro level and was conducted by the Europeans. The border formation process was long, in 1887 only 18% of the borders were completed. Around 1891 Europe had claimed 83% of Africa coastal territory and 58% of the interior, yet many borders still weren't defined (*Ibidem*, 2021: 9-11). Europeans steelers had interested in claiming certain territories, however they were also trying to avoid intra-european conflict due to those interests<sup>4</sup> With that said, although the continent was not randomly divided, that division still had major consequences and it's a pivotal point in explaining today's African conflicts (*Ibidem*, 2021: 35-36).

According to the authors, there are two main points when it comes to colonial border formation: major water bodies. and historical political frontiers (from precolonial states). Regarding major water bodies, Europeans tried to divide Africa having in mind strategic water bodies such as rivers, lakes and access to the coast. When marking borders the Europeans based themselves on access to water, this because rivers and other water bodies would facilitate transportation and trade, a strategic advantage that European powers had in mind. In 63% of Africa bilateral borders water bodies are a major feature (*Ibidem*, 2021: 15/29).

In the case of historical political frontiers, precolonial states had some importance in defining African colonial borders. Ideally the new colonial borders should not cut through areas where precolonial states existed. This was not because the Europeans were benevolent towards Africans, it was simply a way to avoid conflict with automatically meant to waste resources. But avoiding conflict was not always possible, in many cases, Europeans engaged in disputes over the limits of historical states. In some cases treaties to expand territorial claims were only signed by African rulers, due to the use of force by the Europeans (*Ibidem*, 2021: 25).

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<sup>4</sup> Herbst, Jeffrey. (2000). *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*. Princeton: Princeton University Press and Christensen. and Darin and David D Laitin. (2019). *African States since Independence: Order, Development, and Democracy*. New Haven: Yale University Press. in Pain J, et al, (2021) "Endogenous Colonial Borders: Precolonial States and Geography in the Partition of Africa." *American Political Science Review* pp. 6.

Even though maintaining the original pre colonial borders and avoid cutting through precolonial states, could be applied in cases where the pre-colonial states were larger with more structures, most of the times that was not the case, especially in areas with smaller precolonial states (*Ibidem*, 2021:14). The exercise of state formation was harmful in many ways, but particularly when it comes to dismemberment and suffocation of populations. Dismemberment occurs when a community within a region (this being a pre colonial state) gets torn apart in several communities, by the contrary suffocation happens when different groups are forced into one large group in order to form a country (Englebert 2002) and (Darin and Laitin 2019).<sup>5</sup> That was the case of most precolonial states of smaller dimensions.

The major problem with the creation of colonial borders was precisely the dismemberment and suffocation of communities, the result of those actions was major ethnic tensions. Those tensions generated ethnic inequalities since in colonial rule, very often Europeans, through indirect ruling - an element that I will explain further on - allowed some ethnic elites to control valuable resources, allocation of funds and other important decisions. That ethnic disparity as an outcome generated violent armed conflict (Pain, 2018:653/655). In the precolonial period in Africa, the notion of nationalism was nonexistent, in the colonial period Europeans enforced nationalistic concepts into the african precolonial states. That promoted a solidification of ethnic identities, facilitated ethnic inequalities and created animosities between ethnic groups. (*Ibidem*, 2018:649).

With decolonization, those asymmetries became even more evident, especially in countries that had a higher number of precolonial states within their borders (*Ibidem*, 2018:656/657). That is one of the reasons why african countries face so many coups in the postcolonial era, african rulers inherited splitter regimes, where an ethnic group would dominate the political realm, oppressing the other groups, that created the perfect conditions for violent coups to happen (Harkness 2018) and (Sudduth 2017).<sup>6</sup>

### 1.2.3 - The role of colonial imposing rules

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<sup>5</sup>Englebert, Pierre, Stacy Tarango and Matthew Carter. (2002) "Dismemberment and Suffocation: A Contribution to the Debate on African Boundaries." *Comparative Political Studies* vol.35, 1093– 1118 and Christensen, Darin and David D Laitin. (2019) *African States since Independence: Order, Development, and Democracy*. New Haven: Yale University Press. in Pain J, *et al*, (2021) "Endogenous Colonial Borders: Precolonial States and Geography in the Partition of Africa." *American Political Science Review* pp. 18.

<sup>6</sup>Harkness, Kristin A. (2018). *When Soldiers Rebel: Ethnic Armies and Political Instability in Africa*. Cambridge University Press. and Sudduth, Jun Koga. (2017) "Strategic Logic of Elite Purges in Dictatorships. *Comparative Political Studies*" vol.50 1768–801. in Paine J. (2019) "Ethnic Violence in Africa: Destructive Legacies of Pre-Colonial States." *International Organization*; 73(3) 645-683, pp. 652.

An important element from the colonial period that can also justify the current conflicts in Africa, was the methods and strategies used by the Europeans during colonization. One of the most used strategies during the colonial times was the “divide and rule “ strategy or the indirect ruling strategy (Robinson, 2019:3) and (Ray, 2018:368). These strategies intended to create divisions among the different ethnic groups in order to promote conflict among them and weaken potential forms of resistance, making it easier for European colonial rule to thrive. As a result, in the post colonial period, when new states started to emerge, there was a major question regarding which ethnic group would rule the nation. On one side there were middle-class elites, from bigger and more represented groups, that wanted to rule, and on the other side there were groups that have been ostracized and wanted to promote their ethnicity and values into the new nation (*Ibidem*, 2018:371-373).

In this regard Pain makes an important differentiation between two groups of situations. The first being pre colonial groups (PCS), that is a group that was organized as a precolonial state before European colonization, and the second being stateless pre colonial groups (SLPCS). These were groups that did not have a central pre-colonial structure before colonization, as a result the latter lacked the historical and political privileges and advantages as the first group did (*Ibidem*, 2018:659). The main point is that PCS groups have engaged 2.3 times more in armed conflict and SLPCS enrolled 4.9 times more in civil wars (*Ibidem*, 2018:667). The pivotal factor is that the Europeans completely altered the basis of precolonial states, either by separating them or by forcing different ethnic communities living together in one cohesive country. The consequence was the increase of current conflicts and violence in the African continent (*Ibidem*, 2018:679).

As mentioned previously, the reasons for current armed conflict in Africa can be traced to the colonial legacies of violence. Although it is known that strong state structures reduce the risk of civil war, that is not the case of colonized countries Casper Sakstrup explains how states that had strong pre colonial structures, nowadays have higher levels of armed conflict. The transition from robust precolonial states to the current landscape of fragile and failed states can be attributed to the impact of European colonization (Sakstrup, 2023:2132).

In places that had lower levels of pre colonial development, it was much easier for the Europeans to eradicate indigenous authority and replace it with colonial structures. Doing that the colonial regime had a complete state monopoly of force, and the same did not happen for regions with higher levels of precolonial development. These regions had a bigger chance to fight european colonizers. As a consequence the pattern of colonization became irregular, leaving areas with a mix of structures and

authorities, dividing the monopoly of force (*Ibidem*, 2023:2135). Those areas today are more likely to face armed conflicts because it's much easier for rebels to organize and recruit there, without a strong state control (*Ibidem*, 2023:2136).

An essential aspect that further explains European influence in perpetuating violence in Africa is the acknowledgment that, during the pre-colonial era, the slave trade served as a motor for development, as previously mentioned (Nunn, 2008)<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, it's not just through the facilitation of the slave trade that Europeans promoted violence. Upon effectively colonizing African territories during the colonial period, they dismantled the very structures established by indigenous African societies. As a result of that, Europeans kept with the cycle of violence by trying to fully obtain the state monopoly of force.

### **1.3. Impact of Conflict on African Development**

According to data from the PRIO (Peace Research Institute), Africa keeps on being the region that is most affected by conflict. There are three types of conflict: state-based conflicts, non state based conflicts and one-sided violence<sup>8</sup>. The continent experienced 28 state-based conflicts in 2023, compared to ten years ago, the number of conflicts in Africa has nearly doubled from 15 in 2013 to 28 in 2023 (Rustad, S. 2024:6/7/14)

When it comes to non-state based conflicts in 2023 there were 75 non-state conflicts, concerning one-sided violence the numbers slightly decreased compared to the previous year (*Ibidem*, 2021:16/18). In 2023 there were over 122 000 battle related fatalities in the African continent, there was a reduction in the number of deaths compared to the previous year, however 2023 was the third most violent year since 1989 (*Ibidem*, 2024:20). According to the Global Peace Index of 2023 out of the 54 African countries, only 8 have a high state of peace, that means that the rest of the 46 countries either have medium, low or very low states of peace. Only around 15% of the entire continent is considered peaceful (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2023:10/11).

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<sup>7</sup> Nunn, Nathan, (2008) "The long-term effects of Africa 's slave trades." Quarterly Journal of Economics, vol. 128 139–176 in Boxell, Levi, *et al.* "The Slave Trade and Conflict in Africa, 1400-2000." MPRA Paper No. 94468, (2019) pp. 13.

<sup>8</sup> State-based conflict is a contested incompatibility over government and/or territory, where at least one party is a state and the use of armed force results in at least 25 battle-related deaths within a calendar year. Non-state conflict consists in the use of armed force between organized groups, none of which is the government of a state, resulting in at least 25 battle-related deaths within a year. One-sided violence occurs when the use of armed force against civilians by the government of a state or by a formally organized group, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths. Extrajudicial killings in custody are excluded.

### 1.3.1 - Impact on economic performance

It's a known fact that conflict has a devastating effect on development as conflicts reshape completely the dynamics of societies. Not only do they promote massive losses of human life and destruction of infrastructures, but also have a great impact on economic growth, social stability, political structures and exacerbate inequalities (Fang *et al*, 2020:3) Studies highlight that the relation between economic growth and conflict is inversely related. Once a conflict occurs there is a decline in economic performance. When a state enters a conflict it is expected that his Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is 2.5 percentage points lower compared to a country presenting a scenario of peace (*Ibidem*, 2020:11/22). Another important element is that the economic performance does not depend on the type of conflict occurring, it depends on the intensity of that same conflict, the more intense the conflict the lower will be the economic performance. If there is an increase in conflict intensity, GDP can be up to 4.75 lower than average (*Ibidem*, 2020:16/17).

The economic consequences of armed conflict can be multiple, conflict can severely affect agricultural production, industrial production and services since it devastates entire cities and its infrastructures, trade and the conditions of investment (Collier, 1999)<sup>9</sup>. Conflict also reduces consumption of goods by the population by around 6 percent in the first year and 12 percent in the following year. Furthermore conflict has a major influence on external trade dynamics, since it reduces exports by 26 percent in the first year escalating to 35 percent in the second year, over a period of ten years of conflict, this reduction on trade can potentially reach a staggering 58% decline according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) this happens because there is no longer a high demand for inputs like imported goods (*Ibidem*, 2022:4) and (Novta and Pugacheva, 2020:13). During this period, there is a substantial shift in government expenditure patterns. In conflict situations spending is not directed to investment, since it is no longer a priority, instead the states focus their attention on increasing the military and defense budget (Fang *et al*, 2020:22).

Another relevant issue in this situation is that those consequences do not stagnate in time, it's the opposite, they continue beyond the conflict period leaving significant long term effects on the economy of those countries (Le *et al*, 2022:8). In fact these consequences are so serious and persistent that they put states on a 'conflict trap'. The concept of a 'conflict trap' describes a state highly susceptible to relapse into conflict again as a result of the conditions present in the post-conflict landscape (Cerra and

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<sup>9</sup> Collier, P., (1999). "On the economic consequences of civil war". Oxf. Econ. vol. 51 168–183. in Le, T. *et al* (2022). "Economic and social impacts of conflict: A cross-country analysis." *Economic Modelling*, Vol. 115, 1-13 pp.10.

Saxena, 2008)<sup>10</sup>. Regarding water and sanitation, it's probable that water and sanitation infrastructures have been compromised, exacerbating the spread of diseases, agricultural output is also likely to have suffered significant setbacks (Groot *et al*, 2022:262). These multifaceted repercussions underscore the acute fragility of post-conflict economies, rendering them highly susceptible to the resurgence of new conflicts.

### **1.3.2 - Impact on neighboring countries and displacement**

A common element of armed conflict is the spillover effect that can have on other neighboring countries. A conflict in a neighboring country can significantly increase the diffusion of conflict into other countries of the region. Another problem with this situation is that even if neighbors are affected by conflict, or the consequences of conflict, they may not receive aid since they are not seen as a conflict victim like the host country (Groot, 2010)<sup>11</sup> And as Carmignani and Kler put it, countries that live in conflict prone regions already have fragile institutions by themselves. When stricken by conflict or its consequences, neighboring countries may find themselves in very difficult situations (Carmignani and Kler, 2018:492).

A conflict in a nearby country can have an influence on trade, as I mentioned previously, can also compromise the economic integration of the neighboring country that is not in conflict with the rest of the world. Conflicts in the region can also have a major impact on the GDP of a country, leading to a slower development in that country (*Ibidem*, 2018:493).

Another element of violent conflict is the displacement of people that may occur. Conflict displacement includes any situation in which people have to leave their homes in order to escape violence. That may include refugees, asylum seekers, and also internally displaced people (Lischer, 2007)<sup>12</sup>. In conflict situations most of the displaced people relocate within the country, a percentage of displaced people seek refuge out of their home country (Braithwaite *et al*, 2019:5). For the ones that look for refuge outside of their countries, according to the United Nations Refugee Agency, refugees can stay in host countries up to 26 years after the beginning of the conflict in

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<sup>10</sup> Cerra, V., Saxena, S.C., (2008). "Growth dynamics: the myth of economic recovery." *Am. Econ.* vol. 98 (1), 439–457 in Le, T. *et al* (2022). "Economic and social impacts of conflict: A cross-country analysis." *Economic Modelling*, Vol.115, 1-13 pp.1.

<sup>11</sup> Groot, Olaf J (2010) "The spillover effects of conflict on economic growth in neighbouring countries in Africa". *Defence and Peace Economics* vol. 21(2): 149–164. in Groot, O. *et al* (2022). "The global economic burden of violent conflict." *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 59, 259–276. pp- 262.

<sup>12</sup> Lischer S.K. (2007) "Causes and Consequences of Conflict-Induced Displacement" *Civil Wars* in Miller, S. "Conflict-induced displacement and development" in Bastia, T., & Skeldon, R -. (Eds.). (2020). *Handbook of Migration and Development*, Routledge pp.364.



their home country (UNHCR 2016)<sup>13</sup>. People in these situations may experience discrimination in the provision of assistance, forced recruitment to join armed forces, can be more prone to other types of violence and abuse and upon return may face serious difficulties to access their homes and even face issues on property restitution (Sarah Deardorff Miller 2020)<sup>14</sup>.

### **1.3.3 - Impacts on governance and state institutions**

Conflicts can also have a tremendous impact on governance and on state institutions, crippling development, in fact many times governance has been shaped by violence (Justino, 2018:5). Countries affected by conflict are places of intense institutional change, since political actors either constantly contest the political structures or try to re-enforce it. These institutional changes have profound effects on the quality of life, and on the survival of the population (*Ibidem*, 2018:6/7). States affected by conflict tend to display lower levels of administrative capacity, limited rule of law, have endemic difficulties in providing services to the population and also have high levels of social polarization. The administrative and governmental institutions of these countries typically have major incapacities when it comes to managing risks. This leaves them particularly vulnerable not only to the worsening of conflict dynamics but also to additional challenges such as natural disasters (IMF, 2022:8).

Conflict impedes development by inherently diminishing state capacity. During armed violence, governments often find themselves unable to perform their common tasks, for example, most of the time the state has bigger difficulty in collecting taxes. The outcome is that the government is incapable of delivering essential services crucial to the well-being of their citizens (Babajide, 2021:2/4). The quality of state institutions are not only fundamental to development itself, but also are directly associated with the likelihood of preventing, enduring and resolving conflicts. Nevertheless poor countries typically have limited resources to establish strong administrations and prevent violence. States with weak institutions are more sustainable to conflict, yet states in conflict do not have the necessary time and resources to create new institutions that are able to help solve the conflict (Jha, 2022:3).

Authors find that there is a relationship between rule of law, corruption, and armed conflict. States where the rule of law is flawed there is more space for violence and consequently for armed conflict. (*Ibidem*, 2022:3). When it comes to corruption, studies have found that corruption can be both a driver that leads to conflict, or a

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<sup>13</sup> UNHCR. (2016) "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015" p. 20 in Miller, S. "Conflict-induced displacement and development" by Bastia, T., & Skeldon, R. (Eds.). (2020). *Handbook of Migration and Development*, Routledge. pp 364

<sup>14</sup> Miller, S. "Conflict-induced displacement and development" in Bastia, T., & Skeldon, R. (Eds.). (2020). *Handbook of Migration and Development*, Routledge pp366

consequence of armed violence. Corruption can lead to the misallocation of resources, unequal distribution of wealth, promoting the lack of trust in state institutions and on the government leading to violent conflict (*Ibidem*, 2022:2/5). During active conflict corruption can be a way to promote and facilitate violence by allowing impunity for perpetrators, also corruption can undermine conflict resolution and post-conflict peace as well (*Ibidem*, 2022:11).

#### **1.3.4 - Consequences on social cohesion**

Armed conflicts, and overall violence severely disrupts social cohesion, yet the social and institutional legacies of conflict remain on being the least understood of all the war impacts (Blattman and Miguel 2010)<sup>15</sup>. Authors describe social cohesion as the vertical and horizontal relations among members of society, those relations are what holds societies together. (Leininger et al 2021)<sup>16</sup>. When it comes to social matters, conflict is considered an event that intensifies group dysfunctions, since it can promote in-group bonding, however reduces connectivity with out-groups. This can be a serious element since it fosters dangerous rivalry between factions. (Fiedler, 2023:5).

Fiedler argues that there are three different types of social cohesion: trust, cooperation and identity. (*Ibidem*, 2023:2). Concerning trust, studies suggest that conflict negatively impacts social trust. Conflict negatively impacts social trust, trust in strangers and out-group trust which is probably the most important. The decrease of the trust is proportional to the intensity of the violence, the more intense in the conflict, the bigger is the fall of trust. (*Ibidem*, 2023:7). Included in social trust, political trust is also instantly reduced after a violent conflict (*Ibidem*, 2023:13). Some authors went even further and prove that this also applies in a long term perspective, countries that have experienced acute violence between 1400 and 1700, today have significantly lower out-group trust (Besley and Reynal-Querol 2014)<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Blattman, C., and Edward M.. (2010). "Civil War." *Journal of Economic Literature* vol. 48, 3–57. in Fiedler, C. (2023). "What Do We Know about How Armed Conflict Affects Social Cohesion? A Review of the Analytical Essay" *International Studies Review*,. German Institute of Development and Sustainability pp.2.

<sup>16</sup> Leininger, Julia *et al*, (2021). "Social Cohesion: A New Definition and a Proposal for Its Measurement in Africa, Die Discussion Paper" . Bonn: German Development Institute in Fiedler, C. (2023). "What Do We Know about How Armed Conflict Affects Social Cohesion? A Review of the Analytical Essay" *International Studies Review*,. German Institute of Development and Sustainability pp.3.

<sup>17</sup> Besley, Timothy, and Marta Reynal-Querol. (2014). "The Legacy of Historical Conflict: Evidence from Africa." *American Political Science Review* 108(2): 319–36 in Fiedler, C. (2023). "What Do We Know about How Armed Conflict Affects Social Cohesion? A Review of the Analytical Essay" *International Studies Review*,. German Institute of Development and Sustainability pp.12.

Identity is another element that gets remarkably affected by armed conflict. Fielder explains that there exist three types of identities in the social scenario, personal identity, group identity and national identity, and they are affected differently by conflicts. Violence negatively impacts personal and national identities, and yet it increases group identity. (*Ibidem*, 2023:27). This may even be more intense if the armed conflict happening has ethnic motives, since ethnic conflicts draw more attention to the incompatibilities between state and ethnic groups (Nair and Sambanis 2019)<sup>18</sup>.

Even though social trust and identity decreases after violent conflict, the same does happen for cooperation after conflict situations. As a matter of fact, cooperation tends to increase after violent conflicts (*Ibidem*, 2023:18). Experience violence promotes political discussions, civic participation in the communities, voting and knowledge of politics (Luca and Verpoorten 2015)<sup>19</sup>. Cooperation may increase in the post-conflict scenario, for several motives. Individuals may try to have a more active role in society to enhance personal safety and address economic hardships resulting from the war (*Ibidem*, 2023:4). Also people may be available to cooperate and collaborate within the communities as a collective coping mechanism promoting community resilience for dealing with the psychological effects of violence (*Ibidem*, 2023:5/24).

### **1.3.5 - Inequality and violent conflict**

As I have described in the last section, conflicts can have catastrophic effects in society. When examining armed conflict and its consequences, inequality is another pertinent concept that emerges. Inequality and conflict create a vicious cycle that maintains itself by propagating underdevelopment. Societies with high levels of poverty and inequality are fertile grounds for the formation of violent armed rebel groups (Odusola *et al*, 2019:221). As I mentioned previously Africa is the region in the world with the most active conflicts, as a consequence is also one of the most unequal regions in the world, out of the 50 most unequal countries, 23 are african countries, around 46 percent of african countries face severe inequalities (*Ibidem*, 2019:224).

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<sup>18</sup>Nair, Gautam, and Nicholas Sambanis . (2019). “Violence Exposure and Ethnic Identification: Evidence from Kashmir.” *International Organization* vol. 73, 329–63 in Fiedler, C. (2023). “What Do We Know about How Armed Conflict Affects Social Cohesion? A Review of the Analytical Essay” *International Studies Review*,. German Institute of Development and Sustainability

<sup>19</sup> De Luca, Giacomo, and Marijke Verpoorten. (2015). “Civil War and Political Participation: Evidence from Uganda.” *Economic Development and Cultural Change* vol. 64, 113–41. in Fiedler, C. (2023). “What Do We Know about How Armed Conflict Affects Social Cohesion? A Review of the Analytical Essay” *International Studies Review*,. German Institute of Development and Sustainability

In this context of a permanent cycle of conflict and inequalities, it is hard to understand whether poverty is a cause or a consequence of armed violence. Some authors assume that overall poverty and social exclusion are the main causes of conflict, however, as explained in Okunlola and Okafor paper, violent conflict might be also a factor of poverty:

Violent conflict contributes to poverty by causing: damage to infrastructure, institutions and production; the destruction of assets; the breakup of communities and social networks; forced displacement; increased unemployment and inflation; changes in access to and relationship with local exchange, employment, reducing human development, credit and insurance markets; falls in spending on social services; and death and injury to people<sup>20</sup> (Okunlola and Okafor 2022: 105).

Conflict and poverty become one, since poverty makes countries more susceptible to conflict, there is an overall dissatisfaction and profound inequalities in the social, economic and political realms. On the other hand, armed conflicts weaken governmental structures, economic performance and social scenario, and by consequence intensifying poverty (Okunlola and Okafor, 2020:113).

To summarize and based on the several authors mentioned previously, it's clear that conflict has a disastrous effect on development. Armed violence impacts society not only by directly promoting destruction and taking the life of hundreds of people, but also it has a major impact on the core structures of state. Violence degrades the economic life of the country, erodes the governmental institutions, and traumatizes the society. On top of that conflict is intrinsically connected in a vicious cycle with poverty and inequality, leaving countries trapped in this loop of underdevelopment.

## **Chapter 2 - Methodology Chapter**

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the design and research methods used during this dissertation. Starting from a postcolonial view, my goal is to explore the enduring effects of European colonial rule and how they promote contemporary conflicts in Africa. As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, there is extensive research that covers the effects of colonial rule in the African continent and its consequences. Artificial borders, resource exploitation, ethnic divisions, and imposition of a governmental structure are some of the major characteristics of European colonialism.

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<sup>20</sup> Addison *et al.* (2010); Baddeley, (2011) Justino, (2010); ACAPS and MapAction, 2013; Justino & Verwimp, (2013); McGillivray & Noorbakhsh, (2004); USAID, 2014 in Okunlola, C., & Okafor, G. (2022). "Conflict-Poverty Relationship in Africa: A Disaggregated Approach" *Journal of Interdisciplinary Economics*, Vol 34, 104–129 pp 105.

However a comprehensive examination that connects the European colonial legacies to the persistence of contemporary conflicts deserves a more and more deep research and academic discussion. This gap in the literature is very significant, since understanding the historical context of conflicts is crucial for developing effective solutions and policies for the conflict resolution and therefore to promote further development. Without analyzing the colonial past and its consequences, it's impossible to understand and study current conflicts, especially in the global south. In that sense this thesis aims to realize how the colonial past contributes to current conflict dynamics.

I will use three main arguments that connected help to justify the connection between the colonial legacies and contemporary conflicts in Africa. Previous bibliography has tried to connect individual elements of colonialism with contemporary conflicts. I aim to demonstrate how the intersection of artificial borders, resource exploitation, and the imposition of foreign governmental structures forms a critical framework for understanding and contextualizing contemporary conflicts.

Artificial borders may be the most explicit consequence of European colonialism that helps to explain contemporary conflicts in Africa. The inconsequential division of the continent by the Europeans led to the dismemberment and suffocation of communities, as a result there was major ethnic tensions that perpetuated through time (Pain, 2021:14). Those ethnic tensions created by the Europeans in order to conquer territory, explain some of the current ethnic conflicts in the continent, as I will explain in the case of Cameroon in the next chapter.

Resource exploitation is also a major element that helps to explain the continuity of conflicts in Africa. During colonial times, Europeans controlled both human and natural resources in the continent. The slave trade, fostered strong ethnic identities and weakened national identities, perpetuating ethnic conflicts post-colonially, since slaves were captured through armed conflict between different communities and tribes. Countries that had highest slave trade export currently have higher rates of violence as I explained before (Boxell *et al*, 2019:8) and (Zhang *et al*, 2021:781/787).

Europeans also had specific strategies to create divisions among different ethnic groups to promote conflict and weaken potential resistance. Traditional African governance systems were often rooted in local customs, social hierarchies and indigenous practices. By imposing foreign governmental structures that disrupted existing African governance systems, the European colonial legacies created long

lasting instability that not only crippled development, but also is one of the main causes of conflict (Robinson, 2019:3)

In order to explain my point of view I will be relying on postcolonial theory. This theory allows me to have a fundamental framework in order to analyze the current impacts of colonialism in contemporary African conflicts. The postcolonial theory not only reveals the unequal power dynamics, social hierarchies and forced cultural legacies that the global north imposed for centuries in the global south communities, but is also crucial to deconstruct those structures (Loomba, 1998:8/9). Understanding the consequences of the colonial legacies would not be possible without diving into the postcolonial theory.

To accomplish my goal, I will use a qualitative research methodology more specifically the Case Study method. The qualitative approach is fundamental in this dissertation, due to its effective understanding of complex social phenomena, historical and political contexts, exploring subjective experiences and perspectives, and finally also because it provides a holistic understanding of interconnected factors (Berg and Lune, 2017:13-15). The qualitative research method helps to explain the relationships between important social variables and how they can affect a certain population (*Ibidem*, 2017:17). The case study method attempts to investigate an event or set of events with the goal of describing these phenomena. This method involves gathering enough information about a particular event, group or social setting in order to allow the researcher to understand how the subject behaves (*Ibidem*, 2017:170). Focussing on a single event, group or social setting enables the researcher to have a holistic vision of the element of study.

The case studies methodology has a similar design to other methodologies. In this case, the researcher will start by proposing an idea, or research question for the study; will develop a research design that may include a single case study or a multiple case study approach, understand how to obtain access to information and how to study that data. After that the researcher enters the reflection phase, it will reflect on what the gathered information means, its implications and conceptual framework, compared the information to the literature review and finally it will hopefully offer some explanations for the problem in the initial idea or research question (*Ibidem*, 2017:172).

Since I intend to investigate the enduring effects of European colonial rule and how these legacies promote contemporary conflicts and developmental challenges in Africa. I seek for a causal relationship between two major phenomena, colonialism and current conflicts and also how complex influences such as historical, social and

political contexts help to explain that causality relationship. In order to study that, I will be using a specific case study method, the explanatory case study. This type of case study is particularly helpful when it comes to investigate complex situations and understand a cause-effect relationship. Also this method is particularly helpful due to its holistic view, it allows to study various conditions and factors that may help to explain an event or social phenomenon, which is exactly what I'm looking for (*Ibidem*, 2017:176).

In order to explain my argument, data collection and data analysis are a crucial aspect. For this purpose I collected data from secondary data sources, mostly academic journals and books, as they are fundamental to understand theoretical and empirical research made in this topic and can cover important context when it comes to historical events. Aside from those, I also will be using governmental and non governmental organizations (NGO) reports that provide updated information and data on the current conflicts and development of countries.

I will analyze the collected data having in mind a historical contextualization and the postcolonial theory ensuring a deeper understanding of the colonial legacies and their ongoing impact on contemporary conflicts that occur in Africa. Having a historical contextualization of colonialism and how specific events, like the Berlin Conference, have shaped policies and economic conditions is extremely helpful to understand the connection between the colonial past and the present armed conflicts. Using the postcolonial theory will allow me to use a critical framework as foundation in order to prove my main goal.

Without giving too many spoilers for the next chapter, as a case study I will focus on Cameroon. The country's distinctive colonial history and ongoing armed conflicts provide a good example to support my main argument. The country's complex colonial past - the German, British and French ruling - left a multifaceted legacy that continues to influence the nation's social, political and economic life (Halle, 2014: 3/4). The current conflict in Cameroon - the Anglophone crisis - is the perfect example of the consequences of the colonial past of the nation. (*Ibidem*, 2014:5). Using Cameroon as an example I aim to illustrate how the artificial borders, resource exploitation and imposition of a governmental structure still help to justify the existence of contemporary conflicts in Africa.

### **Chapter 3 - Internal Conflict: The Case Cameroon**

In this chapter I will be focussing on Cameroon, the country that I selected as a case study for this thesis. In this analysis I will explore how Cameroon exemplifies the

influence of colonial legacies on present-day conflicts and their impact on development..

### 3.1 . A country's overview

Cameroon is a country located in west Africa, bordering Nigeria, Chad Central African Republic and Equatorial Guinea. The Republic of Cameroon was first colonized by the Germans from 1884 until 1916, with the defeat of Germans in World War I the territory was divided between France and England, one fifth of the territory went to the British while the remaining four fifths went to France (Awasom, 2020: 267). The country is often referred as “Africa in miniature” by some authors due to its geological and cultural diversity since Cameroon is also home to over 200 different linguistic groups<sup>21</sup>.

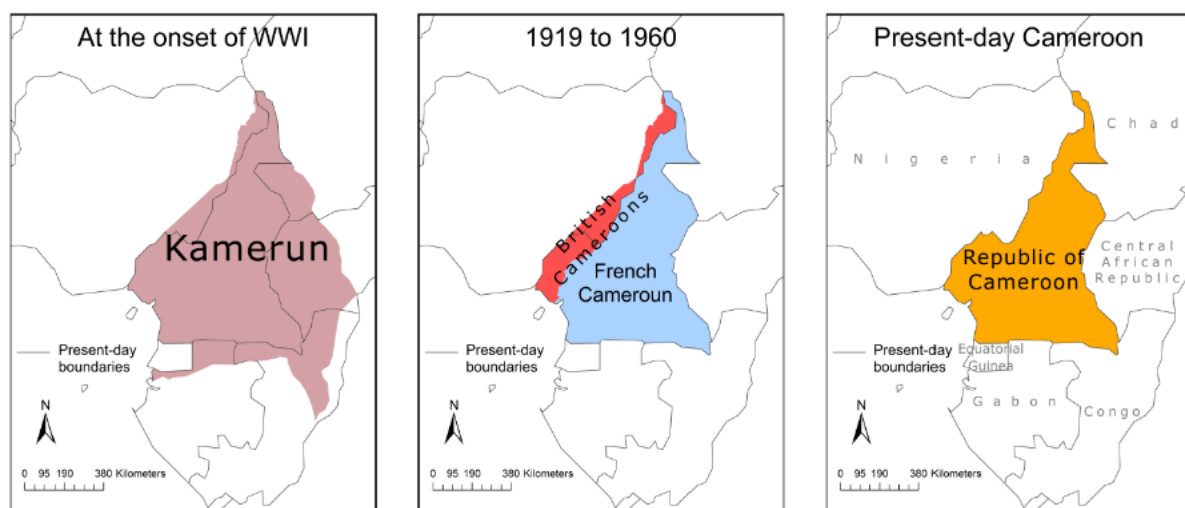


Figure 1: Evolution of Cameroonian boundaries <sup>22</sup>

The case of Cameroon perfectly illustrates how artificial borders, resource exploitation and imposition of a governmental structure perpetuate current conflicts. As a country with diverse ethnic groups, a history of colonial rule by multiple European powers, and rich natural resources, Cameroon provides a compelling case for understanding how these factors can cause instability, promote ethnic tensions, and developmental challenges in post-colonial Africa (Lee and Schultz, 2012:7).

The men who built Europe's colonial empires thought they were doing a favor for those whom they conquered. They argued that the institutional package that they brought to the colonies (...) would ultimately lead to a higher standard of living and

<sup>21</sup> Cameroon Tourism Office in North America in Halle, E. (2014). "The Force of Argument and the Fight for an Anglophone Identity in Cameroon." *SSRN Electronic Journal*.pp 2

<sup>22</sup> Source - Dupraz, Y. (2019) 'French and British Colonial Legacies in Education: Evidence from the Partition of Cameroon', *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 79(3), pp. 628–668.



quality of government than that provided by the institutions they destroyed (Lee and Schultz, 2012:2)<sup>23</sup>

The main goal of the imperial conquest of Africa was to undertake the resources of the continent in order to resolve the economic problems of Europe (Lekane and Asuelime, 2016:136). As a result, colonial-era policies and institutions led to various disparities in current economic growth, public goods provision, democratic governance, and levels of corruption in former colonies. These studies highlight how the legacy of colonial rule continues to shape contemporary socio economic and political outcomes, contributing to persistent challenges in development and governance. (Lee and Schultz, 2012:2). On top of all of that in this dissertation I intend to prove how they also contributed to the promotion of conflict.

### **3.2 - Land and Borders**

Prior to colonization, Cameroon was home to a diverse range of ethnic groups, each with its own distinct political structures and cultures. The land was never regarded in terms of its economic value or as commodity, the land ownership was regulated through a system of beliefs embodied in the indigenous communities, the land was viewed as an ancestral gift (Essougog, U. and Tegua, S, 2018:5). Regarding a system of organization, tribal states were very well organized, with legislative, judiciary and executive branches. Societies were structured with local chiefs, who were chosen with input from councils of elders, who provided checks on their power, whose authority was controlled by the legal or religious code (Lawyer, 2017: 45).

The German colonial ambitions towards Cameroon were driven by several factors, with the primary one being the intense geopolitical competition in Europe during the 19th century. The growing belief that colonies could provide significant economic benefits to European powers led to the establishment of overseas territories. Germany, seeking to assert its influence and secure resources, viewed Cameroon as a strategic location for trade and economic exploitation (Van der Linden, 2017: 177). As a result, Germany sent several expeditions to the Cameroonian coast to secure its interests, ultimately leading to the annexation of territory through treaties with local rulers. These actions were part of Germany's broader strategy to establish a colonial presence and protect its economic and geopolitical ambitions in Africa (*Ibidem*, 2017:179).

Germany signed multiple treaties with several Cameroonian rulers, to secure commercial interests, these treaties transferred a part of the sovereignty, legislative

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<sup>23</sup> Livingston, D. (1868). *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*. New York:Harpers. in Lee, A. and Schultz, K.A., (2012). "Comparing British and French Colonial Legacies: A Discontinuity Analysis of Cameroon". *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, 7, pp.1-46 pp.2.

authority and administrative power from the Cameroonian chiefs to the German state. That gave German authorities the freedom to act and rule the territory as they deemed necessary and also mark their one frontiers (*Ibidem*, 2017:196). On the 14th of July 1884, *Kamerun* (German spelling) became officially a German colony, an event later confirmed by the Berlin Conference, as a result, Cameroon was in control of the Germans for more than 30 years.

There were several difficulties with the legitimacy of treaties that led to the undermining of sovereignty rights of the local rulers. The transfer of power was put in question for multiple reasons, from the context of the negotiation process to the non-compliance of the Germans towards certain points of the agreement. Because of that the validity, interpretation, and enforcement of the treaties were highly questionable and ambiguous.

The treaties were originally written in Germany and then were signed or marked by crosses by the chiefs, to whom had been given an approximate translation or interpretation in their native languages (*Ibidem*, 2017:196). The fact that the treaty was only drafted in the colonizers' language, with local rulers receiving a potentially incomplete or misleading translation, raises serious concerns about the fairness and legitimacy of these agreements. Even though the treaties stipulated that some sovereignty rights would be transferred to Germany, local rulers were theoretically supposed to retain certain rights. However, due to the ambiguous language and lack of clear definitions in the treaties, these rights were not effectively preserved. Because of that German authorities exercised full control of the territories completely ignoring the dual sovereignty (*Ibidem*, 2017:194-195).

Another major problem was connected to land acquisition and land classification, it was expressed in the legal documents that there were a number of safeguard clauses regarding the preservation of native properties and their respective rights. However in the majority of the cases, even though Germans agreed to preserve native properties, that did not happen. The colonizers imposed their own legal system, completely disregarding the governance of the local rulers. Germans directly explored the land and their natives to their one benefit. When it comes to the classification of land very often, Germans would classify land as *terra nullius* (land belonging to no one), this classification undermined the validity of treaties in regions where local rulers had not formally ceded their rights, as it suggested that the land was available for occupation without the need for consent from the indigenous leaders (*Ibidem*, 2017:185-186). Ultimately in the German colonial era, natives were deprived of their lands and their

rights, natives could be evicted at any moment without any prior notice or compensation (Essougong, U. and Teguia, S, 2018:6).<sup>24</sup>

The ambiguous terms and the fact that Germany constantly violated the terms of the agreements, created a legal and political environment that questioned the validity of the agreements (Van der Linden, 2017:213). During this period Germany established boundaries, introduced a new monetary system, created new structures for administration and governance. Accelerated the creation of cash crops plantations like cocoa, coffee, palm oil, rubber and others (Lekane and Asuelime, 2016:135). As the authors put it: “The German administration was made possible by the exploration of the well established indigenous administrations, centered on the chiefs” (*Ibidem* 2016:136)<sup>25</sup>.

The multiple colonial process that happened in Cameroon ultimately altered the structure and ability for that territory to work properly. The implementation of artificial borders both external and internal to that territory was beyond harmful. During pre-colonial times the territory between current Cameroon and Nigeria, was a place with intense economic activity, and peaceful coexistence among different cultural communities. With the new border that was imposed, the ethnic, sociological, historical and political contexts of that territory were forever altered (Konefon, 2022:124/126). The setting-up of colonial borders created in Africa the Westphalian idea of a defined political, military and fiscal jurisdiction within a certain territory. Because of that the border had been created with certain functions (*Ibidem*, 2022:125).

Germany imposed not only borders but also border posts between Cameroon and Nigeria in order to collect taxes from people and from goods that entered the country. (*Ibidem*, 2022:127). Colonial borders were also a way to control diseases and health problems, by controlling the foreign population that entered the country. The German colonial goal was to exploit the Cameroonian territory, for that they needed a workforce, due to the fact that preserving the health of local populations was fundamental in order to guarantee productive labor (*Ibidem*, 2022:128). The colonial borders came to completely erase the african concept of border, creating ethnic tension and destabilization “The Cameroonian-Nigerian border, is 1728 km long and is

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<sup>24</sup> Ndi, F. (2017). *Land grabbing, local contestation, and the struggle for economic gain: Insights from Nguti Village, South West Cameroon*. in Essougong, U.P. and Teguia, S.J., (2019). “How secure are land rights in Cameroon? A review of the evolution of the land tenure system and its implications on tenure security and rural livelihoods”. *GeoJournal* pp.5.

<sup>25</sup> Ndobegang, M 2009. “The Anglophone-Francophone divide in Cameroon: Diagnosis of a national disconnection”, in Lekane, M. and Asuelime, L., (2017). “One country, three colonial legacies: The politics of colonialism, capitalism and development in the pre- and post-colonial Cameroon”. *Journal for Contemporary History*, 42(1), pp.134-153 pp. 136.

characterized by the porosity carried within it seeds of conflict and destabilization” (*Ibidem*, 2022: 129-130).

However, in the aftermath of German defeat in World War I, in 1919 the Treaty of Versailles stipulated that Germany had to surrender all of its colonies. With that, the territory of Cameroon was occupied by the French, who assumed about 80% of the territory and by the British that ruled the territories to the Northwest and Southwest. With that Cameroon officially became divided into two countries, with two different colonial heritages, two languages, two main religions and two forms of government (Halle, 2014:2). France and Britain proceeded to administer their territories according to their policies until they granted independence to those territories in 1960 and 1961 respectively and eventually they formed the Federal Republic of Cameroon in 1961. Later in 1972 the Federation became the United Republic of Cameroon and in 1984 the Republic of Cameroon (Awason, 2020:269) and (Enonchong, 2021:8). The imposition of this internal border, created a major gap between existing communities, as Alexander Lee and Kenneth Schultz put it “ (...) the most notable feature of the colonial border was the degree to which it cut across existing ethnic and religious boundaries” (Lee and Schultz, 2012: 8).

### **3.3 The role of economic Interests**

Another major point that happened during the colonial period, and contributes to the current conflict dynamics in Cameroon is the resource exploitation and economic inequality. The history of capitalism in Cameroon can be traced to the introduction of agricultural commodities that were export-oriented (Lekane and Asuelime, 2016:137). European colonialism assumed two forms, it was either exploitative or the steller variant. The French and British colonies in Africa were exploitative in nature, meaning that those territories were exploited due to their economic value, where the colonial powers sought to extract as many resources as possible with minimal investment in local development (Bigon and Njonh, 2018:934). In Cameroon the main products being trade were, palm oil, bananas, ground nuts, coffee, cocoa lumber and rubber (Alvaredo *et al*, 2021:4)

Like in most African countries, European colonies exploited every commodity possible, including humans, so not only they abused the land and their resources, they also abused the people. There were several slave plantations and a massive trade of slaves (Eckert, 1998:133). Records show that in the nineteenth century in the region of Ngaoundere (in the northern region of the country) there were about 8 000 to 10 000 people that were trafficked annually to work in plantations. Upon the German colonization there was an increase in the demand of enslaved people (*Ibidem*, 1998:135/137).

In 1902 German colonial authorities promulgated a decree to gradually abolish internal slavery, however after the German lost World War I and lost control of the Cameroonian territory, the territory became a French and British colony, with most of the plantation were in the French territory. (*Ibidem*, 1998:139). As slavery was gradually abolished, European powers needed alternative ways to generate profit from their colonies. This led to the introduction of taxation on the local populations to help balance colonial budgets.

In Cameroon, the colonial tax system fostered inequality in various ways. I'll focus on the three most significant forms of this inequality. Firstly the taxes imposed on the European settlers was significantly lower compared to the taxes imposed on the local populations, on top of that the colonial administration was much more strict to the local populations, compared to the European settlers that often could evade taxes (Alvaredo, 2021:8). Also the European tax system that was implemented in Cameroon, was designed to extract local resources while favoring the colonial interest, as a result local farmers and traders were heavily taxed on their incomes (*Ibidem*, 2021:15). “Farmers were obliged to register their farms and to follow the regulations set by the colonial administrator. Many farmers who did not comply with these prescriptions were threatened with the destruction of their farms “ (Lekane and Asuelime, 2016:141)<sup>26</sup>.

Lastly this form of taxation generated funds to create services that would primarily benefit the European settlers, while the local communities received minimal investment. As a result this gap in public services and infrastructures promoted even more the already existing inequality, therefore limiting the access of local Cameroonian population to opportunities (*Ibidem*, 2016:2).

The case of Cameroon is even more severe since not only did European colonizers define external borders, as was common, they also defined internal borders. As I mentioned before, that gave origin to two sections within Cameroon, the Anglophone region and the Francophone region. These regions had very different colonial policies and institutions. The British administration was based on the concept of indirect rule, that meant that local chief executed most of the executive and judicial functions, by contrast the French administration focused on direct ruling, due to that the French were

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<sup>26</sup> Eckert, A (2003). “Comparing coffee production in Cameroon and Tanganyika, c.1900 to 1960s: Land, labor, and politics”. In: WG Clarence-Smith and S Topik (eds), *The global coffee economy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, 1500–1989*. New York: Cambridge University Press. in Lekane.M. and Asuelime, L. (2017). “One country, three colonial legacies: The politics of colonialism, capitalism and development in the pre- and post-colonial Cameroon”. *Journal for Contemporary History*, 42(1), pp.134-153, pp141.

more focused on a closer integration between the colonies and the metropole (Lee and Schultz, 2012:10).

### **3.4 - Ruling Differently**

In the case of Cameroon, two different governmental structures were imposed, and that led to a major division of Cameroon in theory and in practice. The country had two different legal systems: the British followed a common law system, customary law played a more significant role in British Cameroons, especially through the indirect rule system, where local leaders could administer justice and governance at the local level (Enonchong, 2021:11). On the contrary, the French legal system was based on civil law, the legal system was controlled totally by the French authorities, and local chiefs were either co-opted or replaced by artificial chiefs to suit colonial interests (*Ibidem*, 2021:9-10). Overall, both colonial governmental structures overlapped with the pre-existing governance systems of pre-colonial Africa, while also introducing significant divisions, particularly in the legal systems.

The imposition of different governance structures and in this case different governmental powers, led to the formation of different nationalistic ideas within the same country, that being the focal point of the current conflict in Cameroon (Fon, 2023:6). The Anglophone region as it was administered by the concept of indirect ruling, as mentioned before, highly contributed to the development of a national identity. Also Cameroon was an integral part of Nigeria that was also a British colony, which also contributed to nationalist feelings (*Ibidem*, 2023:7). On the other side the Francophone region did not go through the same nationalist patterns, due to its form of government (direct ruling). For the francophone region, nationalism is often tied to a form of central government (*Ibidem*, 2023:9).

### **3.5 - Contemporary Conflict: The Anglophone Crisis**

When Cameroon became independent from the former colonial ties, in 1961, it created a federal system that merged both the states of the West (former British Southern Cameroon) and East Cameroon (former French Cameroon). This federal system was extremely important since it guaranteed the bicultural and bilingual nature of the new country. Even though this idea of a federal state was effective, it did not last long, since in 1972, the president Ahidjo created a centralized unitary state, later in 1984, the name of the country was changed from United Republic of Cameroon to La République du Cameroun. Since then the rights of the populations of the West (English speaking Cameroon) have been gradually marginalized by the East population (French speaking Cameroon) giving origin to what is known as the Anglophone problem (Beseng *et al*, 2023:91).

After independence Francophone Cameroon has dominated the overall ruling system of the country, with the authoritarian president Paul Biya, staying in power consecutively since 1982. An Example of that is the fact that an Anglophone has never been appointed to be head of an important ministries, from the 58 divisions of the country, only 13 are headed by anglophones. Also over the years successive Francophone regimes have taken over or destroyed financial and political institutions that existed in West Cameroon (Edward, 2014:6). This ongoing marginalization has fueled growing unrest, which has persisted since the early 1980s. Through the decades there were several protests claiming the Anglophone rights, but those were always repressed and resulted in several deaths (Annan *et al* 2021:702).

In recent years, tensions have escalated sharply once again, as a result of decades of oppression and discrimination. In 2016, peaceful protests erupted against the Francophone government, as it was seen as responsible for the erosion of the education system in the Anglophone region. However the protesters were met with an extreme violent response from the security forces, as has happened in the past there were more that 100 arrests and two fatalities were recorded, on top of that the government ordered a complete internet shut down in the Anglophone regions (Beseng *et al*, 2023:93)<sup>27</sup>. Since 2017 the Biya government has engaged in a violent war against the Angplophones.

This was a turning point in the history of the conflict, previously the requests from the protestors were that the federal system that was in place from 1961 until 1972 was restored. However with the level of violence that these protests were faced separatist ideas began to emerge. As a result the on the 1st of October 2017 the Anglophone regions made a unilateral declaration of independence for the Ambazonia<sup>28</sup> territory (Beseng *et al*, 2023:94).The Ambazonia Republic represents the desire of the people in South Cameroon, to the return of the statehood in the former British territory. The Anglophone region - or Ambazonia territory- consists in two out of the tencountry regions and has about 8.5 out of the 24 million inhabitants. (Awasom, 2020:265).

The Anglophone problem in Cameroon stems from deep-rooted marginalization in political, economic, social, cultural, and linguistic aspects. This marginalization is further aggravated by the forced assimilation of Anglophone Cameroon in line with French colonial policies. Additionally, bad governance, including a lack of democracy

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<sup>27</sup> Awasom N (2020) “The anglophone problem in Cameroon yesterday and today in search of a definition.” Journal of African Literature Association vol 14. 264–291. in Beseng, M. *et al* . (2023) ‘From “Anglophone Problem” to “Anglophone Conflict in Cameroon: Assessing Prospects for Peace’, *Africa Spectrum*, 58(1), pp. 89–105, pp.93.

<sup>28</sup> Etymologically, the term ‘Ambazonia’ is derived from the word ‘Ambozes’, the local name for the Amba Bay area at the mouth of the Wouri river’ a region in South West Cameroon

and free and fair elections, has contributed to the tensions, with the self proclamation of the Ambazonia region the tensions became even higher (*Ibidem*, 2020:265).

## **Chapter 4 - Results/Discussion**

During this thesis I explain how there were three main points that connected the colonial legacies with current conflicts in Africa. Now I intend to prove how the imposition of colonial borders, resource exploitation and imposition of a governmental structure during colonial times, influence the current conflict in Cameroon and are extremely harmful to development. When it comes to colonial borders, as I explained previously in the case of Cameroon, this point is even more problematic since not only the different colonial authorities implemented internal and external borders.

Colonial borders promoted conflict in African countries through several mechanisms, firstly as I mentioned before in the literature review, when European powers created borders in the African continent they did not take into consideration pre existing communities. Creating borders meant either dismembering communities or combining several communities into one (Pain, 2019:653/655). These separations created ethnic tensions that after a careless process of independence led to major ethnic conflict (Depetris-Chauvin and Özak, 2020:26). In the specific case of Cameroon it was even more concerning since, not only the germans completely imposed their borders, not considering local cultures (Van der Linden:2017:179) when the british and the french came to rule, they internally divided the country, creating a systemic gap with the use of the colonial language culture, and ruling system (Lee and Schulz, 2012:14).

We can also argue that, having in mind the time that these colonial borders took to create and the implications it took, made the borders extremely porous, meaning that the unclear demarcation of borders, especially towards the interior of the continent, led to armed conflict between different communities in order to access limited resources (Pain *et al*, 2021:9-11) and (Depetris-Chauvin and Özak, 2020:2). When it comes to natural resources, the abusive use of resources by the colonial powers promoted conflict in different forms. The use of human beings as commodities for slave trade, left major consequences in the African continent, the proof of that areas with intense slave trade in the past currently present higher conflict rates (Zhang *et al*, 2021:781/787).

Colonial powers created a monopoly for the use of all types of resources from the colonized territories, when I stated that the division of Africa was not random, I meant that European powers strategically considered the natural resources of each region when determining how to divide the continent. Their primary aim was to secure access to valuable resources (Pain, 2021:34). In the case of Cameroon commodities are



extremely important for the development of the conflict since they ended-up being distributed unequally, which led to deep grievances between the populations divided by the colonial powers.

When it comes to the Anglophone problem, natural resources are a big part of the question, since the Ambazonia region is extremely rich in oil, timber, rich soils for agriculture and minerals. The oil present in the Anglophone region accounts for 60% of the country's GDP. The control over natural resources often translates into economic power, groups fighting for power believe that the access to natural resources will provide them with the financial means necessary to support their causes. The Anglophone separatists have exactly this vision, since they see natural resources as a means to sustain their struggle for independence (Ekah, 2021:147/149).

Cameroon's colonial administrations focused on extracting oil, timber, and agricultural products for export to Europe, with little regard for local development or equitable distribution (Lekane and Asuelime, 2016:136). The different allocations of wealth to the different regions of the country from the colonial administrations, to the current administration that is completely biased, due to its French influence, led to economic imbalances, creating and worsening regional disparities (Beseng *et al*, 2023:91). The unequal distribution of resources between Francophone and Anglophone regions is rooted in these colonial divisions, contributing to political tensions.

And finally when it comes to the imposition of a governmental structure, this element also took a major importance in the promotion of conflict in Cameroon. During the German colonial period, Germany imposed a governmental structure that took over local administrations, prioritizing the interests of the metropole, and therefore ignoring local necessities. The marginalization of communities by the central government, led to a disruption of the social order, cultural alienation and erosion of local authorities. This promotes conflict in the sense that, the disregard of local authorities for centuries, now contributes to a sense of constant competition between communities and local rivalries (Van der Linden, 2017: 186/212/213).

The problem became even more exacerbated by the fact that, during the British and French colonization, the county became divided not only by language, but also by different ruling and legal systems that were the opposite of each other (Lee and Schultz, 2012:3). This division created a fertile ground for future conflicts since the country had no internal cohesion. In conclusion, what I have tried to demonstrate during this dissertation is that imposition of colonial borders, the resource exploitation by colonial powers and the forced governmental structures - understood as historical exogenous factors - are the three main points that contribute to modern conflicts in

Africa aside from the role of domestic politics.. The arbitrary creation of colonial borders, without regard for existing communities and cultural divisions, led to ethnic tensions and conflict, while the exploitation of natural resources has deepened economic disparities that also fuels violence. Additionally, the imposition of a centralized government that marginalized local leadership, and openly promoted division is the final piece that explains current conflicts in most African countries.

When it comes to development, there is a direct connection between conflict and development, as I mentioned before, conflict severely cripples development by unable the state to perform its basic actions (Babajide, 2021:2/4). Armed violence affects economic growth, social stability and political structures, which over all results in massively promoting inequalities (*Ibidem*, 2021:11/22). In the case of Cameroon development has been severely threatened, the armed violence has destroyed infrastructures and resources that are crucial for development. Even though the Anglophone conflict began 8 years ago, the violence still keeps affecting the population, recent data states that in 2023 the intensity of the conflict increased compared to previous years (OCHA, 2024:12).

According to the United Nations, more than 4 millions people have been affected by this conflict. More than 1.7 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in the Anglophone regions, as of August 2023, the crisis had displaced almost 670,000 people internally within Cameroon and across the borders to Nigeria. Since the beginning of the conflict, more than 6 000 schools closed, 42 were burned down and its expected that more than a half million children are out of school (Bertrand, 2020:12/13)<sup>29</sup>.

From the point of view of the economic impact, the consequences are equally hard, Cameroon is the largest economy in the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, however, since the beginning of the conflict the economy has been severely affected. Business here shut down due to the intensity of armed violence, and investments are almost non-existent (*Ibidem*, 2020:14/15). Armed violence not only disrupts economic activities and destroys vital infrastructure, but it also deepens social inequalities and hinders access to education and basic services, ultimately crippling long-term development.

My goal was to demonstrate a chain of consequences that came directly from colonialism. The colonial legacies have direct influence in the formation of contemporary conflicts that by themselves have a direct connection to development, or better say the lack of it. The European colonial legacies have left profound and lasting impacts on the Global South. While Western societies often attempt to deflect

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<sup>29</sup> UNOCHA 2018 report on the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon in Bertrand, A. (2020)

responsibility, claiming that the underdevelopment in these regions is a result of local conditions and decisions, it is crucial to recognize that these issues are deeply rooted in the colonial systems of exploitation, resource extraction, and the imposition of foreign governance. The disruption of indigenous economies, the creation of artificial borders, and the marginalization of local leadership have all contributed to long-term instability, economic disparity, and social tensions that still persist today. Understanding this chain of consequences is essential for addressing the ongoing challenges faced by post-colonial societies.

## **Chapter 5 - Conclusion**

The persistence of conflict and underdevelopment in the region cannot be understood without recognizing the deep historical roots. Conflicts in Africa exacerbate existing challenges across political, economic, humanitarian, and social dimensions, impeding progress towards peace, stability, and sustainable development. This dissertation demonstrated that the colonial legacies left by European powers is one of the factors that continue to play a critical role in shaping the political, economic and social conditions of many African nations, particularly Cameroon.

The imposition of artificial borders, coupled with exploitation of natural resources and the establishment of authoritarian governance, has created a foundation for ongoing conflict and underdevelopment. The colonial legacy not only fragmented African societies, but also forested economic inequalities and political instability. The colonial economic model, which prioritized extraction left many African countries with underdeveloped infrastructure, weak institutions, and economies that are extremely fragile . The resulting economic inequalities have resulted in social divisions already existing, mainly due to the creation of artificial borders. On top of that, the legacy of weak governance structures, implemented over preexisting pre colonial structures, continues to create a vicious cycle of underdevelopment and instability. Although it wasn't the main focus of this research, the dispute of domestic interests in the political and economic game of local elites has also contributed to a harder difficulty of promoting the country's development.

The effects of three distinct colonial powers have left their marks in the nation of Cameroon, decades of division, oppression and imposition of European rules, left deep-rooted conflicts and developmental challenges. The Anglophone crisis, which has its roots in the colonial division of Cameroon between the British and French colonial powers, exemplifies how these historical legacies can exacerbate ethnic tensions, create governance issues, and lead to economic disparities.

While the colonial past cannot be undone, acknowledging its impact and taking deliberate steps to address the inequalities it has left behind is essential for achieving long-term peace and development in Africa. By recognizing the root causes of instability and inequality, African nations can move toward a more stable and prosperous future.

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