

# Cameroon

## *Ethnicity in Cameroon*

### *Group selection*

Regarding the group list there is one paramount question. Should the Anglophones be listed as one politically relevant ethno-linguistic group? In principle, one could see good reasons to proceed in this way. Anglophone West-Cameroon joined the Francophone Republic of Cameroon separately in 1961 and was first a state of its own within the so-created federation. In 1972, it was practically annexed into the new unitary state which led to a certain subjugation under the francophone-dominated central state (405; 406; 407). As a result, the anglophone community came to feel marginalized both politically and culturally (408; 409; 410; 411; 412). Particularly with the political liberalization at the beginning of the 1990s, many Anglophone leaders complained about this perceived injustice and marginalization, and several pressure groups were formed to fight for the "Anglophone cause". A return to the federal system or even secession were postulated (413; 414; 415; 416).

However, although there certainly is an "Anglophone question" in Cameroon, this Anglophone group has been far from politically homogeneous. In contrast, there is a quite significant ethnic division between the coastal/forest people of the Southwest Province and the grassfield people in the Northwest Province (which in fact are culturally closer to the French speaking people of the Western Province). This ethnic division has resulted in a political rift dating back to the time even before the unification with French Cameroon (417; 418; 419; 420). The first Southwest political pressure group was founded in the 1960s already and succeeded by both southwestern and northwestern separate lobbies in the course of democratization (421; 422; 423). The Francophone center was able to take advantage of this division and to pit the two regions and their leaders against each other (424; 425; 426; 427). Thus, the Anglophone group very seldom acted as a united political bloc, and that bit of joint political action it was able to take was always hampered by regionalism, mutual suspicion, and internal elite power struggles. For this reason, the Anglophones were not listed as a united ethno-linguistic group, and instead divided them in two politically relevant groups, corresponding to the two cultural and administrative regions.

The Fulani culturally and politically dominate the Muslim north (428). It thus appears reasonable to include the smaller northern

<sup>405</sup> [DeLancey and DeLancey, 2000]

<sup>406</sup> [Fonchingong, 2005]

<sup>407</sup> [Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997]

<sup>408</sup> [DeLancey and DeLancey, 2000]

<sup>409</sup> [Fonchingong, 2005]

<sup>417</sup> [Fonchingong, 2005]

<sup>418</sup> [Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997]

<sup>419</sup> [Mehler, 1993]

<sup>420</sup> [Nkwi, 2006]

<sup>421</sup> [Fonchingong, 2005]

<sup>428</sup> [Mehler, 1993]

Muslim ethnic groups that can be seen as associated with the Fulani into one politically relevant ethnic group named "Fulani (and other northern Muslim peoples)". Note that non-Islamic peoples that also live in the north are not included here.

Groups of the east (e.g. the Maka) are ethnically related to the Beti group of the center/south region (<sup>429</sup>), so they were listed as a combined group (led by the most relevant Beti).

The group "Bassa/Duala" also refers to the Littoral region and, hence, is sort of an ethno-regional marker. (As already mentioned in the case of the Anglophones, ethnicity in Cameroon is very much linked to regions and regionalism.) Like the Bamileke, the Beti, the two Anglophone groups and the northerners, the Bassa and Duala have formed their own ethnic association (SAWA) that politically represents their interests (<sup>430</sup>; <sup>431</sup>).

Due to a lack of comprehensive figures, the analysis had to rely on different sources for the group sizes. The Bamileke are said to make up roughly 25% of the population (Countries and Their Cultures: Cameroon: <http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Cameroon.html> (accessed March 31, 2014)), a figure close to the one given by Morrison et al. (1972) for the 1960s. The combined group of Fulani and other northern Muslim peoples constitutes about 14% according to the U.S. State Department Background Notes (not available online anymore), which is close to the 15% that Takougang (<sup>432</sup>) mentions. For the Beti and the Bassa/Duala groups the analysis relied on estimates of Morrison et al. (<sup>433</sup>) and Fearon (<sup>434</sup>).

(Note that these group sizes refer to those time periods that already include the Anglophone groups. Thus they were adjusted proportionately for the first time period 1960-61.)

Finally, for the two Anglophone groups the analysis also relied on Fearon's (<sup>435</sup>) figures. 12% for the NW and 8% for the SW seem realistic as the whole Anglophone population makes up 20% of Cameroon's population (<sup>436</sup>; <sup>437</sup>), and the NW is more populous than the SW (<sup>438</sup>).

### *Power relations*

My next point refers to the delimitation of the periods after the inclusion of anglophone Cameroon and, particularly, to two crucial events in Cameroon's history: the abolition of the federation in 1972, and the introduction of multiparty democracy in 1990. According to my assessment, both events did not significantly change the ethno-regional power structure of the country. In the case of the former, it needs to be pointed out that from the very beginning, the Cameroonian federation was a highly centralized construct – with the Francophone part clearly having the upper hand – and not a partnership between two equal sides, despite the existence of a separate legislature and a prime minister for the Anglophone part (<sup>439</sup>). Thus, already before 1972 the Anglophone provinces could not be more than "junior partners" anyways – and, as explicated below, over the years they were always more or less equally included in executive

<sup>429</sup> [Morrison et al., 1972]

<sup>430</sup> [Fonchingong, 2005]

<sup>431</sup> [Nkwi, 2006]

<sup>432</sup> [Takougang, 1997]

<sup>433</sup> [Morrison et al., 1972]

<sup>434</sup> [Fearon, 2003]

<sup>435</sup> [Fearon, 2003]

<sup>436</sup> [DeLancey and DeLancey, 2000]

<sup>437</sup> [Mehler, 1993]

<sup>438</sup> [Nkwi, 2006]

<sup>439</sup> [Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997]

power at the center.

In the case of the latter event, it seems clear to me that although the introduction of multiparty democracy altered the political landscape of the country, it did not lead to any significant changes in the actual distribution of power. Paul Biya has managed to stay in power, and behind him is the same national party (the former unity-party RDPC) with the more or less same party barons that represent the country's widespread political elite (very similar, thus, to the case of Gabon and Bongo's regime) (<sup>440</sup>). Political liberalization has led to the emergence of political parties along ethnic lines (<sup>441</sup>; <sup>442</sup>). Also, some groups apparently are more prone to vote for the opposition parties, especially the SDF (e.g. the NW Anglophones, the Bamileke etc.) (<sup>443</sup>; <sup>444</sup>; <sup>445</sup>). However, such ethno-political cleavages are not clear-cut and absolute and, above all, the RDPC remains a multi-ethnic national party (again similar to Gabon's PDG) (<sup>446</sup>; <sup>447</sup>; <sup>448</sup>). Thus, it appears reasonable to insert just two periods which correspond to the terms of Cameroon's two presidents (Ahidjo until November 1982, Biya since then).

Regarding the power status of the ethno-regional groups, again there is diverging information. Several sources speak of the marginalization (or even exclusion) of certain groups and of the dominance of others. For instance, the Bamileke (<sup>449</sup>), the Anglophones as a whole (<sup>450</sup>; <sup>451</sup>; <sup>452</sup>), or the southwestern part of them (Konings/Nyamnjoh 1997; <sup>453</sup>) are mentioned by some sources to have been politically marginalized, whereas the Beti are sometimes said to exclusively dominate politics under Biya (<sup>454</sup>; <sup>455</sup>). However, these very same sources also speak of a system of "ethnic balance", of the "co-optation of ethno-regional factions" etc., thus contradicting themselves somewhat. A different view holds that Cameroonian politics – both under Ahidjo and Biya – is characterized by a highly sophisticated neo-patrimonial system of ethnic balance and "divide and rule", and a very much multi-ethnic (party) elite including representatives from all parts of the country (<sup>456</sup>; <sup>457</sup>; <sup>458</sup>; <sup>459</sup>).

This second view seems much more convincing to me also because it can draw on clear examples of co-opted elites and concrete figures of ethno-regional representation in the government. The ethno-regional power-sharing in Ahidjo's first cabinets is demonstrated by figures provided in Morrison et al. (<sup>460</sup>). According to Mehler (<sup>461</sup>), Ahidjo followed a careful proportional representation in ethno-regional terms regarding the allocation of important posts, particularly cabinet posts (see also Morrison et al. (<sup>462</sup>) in this regard). Gabriel (<sup>463</sup>) explicitly distinguishes Cameroon under Ahidjo from the case of Nigeria which developed a "tradition of northern primacy" that could not be observed in Cameroon. Although the distribution of power clearly altered under Biya, none of the important ethno-regional groupings has been neglected (<sup>464</sup>; <sup>465</sup>). Mehler's (<sup>466</sup>) recording of the regional distribution of cabinet seats in all of Biya's governments gives a clear picture of inclusion and representation of all parts of the country. Although the regions are not ho-

<sup>440</sup> [Gabriel, 1999]

<sup>441</sup> [Gabriel, 1999]

<sup>442</sup> [Nyamnjoh, 1999]

<sup>443</sup> [Fonchingong, 2005]

<sup>444</sup> [Gabriel, 1999]

<sup>449</sup> [DeLancey and DeLancey, 2000]

<sup>450</sup> [DeLancey and DeLancey, 2000]

<sup>451</sup> [Fonchingong, 2005]

<sup>452</sup> [Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997]

<sup>453</sup> [Nkwi, 2006]

<sup>460</sup> [Morrison et al., 1972]

<sup>461</sup> [Mehler, 1993]

<sup>462</sup> [Morrison et al., 1972]

<sup>463</sup> [Gabriel, 1999]

<sup>464</sup> [Gabriel, 1999]

mogeneous, almost all of them are dominated by one specific ethnic group (e.g. the Western Province by the Bamileke, the Center by the Beti etc.). Decisions in favor of a region are thus seen as decisions in favor of that region's dominant ethnic group (<sup>467</sup>). Overall, Gabriel (<sup>468</sup>) states that both the Fulani and the Beti, when in power, always shared power with other ethnic groups. Also the unity-parties UNC and RDPC contained/contains elites from all ethno-regional groups (<sup>469</sup>; <sup>470</sup>). On the whole, the case of Cameroon reminds me strongly of Gabon under Bongo: a national unity-party with a very much multi-ethnic elite, a politically clever personalistic leadership with the president as "father of the nation" who distributes resources to all parts of the country and co-opts all important elites into his neo-patrimonial system of "divide and rule", giving each ethnic group its "fair share".

This share, of course, varies over time and is thus a basis for complaints by groups and their elites in many instances. Every group (to a lesser degree even the Beti, see <sup>471</sup>) feels the need to lobby for a bigger share at some point – by complaining about its marginalization. However, these complaints symbolize the momentary disappointment about a reduction of the share and the demand for a bigger "piece" in the next "round", rather than a serious protest against total exclusion. (And many times this strategy is successful as the regime reacts by allocating more appointments to the complaining group.) It seems that some of the sources mentioned above reflect such expressions of relative dissatisfaction of groups rather than the actual situation. The Beti under Biya also remind me of the Baule in Cote d'Ivoire during Houphouet-Boigny's rule. They, too, were sometimes accused of dominating Ivoirian politics in that period. Although holding the most powerful political posts, both the Baule in Cote d'Ivoire and the Beti in Cameroon share(d) their power with other groups. Therefore – in the light of all these impressions – Cameroon's political system was coded as a power-sharing arrangement with a national, multi-ethnic unity-party and a multi-ethnic co-opted elite.

Finally, some additional comments on each group:

Bamileke: Some of the above sources state that the Bamileke group dominates the economy but has been kept out of political power. This claim is strongly disputed by others. Gabriel (<sup>472</sup>) holds that the Bamileke have always been politically included, both under Ahidjo and Biya, and that there has always been a co-opted Bamileke elite – even after the introduction of multiparty democracy. Already Ahidjo incorporated Bamileke representatives into his governments, for example as finance ministers (<sup>473</sup>). According to Morrison et al. (<sup>474</sup>), they even constituted a plurality in Cameroon's cabinets in the first years after independence, holding 40% of all government seats. The UPC rebellion in the 1960s which was mainly based on the Bassa and Bamileke groups (<sup>475</sup>) seems not to have influenced that. And Mehler's (1993) figures also show a constant inclusion of the group in Biya's governments. Therefore, the

<sup>471</sup> [Nyamnjoh, 1999]

<sup>472</sup> [Gabriel, 1999]

<sup>473</sup> [Mehler, 1993]

<sup>474</sup> [Morrison et al., 1972]

<sup>475</sup> [Morrison et al., 1972]

Bamileke are coded as "junior partners" in both periods.

Beti: Together with the Fulani they form a successful north-south political alliance (<sup>476</sup>). Biya was prime minister under Ahidjo before he succeeded him, and other Beti were appointed to important posts (<sup>477</sup>). Thus, the Beti are coded as "junior partner" in the first period. Under Biya, elites of the group have clearly been promoted and now control the most important positions in the government, as Biya has increasingly relied on their loyalty to safeguard his power (<sup>478</sup>; <sup>479</sup>; <sup>480</sup>). Hence, in the second period, the Beti are coded as "senior partner".

Fulani: With Ahidjo as president, the Fulani were the country's leading ethnic group (<sup>481</sup>). They were favored by the president, and an important part of political power was held by Ahidjo himself (<sup>482</sup>). Thus, the Fulani should be considered "senior partner" in the first period. In the second period, their position deteriorated somewhat (<sup>483</sup>) – especially after the failed 1984 coup attempt which was apparently "northern-inspired", yet they are still included in executive power (<sup>484</sup>). After the political transition of the 1990s, several northern leaders – for example, of the UNDP, a party that is based in the north – were co-opted into Biya's governments (<sup>485</sup>; <sup>486</sup>; <sup>487</sup>). Overall, the north has always had a disproportionate share of political power since independence (<sup>488</sup>). Therefore, the Fulani (and other northern Muslim peoples) are coded as "junior partner" in the second period.

Northwestern and southwestern Anglophones: The Francophone part is clearly dominant in Cameroonian politics and society, already because of its demographic advantage. There are claims by the Anglophone community of political and cultural marginalization, and within it, southwestern complaints of northwestern supremacy (<sup>489</sup>; <sup>490</sup>; <sup>491</sup>). However, as explained above, the evidence points in another direction. Leaders of both regions have been included into governments and sometimes appointed to important posts like that of the prime minister under both Ahidjo and Biya (<sup>492</sup>; <sup>493</sup>; <sup>494</sup>; <sup>495</sup>; <sup>496</sup>; <sup>497</sup>; <sup>498</sup>; <sup>499</sup>). I thus decided to code both Anglophone groups as "junior partners" in both periods, despite playing an inferior role compared to the Francophone groups as a whole.

Bassa/Duala: According to the figures provided by Morrison et al. (<sup>500</sup>) and Mehler (<sup>501</sup>), and based on other information (<sup>502</sup>), the Bassa/Duala groups have also been included into the governments under both Ahidjo and Biya. After the elections of 1992, for instance, a political agreement was achieved between the RDPC and the UPC, a party rooted in the Littoral Province. UPC leader Kodock became minister (<sup>503</sup>). Therefore, the Bassa/Duala are also coded "junior partners" in both periods.

<sup>476</sup> [Gabriel, 1999]

<sup>477</sup> [Morrison et al., 1972]

<sup>478</sup> [DeLancey and DeLancey, 2000]

<sup>479</sup> [Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997]

<sup>480</sup> [Mehler, 1993]

<sup>481</sup> [Takougang, 1997]

<sup>482</sup> [DeLancey and DeLancey, 2000]

<sup>483</sup> [Takougang, 1997]

<sup>484</sup> [Mehler, 1993]

<sup>485</sup> [Gabriel, 1999]

<sup>489</sup> [Fonchingong, 2005]

<sup>490</sup> [Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997]

<sup>491</sup> [Nkwi, 2006]

<sup>492</sup> [DeLancey and DeLancey, 2000]

<sup>493</sup> [Fonchingong, 2005]

<sup>500</sup> [Morrison et al., 1972]

<sup>501</sup> [Mehler, 1993]

<sup>502</sup> [DeLancey and DeLancey, 2000]

<sup>503</sup> [Takougang, 1997]

*2006-2009* Biya continues in power. His rule remains based on the same stabilizing pillars of a clientelistic distribution of resources, the co-optation of a multi-ethnic elite and the principle of "divide and rule" as in the periods before – mirrored in an overbloated cabinet consisting of about 60 (!) ministers. His personalist, neo-patrimonial rule has made Cameroon one of the most corrupt countries in the world. On the other hand, through this system of ethnic clientelism, he has also ensured an ethnic balance in his regime despite ongoing claims of marginalization from different ethnic groupings (see e.g. <sup>504</sup>; <sup>505</sup>: cp. also comments above). His prime ministers, for example, were always Anglophones during these four years: Inoni, a Bakweri from the southwest, until June 2009, and since then, Yang from the northwest. Also the Fulani (and other northern Muslims) have been included into the central government (<sup>506</sup>: see above). Overall, and like before, Biya's Beti group enjoys the greatest access to political (and military) power among all of Cameroon's ethnic groups (<sup>507</sup>; <sup>508</sup>), holding about one third of all cabinet positions (<sup>509</sup>: see above). In general, there is no evidence of any substantial changes to the situation before 2006. Thus, I add the years from 2006 to 2009 to the period of 1983-2005 with the same relevant ethnic groups and the same power statuses.

*2010-2013* Reelection of Biya in 2011. Still, the Beti are reported to be overrepresented in the cabinet, but not at the expense of a total exclusion of other ethnic groups considered to be politically relevant (<sup>510</sup>). The Northwestern Anglophone Yang was reelected as Prime Minister. After the elections, Biya reshuffled the cabinet, without however breaking up his old alliances with the Northern, muslim parties NUSDP, NADP, and FSNC, or excluding previously included ethnic groups (<sup>511</sup> and <sup>512</sup>). It thus seems that the overall ethnic balance in the government has been maintained. I therefore extend the previous period to 2013.

<sup>504</sup> [Bertelsmann Country Report, 2006-2010]

<sup>505</sup> [IRIN Africa, 2004-2007]

<sup>506</sup> [IRIN Africa, 2004-2007]

<sup>507</sup> [State Department, 2010-2014]

<sup>508</sup> [Freedom House Country Reports, 2007-2010]

<sup>510</sup> [State Department, 2010-2014]

<sup>511</sup> [Reuters, 2014]

<sup>512</sup> [Africa Review, 2014]

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## Political status of ethnic groups in Cameroon

*From 1960 until 1961*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Bamileke	0.3125	JUNIOR PARTNER
Beti (and related peoples)	0.225	JUNIOR PARTNER
Fulani (and other northern Muslim peoples)	0.175	SENIOR PARTNER
Bassa/Duala	0.1	JUNIOR PARTNER

*From 1962 until 1982*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Bamileke	0.25	JUNIOR PARTNER
Beti (and related peoples)	0.18	JUNIOR PARTNER
Fulani (and other northern Muslim peoples)	0.14	SENIOR PARTNER
Northwestern Anglophones (Grassfielders)	0.12	JUNIOR PARTNER
Bassa/Duala	0.08	JUNIOR PARTNER
Southwestern Anglophones (Bakweri etc.)	0.08	JUNIOR PARTNER

*From 1983 until 2013*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Bamileke	0.25	JUNIOR PARTNER
Beti (and related peoples)	0.18	SENIOR PARTNER
Fulani (and other northern Muslim peoples)	0.14	JUNIOR PARTNER
Northwestern Anglophones (Grassfielders)	0.12	JUNIOR PARTNER
Bassa/Duala	0.08	JUNIOR PARTNER
Southwestern Anglophones (Bakweri etc.)	0.08	JUNIOR PARTNER

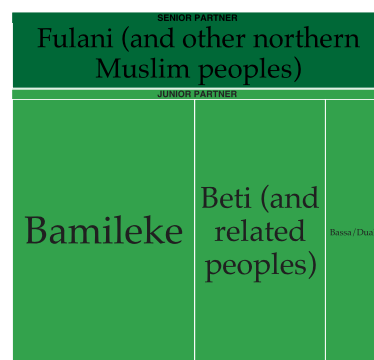


Figure 109: Political status of ethnic groups in Cameroon during 1960-1961.

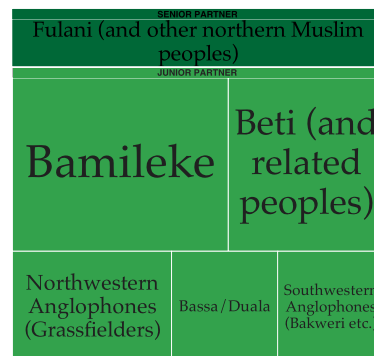


Figure 110: Political status of ethnic groups in Cameroon during 1962-1982.

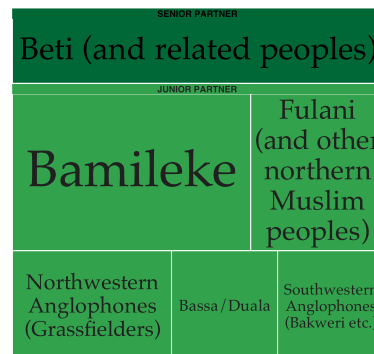


Figure 111: Political status of ethnic groups in Cameroon during 1983-2013.

## Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Cameroon

*From 1960 until 1961*

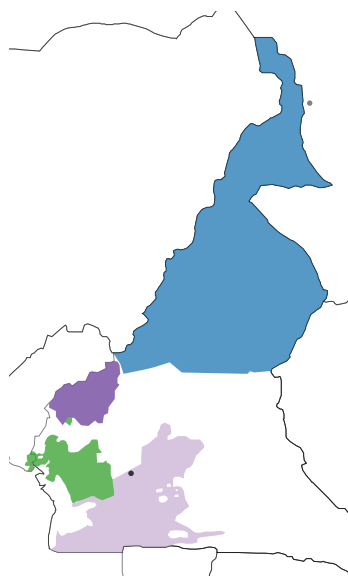


Figure 112: Map of ethnic groups in Cameroon during 1983-2013.

Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
■ Fulani (and other northern Muslim peoples)	164 399	Regionally based
■ Beti (and related peoples)	50 632	Regionally based
■ Bassa/Duala	17 795	Regionally based
■ Bamileke	14 485	Regionally based

Table 36: List of ethnic groups in Cameroon during 1960-1961.

*From 1962 until 2013*

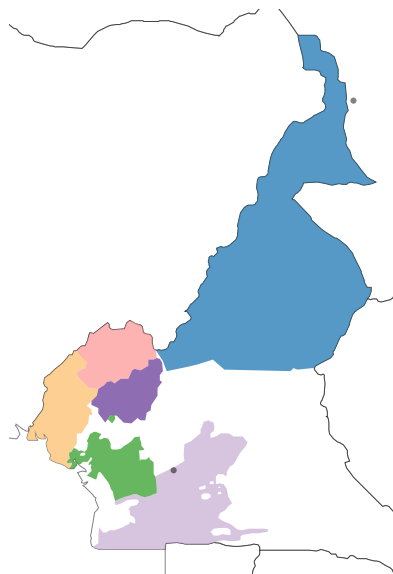


Figure 113: Map of ethnic groups in Cameroon during 1983-2013.

Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
■ Fulani (and other northern Muslim peoples)	164 399	Regionally based
■ Beti (and related peoples)	50 632	Regionally based
■ Southwestern Anglophones (Bakweri etc.)	22 486	Regionally based
■ Northwestern Anglophones (Grassfielders)	18 769	Regionally based
■ Bassa/Duala	17 795	Regionally based
■ Bamileke	14 485	Regionally based

Table 37: List of ethnic groups in Cameroon during 1962-2013.

## *Conflicts in Cameroon*

*Starting on 1957-09-30*

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of France	UPC		1957-09-30			

*Starting on 1960-01-31*

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Cameroon	UPC	Bassa/Duala	1960-01-31	No	Yes	Yes
Government of Cameroon	UPC	Bamileke	1960-01-31	No	Yes	Yes
Government of Cameroon	Military faction (forces of Ibrahim Saleh)	Fulani (and other northern Muslim peoples)	1984-04-06	Presumed	Yes	

*Starting on 1994-02-18*

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Cameroon	Government of Nigeria		1994-02-18			