

Mélanie Torrent

Diplomacy and Nation-building in Africa:

Franco-British Relations and Cameroon at the End of Empire

I.B. Tauris, London and New York: 2012, ISBN: 978 1 84885777 3, 409pp., £55.25

The decolonization and reunification of British Cameroons and French Cameroun, 1960-1961, and the impact of Anglo-French interests in the process make for fascinating reading. In this 409 – page *Diplomacy and Nation-Building in Africa: Franco-British Relations and Cameroon at the End of Empire* (2012), Mélanie Torrent discusses this process within the context of cold war politics, the importance of safeguarding Anglo-French relations while ignoring the long-term interests of ex-French Cameroun and ex-British Cameroons. In this five-chapter book with an introduction, conclusion, maps, tables, index and a very rich bibliography, Torrent has made excellent use of some hitherto unavailable official correspondences between London and Paris, between British Foreign and Colonial Office officials as well as between French Foreign and Colonial Office officials.

The Introduction briefly examines the thrust of Anglo-French relations and Anglo-French relations with Cameroon. It highlights the importance of the “pledge” made by Ahmadou Ahidjo and John Ngu Foncha in *Southern Cameroons Plebiscite 1961: The Two Alternatives* in the promotion of Cameroon’s bilingualism. Chapter One discusses Franco – British negotiations that led to the independence and reunification of British and French Cameroons while Chapter Two, treats Cameroon’s non-participation in the Commonwealth. Chapters Three and Four examine British and French post-independent African policies: the British hands-off policy in the internal management of the affairs of ex-British colonies while protecting and promoting British global interests; Ahidjo’s pragmatic handling of Africa’s, and Cameroon’s, criticism and condemnation of the British sluggish decolonization process in British African colonies after 1961; Ahidjo’s gradual acceptance of the concept of Francophonie and the dismantling of the federal system in favour of a unitary system (state). The changes in Franco-Cameroon relations and the low rating of Cameroon “in FCO priorities” (p. 225) is handled in Chapter Five as it discusses multilateralism in Cameroon’s policy.

There are, however, some minor lapses which could be addressed in a subsequent revised edition. For instance, the Kamerun National Congress (KNC) did not exist in 1951 as implied on p. 17 rather it was the KUNC – a pressure group led by Dibonge; the KNC was created in 1953. Secondly, the UPC meeting in 1951 was in Kumba in Chief Abel Mukete’s residence. The UPC two-man delegation comprised Abel Kingue and Ernest Ouandie and met with N.N. Mbile and R. J. K. Dibongue not with Dr. E.M.L. Endeley as alluded to on p. 17. A typographical error must have led to Paul Kale being referred to as Peter Kale (p. 46). Finally, in 1960, the KPP, which later merged with the KNC to form the CPNC, had four seats in the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly (p. 46). These minor lapses do not affect the tremendous wealth of the author’s work.

A well-researched and up-to-date publication on the decolonization of Cameroon, the author has successfully achieved her goal. This is the premier history of the territory’s quest for independence viewed from the role played by Anglo-French diplomacy while safeguarding Anglo-French global interests. As a historian, this valuable document is a most appreciated



book and should be of immense relief to scholars and students of international politics as well as all those interested in the role of European powers in the decolonization drama in Africa. It provides a vivid insight into the thinking and working of the minds of the ex-colonial powers.

Victor Julius Ngoh

University of Buea, Cameroon

POLITICAL REFLECTION Advancing Diversity

“Quarterly news-Magazine”

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTION

Published by CESRAN

POLITICAL REFLECTION welcomes contributions from scholars, students, and professionals in all aspects of international relations, politics, and political economy.

- ◆ Articles submitted should be original contributions and should not be under consideration for any other publication at the same time.
- ◆ Articles for the Magazine should be submitted via email to the following addresses: **oztufekci@cesran.org; editors@cesran.org**
- ◆ Author’s name, title and full address with a brief biographical note should be typed on a separate sheet.
- ◆ Authors are encouraged to submit their manuscripts by electronic means as Word format attachments in Times New Roman and 1,5 space. 12 font should be used within text while 10 font should be preferred for footnotes.
- ◆ The minimum length for Articles is 1000 words.
- ◆ Quotations should be placed within double quotation marks (“.....”). Quotations larger than four lines should be indented at left margin and single-spaced. Use footnotes (not endnotes). Dates should be in the form 3 November 1996; 1995-1998; and 1990s.
- ◆ Foreign language text should always be italicized, even when lengthy. American spelling is accepted but spelling practice should be consistent throughout the article.
- ◆ If a submitted article is selected for publication, its copyright will be transferred to **Centre for Strategic Research and Analysis (CESRAN)**. Published papers can be cited by giving the necessary bibliographical information. For re-publication of any article in full-text permission must be sought from the editors.
- ◆ Authors bear responsibility for their contributions. Statements of fact or opinion appearing in **Political Reflection Magazine** are solely those of the authors and do not imply endorsement by the Magazine or the **CESRAN**.
- ◆ Submissions whether they are published or not are not returned.