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## The Realities of National Integration in Cameroon

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### Abstract

*The political project initiated by the Germans in 1884 to merge the multiple ethnic entities in Cameroon into a modern civic nation-state was later impeded by Germany's defeat in World War I leading to the partition of the territory into British and French spheres. This project was later revived by Cameroonian patriots culminating in the Reunification on October 1, 1961 thereby stressing their unity. Since then, the policy of national integration has been in force to bring together the various peoples who constitute the country. While others initially perceived this endeavour as a nine-day wonder conceived by architects who had taken a primrose path to ruin, some people remained unscathed, having crossed the Rubicon and burnt their ships. In the apparent uncertainty that has prevailed since then, it is necessary to establish the extent to which this policy has achieved its objectives. With the use of social science methodology, it has been discovered that living together has become a national mantra and is facilitated by acculturation, urbanization, ecumenism, bilingualism and sports. Although this policy which is inscribed in the constitution, other legal instruments, administrative structures and national emblems gained ground, its successful implementation has remained a long blinding mirage especially in the arena of partisan politics where more than 300 parties have segmented the country instead of uniting it.*

**Keywords:** *Living together, unity and national integration village, ethnic nations, multiculturalism, national culture*

### 1. Introduction

With a surface area of about 475 442 square kilometers, Cameroon is one of the most heterogeneous states of the African continent, a real cultural mosaic due to its geography and history. She is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural entity wherein nation building has been a challenge of encouraging the development of a melting pot of the people who are distinguished into four cultural groups, namely Sawa, Grass fields, Fang-Beti, Sudano- Sahelian. The fatherland has been described as "all of Africa in a single country" because she exhibits all ecological features of the continent: coast, desert, mountain, rainforest, and savanna (Besong and Ngwasiri, 1995). Even in terms of ethnicity, she is still like Africa, a continent that is a microcosm of the world. Cameroon has remained jealous of her cultural heritage and resolved to preserve it. With more than 250 ethnic groups, Cameroon whose total population is about 25 million inhabitants, is ethnically, culturally, and linguistically, one of the most diversified countries of Africa.

National integration is a core value of nation building which is the practice of socio-political development or art of national construction that allows initially loosely linked communities during a long duree to become a common society with a nation-state corresponding to it. Bandyopadhyay and Green identify nine nation-building policies that have been implemented in at least eight instances in Africa. Some countries like Guinea-Bissau, Rwanda and Togo applied only one policy each since independence while both Nigeria and Uganda executed all (2012: 3). In the case of Cameroon since colonial times, fourteen nation building approaches, classified into four broad themes namely indigenization, harmonization, centralization and building citizenship have been applied. Indigenization policies include the renaming of country, altering city names and the changing of national currency. Bilingualism, national integration and relocation of political headquarters have engendered harmonization in the country. Those policies based on centralization were forged from the creation of a unitary state and monolithic political system, the encouragement of national integration, authoritarian rule and the nationalization of land. The building of citizenship involves four aspects namely regular general population censuses, defining nationality, military conscription and civic education (Ngwoh, 2017).

This paper, which focuses on national integration, begins by analyzing various theoretical frameworks upon which the policy operates. It then goes further to invoke its necessity by indicating that it has got blissful, opinionated, communal and intellectual underpinnings. The role of colonialism, national patriots and political leaders has also been explained as well as an indication of legal parameters that uphold the tenets of integration. The essay also paints a picture of how this policy has permeated almost all aspects of national life. It does this by highlighting the various facets and agency that facilitate it as well as the challenges that impede it.

### 2. Meaning and Purpose of National Integration

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Civic Education (MINJEC) of Cameroon defines national integration thus: national integration refers to the notion of national unity; unity in diversity, but also in complementarity, solidarity and faith in a common destiny transcending all particularities, especially geographical, historical, linguistic, tribal, religious or political. National unity implies that Cameroonians are first of all Cameroonians before being Anglophones or Franco

phones, Christians, Muslims, animists or other. For any non-Cameroonian, the issue would be to integrate into and adapt to the Cameroonian society (integratability of such a person) and, for the State and the society, their capacity to integrate such people. For this reason, integration designates a whole (process), an entity, some synergy (2015).

In sociology, integration is an ethnological process which helps a person or a group of persons to become closer to others and become a member of a larger group by adopting its values and the standards of its social system. More inclusively, integration consists in encouraging the active involvement in the society as a whole, of all men and women who are expected to live together for a long time accepting without any ulterior motives the persistence of cultural specificities especially, by emphasizing the similarities and convergences in equal rights and duties in order to ensure social cohesion. Theories of national integration include the Durkheimian tradition of solidarity, the Chicago School and Milton Gordon's assimilationist approach, while models of national integration include the republican, ethnic and community-based or multicultural model (MINJEC, 2015)

On August 20, 1985, the English-speaking youth of the North West and South West Provinces of Cameroon defined integration as:

It is a voluntary aspect of human cultures, which happens when they are brought into peaceful contact and not forceful collision. It is achieved by endless exchange of ideas and cultural aspects accompanied by intermarriages... Nobody tries to force integration when facilities for endless peaceful contact and intercommunication have been attained (Ndi, 2005: 320).<sup>1</sup>

Other authors have advanced diverse definitions of the term like Ake who says it is the process of unifying a society which tends to make it harmonious city, based upon an order its members regard as equitably harmonious. In such a procedure people of a social system develop linkages and location so that the boundaries of the system persist over time and the frontiers of sub systems become less consequential in affecting behavior because an escalating sequence of contact, cooperation, consensus and community comes into play. In the course of political interaction, the minimal units develop a pool of commonly accepted norms regarding political behaviour patterns legitimized by these norms (1967: 3-5). Coleman and Rosberg say it as the progressive reduction of cultural and regional tensions and discontinuities in the process of creating a homogenous political community (1964: 9).

From another angle, national integration is the attainment, within a territory of a 'sense of community', institutions and practices that are strong and widespread enough to assure, for a long-time dependable expectation of peaceful community. This sense of community has been described as:

A belief on the part of individuals in a group that they have come to agreement on at least one point, that common social problems must and can be resolved on processes of peaceful change. Peaceful change in this context means the resolution of social problems without resort to large scale physical force (Deutsch et al, 1966:2).

The purpose of national integration is manifold with heavenly, political, social and cultural underpinnings. Its godly intention is to ensure that "each individual is accepted and respected in his or her own right as God's special work of art in his own image. Subsequently, each family, each community with their distinct cultural traits, values and charisms converge to form a more enriched national community in fraternal solidarity" (Ndi, 2005: 319).

It is intended to bring together different ethnic communities into a natural and genuinely amalgamated society in which leaders and the citizenry are allowed to consciously cultivate a national identity, a sense of belonging based on shared values, tradition, history and aspirations (Ndi, 258).

National identity is the foundation of social cohesion with the grand aim of constructing or structuring a global image using the power of the state. Through integration, solidarity is achieved in action and purpose amidst multiple ethnic nationalities each exerting both centrifugal and centripetal forces on the central issue of the nation, bound in freedom, peace and unity where justice reigns" (Ojo, 2009). According to Biya,<sup>2</sup> the grand aim of national integration is that "inter-ethnic solidarity should lead to the gradual elimination of present sectarian tendencies in favour of a more integrated social environment (Jua, 2004: 302).

National integration is necessary since ethnic groups are always in conflict and competition for scarce resources. Indeed, this is not unexpected especially between and among "ethnically defined constituencies". Since they are socio-cultural entities, they consider themselves culturally, linguistically or socially distinct from each other, and most often view their relations in actual or potentially antagonistic terms (Cox, 1970: 317). Cameroonian culture gives a picture of the country described as "a harmony of differences" by virtue of the geographical, historical and sociological aspects of this "Africa in miniature," a land of friendship and crossroads of civilizations. In order to benefit from what the whole country possesses in the different geographical and touristic areas, national integration is indispensable so "that although the rooster (cock, male chicken) belongs to one person, it crows in the morning for the whole village" (Jua, 2004: 323).

Based on its multi-ethnic and multi-cultural nature, the country's cultural policy is focused on encouraging the development of a melting pot similar to that of America. In this light, each specific culture is promoted to enable it develop fully within the framework of a fruitful and peaceful forum of exchange between the different local cultures in a tumultuous Africa torn by ethno-political conflicts. By so doing, Cameroon became a haven of peace and an island of stability at one point in its history. It was due mainly to the ethno-linguistic mixture, the fruitful dialogue between different cultures that Cameroon absorbed potential conflicts as regards cultural and ethnical differences in an Africa torn and exposed to cultural extremism and fundamentalism (MINCULT, 2012). According to Nyansako-ni-Nku,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This was contained in an Open Letter to All English-Speaking Parents of Cameroon from their children who were students.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Biya, president of the Republic of Cameroon since November 6, 1982 was born on February 13, 1933

<sup>3</sup> The Very Rev. Dr Nyansako-ni-Nku worked as Synod Clerk of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) from 1989 to 1999, as Moderator of the PCC from 1999 to 2009. He is also former President of the All African Council of Churches (AACC).

national integration aims at establishing a viable nation that would be a giant in the sub region and a beacon of hope for the continent by being the only truly bilingual country. It would bestow a new status to the country by creating a community where people would have an equal sense of belonging and live with relative ease (2011: 11).

### 3. Background to National Integration in Cameroon

Colonialism laid the substratum for unity and integration by fashioning a nation out of a hotch-potch of cultural zones populated by a variety of peoples and polities. The Sudano-Sahelian states in the north traded with trans-Saharan merchants and Arabic peoples. The Sawa or coastal peoples in the south traded with Portuguese and Dutch seafarers beginning in the late Fifteenth Century. In 1884, Cameroon became a German protectorate (Kamerun) thereby initiating the earliest modern mixing or shuffling of the diverse peoples of the country. This was both forced and voluntary (Ejedepang-Koge, 2011: 38).

Although the territory was partitioned in 1916 as a pro tem measure, the sentiment of "once-a-united" Cameroon was kept burning by inhabitants of both British and French zones (Ngoh, 2011 a: 13). Factors that favoured reunification included the impact of the "Kamerun Idea" or the importance of German rule, 1884-1906. Many Cameroonians in both areas looked back at the German era, when the country was one, united and indivisible, with nostalgia especially as many tribal groups in British and French Cameroons were historically linked. For example, there were close ties between the Bakossi, Balong, Bangwa and Mbo people living on both sides of the divide. But on the contrary, many factors worked against association with Nigeria like Ibo people in Southern Cameroons, whose activities created a dread of domination which pointed to the fact that integration with Nigeria would mean submission to their social, economic and even political control. This also applied to the supremacy of the civil service by Nigerian Yoruba low-grade servants that was greatly resented. Others were also of the opinion that with Nigeria, "we would always be alien, so it was better to trace our steps back from where we came and reunite with our kith and kin of the Republic of Cameroon" (Nyansoka-n-Nku, 2011: 90). Duala chiefs refused to submit themselves to French authority, demanding respect of the German heritage by considering the Cameroonians on both sides of the Mungo.<sup>4</sup> On February 21, 1918 a pamphlet was published to underscore the fact that the 'bad treatment of indigenous people by the French administration had forced many men to desert their families and emigrate to the English speaking part where there was humane treatment, peace and tranquility. Can you see that the English administration in Cameroon was treating the black man with a strict respect of justice?' (Abwa, 2011: 19).

This provided Cameroonians the forum to learn to live together, in spite of the desire of the colonial administration to separate them. Some Francophones like Robert Jabea K. Dibongue who settled in the Anglophone zone even went as far as playing a crucial role in the politics of the area, and were architects of reunification despite the many obstacles imposed by the British administration. By and large, it was through the migration of these Francophones that the "Kamerun Idea" was born. This called for unity as the Germans left it and even the "Cameroonian Unification Movement" encouraged Anglophones to reject the English administration and close ranks with their Francophone counterparts for the goal of building a united and prosperous country (Abwa, 2011: 20).

The first real meeting of Cameroonians from both sides of the Mungo to discuss reunification held in Kumba in 1949 between Endeley's Cameroon National Federation (CNF) party and Um Nyobe's Union des Population du Cameroun (UPC). Between February and June 1956, there were at least nine meetings between nationalists, a move that worried the trusteeship masters to the extent that the British decided on May 30, 1957 to expel Francophone nationalist's resident in their territory with effect from July 9, 1957. The result was the formation of Ndeh Ntumazah's One Kamerun (OK) party to "materialize the struggle for the reunification of the Cameroons" (Abwa, 2011: 21).

Ahidjo got engaged in the reunification movement by convening a Pan Cameroonian conference of students from France and Great Britain, British Cameroons and Nigeria in Yaounde from August 27 to 30, 1959. The main outcome was the putting in place of a blueprint for reunification to solidify the foundation for national integration which actually turned out to be a coming together again of people or states after many years of separation (Abwa, 22). This was a crystallization of the three legacies that the Germans left behind for their subjects, namely "a memory, an idea and the hope" (Kofele-Kale, 1980: 17)

### 4. Legal and Institutional Framework of National Integration

The policy of national integration is not lip service as it is enshrined in the country's framework law and disseminated through discourses with national symbols and policies to showcase its existence. The ambition of Ahmadou Ahidjo, leader of Cameroon's first Republic (1961-1982) was to raise a strong and united country out of its assorted ethnic background. This explains why he fused the existing political parties into the Cameroon National Union (CNU) on September 1, 1966. The federal system was transformed into a unitary state following the May 20 1972 Referendum and the government adopted the watchword "one people, one nation, one destiny" (Awasom, 2004: 175-176).

The Preamble of the June 2 1972 Constitution further reflected this by stating inter alia that:

The people of Cameroon...profoundly aware of the imperative need to achieve complete unity solemnly declare that it constitutes one and the same nation, committed to the same destiny and affirms its unshakable determination to construct the Cameroon fatherland on the basis of the ideal of fraternity, justice and progress...

This was retold in the January 18, 1996 Constitution whose Article 1(2) provides that "the Republic of Cameroon shall be a decentralized unitary state"; and that it shall "be one and indivisible". This framework law also insists in Article 64 that the unity and territorial integrity of the country shall go on ad infinitum. From a governance and public policy

<sup>4</sup> Mungo is the name of a river that served as a boundary between French Cameroon and British Southern Cameroons. The expression "both sides of the Mungo" refers to people from French and British Cameroons.

perspective, another invaluable and authoritative source of nation-building discourse in the Cameroonian polity is the President of the Republic who is also Head of State, elected by the whole nation and remains a symbol of national unity (Germandze, 2008: 9-10).

According to Decree No. 77/245 of July 15, 1977 on the organization of traditional chiefdoms, the management of traditional rulers was harmonized despite the variety and diversity of Cameroonian traditions. The introduction of each of these subsystems to all Cameroonians regardless of their origin, as well as to all foreigners residing in Cameroon, rather enriches this coexistence. An Inter-Ministerial Order No. 242 / L1729 / MINEDUC / MJS of October 25, 1979 created school holidays and youth work camps intended to strengthen national unity through the cultural exchange of youths from diverse origins (MINJEC, 2015). Through this programme, young boys and girls from all ten regions of Cameroon take part in an annual youth camp during summer holidays in different parts of the country.

Law No. 98/004 on the orientation of education in Cameroon states that education aims at training citizens rooted in their culture but open to the world and respectful of the public interest and the common good. In this light, its Article 7 states that "the State shall guarantee to all equal opportunity of access to education regardless of gender, political, philosophical and religious opinion, social, cultural, linguistic or geographical stance." Following Decree No 2011/048 of December 9, 2011, the development and implementation of national policy as defined by the President of the Republic has to be the responsibility of government. One year later, Decree No. 2012/565 of November 28, 2012 re-organized the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Civic Education (MINJEC), and assigned to it the task of supervising and implementing the policy of national integration (MINJEC, 2015).

To ensure that this is done, the same decree created a Directorate of Civic Education and National Integration responsible for encouraging the values of peace and solidarity; developing plans for the integration of Cameroonian citizens worldwide; defining strategies for the socio-economic integration of refugees and displaced persons; stimulating the social, economic and political integration of youths and socially vulnerable groups; promoting inter cultural and intergenerational dialogue, and intermingling of the populations.

The National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism (NCPBM) is one of the institutions put in place to promote national integration. Although it was created as one of the measures to stall the Anglophone Crisis, its mission is manifold: to give a fresh impetus to Cameroon's unity in diversity; ensure to the letter, that the bilingual nature of the country functions optimally with English and French as two official languages - with equal status so that Cameroon stands out privileged amidst other countries within and without Africa; create a conducive environment wherein all Cameroonians will have what to give and take in their interaction and integration especially within a context of win-win partnership; address vexing wrongs by engendering change of mind-sets and alteration of conflict-ridden administrative orders; work to reinforce national unity and national integration; uphold and harness the rich and diverse cultures of the country in order to wipe out the sense and feeling of superiority or inferiority that greatly frustrates the essence of living together; complement the work of other existing structures that champion bilingualism and multiculturalism (Qui, 2017).

## 5. Manifestations of National Integration

Multiculturalism, living together and bilingualism are the cardinal pillars on which Cameroon national integration is built and this is facilitated by social mobility, education, urbanization, employment, religion, transport, democracy and sports. Conscious of the fact that Cameroon is a cultural mosaic and one of the most complex countries in the world, a cultural policy that encourages the development of a melting pot was put in place to promote each specific culture for it to blossom within the framework of peaceful co-existence. This cultural conviviality has been cultivated so that each ethnic group brings the best of what it has for the edification of a national culture.

As a vector of national integration in Cameroon, multiculturalism is displayed in traditions and customs of music, dance, gastronomy as well as accoutrement or dress that intermingled and interwoven almost all fabrics of Cameroonian society and life. Since reunification in 1961, all what is positive in this culture *mélange* has been nurtured, developed and put at the service of a united and stronger Cameroon. In the music and dance arena, *makossa*, *bikutsi*, *mangambu*, *njang*, *bend skin*, *mbaya*, *chacha*, *asiko*, *bottle dance* and others have gone beyond tribal frontiers. Concerning cuisine, traditional dishes like the *ndole*, *eru*, *achu*, *nkwem* have transcended the borders of tribes wherein they were hitherto a reserve. This cultural blend has advanced from ethnic cultures to a national culture and from ethnic groups to a fatherland. Customary dressing styles like the *sanja* and *kabba* of the Sawa and Fang-Beti, *gandourra* and *boubou* of the Sudano-Sahelian and *atoghu* of the Grassfields have all overflowed their geographical confines. But whereas the dressing costumes of other cultural groups like Sawa, Fang-Beti and Sudano-Sahelian are akin to those of African peoples in other countries, that of the Grassfields has remained unique and instead become a national dress. This has been showcased in international events like the Olympic Games where Cameroonian athletes adorned themselves in the Bamenda Grassfields attire in London (2012) and Rio de Janeiro (2016).

Linguistic homogenization through bilingualism has been an important aspect of national integration in Cameroon based on the two official languages (English and French) which are the heritage of Franco-British rule. In Circular N° 001/CAB/PM of August 16, 1991, the Prime Minister reiterated the need to provide bilingual services to all persons using government or para-statal means of communication. About ten years earlier, a more concrete meaning had been given to the bilingual option through the opening of the Advanced School of Translators and Interpreters (ASTI) in Buea as well as the creation of Bilingual Training Centers in all regional headquarters of the country (Ministry of Culture Cameroon, 2012). According to Cameroon law, the state guarantees, protects and promotes bilingualism throughout the country and that is why Article 13 (2) of the January 18, 1996 Constitution stipulates that "the official languages of the Republic of Cameroon shall be English and French, both languages having the same status." In an address to members of government

on June 4, 1998, the president reminded the Prime Minister, members of Government and public officials at all levels that they are required to work for the development of bilingualism. The result of bilingualism is that in our country, we have citizens with Anglophone sociological background who are culturally Francophone and citizens with Francophone sociological background who are culturally Anglophone. We equally have citizens of Anglophone sociological background who grasp both the French culture and language and citizens of Francophone sociological background who grasp both the English language and culture (Ngwoh, 2017).

The practice of living together has gradually entrenched itself into the fabric of Cameroonian society as a manifestation par excellence of national integration. In a build up to National Day Celebrations that come up on May 20 every year, unity promotion activities, like the symbolic creation of a Unity and National Integration Village, are usually organized across the national territory to celebrate the country's unity in diversity. The village is usually a huge center of attraction to those from all the four corners of the country with legendary pictures, traditional dishes as well as dances to present the country's unity in diversity in all domains. Situated at the esplanade of the National Museum in Yaounde, it is a place to learn about the various cultural zones of the country. In the same vein, educational talks, round-table discussions, conference-debates are given on various themes like "the strategies and determinants of living together," "Cameroon's living together: everyone's concern", multiculturalism, national unity and living together, a Cameroonian identity to consolidate", "national crossroads of Cameroon's living together", "Cameroonians living together: let's talk about it" (Kendemeh, 2015).

An evaluation of national integration in Cameroon cannot be complete if marriage is not mentioned. As a basic universal social institution which is critical and fundamental to the formation of an organic unified entity (family), nuptial relationships among ethnic groups are not just for an individual but the entire community. By virtue of the fact that intermarriage creates close social interaction between people of different ethnicities, it is one of the most ultimate measures to break down socio-cultural barriers thereby engendering integration (Fru, 2018). According to Price 'intermarriage is still the best measure of ethnic intermixture because it breaks down ethnic exclusiveness and mixes the various ethnic populations more effectively than any other social process' (1982, 100). Intermarried partners, although coming from different ethnic, social or cultural backgrounds, are likely to share some common values and aspirations which are important elements in building social cohesion and contributing to national integration in a multicultural Cameroon (Fru, 2018).

Weddings between partners from different ethnic groups, commonly called inter-ethnic marriages, which became widespread in Cameroon from the 1970s, have been very effective in consolidating national integration. Statistics from Civil Status Registration Centers in some cosmopolitan and metropolitan towns in the nation show that between 2008 and 2018, more than half the number of contracted marriages were between couples from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Matrimonies between Bakweri and Bayangi, Ewondo and Bassa, Esu and Nso, Duala and Bamileke, Fang-Beti and Grass fields or even Anglophone and Francophone (for example), that were non-existent about 50 years ago, have now become the *modus operandi* simply because most of the cultural entities possess exogamous marital customs and the multicultural nature of Cameroon offers opportunities for social interaction between people of different ethnicities. As the oldest established form of human behaviour providing kinship ties and an avenue for peacemaking between tribes, marriage which does not only imply kinship, contains its own acculturation, assimilation and integration processes in accordance with its social environment (Nuri, 2012). Since the first requirement for a new kinship is marriage, which then creates a blood tie, its establishment forms a bond whose effects grow down through the generations and over the years among people. Intermarriage has important implications for the next generation who will have mixed or multiple ethnicities as a result of assimilation, integration and hybridization. As an indicator of integration, it is also a pointer to the progress of multiculturalism in ethnically diverse societies (Nuri, 2012).

In spite of the fact that Cameroon is a secular state, the Church in particular and religion as a whole have played an immeasurable role in creating, sowing, nurturing and disseminating the seeds and fruits of concord and incorporation. In 1961, national integration was reinforced, through the detachment of Buea Diocese from the Metropolitan See of Onitsha and its subsequent affiliation to the Yaounde Metropolitan See so that when the Diocese of Bamenda was created in 1970, the Archbishop of Yaounde, Mgr. Jean Zoa, participated in the ordinations of Bishops Paul Verdzekov and Pius Awa who were local ordinaries. The then Bishop of Buea, Jules Peeters, also got many ideas from Bishop Ndongmo of Nkongsamba which he implemented in the Church in West Cameroon. New national integration trends were set through the birth of the National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon (NECC) through which Anglophone bishops contributed significantly to the advancement of this national policy. Bishops like Paul Verdzekov, Christian Cardinal Tumi and Cornelius Esua each ruled the NECC for two terms as president (Sanusi, 2010).

The establishment of ecclesiastical circumscriptions, manner of deployment of human resources, propagation of Christian Action Groups, enculturation, ecumenism as well as mobilization during papal visits are many other ways in which the Church fosters integration at the national level (Ndi, 2005: 319-321). The erection of religious institutions of all sorts generally ignores linguistic, cultural and geographical boundaries. Appointments, promotion and transfers are based on need, competence and availability. For example, of the four Bishops in the Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province by 2012, none of them was indigenous to his bishopric. The creation, consolidation and enlargement of groups like Catholic Women Association (CWA), Catholic Men Association (CMA), Christian Women Fellowship (CWF) and the Christian Men Fellowship (CMF) open avenues for the interaction of people of diverse cultures which has gone a long way to build linking bridges for penetration into the distant and dark areas of people's hearts.

Besides, the proliferation of Christian educational institutions at the basic, secondary and higher education levels as well as the Church's efficient management of high-level health institutions facilitates the admixture of people and ways of life.

The invasion and near domination of Anglo-Saxon style mission colleges by French-speaking students is a manifestation par excellence of the Church's role in the sustenance of national integration in body, soul and spirit. What is more, enculturation and ecumenism have remained some of the most regular and effective means of uniting people spiritually and physically. According to Ndi:

Eccliesial and liturgical celebrations such as the consecration of Bishops, ordination of priests, profession of religious and celebration of jubilees have become rallying occasions for the manifestation of the catholicity of Catholics and national jamborees for progressive ecumenism frequently bringing together civil, Protestant and even Moslem faithful in joyous festivity. These celebrations simply through continuous cultural interchange in terms of music, lyrics, instruments and style are in the course of fusing a unique Cameroonian liturgy ready for export (Ndi, 2005: 320).

In Buea Parish for example, the 2012 World Christian Week of Prayer witnessed ground breaking events in which Presbyterian and Baptist Church Pastors delivered sermons in Roman Catholic Churches while Catholic Priests did same in Protestant churches. Some years earlier, Bishop Emmanuel Bushu of Buea Diocese and the Right Rev Nyangsaku ni Nku, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, trekked hand in hand from Bongo Square to the Molyko Sports Complex after an ecumenical service. This would have been an impossibility thirty years earlier when mutual rivalry and hatred that bedeviled relations between Christian denominations and poisoned inter-religious dialogue was at its peak. The Christian Churches which had played a significant role in the reunification process were keen to reap its fruit. It provided the church in former West Cameroon to open up and expand its mission capabilities. The churches rushed to discover their protestant and Roman Catholic counterparts across the Mungo. The new unions of these churches that emerged strengthened their prophetic voice in the nation. Unlike the State which was slow in maximizing the latent value of bilingualism, the churches crafted a cultural symbiosis out of the new bilingual reality and exploited it well for Christian growth and mission. Apart from NECC, the Council of Evangelical Protestant Churches of Cameroon brings together Cameroonians from all cultural backgrounds (Nyansaku-ni-Nku, 2011: 11). Like the Christian religion in all its ramifications, Islam has also greatly contributed to national integration. Apart from being a major player in inter-religious dialogue and ecumenical services, the Moslem religion has implanted itself almost in every city, town and village in Cameroon where there are non-indigenous Imams or Moslem religious leaders.

In the social domain, national integration has taken the form of vertical and horizontal social mobility in a country that is an open and not a closed society. According to Pierre Bourdieu, vertical mobility involves improving one's status by working hard and amassing social, economic and cultural capital in the form of resources, influence and education respectively. In this way, status is achieved and not ascribed because movement up or down the social ladder is based not on blood, family or birth but on merit, skills, abilities, and actions. This greatly facilitates social transformation even though some structures of sin and acts of public indecency like tribalism, bribery and corruption have always slowed the pace. The result of this mobility is that on a daily basis there is the emergence of les nouveau riches in various parts of the country.

This mobility is facilitated by the creation of avenues in which the voiceless are given expression including minority groups, youths, women and the physically impaired. A number of institutions exist in Cameroon for the empowerment of youth in preparation for their eventual integration into mainstream society.<sup>5</sup> What is more, there is a well-defined legal framework for the erection of enterprises for wealth creation and poverty alleviation as outlined in the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper. The underprivileged strata of society are brought into sharp focus. Ethnic minorities are protected by the Constitution and benefit greatly from government assistance. The political state works towards ensuring the literacy of the underprivileged social strata; integrating the Pygmies; promoting the education of the girl child throughout the national territory and implementing major projects aimed at introducing ICT in primary schools (Morikang-Tche, 2011: 67-71).

Since the Reunification, women have been integrated into the country's political culture. A Ministry for Women Empowerment and the Family ensures the valorization of the housewife, encouraging women to take part in the political scene to support education and rural women in different ways. In the political domain, the number of female Senators moved from 20 in 2013 to 26 in 2018 out of a hundred while there are 56 members of parliament in a House that comprises 180 members. In local government, there are currently 31 mayors out of 360 in the whole country and there is a possibility of women gaining more positions in upcoming elections.<sup>6</sup> These figures show a marked improvement to what obtained in the past. For example, from 2007 to 2013, 3 % of mayors were women (10 out of 360); 10.7 % were first assistant mayors (36 out of 301), 23.7 % second assistant mayors (80 out of 257), 15.7 % third assistant mayors (11 out of 59) and 50 % were 4<sup>th</sup> assistant mayors. In all, the number of women in local councils moved up from 36 in 1982 to over 1 700 in 2007 (Ngwoh, 2016: 380).

On the other hand, horizontal mobility involves the movement of people from one part of the country to another where they discover, learn new ways and are acculturated. It is facilitated by a road network which stands at 54 000 kilometers classified into four categories including national, regional, divisional and rural roads. About 5 000 are tarred,

<sup>5</sup> These include the National Employment Fund, Programme of Support for the Rural and Urban Youth (PAJER-U), Programme of Support for the Rural Youth to fight against Poverty (PAJER - LP), Project for the socio-economic Insertion of the Youth (PIFMAS), National Civic Service for Participation in Development Agency, Multipurpose Youth Development Centres, National Youth Council, as well as seven ministries including Youth Affairs, Basic Education, Secondary Education, Higher Education, Social Affairs, Sports and Physical Education, Employment and Vocational Training.

<sup>6</sup> Municipal, Regional and Parliamentary elections were announced for 2019 and although the electorate had not yet been convened by March 30, 2019, there is a likelihood that the elections will hold in September 2019.

18 016 are earth while 27 693 are rural roads. The Trans-African Highway also runs across Cameroon into eight outlets.<sup>7</sup> The creation of the Road Fund on April 8, 1996, development of a Road Master Plan in March 2003 as well as the formation of the National Road Board (CONAROUTE) on May 9, 2005 were intended to facilitate movement from place to place so that people could easily get integrated (Ngwoh, 2017).

The railway network stretches at 1 103 kilometers and is the centerpiece of Cameroon's transport system. It was opened in 1965, with a privatization process initiated in 1994. In relation to air transportation, there exist facilities for transactions between regions and foreign nations by the setting up of a national airport network. International airports at Douala, Yaoundé and Garoua are accompanied by airplanes services in Ngaoundere, Maroua, Bamenda, Bafoussam, Fouban (Koutaba), Bertoua. The seaport sector is not excluded as the creation of Cameroon Shipyard and Industrial Engineering Ltd (CNIC) renders it vibrant. The existing Douala seaport, the newly constructed Kribi Deep Seaport and other port facilities in Tiko and Limbe are of great service to the nation.

Urbanization is one of the ways in which national integration has been forged through the agglomeration of mixed ethnic groups as well as the creation of ethnic spaces in urban places. For example, "... the Doualas, the Bamilekes, the Ewondos, the Bassas, the Bamouns ... came as far back as 1916 to work in the German plantations. They got married here, they had their kids here (Ngoh, 2011 b: 16). In Biya's view, national integration could also be achieved through the "judicious planning of towns with a view to turning urban centers into focal points for sociological changes necessary for the consolidation of national awareness and the nurturing of a consolidated culture (Jua, 2004: 302). It is no wonder that there exist ethnic spaces in urban areas like Bayangi quarters and Quartier Bamoun in Douala or Metta Quarters in Bamenda and Kumba.<sup>8</sup> Government policy that Cameroonian citizens could serve in any capacity everywhere in their fatherland regardless of their ancestry, ethnic origin, language or religion goes a long way to water the roots of national integration. In the course of doing so, such servants and their families usually get immersed in the cultural aspects of the people they serve with the tendency of leaving indelible marks through marriage and other relationships. For example, of the ten regional governors in Cameroon by February 28, 2019, almost 90 per cent of them were not indigenous to their areas of command. This goes same for other categories of civil servants working across the country.

This policy is simply a relay from what obtained in the days of old when descendants of Francophone immigrants in Anglophone Cameroon were treated as citizens in law and fact. For example, Pa Tamen, a Bamileke of Dschang origin was elected Secretary General of the West Cameroon Teacher's Trade Union from 1969 to 1973; John Belinga Andela of Bafia parentage was Permanent Secretary in the West Cameroon Prime Minister's office and later governor of the North West Province (August 1983 – March 1984); Paul Sinju aka Paul Bamileke served as Municipal Administrator of the Tiko Council (1985 to 1995); Emmanuel Belo Chimy from Monatele who became member of the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP), later served as Chairman of the Tiko Local Government area between 1962 and 1964 (Awosom, 2004: 277). In the Tiko Council, another none indigene Tita Fomukong from Bali in the North West Region was Mayor from 2007 to 2013.

Sports in general and football in particular has been adopted by Cameroonians as one of the pillars on which national integration is built. Numerous sports events like University Games, National School Games, National Games of Cameroon, (DIXIADES), Nation's Challenge Cup, Elite I and II Soccer Championship, Inter Quarter Competitions, Holiday Competitions and Keep Fit Clubs in townships, villages and quarters enforce the integration and unity of Cameroonians. The recruitment of players into teams from other regions in their quest for soccer glory and even the development of sports infrastructure inspires hope with virtually all regions having their turn to host sport events. Ultra-modern stadia in Buea, Limbe, Douala, Garoua, Yaounde, Bafoussam and Limbe to host continental events feature as veritable instruments to inspire youths of the nation to excel in sports. In this way, Cameroon's sports development policy has been successful in bringing together and fostering social integration. Having been elevated to the level of a national religion, Cameroon's national team called Indomitable Lions with its mantra of "fighting spirit", has become common cultural property and the country's national pride (Nkodo, 2017).

In Cameroon, sports inspire team work, strengthens national pride and unity, has been providing a positive identity, not only for Cameroon players, but for all citizens. Sports competitions and events build relationships, serve as conciliation instruments that encourage understanding and tolerance. Playing and running together on pitches and tracks helps to transcend social barriers irrespective of age, class, ethnicity, sex or politics. It is increasingly evident that with sports, the task of building a strong and united Cameroon out of the pluralistic population does not require stupendous efforts. Football in particular could be seen as the opium of the people, complementing the efforts of politicians, administrators and traditional authorities in the search for national cohesion. At the grassroots, community, regional and national levels, it has been a useful vector in creating a conducive environment where Cameroonians from different extractions assemble, celebrate and work towards the same goals, show respect for others and share space and equipment (Nkodo, 2017).

Every year, Cameroonians come together without any regional or tribal discrimination to celebrate national and international victories registered by the Indomitable Lions football team, the Olympic Lions, the female National football team and reward excellence by sports men and women from the nation's 39 sports federations who showcase their best talents. In the heat of the Anglophone Crisis in February 2017, the Ministry of Sports and Physical Education organized a

<sup>7</sup> These include Yaounde-Ayos-Bertoua to Chad; Yaounde-Ayos-Bertoua to Central African Republic; Ngaoundere-Toubooro-Moundou to Chad; Yaounde-Ebolowa-Kye-Ossi to Central African Republic; Yaounde-Ebolowa-Kye-Ossi to Equatorial Guinea; Yaounde-Ebolowa-Oyem to Gabon; Mutengene-Kumba-Mamfe-Ekok to Nigeria; and Bamenda-Mamfe-Ekok to Mfum-Abakilik-Enugu in Nigeria

<sup>8</sup> Bayangi, Bamoun and Metta are tribal peoples who migrated to various urban centers of the country where their settlements created new quarters bearing their names.

tour by the Indomitable Lions to display the trophy won at the 2017 AFCON tournament hosted by Gabon and won by Cameroon. The trophy tour pulled sports loving Cameroonians in huge crowds in cities across the national territory and particularly in towns in the North West and South West regions which were emblazoned in spates of unrest, demonstrations and ghost towns. Cameroonians from all shades of the society lined up the streets in Bamenda, Tiko, Limbe and Buea on February 22 and 24 2017 respectively to get a rare glimpse of the coveted trophy. The euphoria that characterized the event did not leave anyone indifferent and the expedition was used to preach peace and national unity as Cameroonians were called upon to remain united in their diversity (Elah, 2017).

Government promotes economic integration through agency (institutions or facilities to engender development) especially in the rural areas such as National Project for Participatory Development (PNDP), Grassfields Participatory and Decentralized Rural Development Project (GP DIRUDEP), North West High Plateau Rural Development Project (MIDENO), South West Development Authority (SOWEDA), Rumpi Project and others. These were launched within the framework of the National Poverty Reduction Strategy to decentralize various public services so as to alleviate poverty at the grassroots level. Such programmes address aspects like agricultural and pastoral development; environment; water and forests; agronomic research and protection of civil society (Ngwoh, 2011). These poverty alleviation initiatives are co-funded by government, beneficiary communities as well as other bodies and the strategy adopted for their implementation revolves around that of decentralized rural development or community development at village level.

Regarding the youth, numerous institutions exist to facilitate their insertion into the realm of national integration. Some are National Youth Council of Cameroon (NYCC), National Civic Service for Participation in Development (NCSPD) and Multifunctional Youth Promotion Centers (NYPCs). The NYCC is a framework for consultation, expression and youth action as well as interface between them, the government and development partners. The NCSPD contributes to the socio-economic development of Cameroon through the mobilization of energies, promotes national feeling, sense of discipline, tolerance, dignity of work, civic spirit and culture of peace among all citizens. MYPCs are multiservice platforms to stimulate the ingenuity and empowerment of youth so that they can also contribute to national development work. NYPC activities are developed towards social inclusion, economic promotion and a healthy entertainment (Ngalame, 2019).

## 6. Challenges to National Integration

There are numerous challenges to integration like in the political arena where micro nationalisms and resistance to good governance mechanisms asphyxiate the dissemination of democracy dividends. Concerning the socio-economic domain, acts of public indecency such as bribery, corruption and embezzlement suffocate economic equity while numerous structures of sin usually put a check on social equality. Cultural xenophobia and religious fundamentalism make it difficult for the establishment of a homogenous society in the country.

According to Nyamnjoh, the ordinary Cameroonian has come to the conclusion that the whole business of national integration is a smoke-screen perpetuated with the hidden agenda of thwarting all attempts at meaningful change. He holds that the system is interested in nation-deconstruction, not nation-building, national disunity, not national unity, disintegration, not integration. Since it finds comfort in chaos, and makes of conviviality a subject of rhetoric mostly, there is no wonder then that government makes it a point of duty to "repatriate" the corpse of every civil servant to their village of origin, lest their folk become emotionally attached to that part of Cameroon where they worked, died and naturally should have been buried. This explains why Cameroonians are associated geographically and administratively with the place of birth of their fathers, rather than culturally or in terms of where they themselves were born and raised. Thus, citizens are denied Francophone and Anglophone cultural identity by referring to them as *les Francophones de culture Anglophone* and "*Anglophones of Francophone culture*," (Nyamnjoh, 1999: 107)

Building a national consciousness or nationalism to sustain the nation state is complicated since there are competing ethnic nationalisms. The belief of a superior-inferior group makes consensus-building more difficult. Building strong and viable resources of political association and mass-based political parties is difficult, as the challenges of ethnic loyalty may determine them. If the representatives of the big ethnic groups are only interested in themselves and their groups, the resolution of divisive issues and the protection of minority interests are difficult. The political elite regard the manipulation of ethnic loyalty as the cheapest and most reliable strategy to acquire and consolidate power. (Kagame, 2010). In the case of Cameroon, such difficulty has been expressed thus:

National integration is jeopardized by ethno-regional jingoism, fanned and sustained by the state. Small wonder then that the notion of national unity is ridiculed. People are overtly encouraged to demonstrate stronger loyalties to their ethno-regional or sub-national groups than to the Cameroon nation. Priority is given to belonging to a group first and the nation second, and this state of affairs engenders the crisis of citizenship as full acceptability in one's fatherland suffers from a delimitation of a geo-ethnic order (Awasom, 2004: 268).

Even the policy of bilingualism, inscribed in the country's constitution is not implemented with equal fervor. There is an unequal distribution in the usage of English and French as official languages with a minority English speaking population. For decades since the independence of Cameroon, the Anglophones have constantly been in the battle of trying to negotiate their identity in the country. English language which is the *modus operandi* in the courts of the English-speaking part of Cameroon once suffered major setbacks like when the President of the North West Court of Appeal in decided in February 2015 that lawyers should make their court submissions in French. Apparently, most of the magistrates appointed to courts in Anglophone regions were Francophone who could hardly use English as a working language, an evidence of Frenchification of Anglophone Cameroon (Bamenda Provincial Episcopal Conference (BAPEC), 2016: 6-7).

Apart from this instance, there were other ways by which English language was discriminated against in the public life of the nation: (i) some documents and public notices were produced by state institutions in French, with no English



translation, even basic finance documents such as COBAC Code, the CIMA Code and the OHADA Code<sup>9</sup> (ii) national entrance examinations into some professional schools were set in French only and Anglophone candidates were expected to answer them. Sometimes this happened even in the English-speaking regions, (iii) visitors and clients to government offices were expected to express themselves in French, even in the English-speaking regions, since most of the bosses in the offices spoke French and made no effort to speak English, (iv) most senior administrators and members of the Forces of Law and Order in the North West and South West Regions were French-speaking and ignored the cultures and customs of the people they were appointed to govern, (v) members of inspection teams, missions and facilitators for seminars sent from the ministries in Yaoundé to the English-speaking regions were generally predominantly French speaking, and expected to be understood by predominantly English speaking audiences, (vi) the Military Tribunals in the North West and South West Regions were basically French courts (BAPEC, 2016).<sup>10</sup>

The debate in Cameroon on the concept of "electoral village" whereby urbanized people cast their votes along ethnic lines enhances that the village, the lineage, the clan and the ethnic group still constitute vital variables in the political system (Nkwi 1997: 140). Faithfulness to ethnic bonds demonstrated itself in different ways and situations across the country especially during the turbulent years of the early 1990s. For example, when Mgr Andre Wouking (a Bamileke) was appointed by the Pope in 1999 to replace Mgr Jean Zoa (a Beti) as Archbishop of Yaounde, some Beti elite took upon themselves to *casser le choix du Vatican* in order to "stop the invading strangers" (Jua, 2004: 318).

The colonial legacy has continued to put a check on national integration and nation building because the goal of the colonialists was not to establish a nation-state, but simply to demarcate their areas of influence from those of other European masters (Ajayi, 1992: 8). They wanted to "ensure that colonial control and dispossession could be achieved without undue rivalry among the colonizers and at minimum cost to them" (Oladipo, 1998: 113) As such, their primary objective was to enhance their own economic interests rather than those of the colonized people: certainly not the construction of a new national identity, loyalty, unity of purpose and convergence of interests that would cut across the nationalities they had lumped together (Ekanola, 2006: 288-289).

## 7. Conclusion

Since earlier contacts between Cameroonians from different ethnic groupings were marked by culture shocks expressed through spiteful statements, xenophobia and mutual suspicion, the policy of national integration was introduced to break down socio-cultural barriers. This policy has nurtured Cameroonian citizens who are embedded within their culture, respectful of public interest, the common good, ethics and democratic values for a harmonious living together in a global world. The policy has helped citizens to find fulfilment and promoted a national consciousness through multiculturalism and living together expressed in varied customs and traditions.

If the success of these policies were to be measured in terms of socio-economic integration, then they would have been a gargantuan failure due to the near absence of human security and sustainable development. This would have applied *mutatis mutandis* to a political parameter because a huge majority of the people still awaits democracy dividends in the form of more political space and the promotion of fundamental human rights. So far, efforts at integrating the diverse peoples and cultures of Cameroon have turned her into a zebra people and another rainbow country. As state officials have contented themselves in chanting the policies of national integration as a *credo*, the church has adopted them as some *modus vivandi*. While cultural integration is more visible in a society where sports has remained the ocean into which numerous political streams meander, the house of God has emerged as the greatest advocate in word and deed.

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<sup>9</sup> These documents were finally translated in 2017 as one of the measures to resolve the Anglophone Crisis

<sup>10</sup> This was one of the grievances of the Anglophone Lawyers whose strike action in 2016 initiated the Anglophone Crisis. In reaction to these grievances, the government released a slew of policies aimed at righting the wrongs

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