

WestAfrica

INSIGHT



Tech start-up ecosystem in West Africa

Persistent protests: Everyday activism in Burkina Faso

YOUTH, PROTEST AND TECHNOLOGY:

Disrupting the status quo

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Editorial

Across West Africa, citizens are finding their voice to engage in protests aimed at rebalancing perceived, and often historical, grievances and imbalances. Young people in particular, cognizant of the power of new technologies, are increasingly finding ways to disrupt the status quo.

Historical grievances are also driving street demonstrations in Togo, where the Gnassingbé dynasty has held power since 1967. Wolali Ahlijah takes us inside the protest that began in August 2017 to understand how they are continuing to face up to the repressive response of the state with the help of social media and a more unified message. Away from the streets he also explains how negotiations have been manipulated by the government in attempt to reassert their control in the country.

Ernest Harsch explores the ongoing role of protest in public life in Burkina Faso; a country with a recent, and historic, tradition of successful popular uprisings. Looking at the individuals and associations that continue to utilize protests to air grievances in the post Compaoré era, Harsch highlights the current government's tentative, and often slow, response and offers some thoughts on how civic activists - in particular youth and women - can be more effective in driving change.

In light of the recent signing of the Not Too Young To Run Bill by President Buhari in Nigeria. Aisha Salaudeen takes a look at the success of the movements online campaign, how it got people talking about the question of age limits for public office and the way the campaign was able to sustain its online momentum, offline, to push for a change in the legislation. And asks whether other civic movements can learn from its success.

Nigeria's emerging tech start-up scene is explored in detail by Kemili Norman. Providing a space for creative new ventures that, for example, seek to improve civic participation or access to financial services, Norman looks at the growing interest from international investors and asks whether the Nigerian government is building a supportive environment to allow these youth-led initiatives to flourish.

Finally in Cameroon long-standing grievances between Anglophone regions and the central state, which have their roots in the independence era, have sparked sustained protests that are threatening to spill into wider conflict. Isidore Ngueuleu offers some reflections on why and how Cameroons divide has grown so stark since 2016 and looks at who might be in a position to act as a credible mediator if both sides can be convinced that dialogue offers a way forward.

The Center for Democracy and Development and the Open Society Initiative for West Africa are responsible for the views expressed in this publication



TAKING ON GNASSINGBÉ: West Africa's last strongman

By: **Wololi Ahlijoh**

At 51, Faure Gnassingbé is the youngest president in West Africa. The Togolese leader is discreet on the international stage and seldom speaks directly to his people on local media. This low-key approach, coupled with the small size of the country could easily shield Mr. Gnassingbé from the spotlight if it was not from the vociferous efforts of his own people to remove him for office. Since 19 August 2017 thousands of Togolese have taken to the streets to demands reforms that would limit presidential terms, and end Faure's time in office.

The Gnassingbé dynasty

On 13 January 1967 when his father took over the presidency of the republic of Togo, Faure Gnassingbé was just seven months old. He was raised in the circles of power as Eyadéma Gnassingbé tightened his grip over the country, annihilating any opposition and amassing considerable wealth.

The foundations of the Eyadéma's dictatorship were so strong that it survived the popular upheavals of the early 1990s that ended brought greater democracy to many states in Africa. The regime not only survived the popular challenges of the democracy movement but bounced back, to sustain itself against the will of the people.

In October 1992, the people of Togo overwhelmingly voted for a new constitution. One provision that was included stated that the president could serve a maximum of two presidential terms. But despite a new era for democracy on paper in reality the state continued much as before. In elections in 1993, Eyadéma won "a first term" in office running virtually unopposed. Most of the opposition had fled the country due to political violence and refused to participate in the electoral process. In 1998, he was again declared the winner by the election commission, securing 52.1% of the vote, a result the opposition contested unsuccessfully.



Each election in Togo since the end of single party rule in 1990 has been marred by violent street protests and the disproportionate use of violence by state security forces. In fact, Eyadéma authorized political parties in March 1991 in part in response to sustained street protests dating back to 5 October 1990. The National Conference in July 1991, a transitional prime minister and the adoption of the 1992 Constitution are further examples of reforms driven by popular protests.

Eyadéma promised to adhere to the provisions of the 1992 constitution and leave power at the end of his second five-year term, following the controversial the 1998 election. But in 2002, the same year that Faure Gnassingbé entered politics and was elected to the National Assembly, the legislature, composed solely of ruling party members and supporters, modified the constitution to remove term limits. Allowing Eyadéma to run for, and clinch, a third elected term in 2003. On 5 February 2005 Eyadéma unexpectedly passed away.

Within hours of president's death Faure Gnassingbé was appointed as new president by the army in complete violation of the constitution.

According to the constitution, the chairman of the National Assembly should assume the presidency until new elections - to be held within 90 days - are arranged. But the basic law was modified overnight, even though the same text precluded revisions during a presidential vacancy. Then, the chairman of the National Assembly was removed and replaced by Faure Gnassingbé. A few days later Gnassingbé stepped down in light of intense local and growing international pressure. But his party retained tight control of the electoral process and when polls were held in April 2005 he was declared the winner. The vote was marred by extreme violence with a United Nations report stating that hundreds of people died at the hands of the army and pro-government militias.



A New Voice?

Faure Gnassingbé vowed to turn the page of political violence and usher the country into a real democracy. But although he was quick to distance himself from his father and promise a new form of leadership, his opponents quickly learned that Faure had no intention to leave power. He finished his controversial first term in 2010, won a second one and is now well into a third. Yet there is still no sign of any of the promised constitutional reforms that he agreed upon in 2006. Reforms that were to reinstate presidential term limits and a two-round election system.

The issue of term limits and the desire of many Togolese to elect a new leader after decades with the same family at the helm has fueled protests in the country since 2003. *Tikpi Salifou Atchadam*, the leader of a relatively new political party, the *Parti National Panafric-*

ain, is not a new face for keen observers of Togolese politics. He has been an active participant in the democratic struggle since its beginning in the early 1990s. His efforts to reinvigorate the opposition, whose credibility had been dented by the decision of the *Union des Forces de Changement* leader *Gilchrist Olympio* to sign a power sharing agreement with Gnassingbé in 2010, has gained sustained momentum since August 2017.

Tipki Atchadam came to the scene with a new, radical proposition. Since the original constitution adopted by the people in 1992 has all the features of a democracy, and doubtful that Faure Gnassingbé would ever deliver on his 2006 promise of reform, a simple reinstatement of the original basic law would be enough to set the country back on course. This, along with the right to vote for the diaspora, have been his two major rallying cries.

While constitutionalists and legal analysts were debating the merits of Atchadam's argument, his followers took the message to the streets, to demonstrate, peacefully, their support for the proposed changes. One innovation of Atchadam was to hold protest simultaneously in multiple cities across the country and in the diaspora.

The success of these first protests on 19 August 2017, despite the violent government response, convinced other opposition actors of the merits of this new approach. Jean Pierre Fabre, who has been put by Faure Gnassingbé on the government's payroll as the leader of the opposition has led street protests against the government since 2010, when he first contested for the presidency. However, his actions were limited to rallies at the beach front in Lomé on the weekends as the regime refused to allow his followers to march on the streets during the weekdays. The initially sizeable crowds shrunk over time due to the various restrictive government measures and the lack of a consistent message. Becoming more of a gathering of disgruntled citizens than an organized resistance.

All that changed in September 2017, when Fabre and Atchadam joined forces in a coalition along with 12 other political parties to push for change in keeping with Atchadam's proposal. This coalition created a rare, unified front to push for the reinstatement of the 1992 constitution. In the last trimester of 2017, thousands of protesters took to the streets of the capital Lomé as well as in other major cities in northern Togo - Sokode, Bafilo and Mango. At the same time, diaspora led protests were held in Europe and North America. The demonstrations grew in both size and intensity.

Fighting Back

The government's response to protests, using tactics of violence and intimidation, have historically proven more than sufficient to keep the opposition under control in Togo.

But this time things are different. The opposition has unified and agreed on a clear message. Efforts to stamp out protests have been met with fierce resistance, with some demonstrators fighting back and causing soldiers to retreat. Protests have not just been confined to Lomé and the south of the country, traditional areas of opposition support, but for the first time have spread into the northern strongholds of the government where open dissent has previously been rare.

Protest signs read "Faure Must Go", "50 years is enough" and "C92" the new acronym for the 1992 Constitution. The streets have been occupied by people of all ages, from different social backgrounds. Street vendors, motorbike taxi drivers called Zomidjan, university students, young professionals and groups of women have all shown their commitment to defy the government. "En Aucun Cas" (under no circumstance), a reference to the term limits clause in the 1992 Constitution, has become the rallying cry of the demonstrators.

A unified opposition has helped but the protests have crossed party lines and made things very difficult for the regime to contain. One response the government resorted to was cutting off the internet on the days of protests to curtail the diffusion of images through WhatsApp. Concerned that the sharing of information through this platform was invigorating protests and leading to the propagation of 'fake news' the government sought to control online access. But the results appear to have been more detrimental to local businesses than to the protesters.

The ruling party also sought to challenge the opposition by mandating civil servants to take part in pro-government rallies to publicly show their support. Armed militias began patrolling the cities to intimidate protesters while the police stood and watched. However, none of these measures seem to have reduced the determination of the people on the streets who have grown in confidence that the momentum for change is with them.

In fact, the repressive tactics of the government appear to have the adverse effect of galvanizing more people to take to the streets.

The government has even proposed a set of constitutional amendments to include term limits and the two round ballot system to be put to a public vote. The opposition rejected the referendum initiative in its entirety citing reservations about the independence of the electoral commission and judiciary; institutions that are run and controlled by Faure loyalists. They are also concerned that it has the potential to create a false choice for citizens. The proposed text excludes a key stipulation of the 1992 constitution that under no circumstances shall one individual serve more than two presidential terms. If the voters approve the amendments, this opens the possibility for Faure Gnassingbé to seek two more terms as changes would not apply retroactively. But if voters reject the proposed amendment this would give credibility to the continuation of politics as they are.

A Return To The Negotiating Table

In December 2017, Faure Gnassingbé broke months of silence in an interview with *Jeune Afrique*. He attacked the opposition for using street protests as a mean to remove him from power, labelling their tactics as a failed coup attempt. He insisted that a referendum would be held, that any outcome would not be retroactively applied to him and offered to meet for talks with the opposition to negotiate a solution.

The opposition's initial rejection and ongoing ambivalence to this call for dialogue gave more leverage to Gnassingbé. Refusing to engage in a dialogue presented the opposition as uncommitted to a peaceful solution. But engaging in talks would reduce their momentum on the streets. With the presidents of Ghana and Guinea - Nana Akufo-Addo and Alpha Conde - willing to try and broker an Economic Community of West African States - which Gnassingbé is currently the head of - solution, the opposition reluctantly began talks in February 2018.

Faure Gnassingbé and his advisors saw the setting up of a dialogue as a chance to regain the upper hand, not necessarily to broker a solution. At the same time as the government was making overtures to the region about the need for dialogue their repressive machine was operating with full force. Dozens of civil society leaders and opposition sympathizers were thrown in jail; Tikpi Atchadam fled into exile, fearing for his safety, after his party's headquarters were ransacked and burned; and the northern cities of Sokodé, Bafilo and Mango were put under heavy military presence, whilst soldiers and militiamen roamed the streets of Lomé threatening opposition supporters. With the facilitators able to persuade the opposition to suspend protests during the talks, the government appeared to have reasserted control.

Neither Faure Gnassingbé or Tipki Atchadam showed up for the talks and the discussions stalled on the very first day as the opposition insisted that the government release all political prisoners before a dialogue could begin. The government countered by claiming that protesters had attacked soldiers and stolen weapons; it would not engage in any actual discussion until the weapons were returned. Clearly neither party was there to talk. But neither party wanted to be accused of refusing to talk.

The talks broke down within a week although Nana Akufo-Addo insists that he paused the discussions to allow some areas of common ground to be identified. This pause has allowed the government to employ a new strategy. They contended that the opposition had agreed to suspend the protests during the talks and, since talks were simply on hold, no-one would be allowed to demonstrate.

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The Front Citoyen Togo Debout



The stuttering talks have reduced the oppositions momentum. Protests have decreased in size as the violence from the government had intensified; permits for peaceful protest are being routinely denied; public events including press conferences have been shut down; and civil society leaders remain imprisoned. Faure Gnassingbé appears to have averted this crisis and is putting in place the structures to hold a referendum. He controls the framework for the dialogue and is carefully leveling the repression to remain below the threshold of international outrage that could make him a target of harsher regional and international criticism.

The Struggle Continues

Street protests may have dimmed, but the determination of the people of Togo to deny Faure Gnassingbé a fourth term remains. The deaths of protesters, including children, has made Faure less popular within his own rank, with some contemplating the possibility of not supporting his widely expected 2020 bid.

On the civil front, a new organization, the *Front Citoyen - Togo Debout* founded in September 2017 is gaining strength. Led by David Dosseh, a charismatic surgeon, the movement has opened a new civil resistance battlefield. With the support of organizations in the Togolese diaspora, including a coalition of Togolese diaspora organizations dubbed Coditogo; the *Togo Debout* movement, and the Faure Must Go Campaign led by renowned activist Farida Nabourema, have intensified advocacy efforts aimed at regional and international actors as well as retooling protesters with civil disobedience tactics. Smaller protests are being encouraged, organized more at the neighborhood level. Social media too is playing an important role both in documenting the repression, but it is also being used to raise awareness of social grievances held by citizens, some of which have elicited a government response, and to connect protesters in-country with the diaspora

who continue to provide significant funds to the struggle.

Political leaders are promising bigger demonstrations in the weeks to come. Brigitte Adjamagbo-Johnson, the coordinator of the Coditogo coalition stated during a tour of the country in May 2018 that demonstrations would continue. In an audio message shared on WhatsApp on 3 June 2018, exiled opposition figure Tipki Atchadam, called on the people to show their determination to the world through massive protests on 6-8 June. Efforts to begin a new wave of protest were nipped in the bud by the security forces but attempts to revive the movements momentum are likely to continue.

Faure Gnassingbé remains convinced that he will come out stronger from the referendum. In February 2018, he made new appointments to the electoral commission signaling that he intends to move to the ballot

within months. How quickly he moves is still unclear, as he continues to harness the paused dialogue to stall the oppositions momentum. Legislative elections are scheduled for July and opposition figures insist that these cannot take place until reforms are agreed and enacted.

Although he seems to be hanging on for now, Faure Gnassingbé is arguably weaker than ever. Since the fall of Yahya Jammeh in the Gambia in 2017, Togo remains the last country in West Africa not to have experienced political succession through the ballot box. Faure might be longest serving president in the region - with 17 years in power and 51 years of combined rule with his father - but he is increasingly becoming an isolated figure, facing up to continuing protests that pose the greatest threat to his grip on power. For now he remains West Africa's last strongman standing, but for how long?

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PERSISTENT PROTESTS: Everyday activism in Burkina Faso

By: **Ernest Horsch**

Even before large crowds chased President Blaise Compaoré from power in 2014, the people of Burkina Faso had a reputation for rebelliousness. A similar popular uprising toppled the country's first president in 1966, trade unions subsequently blocked a ruling general's attempt to impose a one-party state and for a brief four years in the 1980s Thomas Sankara's revolutionary government overhauled a corrupt bureaucracy; inspiring ordinary people to transform their communities and audaciously challenging the dictates of France and other Western powers.

But the popular insurrection that removed Compaoré in October 2014 was a fresh reminder that ordinary citizens, sufficiently motivated and organised, can alter a nation's political direction. The events resonated across West Africa where in several neighbouring

countries tens of thousands are themselves mobilising with the aim of dislodging entrenched autocrats. Large street assemblies defending the rule of law against a leader trying to hang on by unconstitutional means eventually brought change and a legitimately elected government. However protests did not end there; sit-ins, marches, rallies, strikes and other agitation have remained constant features of everyday life since.

Grievances, Big and Small

The basic democratic thrust of the 2014 uprising has drawn a great deal of attention but focusing too narrowly on that triumph can obscure the reality that change is never straightforward. The process in Burkina Faso was prolonged and convoluted. Compaoré, following his 1987 military coup and assassination of San-



kara, managed to stay in power for more than a quarter of a century. He survived not simply through repression, but also by co-opting and dividing challengers.

Nonetheless, over time opposition grew. Professionals campaigned against corruption. Students outraged by killings of their comrades repeatedly mobilised. People across the country rose up in 1998-99 over the assassination of independent newspaper editor Norbert Zongo. Those actions had obvious political implications. Yet many more protests were driven by economic and social grievances. Organized labour repeatedly went on strike seeking higher salaries, an end to privatization and other material concerns. Merchants protested customs raids and arbitrary market regulations. Poor urban residents demonstrated against corrupt land allocations and municipal mismanagement. Youths, judges, police trainees, civil servants, and other social groups also aired their grievances in the streets.

Gradually, agitation became more national, breaking a robust civil society, albeit without common organisations or aims, began to emerge. Initially activists focused on their own specific interests but eventually many realized that lasting solutions would require basic political change. The 21 April Movement was founded in 2013 to improve agriculture, health, education and democratic rights. However negotiations for limited reforms proved impossible. Reflecting back in 2016 on the lack of space for dialogue, the group's leader, Marcel Tankoano, noted that "since we could not have discussions with it, this regime had to go".

Many of Marcel's comrades in other groups reached a similar conclusion and decided to come together in an overtly political movement to remove this common obstacle. Once Compaoré was gone, however, their discontent lost a clear target. Activists still mobilized against the legacies of poor governance but the prote-



sts became more diffuse, with many having different targets, prompted by a wide array of grievances.

Since 2014, Burkina Faso has been roiled by hundreds of protests. Teachers, health care workers, civil servants and other employees have repeatedly gone on strike or staged sit-ins. Students in the secondary schools and at the main universities in Ouagadougou, Bobo-Dioulasso and Koudougou have walked out of their classrooms. Residents of local communities have mobilized against fraudulent land deals, high health costs and poor roads.

The government of President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, who was elected in 2015, frequently laments the constant disruptions, but with a few exceptions has generally avoided responding with repression. The situation, as Burkinabè journalist, Jean Stéphane Ouédraogo put it in 2015, marks a “quasi-institutionalisation of governance by the streets”.

Drivers of Protest

Popular expectations are high that advances will come not only in the political sphere, but also in economic and social conditions. Although the economy remains fragile, growth prospects are good, with International Monetary Fund projections for 2017–21 exceeding 6% annually. Yet growth by itself cannot quickly improve the lives of the more than 40% of Burkinabè who live in poverty, according to official estimates. Even those who live just above the poverty threshold face difficult conditions, given rising food and other consumer good prices, a scarcity of jobs and the country's more erratic climate - marked by both uncertain rainfall and unexpected flooding. Dissatisfaction remains high and is made more acute by the visible contrast between the living standards of the elite and those of the vast majority.

Although Burkina Faso's labour movement has historically been fragmented, comprising competing federations and autonomous unions, it remains the strongest and most structured social sector. The labour movement played a major role in the events of 2014 and remains very active. According to an estimate by the *L'Observateur Paalga* newspaper, public employees engaged in more than 80 strikes, sit-ins and other protests between January 2016 and November 2017.

Women are also in motion despite social constraints against their public participation. Just days before the *anti-Compaoré* insurrection, tens of thousands of women marched to defend the constitution. Marie Madeleine Somda, a central organiser of this unique women-only group - *the Collectif des Femmes pour la Défense de la Constitution* (Women's Collective to Defend the Constitution) - explained that they founded their own organisation because in mixed associations "women don't occupy leading responsibilities; they're often in the second rank." However some women do gain leadership roles in wider organisations. Blandine Sankara, a sister of the late president, is coordinator of the *Collectif Citoyen pour l'Agro-écologie* (Citizens Collective for Agro-Ecology), which in June 2018 mobilized hundreds of protesters against plans to promote genetically modified products.

Traditional social norms giving preference to (male) elders are also biased against young people. That reality was shaken up during the revolutionary era of the 1980s. It has since been eroded further by the sheer power of demographics: in 2015, 65.5% of all Burkinabè were under 25 according to United Nations data. While Burkina Faso has many older activists and party leaders with progressive outlooks - acquired during the turbulent 1980s - youth have been especially open to radical ideas and action. Most of those who gave their lives for the democratic movement in 2014 and 2015 were in their teens or twenties

Youth are numerous in the ranks of the various parties and civil associations. One of the most influential activist groups of recent years, *Balai Citoyen* (Citizen's Broom), besides upholding the example of Sankara - a hero to many young people - is led by the rapper Smockey and the reggae artist *Sams'K Le Jah*. Both are adept at appealing to Burkina Faso's youth.

Although Facebook and similar sites are popular with better-off urban residents, Burkinabè youth are less likely to communicate using social media than elsewhere in the region. Overall internet access remains one of the world's lowest, at under 4%. They are far more likely to use the text messaging functions of mobile phones to publicize and coordinate protests; the number of mobile phones increased nearly fifteen times between 2006 and 2015 to more than 14 million.

Navigating Turbulence

The persistence of popular agitation obliges activists and authorities alike to find ways to safely navigate the "new" Burkina Faso. For civil society and labour movements, their organizational fragmentation may not be a notable problem when dealing with local issues, such as removing a corrupt municipal councilor or highlighting shortages at a health clinic. But on national issues, it is a definite handicap, making it harder to pose clear demands and easier for authorities to ignore them or pit groups against one and other.

Lack of coordination also fosters indiscipline. While protests in Burkina Faso have largely been peaceful, outbreaks of violence have sometimes brought property damage, injury and on occasion death. Disruptive actions such as blocking major national highways or repeated civil service strikes also threaten to alienate potentially sympathetic sectors of the population.

Efforts to improve the organizational and technical skills of civil society groups may strengthen their ability to communicate, focus on their most essential demands and better use available institutional channels to seek redress. For that to happen, however, the authorities must become more receptive. Opinion surveys, conducted by the civil society managed Présimetre monitoring network, show that the government has acquired a reputation for promising much, but moving very slowly on delivery. Such failings can only increase public cynicism towards the political system, undercutting electoral participation and impelling some to explore violent alternatives.

In face of high public expectations, the authorities need to act more expeditiously on a variety of fronts: improving transparency and accountability in public affairs, ensuring that at least some high-profile cases

against corrupt former officials and rights violators reach the courtroom, creating many more jobs for young people and addressing trade union demands more comprehensively.

Greater responsiveness at the top may help calm public agitation, but will not end it. Yet in all well-functioning democratic systems marches and demonstrations provide useful avenues for highlighting gaps and shortcomings, promoting wider citizen engagement and dissuading those in office from abusing their powers. As Smockey of *Balai Citoyen* commented shortly after the 2015 elections: "It's important to maintain some form of counter-power, to force the government to respect its commitments. If this balance is allowed to disappear, there will be a risk of the old ghosts coming back."

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HOW AN ONLINE CAMPAIGN CHANGED the constitution in Nigeria

By: **Aisho Soloudeen**

Social media platforms are increasingly leading online campaigns aimed at expressing dissatisfaction and sparking change. The past few years in Nigeria, a trend replicated globally, have seen a rise in debates and discussions regarding the role of the internet in citizen-led social movements.

Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp allow like-minded individuals to converse directly with one and other without, in some instances, ever having met. This is particularly true of the younger generation who are finding their political voice online. The Not Too Young To Run Campaign, arguably Nigeria's most popular youth-led social media movement, was an idea, formulated by a group of like-minded individuals, that took off online in 2016 under the hashtag #NotTooYoungToRun.

The aim of the campaign was twofold. To convince Nigerian lawmakers to amend the constitution to lower

the minimum age at which candidates are eligible to run for political office and to encourage the wider populace to support greater youth participation in politics. "We have this believe that if you are old enough to vote, then you are old enough to run for office" says Moshood Isa the media officer for YIAGA, a youth based organisation in Africa that promotes inclusion and democratic governance. It has been at the forefront of the online campaign.

On 31 May 2018 the Not Too Young To Run Bill was signed into law by President Buhari. The constitutional amendment lowered the age threshold for running for political office to 35 years old for president and 25 for the House of Representatives and State Houses of Assemblies. President Buhari, while assenting to the bill recognised the role played by the Not Too Young To



Online protests operate with a speed and interactivity that would previously not have been possible without Twitter, Instagram and Facebook



To Run movement in getting it enacted, “your focus and contributions have now successfully increased the quality and maturity of Nigerian democracy and expanded the playing field for youth participation in politics”. A testament to the impact that online campaigns can have in shaping policy debates and decisions.

Connecting Citizens

Access to the internet makes it easy to connect and assemble like-minded individuals. A person can communicate with someone who is hundreds of miles away through a few clicks of a button. In Nigeria this is becoming easier as more and more people get online. In April 2018 it was estimated by the Nigerian Communications Commission that 100 million Nigerians were using the internet. However that growth is limited to cities or areas in the country with lower poverty rates, as a basic data plan costs ₦1000; just over 5% of the monthly minimum wage (₦18,000).

Mark Amaza, a member of Not Too Young To Run’s strategy team says latching on the internet to as a way of connecting people to the objective of the movement was intentional. “Our online campaign was deliberate, we wanted to get as many people as possible talking about the age reduction bill. Given the reach social media has, it was our best bet of getting our message to people, and fast”. Part of the strategy employed by the movement to boost their engagements online and to make the information more accessible and engaging to as wide an audience as possible, was to use infographics, question and answer polls and visuals.

Online protests operate with a speed and interactivity that would previously not have been possible. Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, for example, are able to reach millions of people from different parts of the world as events are happening. The fast spread of information – especially across different states within the country –



helped with validation, mobilization and increased momentum for the goals of the movement. The campaigns impact spread across Nigeria's states as evidenced by the fact that 33 of the 36 State Houses of Assembly gave their approval to the Bill.

This feat would have taken longer, and been much more expensive to accomplish, and more risky, using traditional forms of media such as radio, newspapers and door to door campaigning. Instagram and Twitter posts, along with updates to Facebook statuses around the objective of the movement, bypassed the bias of official sources of the mass media and gave a voice to ordinary youths in transforming the political landscape of the country. Helping them to quickly establish a sense of a community with a shared objective at a low cost.

Moshood says a lot of debates around the objectives of the campaign happened online, so much so that it made people who seemed disinterested at first pay at-

ention. "The online campaign created a lot of conversations around the movement. There were so many people sharing their opinions and making comments around what we were doing, it helped pass our message across". Whether or not the conversations were for or against the bill, the online debates, got more people familiarized with the movement and the issue of age barriers to entering into politics in Nigeria.

Making an Impact Offline

While online campaigns are excellent at sharing information and connecting citizens, it is important to consider how much influence these movements have at the policy level. Recent examples in Nigeria suggest that sustained pressure online can drive change offline.

In April 2014 the armed Islamist militant group, Boko Haram, kidnapped more than 200 Nigerian schoolgirls from their boarding school in Chibok, Borno State.

The response from the federal government was slow and almost non-existent, but with sustained advocacy from citizens, and in particular an online campaign to **#BringBackOurGirls**, it became a national, and even international, issue. In using social media to raise awareness of government failings the campaign made the issue one that the government could not ignore. In 2017 over 80 of the girls were released after sustained negotiations with Boko Haram.



A more recent example is the **#OpenNASS** social media campaign started by Enough is Enough, a youth-led organization aimed at promoting good governance and public accountability. Between June and July 2016, the group launched a campaign, taken up by others working on governance, to improve the transparency of the National Assembly. It had three objectives: for the Assembly to publish a breakdown of its 2016/2017 budget; provide contact information for its members on a publicly accessible website; and to replace voice voting with electronic voting. The sustained campaign, which took over Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, eventually led the National Assembly to release its budget to the public in May 2017. While the other two objectives are still pending, it is a further example of the power online movements have to push for change.

The Not Too Young To Run campaign followed a similar path in using online tools to have a big impact offline; garnering significant attention from Nigeria's lawmakers in the process. While the success of the campaign offline is not solely due to the reach the movement had online, it played a crucial role in connecting millions to the objective of the campaign. "The online movement definitely helped our campaign outside social media.



We had radio and TV interviews where people kept referencing the hashtag from online.... a lot of lawmakers had already heard about our movement when we approached them, it made it easier to relate our wants to them" says Amaza.

Shifting the Balance of Power

Youth led online movements like Not Too Young To Run are important actors in strengthening of Nigeria's democracy. Not only has their campaign paved the way for greater inclusion of young representatives in the political process but they have shown the potential power of online campaigning for shaping policymaking and Nigeria's political direction.

It is not a stretch to say that the government is likely to engage and respond to the demands of citizens and similar campaigns in the future. With the rapid spread of information it provides, social media has grown to be a tool for citizen driven public accountability. It provides access to the government and a means to connect in real time; especially with an increasing number of stakeholders within the Nigerian government active, and trying to engage, on Facebook and Twitter.

Ibrahim Faruk, Senior Programmes Officer at YIAGA says that the success of Not Too Young To Run campaign illustrates the importance of social media in instigating protests in Nigeria on a wider level. "There

are more movements already studying the campaign and online impact to learn lessons on how to effectively organise" he says. What this campaign has done is show Nigerians that with a lot of work, social media can be a tool to gather like minded individuals and get them to engage their leaders and make demands.

Social media campaigns and protests are gradually changing ways of interaction with governments in Africa by connecting people across the continent. And these connections make a difference. From a small group of activists in Togo to concerned young citizens in Nigeria, we are increasingly seeing how social media can forge powerful online communities, with the potential to spark change.

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NIGERIA'S VIBRANT **Start-up ecosystem**

By: Kemili Normon-Williom

In March 2017, three Nigerian tech start-ups received US\$8.35 million in seed capital from local and foreign investors. Wi-Fi provider Tzeti received US\$2.1 million, e-commerce start-up Cars45 got US\$5 million and fin-tech firm Lydia, US\$1.25 million.

Seed funding is on the rise across the continent, increasing by 16.8% last year to reach US\$129 million, according to a survey by the Nairobi-based tech media outlet Disrupt Africa. The biggest recipients were fin-tech businesses, followed by e-commerce, e-health and agri-tech. About 80% of all seed funding went to firms in Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa. A number of cities in Africa have vibrant start-up scenes – most notably in Cape Town and Nairobi, the latter of which is often nicknamed the “Silicon Savannah” – but it is Lagos, Nigeria’s economic hub, where the value of start-ups is highest: US\$2 billion according to Startup Genome’s “Global Startup Ecosystem Report 2017”.

The technology revolution in Nigerian is growing and so are the number of technology hubs and centers. They include, but are not limited to, the Co-Creation Hub (cCHub), Yaba iDEA Hub, Ventures Platform Hub, Enspire Hub, Civic Innovation Lab, Blue Hub, Start Innovation Lab, Root Hub, Delta State Innovation Hub and Ken Saro-Wiwa Hub. Technological innovation is seen as a key part of tackling poverty and these hubs are providing communities with infrastructures to support home-grown innovations, by assisting start-ups with internet access, free training and co-working spaces. They also provide a network of both professional and social networks in which technology entrepreneurs can thrive and turn their ideas into viable business ventures.

Mark Zuckerberg's visit to the Cc-hub



Sites of Innovation

Cinfores, a tech start-up company in Port Harcourt, developed an e-learning and examination preparatory tool called BrainFriend. The software is locally developed and was endorsed by the Federal Ministry of Education in 2016. It is now being widely used across secondary schools in the country. FarmCrowdy, created in 2017 as a digital and crowd-funded agricultural platform, empowers farmers in Nigeria by allowing users to invest in agricultural markets; giving farmers a stable price and sponsors a chance to make profit on their initial capital. It secured U\$1 million from Techstars Atlanta and other international investors in early 2018. Accounteer, a localized accounting platform for small businesses, with features that are specific to the countries their customers come from, has grown quickly to have 500 monthly paying users since it was launched in 2016. Bazecloud, a tech startup based in Abuja, is fo

cused on developing innovative software solutions, advanced e-learning and accountability tools for the project monitoring needs of civil society and even government.

In Lagos, the CcHub, through its incubation program, has fostered the growth of many notable start-ups working on health (Lifebank), governance (BudgIT), education (Stutern) and the environment (WeCyclers). Almost US\$1 million has been secured from its investment network since 2015, with start-ups able to access as much as US\$25,000 during the incubation phase and up to US\$100,000 more if they continue to show traction. Lagos is also home to e-commerce heavyweights Jumia and Konga and some of the continent's best-known start-ups: Andela, iROKO and Flutterwave have all attracted major global investor interest and investment.

THE FINTECH ECOSYSTEM IN NIGERIA



As well-established financial services providers looking to modernise operations, the volume of interest in Nigeria's fintech industry is growing. According to Asoko Insight, an Africa-focused corporate data company, Nigeria has almost 50 domestic fintech companies, excluding banks, with inbound investment last year tripling to reach US\$151 million. Paystack, the first Nigerian graduate of Silicon Valley-based accelerator Y Combinator – together with Paga, another online payments firm – became two of five fintech start-ups to make it onto the Fintech 250, a global list drawn up by CB Insights.

Breaking Down Borders

However, tech start-ups in Nigeria have generally failed to flourish as global entities. One reason for this is the scarcity of expansion plans, given the large, and

mainly untapped, domestic customer base for their products. In March 2017, the country had up to 90 million internet users, yielding the continent's highest penetration rate at about 53%, according to the Nigerian Communications Commission.

Another obstacle to tech start-up growth is funding. The cost of infrastructure: the expense of setting up and maintaining a server, as well as accessing advanced technologies, has generally meant larger enterprises have had an easier time growing in Africa. One way tech start-ups could reduce server costs, according to Rex Mafiana, CEO of FPG Technologies and Solutions, is by using cloud services. Another is through the support being offered by the increasing number of international tech hubs being launched in Nigeria.



In May 2018 Facebook announced the launch of its NG_Hub in Lagos – its first flagship community hub space in Africa. In addition to a partnership with cCHub - which will bring together developers, start-ups, and the wider tech community across Lagos and Nigeria - Facebook also announced partnerships with seven other hubs across the country: Venture Platform (Abuja), nHub (Jos), Colab Hub (Kaduna), DI Hub (Kano) and Start Innovation Hub (Uyo), Roar Hub (Enugu) and Ken Saro Wiwa Hub (Port Harcourt). These will serve as centers where Facebook’s training sessions will take place, and a space where innovative developers can seek out specialist support to them advance their skills and businesses.

Cc-Hub is also collaborating with Google on the next phase of Developers Launchpad Africa - an initiative which is providing over US\$3 million in equity free support to grow businesses.

The scheme is a new hands-on comprehensive mentorship programme tailored exclusively to start-ups based in Africa. According to the company, “this initiative will operate from a new Google Launchpad Space in Lagos”. The first site location for the program outside of the United States.

A Billion for Innovation

In 2016, the Nigerian government, not to be outdone, set aside US\$1 billion to develop ICT innovation hubs around the country with the aim of supporting its young tech talents and encouraging local content development. Industry stakeholders have suggested quick wins for tech start-up ecosystem could include the stabilization of electricity supply and improvements to the speed and penetration of the internet, to generate the supply of faster access, at reduced costs, to a greater number of citizens.

The launch of the 'Start-up Nigeria' incubation program on 7 May 2018, was designed to support the transformation of innovative ideas into viable products. Start-up Nigeria is being spearheaded by Emerging Platforms in collaborating with Ventures Platform Foundation and Genesys Tech Hub. It is supported by the National Social Investment Office in the Office of the Vice President as part of the Federal Government's support for innovation hubs across the country. Specifically, the program will provide training, mentorship and equity free funding to selected start-ups who are focused on solving the challenges of agriculture and governance in the north and central Nigeria and of commerce and finance in the south and eastern areas.

The investment is needed and overdue. The average global expenditure by governments on research and development is 0.4% of GDP, twice that of Nigeria.

The Nigerian government should make conscious efforts to support the education of engineers, entrepreneurs and scientist, and to encourage foreign investors to invest in the nations technology sector. Creating an Office of Entrepreneurship Education or an Office of Technology that would be geared solely towards catering for the educational and informational needs of technology-inclined start-ups and ventures would be welcome. In Sierra Leone the recently elected president created the position of Chief Innovation Officer within the Directorate of Science, Technology and Innovation, a similar appointment in Nigeria would signal a further commitment to the innovation agenda.

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CAMEROONS GROWING DIVIDE: The Anglophone problem

By: Isidore Ngueuleu

In 2016 lawyers went on strike in parts of northwest and southwest Cameroon to protest against the “francophonization” of the judicial system and what they perceived as a systematic attempt by the central government to erode English common law in Anglophone parts of the country. They were soon joined by teachers and students and formed the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium: a vehicle for peaceful demonstrations against the ongoing wider discrimination and assimilation of the English-speaking community. In recent months, the protests have escalated into sustained violent clashes.

The “Anglophone problem” has been part of political life in Cameroon since independence from British and French rule. The Francophone territory gained independence from France in January 1960 and the Anglophone territory - home to almost 20% of the population - became independent by joining the Francophone part, after a plebiscite, in October 1961.

The referendum, held on 11 February 1961, provided two alternatives for the populations under British administration: assimilate with Nigeria or join Francophone Cameroon. A third option, to establish an independent nation, was not on the table.

Separatist movements, encouraged by the mismanagement of the newly unified territories and the failure of the Cameroonian authorities to respect the terms of the agreements of the federal state, emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s. They included the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), the Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL), Cameroon Anglophone Movement, the Free West Cameroon Movement, the Southern Cameroons Restoration Movement and the Ambazonia Movement. In 1999, secessionist militants replaced the name of “Southern Cameroons” with Ambazonia Republic. Derived from the name given by the Portuguese to the region’s coast, Ambazon Bay,



it was done to remove any reference to Cameroon in the struggle in a reassertion of their desire for independence. Other, less hardline groups, agree that significant change is needed but see the solution to the Anglophone crisis in the proper implementation of a truly federal system of government.

Language, Identity and Politics

Cameroon does not have a linguistic policy, but it does have a language problem. The government at independence followed a colonial era commitment to bilingualism with French and English both adopted as official languages. But the upsurge of violence in the northwest and southwest regions draws on the frustration of Anglophones about the predominance of French. Particularly in its use as the language of government and administration. Numerous official documents, including certain laws and decrees, are unavailable in English, forcing many to feel as though they have to learn French to have access to socioeconomic opportunities.

The country has failed to promote its own national languages and implement a policy to build a common Cameroonian identity. As Willibroad Dze-Ngwa, Associate Professor in Political History and International Relations in the University of Cameroon noted in 2014, "Cameroon has two completely different national anthems which were composed in two different territories by two different groups of people under two different historical contexts and influenced by two diametrically opposed colonial legacies".

The division is clear, but it has been exacerbated during the 35 years that Paul Biya has been president of Cameroon. Clientelism, corruption and discrimination have progressively been institutionalized. For some Francophones, the Anglophone problem is a manifestation of these national problems of centralism, bad governance and a growing generational divide. They point to the fact that several French-speaking regions in the east and north are as poor and neglected as the English-speaking regions,

to argue that development problems are as much a result of poor national governance than a desire to marginalize based on language. But in October 2017, when well-known journalist and activist Mancho Bibixy started the so-called coffin revolution, he drew on a familiar argument that Anglophone regions do not benefit proportionately from the country's mineral and oil wealth, given that the resources are predominantly found in these regions.

The implementation of a decentralization process, a part of the 1996 constitution, has been very slow. But the decentralization legislation that does exist is designed in a way that does not account for minority issues from a linguistic and cultural dimension. It maintains that central state representatives have the right to supervise and even intervene in autonomous regional affairs. Opponents of decentralization support a return to federalism; a system in which they believe cultural and linguistic specificity will be more adequately managed, promoted and protected.

The disconnection of the Anglophone political and economic elites from local communities fed in to this sense of neglect and provided the space for the growth of a very strong and well-organized civil society. The civil society groups that have emerged in the region during the last two decades focused on consolidating that sense of community ownership. In 2007, there were an estimated 17,000 civil society actors - non-government organizations, unions and associations of professionals - in the two Anglophone regions; working on ending poverty and tackling issues of economic, social, cultural and environmental development.

The relations between these civil society networks and government has always been tense, particularly when it comes to issues of governance and human rights. However the government decision to detain several of these association leaders - including Agbor Balla and Fontem Neba in January 2017 on charges of terrorism and state rebellion - in response to the escalation of the Anglophone crisis has not slowed its momentum.



Southern Cameroons

Cameroon has a total population of **23,344,179** (2015 - World Bank)

Southern Cameroons is the region located in the south-west part of the country.

Northwest region population: **1,728,953** (2005 census)

Southwest region population: **1,481,477** (2013 census)

Languages spoken nation-wide:

French: 57.6%

English: 25.2%

Other: 28.8% (2005 census)



“ Fighting has caused more than 160,000 persons to be internally displaced and created 34,000 refugees in Nigeria ”

In fact the detention of these more moderate actors has opened the space to more radical actors, with more radical goals. Governance failures, the lack of democratization and the gross human rights violations have accelerated Anglophone demands into dangerous security unrest in which armed separatist movements have taken to direct confrontation with government forces.

A Violent Turn

Since November 2017, the long standing structural crisis has escalated into violent conflict, marred by numerous human rights violations, with daily clashes between national defense and security forces and separatists reported. Fighting has caused more than 160,000 persons to be internally displaced and created 34,000 refugees in Nigeria. Several hundred civilians and protesters have been killed, along with almost 50 Cameroonian defense and security personnel. At least 100 violent clashes between the defense and security

forces and separatist groups were recorded and mapped by activists between November 2017 and March 2018.

The Southern Cameroon defense forces and the Ambazonia defense forces are fighting on the ground against the Cameroonian army, with some estimates suggesting they have up to 300, well trained and equipped fighters. In addition, local cells of ten or so fighters, each reacting to local situations, have emerged. Groups such as the Ambazonia Restoration Army in Kupe, Muanengoumba and Moyo; the Bansa Liberation Army in Bui; the Tigers of Ambazonia in Manyu division; and the Lebialem Defence force have shown dynamism in mobilizing, communicating and fighting against the defense forces of Cameroon.

The army has taken a hard-line approach towards Anglophones villages suspected of having separatist sympathies; ransacking houses and shops and destroying food stocks according to the Center for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa which has enumerated

the arson of 60 villages by security forces. These are allegations that the army has vehemently denied. With separatist fighters showing an increased level of organization in their resistance the violence is likely to become more intensive and protracted with negative implications for the already worsening humanitarian situation.

Struggling to be Heard

Faced with a repressive state Anglophone activists have taken to social media to raise awareness of the issue to a national, regional and international audience and to coordinate the ongoing struggle. The most prominent leaders operating often from abroad have centralized the struggle, creating well followed Facebook pages that have been used to express solidarity, share ideas and raise funds. Ayuk Sisuku Tabe, the self-proclaimed head of the interim government of Ambazonia, nationwide address, deliberately delivered on 2017 new years eve at the same time as President Biya's, was viewed by 40,660 people online, compared to just 20,000 for the president.



Aware of the potential and growing impact of these online spaces, the government cut-off the internet in January 2017 for three months in the Anglophone regions forcing protesters to revert back to text and phone calls as the primary means of communication. An initiative of Internet Sans Frontières, allowed those outside the country or with access to virtual private networks, to campaign online for the government to #BringBackOurInternet. The campaign, which drew inspiration from the #BringBackOurGirls campaign in neighbouring Nigeria, aimed to raise international awareness and push the government to restore the internet connection. A lawsuit was also filed in the national courts to challenge the government's internet shut-down which was estimated to have cost the affected regions 44 million CFA Francs (US\$723,000). Combined domestic, regional and international pressure pushed the government to end the internet shutdown. Immediately after it was restored protesters reverted to using more secure platforms, such as WhatsApp or Telegram to inform, and coordinate the activities of protesters.

In raising international awareness of the struggle the Cameroonian diaspora has played an important role, particularly after the detention of key leaders of the Ambazonia interim government in Nigeria in early 2018. AFP reported that "the radicalization of some Anglophones is the result of intensive "propaganda" activity launched from abroad on social networks, which feeds into the feelings of marginalization among local people". They have sustained the protests with financial backing and helped to give the crisis a higher international profile. In April 2017, a cable television channel, the Southern Cameroon Broadcasting Corporation, was launched from South Africa and the interim

government of Ambazonia was operating from Nigeria before its leaders were arrested in January 2018.

However some diaspora, having been out of the country for a long time are disconnected from the realities on the ground. There is a danger that their hardline demands for secession as the only viable solution might lead them to play a spoiling role in future dialogue.

Superficial Solutions

The Cameroonian authorities have continued to ignore the political dimension of the crisis. In January 2017 a National Commission for Bilingualism and Multiculturalism was established. It did issue its first report in June 2018 - a synthesis of three days of discussions with civil society and political actors in the Anglophone region - but the commission lacks dynamism and is neither mandated nor equipped for addressing this type of crisis. A "superficial solution not addressing the root causes of the problem" was how an International Crisis Group report accurately described it. New benches for common law advocates at the Supreme Court have been established; as have new departments at the National School of Administration and Magistrates; and new Anglophone magistrates and teachers have been recruited. But the situation has continued to worsen because these measures fail to address the root political, identity and socio-economic dimensions of the crisis.

President Biya has called for dialogue to resolve the crisis on several occasions, most recently after violence erupted on the 1 October 2017 and during his 2018 address to the nation. But he has not followed up those words with significant steps to make it happen. Nor does he appear willing to consider federalist or secessionist demands.

Biya has been very consistent in proposing decentralization on the basis of the ten existing regions as the most appropriate solution to the grievances of Anglophone activists. The president continues to refuse Anglophone activists' preference for a mediation conducted by an international body even though the government, as a party to the conflict, is no longer a credible mediator.

Activists have increasingly grown wary of his commitment to finding a resolution. The government has jailed and, in some recent cases, sentenced Anglophone leaders, including Mancho Bilibixy, Penn Terence Che Benjamin and Ambeizi Andrew, with whom it has held preliminary discussions, to up to 15 years in prison.

Credible Mediators

The United Nations, African Union and European Union have called on the parties to start a genuine dialogue and offered their mediation services. However the African Commission of Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) appears the most credible external body having already pronounced several times on the Anglophone crisis. In 2003, the SCNC and Southern Cameroons People's Organization filed a complaint before the commission on behalf of 14 individuals - 266/03 Kevin Mgwanga Gunme et al/Cameroon - alleging violation of the African Charter of Human and People's Rights by the Republic of Cameroon. Besides their claim for the self-determination of southern Cameroon, the complainants alleged that the Republic of Cameroon has violated human rights of various Anglophone individuals through arbitrary arrests, detentions, torture, punishment, maiming and killings of persons who have advocated for self determination.

In its decision in 2009 ACHPR, denied the complainants the right to secession but recognized several human rights violations, recommended the right to self-determination as part of federation or confederation and placed its offices at the disposal of the parties to mediate an amicable solution. Noting that ACHPRs decisions are not binding on member states, the commission could still play an important role in bringing the two parties to the table. It can be perceived as neutral by both parties who relied on its jurisdiction in 2009, even if it would lack the legal authority to enforce any agreed ways forward.

The Catholic Church, one of the country's strongest institutions, could help to organize and conduct much needed dialogue relying on its presence in all ten of Cameroon's regions. Its mediation capacity is not limited to its religious doctrine on peace and its ability to navigate between various political, cultural and economic interests of parties to bring them on the table of negotiations, could be key. With its 350 priests serving 35 parishes in the Anglophone regions, the church can play a leading role in mediating and building a dialogue framework. But as a 2018 International Crisis Group report pointed out, the church itself is divided and does not share a uniform view on potential solutions. It should also be noted that, the experience of the church as a mediator in Africa has not been always successful.

The current political crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo illustrates how the intervention of the church can be instrumentalized to benefit one party to the dialogue. The agreement negotiated by the church and signed of 31 December 2016, postponing elections, was never implemented and has simply helped President Kabila stay in office unconstitutionally. Cameroon has its own history with compromised church interventions. In 1970, when Bishop Albert Ndogmo was asked

by then President, Ahmadou Ahidjo, to negotiate with the insurgents he was subsequently arrested and condemned to death - a sentence later commuted to life in prison - for collaborating with the rebels. A reminder that the church, like other institutions, is not immune from co-option.

To resolve the crisis currently engulfing Anglophone Cameroon, a transitional justice mechanism, that would draw on national expertise, and include representatives from political parties, the church and civil society organizations, could provide a workable solution. A mixed commission is not without historical precedent in Cameroon. In 1960, Bishop Thomas Mongo of Douala was among those who agreed to serve on the constitutional committee for the new state of Cameroon. And with many Cameroonians having served or currently operating as expert in peacebuilding missions within the African Union and the United Nations as well as judges and lawyers having also contributed to the work of international ad-hoc tribunals in Rwanda and Sierra Leone, the national expertise exists.

A restorative approach to justice that focus on hearing, pardon and reconciliation might produce better results. It would be a chance to acknowledge the colonial roots of the Anglophone crisis and to discuss a sustainable resolution that would unpack deep-seated resentments. As Yosimbom Mbiydzennyuy, a lecturer at the University of Buea noted in a 2010 article "there is not even one article or provision in the Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon that expressly defines or provides for national unity". Similarly, a 1991 initiative to recognize some of Cameroon's national heroes did not include any Anglophones

The escalation of the crisis, despite the arrest of 47 members of the interim government of Ambazonia, clearly shows that the separatist movement has spawned a multiplicity of groups. Their differing ideologies, demands and approaches to violence will further complicate efforts at dialogue and could pose a sizeable obstacle to reaching a negotiated end to the crisis. The continuing violence, which has intensified

in recent months, clearly illustrates that the space for dialogue is limited. Presidential and local government elections, scheduled for October 2018, are only likely to exacerbate tensions in Anglophone regions and could lead to greater civilian casualties. Although it is premature to say that a civil war is underway in Cameroon, it is a possibility if a sustained and genuine dialogue to address the crisis cannot be brokered soon.

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