The Paradox of Southern Cameroons' Economic Viability Debate in Colonial Lenses: A Post-Colonial Critique of the British Underdevelopment Tactics, 1922-2022

Elvis Nkome Ngome*

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The idea of developing and granting political independence to the British colonial sphere of Southern Cameroons depended greatly on the country's economic potential. Although the territory inherited several German structures like colonial plantations and buildings, the British were not convinced that the territory would be economically viable and sustain itself if it were granted independence as an autonomous state. In order to exonerate the colonial government from future decisive political decisions for the future of the country, the interim southern Cameroons government, acting under the aegis of the British colonial authorities, requested for studies to be conducted on the 'economic' viability of the British colony of Southern Cameroons in the 1950s. The results of the studies were damaging, and their conclusion showed an economic 'red card' to politicians who aspired for an independent Southern Cameroons. The hypothesis of economic unviability of the Southern Cameroons appears interesting, but unfortunately, very little research has been done by Cameroonian scholars to debunk colonial assertions of unviability. The paper attempts to investigate the so-called economic viability debate in the history of Southern Cameroons using decolonial interpretations to unpack the colonial assertions. The study adopted the interdisciplinary methodology to exploit primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained from the National Archives in Buea, while a desk review of secondary sources was done at the University of Buea library in Cameroon. The sources reviewed enabled the researcher to obtain verifiable data capable of providing evidence against the negative colonial reports on the economic viability of the former British Southern Cameroons. The data obtained was critically analyzed from a decolonial perspective and presented qualitatively.

Keywords: *Cameroon, Economic Viability, British, Colonial, Archives, Plantations*

*University of Buea, Cameroon. Email: nkomengome@yahoo.co.uk/ngome.elvis@ubuea.cm

Introduction

The colonial history of Cameroon is highly colorful in that Cameroon experienced three colonial administrations: Germany, Britain, and France from 1884 to 1961. European colonial activities in Africa were driven by deep economic and political considerations rather than social and humanitarian motives. Before the summoning of the Berlin West Africa Colonial Conference, every other aspect of European rivalries in Africa was mainly of economic interest. These long battled economic motivations propelled the Germans to scramble for and eventually colonized Cameroon in July 1884 (Ngoh, 2019; Fanso, 2017; Ngoh, 2011; 1995). German colonization of Cameroon was after she had participated in the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, paving the way for the historical partition of Africa on 'ground' and 'paper'.

Within the prism of colonialism, after having colonized the country, she took an interest in opening vast plantations, mainly in the coastal regions of Cameroon, specifically around the slopes of Mt. Cameroon and other parts of the forest regions. The construction of a plantation economy was possible after the Germans had expropriated indigenous lands and used cheap labor to cultivate and expand the plantations, which became one of their stable sources of income besides taxes. The paper traces the historical beginnings, the colonial trappings, and the origins of the British underdevelopment tactics. It also investigates the damaging British colonial reports and how these negatively affected the political decision of the administering authorities against the independence of British Southern Cameroon. Lastly, it underscores the viability thesis of Southern Cameroon, citing post-colonial economic discoveries and changes that help to debunk the colonially anchored hypothesis that dealt a severe blow to the political ambitions of Southern Cameroonians.

Statement of the Problem

The hypothesis of economic viability or unviability of the economy of Southern Cameroons appears interesting; however, very little research has been done by Cameroonian scholars to debunk or accept such a skewed conclusion that had animated discussions in the territory between 1954 and 1961. Although the colonially sponsored studies were relevant when conducted and rendered public, there was skepticism among leading political figures in the territory and some minded colonial administrators who criticized the reports for lack of objectivity and balance.

Beyond this, many post-colonial writers, among whom leading historians, have not adequately analyzed the studies to show the contrary. The central objective of writing this paper is to analyze these studies and critically provide a counter-narrative. However, addressing the research's crucial problem requires investigating the intricacies surrounding the development of this colonial hypothesis of economic viability. A pseudo-theory that has often misled many scholars to believe the contrary.

The paradoxical creed of Southern Cameroon's economic viability debate was motivated by imperfections in the private investment process of the British government's colonial policies. These imperfections temporarily changed the status of the British Southern Cameroons in the Trusteeship Agreement, which was approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) in 1946. According to Article 5 (b) of the Agreement, 'Britain was entitled to constitute the British Cameroons into a custom, fiscal or administrative union or federation with adjacent territories…to establish common services between such territories and the British Cameroons' (Colonial Office, HMSO, CMD, 6863, 1946).

The individualist-utilitarian creed made the case for self-determination for the people of Southern Cameroons, who were weak to the brink of collapse without succumbing to this capitalist prognosis (Rostow, 1959). Germany was the first colonial government to take control of what was then Kamerun from 1884 until 1916. The Germans acquired the right to administer Cameroon from the treaties signed by their agents with traditional rulers in different parts of the territory, beginning with the Germano-Duala treaty of July 1884 and from military subjugation of groups that resisted their penetration and presence. Shortly after the First World War broke out in Europe in August 1914, hostilities began in German Cameroon, under the control of the Allied forces comprising the British, the French, and Belgian forces. The war lasted in Kamerun for eighteen months and ended with the defeat and expulsion of the Germans from the territory in 1916 (Fanso, 2017; Elango, 2017; Ngoh, 2019).

A joint Anglo-French administration condominium, so to speak, was mooted. However, the colonial forces were unable to agree on how to co-administer the territory due to unbridled differences between Britain and France. Failure to establish an Anglo-French condominium resulted in the partition of the territory. Britain was prepared to pass over complete control of Cameroon to France in return for greater control in other areas of strategic interest, such as in East Africa. When France proposed to take the lion's share of territory during negotiations, Britain

agreed. A line was impetuously drawn on the War Office map by François Georges-Picot, who had very little knowledge of Africa: Georges-Picot chose a point to the east of Victoria and another to the south of Yola and 'began to join these two points in a casual way with a blue pencil.' Sir Frederick Dealtry Lugard, the Governor General of Nigeria, reportedly described the area acceded to British control as 'an insignificant little strip that it was hardly worth reserving at all.' Nevertheless, the British opted to maintain control of this strip and installed several governmental institutions such as law courts, local governmental institutions, schools, and more (Roxana et al., 2019; Elango, 2018).

The provisional boundary was reached after conferences between General Dobell and General Aymerich in Douala. The boundary line was traced by the two Generals from Lake Chad to River Mungo based on river courses, watersheds, hills, mountains, villages, and ethnic groups (Fanso, 2017; Awachwi, 1993; Aka, 2002; Nzume, 2004). The French received the lion's share of the territory, its own portion, including new Cameroon, was approximately 270 919 square miles with a population estimated at about 2 177 599. The British obtained two disconnected pieces of territory along Nigeria's eastern frontier, estimated at only one-fifth (1/5) of the original German territory. It comprised a population of about 822 441, occupying over 34 081 square miles. The British further partitioned the territory into Northern and Southern Cameroons, respectively. It must be pointed out that the Anglo-French partition of the Cameroons was not carried out under the supervision of the League of Nations. The partition of the Cameroons and Togoland had been concluded before the League of Nations was formed. After putting in place of the League of Nations in 1922, the British and French spheres of Cameroon were assigned to Britain and France as administering powers of the mandated territories in the 'B' category. The League confirmed the 1916 arbitrary partition of Cameroon, and Southern Cameroons was administratively linked to Nigeria (Aka, 2002).

The approach adopted by the British and French overtly showed the individualist-utilitarian creed that made the case for self-determination for the people of Southern Cameroons weak to the brink of collapse. When the respective administering powers were required to furnish the Trusteeship Council with regular information concerning separate records on the economic and social development of the Trust Territories, Britain categorically stated its intention to continue to administer the Southern Cameroons as an integral part of Nigeria, 'because this was the only

practical method of administration.' Britain reiterated severally that the political union was in the best interest of the Southern Cameroons and that if the territory were separated from Nigeria, 'it would deprive the people…of political, educational advancement which they derive from their integration with a large and highly developed area'. Here again, one can clearly perceive the negative intention of the British, which is reflected in their detrimental economic reports.

Britain further asserted that, for geographical and ethnic reasons, it would be impossible and undesirable for financial reasons to create a separate Region [for southern Cameroons] as an administrative unit for the country. From every indication, Britain never contemplated administering the Southern Cameroons as an autonomous territory. This is the more reason for the damaging economic reports that completely dampened hopes for an independent state. The Trusteeship Council also concluded that 'the Southern Cameroons is one of the most underdeveloped areas on the West African Coast.

According to Le Vine (1964), 'the Southern Cameroons was a backwater for the colonial office…the territory failed to reap much benefit from being either a Mandate or a Trusteeship.' Such a capitalist prognosis appears paradoxical, as it is now proven that the Southern Cameroons did not need any financial probe from Nigeria to survive. A better organization of its public revenues and resources would have made the Southern Cameroons financially viable and perhaps one of the most developed territories in West Africa at the time.

On February 11, 1961, the United Nations organized a plebiscite for the Northern Cameroons and Southern Cameroons. The option placed before the British Southern Cameroonians was: '*Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Federation of Nigeria?' or 'Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Republic of Cameroon.'* The plebiscite did not provide the option for a separate independent state either for the Northern or the Southern Cameroons. The results of the plebiscite in Northern Cameroons showed a vote in favor of achieving independence by remaining as a part of the independent Republic of Nigeria, which had gained independence on October 1, 1960. Conversely, the plebiscite outcome in Southern Cameroons was voting in favor of reuniting with French Cameroon, which gained independence on January 1, 1960 (Aka, 2002; Basung, 1975). Again, this vote was prompted by a British report that insisted that its former territory would not survive economically on its own. Southern Cameroonians wanted nothing more to do with Nigeria. They had suffered enormously at the hands of the domineering Igbo traders who had long settled in their territory.

In the years leading up to the plebiscite, leaders of the Southern Cameroons worked with the United Nations to determine what options should be included in the plebiscite vote. Following the encouragement of the United Nations, an All-Party Conference was held in Mamfe on August 10-11, 1959, for the Southern Cameroonian leaders to reach an agreement on the terms of the plebiscite. The most popular outcome of the Mamfe Conference was for the plebiscite to include the option of 'integration' with Nigeria or 'secession'. However, secession was denounced as economically unfeasible by Sir Sidney Phillipson, the British Acting Commissioner of the Southern Cameroons, and later dismissed by the United Nations on grounds associated with Sir Sydney's reports.

The argument against secession by Sydney, and later supported by the UN Trusteeship Council, worked against the motivation of some politicians in Southern Cameroon. This led to the removal of the secession option from the list of plebiscite questions, which was and remains a contentious issue until nowtill date among the people of the former Southern Cameroons and many Cameroonian historians. According to Ngoh (2023), the failure to achieve the 'third option' by Southern Cameroonian politicians by September – October 1959 was caused mainly by disagreement among them. For instance, the KNDP, which was led by Foncha, did not support a permanent separate political entity for southern Cameroons because Foncha was not happy with Endeley's stance. Endeley walked away from Foncha's party, and he was joined by Jua and other politicians who resented Foncha's political agenda for the territory. In June 1965, Foncha declared in Buea that the "Third Option" was rejected because it was not on the political agenda of the KNDP.

Ngoh (2023) clarified that the central goal of the KNDP was for the territory to achieve independence by reuniting with French Cameroon. However, Foncha and Endeley later changed their political stance in favor of a separate or independent state and proposed it at the UN session. However, their aspirations were short-lived as both politicians returned from the UN session without achieving the "Third Option" for the territory. Their political preferences remained stitched to reunification with French Cameroon for the KNDP or association with Nigeria, a political vision that was conspicuously drummed up by the KPP-KNC alliance. Britain also strongly supported its association with Nigeria. It is worth noting that while the CPNC and KNDP differed at various times on the plebiscite options, the question of economic viability at this time

was not a major obstacle to securing the "Third Option." From every indication, one is tempted to believe that the British and French had worked it out and that reunification or association with Nigeria was to decide the political future of Southern Cameroons.

To corroborate this claim, Dag Hammarskjold, the UN Secretary-General from 1953 to 1961, warned that 'uniting the Southern Cameroons to the Republic of Cameroon is like forcing a balloon under the sea. One day, it will come out.' Therefore, the problem that this paper seeks to uncover is why Britain denied Southern Cameroonians the opportunity to achieve political independence on the basis of its economic viability. Or was Southern Cameroon economically unfit to sustain an independent state at the time? Did the British economic studies actually reflect the true picture of the economy of southern Cameroons? In part, these and other unanswered questions are the concerns and motivations for this paper for which the following research objectives have been singled out.

Research Objectives

The study has both general and specific objectives. The general objective is to explore the historical evolution of Southern Cameroon and the notion of economic viability or unviability. From this general or main objective, the following specific objectives were suggested:

- To examine the various economic studies conducted by the British
- To analyze the validity or invalidity of the studies,
- To explore the impact of the economic viability studies on the political future of southern Cameroon and
- To show the extent to which the various economic studies that led to the unviability situation were a hypothetical paradox

Materials and Methods

Data for the study was collected from different research venues like the National Archives in Buea and public and private libraries in Cameroon. In the archives, the researcher went through some historical documents written by the British colonial authorities as well as United Nations documents on Cameroon. These documents were important to the research as they pointed out important facts implicated in the study. The data collected was critically analyzed and presented qualitatively in the study for comparative analysis to ensure historical objectivity and coherence.

The sources include books, journal articles, theses, and dissertations on the subject under review. These sources were used for the desk review of the literature for the study. From these sources, the researcher could distinguish between colonial and works by African writers and then compare their views on specific issues concerning this study.

As concerns the methodological approach, the study deplored the mixed research approach. However, in its practical application, the researcher deplored the historical methodology as the study utilized data from different fields such as history, political science, geography, and law. This trans-disciplinary approach helped to provide the researcher with the lens to critically assess the intricacies that underpin the economic viability or unviability theory in debate and how it affected the political destiny of the territory during and after the colonial period. The data was critically evaluated using documentary content analysis from literature to examine the contentious issue of southern Cameroon's unviability debate during the British colonial period in Cameroon. The findings from the literature were thematically interpreted and presented in a way that enriched the intellectual discussion on the historiography of Cameroon, with an emphasis on the decolonization process of southern Cameroon and the consequences of British economic studies on its political future.

Results and Discussion

Data for the study was drawn largely from primary and secondary sources. The National Archives in Buea, as well as the University of Buea library, proved helpful. This is because the archives contained important documents for the study, like the three economic reports on Southern Cameroon's fiscal, economic, and administrative viability. From these reports, the researcher examined the authors' perspectives and compared them with post-colonial arguments on the issues evoked in the paper. This was done in line with the main and supporting objectives of the paper, starting with uncovering the economic unviability hypothesis in the colonial situation in Southern Cameroons.

Unpacking the Economic Unviability Hypothesis in Southern Cameroons

The period between the wars in Cameroon was utterly decisive and challenging, and the political future for Southern Cameroons was uncertain. The British development or underdevelopment tactics for the Southern Cameroons showed its ugly sides between 1954 and 1961. In spite of the

presence of strong economic structures that the British colonial authorities inherited from the Germans, the British overtly demonstrated without any reservation their unfriendly and reluctant attitude to define the political future of the country. Instead, they fashioned policies that were inclined to exploit the country's economic resources with little regard for engineering their development. By designing policies that engendered further exploitation of indigenous resources, the British complicated and compromised the political destiny of Southern Cameroons in many respects.

Findings further reveal that the British colonial administration favored the derogatory policy of governing Southern Cameroons in association with Nigeria, a doctrine that favored assimilation, underdevelopment, and dependency. Moreover, while in Nigeria, southern Cameroonians went through thick and thin in the hands of Igbo traders and politicians, and this accentuated resentment among Southern Cameroonians both in Nigeria and at home. As a result of the foregoing, increased political consciousness among the elite class in Southern Cameroons catapulted the burning zeal in the politicians contemplating the territory's political future. This was, indeed, a turning point in the historiography of colonial Cameroon.

In 1949, the United Nations Visiting Mission came to Southern Cameroons, which allowed the people under colonial domination to discuss the political, economic, and cultural challenges that besieged southern Cameroonians. Amongst other things, Southern Cameroonians expressed their reservations on the negative effects of Southern Cameroon's integration with Nigeria, the absence of a separate regional organization for the Cameroons, and the absence of a separate budget for the Southern Cameroons (Amaze, 2000; Basung, 1975; Awachwi, 1993). The study also indicates that it was, however, during the Eastern Regional Crisis in Nigeria in 1953 that Southern Cameroon politicians made unequivocal demands for self-autonomy from Nigeria. However, the politicians were undecided over their political choices. Based on some reviewed sources, it is clear that some politicians wanted independence in association with Nigeria, while others were in favor of complete self-rule within the Commonwealth of Nations. The increasing quest for independence for Southern Cameroons clashed with the inconsistent British economic, administrative, and political reports on the so-called economic viability or unviability of the Southern Cameroons.

Again, the period between 1954 and 1960 marked a historical turning point for the Cameroons because it was within this period that the British colonial government commissioned studies to be

carried out on the economic viability of the territory in order to establish if the country would in nearest possible future be economically strong to lead an independent state without external support from Britain. It was because of this that three pro-colonially engineered studies were authorized and sponsored to x-ray the economic realities of British Cameroons. The three Commissions were the Chick Fiscal Commission's Report of 1954, the Phillipson's Report of 1959, and Kenneth Beryl's Report of 1960 (Ngoh, 2019; Fanso, 2017; Mukete, 2013; Elango, 2018). A cursory look at the various studies indicates contradictions in the statistical findings espoused in the reports.

Sir Louis Chick's Fiscal Commission Report and Impact

The Chick Fiscal Commission study was the first major scientific, economic study that was authorized to be undertaken with the objective of determining the economic viability of Southern Cameroons. The Commission was formed in 1954 in response to increasing demand for a separate regional status for the Southern Cameroons by the *Kamerun* National Congress (KNC). During the London Constitutional Conference of July 30 to August 22, 1953, which was chaired by Sir Lyttleton, Southern Cameroons politicians expressed the desire for a separate political entity. In order to ascertain their contentions in favor of the economic viability or unviability of the territory, the British colonial government, through Sir Lyttleton, hired the services of an economist to conduct a study whose results were to determine if the territory was economically viable to gain independence as an autonomous state or not.

According to the study's findings, Sir Louis Chick was hired to study the economy of southern Cameroon and ascertain the extent of the territory's economic viability. Among other things, the Commission aimed to investigate whether Southern Cameroons could pay its way without financial assistance from other parts of Nigeria, assuming that none of its revenues were henceforth shared with the Northern Cameroons or with any other part of Nigeria. This report was guided by the assumption that Southern Cameroons would be constituted as a separate region within the Nigerian Federation only if "it…could pay its way without assistance from other parts of Nigeria and without sharing revenue derived from it" (Ngoh, 2011; Mukete, 2013; Aka, 2002).

Based on the facts and figures on the alleged weak economic situation of Southern Cameroons from 1953 to 1954, which tackled the economic viability question, Sir Chick averred that Southern Cameroons had a surplus in each of the three years leading to the 1951/1952 estimates which the

central government transferred to the Cameroon Development Fund (Aka, 2002; Mukete, 2013). Furthermore, Chick also alleged that the 1951/1952 surpluses rose to about £173.000, but the estimated predictions for the period 1953 to 1954 anticipated a hooping deficit of £200.000 (Ngoh, 1996; Ngoh, 2023). If the British Southern Cameroons was granted a separate regional status, Chick averred that the Southern Cameroons expenditure would rise from £825.000 (under the Eastern regional government) to 1.275.000 (if Southern Cameroons became an independent state). Here again, one can notice the intrigues of the author of the report by trying to downplay a favorable economic picture for southern Cameroon, but he tacitly conveys a negative report that betrays a favorable and sustainable economy.

In addition, the report further revealed that the growth and development of Southern Cameroons relied exclusively on the plantations of Elders and Fyffes and C.D.C, which made estimates for future revenue unreliable due to price fluctuations in plantation produce. However, the report acknowledged other sources of revenue in the territory, like revenue from the exportation of cocoa, bananas, palm products, rubber, and income tax on companies' products (Ngoh, 1996). Although Chick's report appears simplistic, it was far from being balanced and objective because it only projected figures and expenditures to be incurred by the Southern Cameroons when it became an independent state.

For example, the report paid little attention to the alternative sources of income-generating sectors like the stamp duties and capitation tax, which was paid by Southern Cameroonians. The empirical evidence favored that these were reliable sectors where the deficits could be fixed and improved on Southern Cameroons' economy by making it more resilient, realistic, and viable, but regrettably, these aspects were not included in his report. By and large, the Chick's Commission on the fiscal viability of the territory posited that:

> …a Southern Cameroons Regional Government would not in the year immediately ahead be financially stable without any external assistance. In good years, it might pay its way with a slender margin, but in lean years, it would have no reserves to fall back on if, over a period, the deficits exceed the surplus (File No. WAF 39/87/62, NAB).

Besides, other sectors like tourism, mineral, timber, and fisheries resources were ignored and excluded in such decisive economic reports that mattered a lot for the political future of Southern

Cameroons. The outcome of the report left many skeptical and perplexed. As a result of this skepticism, the Commissioner of the Cameroons, Brigadier Gibbons, had to reject it because the territory's share of central expenditure was not checked on the basis of population (Ngoh, 1996). From every indication, Chick's report had a negative impact on the political future of Southern Cameroons as it revealed that the territory was not economically viable enough to sustain an independent state, except with sufficient financial/economic assistance from Nigeria or the United Kingdom. In fact, the decision of the British to argue against the independence of Southern Cameroons as an autonomous state was largely inspired and bagged by Chick's damaging fiscal report, which had far-reaching implications on the political future of the territory.

Although the Lagos Constitutional Conference, during an in-camera constitutional debate, voted to grant a "Quasi-Federal Status" to Southern Cameroons, it could be said that this was half-heartedly done since Britain did not favor the choice of independence of the territory as an autonomous state (Amazee, 2000; Lum, 2000). Consequently, Chick's report left an air of uncertainty because of dissatisfaction or lack of trust in the report; the Foncha's government in 1959 called for another study to be undertaken on the economic, financial, and administrative viability of the Southern Cameroons. The objective of the studies was to ascertain the true economic potentials of the territory in terms of its economic and fiscal viability; thus, Sir Sidney Phillipson and Kenneth Berril were recruited to undertake two complementary but separate studies with the same objective.

The Sydney Phillipson's Financial, Economic, and Administrative Study

The seemingly endless quest to arrive at a conclusive decision on the economic, fiscal, and administrative viability of Southern Cameroons precipitated the summoning of another economic study to correct the uncertainties that surrounded the shaky economic, financial, and administrative situation of Southern Cameroons as postulated by earlier studies. The Southern Cameroons government commissioned Sir Sydney Phillipson to investigate the financial, economic, and administrative feasibilities of the territory. Sir S. Phillipson was the interim Adviser to the Government of Southern Cameroons on financial matters. His report was based on the immediate and long-term financial and administrative issues and the prospects for future developments (Phillipson, 1959).

As regards the immediate financial consequences of Southern Cameroon's separation from the Nigerian Federation, the report examined four main dimensions: the estimated additional cost of adapting the non-federal services, that is, the services that were already regionalized to separation; the estimated cost of replacing federal services operating in or for the Southern Cameroons by the Southern Cameroon services; estimates of the value of money in terms of money which was to be attached to the indirect benefits of belonging to the Federation, and lastly, estimates of the net gain of revenue which was to accrue to the Southern Cameroons as a result of the loss of some sources of revenue and the gain of others. However, the report did not evaluate the prospective capital position of Southern Cameroons in the immediate period after separation or the percentage of import duties derived from excise on imports.

Their inability to include the above duties was blamed on the extensive areas of the territory, which were supplied by road. The Cross River region of Nigeria was supplied by road, and the volume of supplies coming from these routes was unknown. The fact that the report did not consider all other possible sources of revenue in Southern Cameroons makes the findings questionable. No wonder such hasty generalization gave the economy of Southern Cameroons an unrealistic and unhealthy financial outlook in the face of heightened international debates about its proposed independence. In cognizance of the above, one is tempted to suggest that Sydney's report was built upon personal judgments rather than objective field-based realities or facts (Ngoh, 1996; Ngoh et al., 2004). Regarding the consequences of Southern Cameroon's separation from Nigeria, Phillipson maintained that:

> The revenues that will be available to a separated Southern Cameroons might just suffice to enable it to maintain existing recurrent services at their present level, but it would be a precarious, hand-to-mouth existence, necessitating a reduction of the present capital contribution from recurrent revenue, in itself a bad thing, and the postponement of the contribution to the Reserve Fund, which would also be unfortunate. The territory would lose the contribution made by the Federal Government, through its economic program, to capital development… this amounts to saying that, as a completely independent and sovereign state, the Southern Cameroons would not, at its present stage of development, be viable (Phillipson, 1959, p.9).

As regards his findings, Phillipson proposed that separation was to be with a continuance of the Trusteeship for a reasonable period and hence completely ruled out the independence option for Southern Cameroons because of its unviability situation. Although the report showed an economic 'red card', it nonetheless hinted that an improvement in the road network infrastructure within the foreseeable future could positively upgrade the region's economy. Lastly, although the Phillipson report painted a controversial picture of the economy of Southern Cameroons, it did not rule out the possibility of a separate Southern Cameroon from Nigeria. In spite of the fact that he had his own reservations, Phillipson went further to make insightful directives on how both the short-term and long-term deficits could be handled in a way that the functioning and sustainability of the state would be assured.

The very problem of financial quagmire that loomed over Southern Cameroons on a short-term basis was re-examined. In this regard, Phillipson contended that the financial challenges that hindered the Southern Cameroons were obvious: inadequate reserves, inadequate tax flows, lack of companies, and loss of financial revenue allocation in the event of separation from Nigeria. It was, however, possible to surmount these hindrances. He advised that, despite these hurdles, the Southern Cameroons government could expand its services, even if it was doing so on a deficit. He suggested that 37% of the Southern Cameroons' agricultural revenue could be gradually increased annually by expanding the plantation sector. This would have propelled the economy of the Southern Cameroons to the path of economic stability and viability. Given the economic factors at the time, his suggestions were realistic and achievable. This was optimistic for a separated Southern Cameroons state to thrive, against the grim picture painted by the earlier reports. By and large, focusing on the lack of infrastructure and other socio-economic assets, which could be blamed on the British neglect, Phillipson predicted a not-too-vibrant Southern Cameroons economy in the long future. It was not surprising also that the report failed to acknowledge the existence of unexploited minerals and forest resources like timber that could have positively impacted the economy of Southern Cameroons as a separate political entity.

From an analytical micro and macro perspectives, alongside global economic dynamics at the time, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), foreign aid as well as exploring resources like land, human capital, and tourism for instance that could have impacted positively on the economy of the country were completely excluded or undermined by Phillipson’s report.

Rather, his report emphasized or maintained a negative situation by insisting that Southern Cameroons could not balance its budget because of limited human and natural resources. However, this was vividly contrary to the budget speech made by the Acting Financial Secretary (Mr. A.D.H. Paterson) for Southern Cameroons in 1959 when he observed that:

> In 1959-1960, we can look forward to our revenue rising to a level more consistent with our recurrent needs than ever before… while therefore, the Federal Minister of Finance Chief Festus Okotie-Eboh has termed the Federal budget for the next year "the responsibility Budget". I would like to introduce our budget here in Southern Cameroons as "the solvency Budget" (Lum, 2000).

It is clear from the above extract Paterson's remarks in 1959-1960 that an independent Southern Cameroons would have been economically stable, viable, and progressive within the first few years without any external financial assistance from either French Cameroon or Nigeria. The alleged economic situation depicted above contradicts Phillipson's Report, which, from every intent, was tailored at defending the colonial interest of systematically undermining the option of self-rule and projecting a bleak economic situation of Southern Cameroons. Furthermore, sources reveal that the recurrent revenue for 1960 was estimated at £1.999.000 more than the current expenditure of £1.897.000, which would have allowed the Southern Cameroons government to budget for a satisfactory surplus (Lum, 2000).

The anticipated revenue was to come from taxes, licenses, internal revenue from forestry fees and royalties, and statutory payments from the federal government under the revised revenue allocation system. It indicates that these sources of revenue were undermined or suppressed in Phillipson's economic report, thereby projecting a negative economic situation for southern Cameroons at the time. It is pertinent to indicate that Philipson's report had negative implications for the Southern Cameroons because it sowed the seeds for the underdevelopment of Southern Cameroons and worked against the realization of the independence agenda for Southern Cameroons. It was against this background that Kenneth Brill was commissioned to undertake another survey of the economy of Southern Cameroons in order to provide alternatives or complementary findings on the economic and fiscal standing of Southern Cameroons.

Kenneth E. Beril's Report and the Economy of Southern Cameroons

Kenneth Beril was commissioned in December 1959 to conduct another complementary study on the economy of Southern Cameroons, and his report was submitted in August 1960 (NAB, Qb/a/1960/1). This was the third and perhaps the most detailed report of the study undertaken by the Foncha's government to examine the economic viability of the Southern Cameroons. This study focused on a range of issues concerning both the political and economic status of Southern Cameroons, like the plantations, population and transport, and infrastructural development. Apart from providing the geo-historical locale of the study area, Berill's Report (Qb/a/1960/1) also provides the outstanding features of the Southern Cameroons' economy, which he noted were in sharp contrast between plantation and peasant, grassland, and forest and the rapid development of the territory. In the domain of communication, Beril reported that:

> …A third feature (of the economy of Southern Cameroons) was the poverty of communication. By water, there is substantial canoe traffic along the coast and the creeks, mainly carrying local foodstuffs. But the rivers do not provide an important or reliable means of access to the interior .... The railway system is diminutive and consists of narrow gauge plantation tracts near the coast, which carry bananas … to the ports (Beril, Qb/a/1960/1).

In his so-called economic study of Southern Cameroons, Beril, like his predecessors, made a rough assessment of the economy of Southern Cameroons. The emphasis of his study was on the economic structures like ports, roads, and airports. He observed that port infrastructures in Southern Cameroons were poorly developed, arguing that the Victoria-Bota port was not only well developed but also that shipment and discharge were very expensive. In comparative terms, Beril's report averred that port charges were twice as high as that of the Calabar port in Nigeria, and this was also associated with inevitable damage of cargo. However, the report singled out that the bananas and timber ports were better developed and capable of dealing with ships up to 500 feet long (Beril, 1960). At the peak of the banana harvesting season, traffic was heavy, and a banana ship was loaded and cleared every two or three days. However, even at the Tiko port, the narrowness of the channel meant that ships must be maneuvered singly and carefully in and out.

Still, due to the nature of Southern Cameroons' economy, Beril furthered that there were no port facilities in Southern Cameroons that could be comparable with those in the Eastern Region of Nigeria or at Douala in the Republic of Cameroon. This shows a negative state of infrastructural

development in Southern Cameroons compared with other areas in French Cameroon, like Douala and Calabar in Nigeria, for instance. It seems glaring that both Beril's and Philipson's reports were comparatively similar in contents and obviously held negative assumptions that discouraged the idea of an autonomous state for southern Cameroons. Instead, the reports emphasized and portrayed the territory as economically vulnerable and characteristically poor, citing poor roads and lack of sea and airports, among others.

To expose the deplorable state of the roads in the territory, Beril argued that Southern Cameroons had only 633 miles of government roads and 442 miles of Native Authority (NA) roads. In terms of the tarred mileage represented, only about a tenth of the 1:100 miles were tarred; the "rest were dirt roads and the condition of some of them was atrocious" (Beril, 1960). Although the British, particularly the economic experts, described Southern Cameroons as an underdeveloped periphery, they lost sight of the fact that the development of the territory was their responsibility as stipulated in the mandate agreement. However, they did very little to improve the social and economic situation of the territory during their mandate/trusteeship periods in Cameroon, only to turn around and describe the economy as weak and backward. It was, however, after several years of inactivity, that the British reluctantly initiated a road development program in the territory with a view to improving the road infrastructural development to enhance local development in the territory. An average sum of £250.000 per annum was spent on the territory's road infrastructure. In 1958, the expenditure was stepped up sharply from £500.000 in 1959 to over £600.000 by 1960. With this initiative, some roads were tarred. For instance, the road from Victoria to Kumba was tarred, which made Kumba one of the fastest-growing economies in the territory. Generally, the improvement of the road situations in the region triggered economic growth in the area. For instance, the Bamenda ring road and the road west from Kumbo facilitated trading and peasant activities in the area. However, in spite of this, the argument of economic unviability still prevailed to the detriment of the colonized subject.

In contextualizing the importance of C.D.C. to the economy of Southern Cameroons and specifically highlighting the comparative viability advantage that banana, cocoa, or other agricultural products offered, without dismissing the economic advantage of the C.D.C., Beril, however, contemplated with dismay the challenge that was likely to affect the banana sector in particular by stating that "old enemies," that is; natural disasters, pests, and diseases were likely to affect the plantations. The report claimed that some plantations lacked wind protection and were

frequently damaged by storms. According to the report, in a "good" year, the losses incurred by the C.D.C. plantations fell below a million plants. This was, in the view of the British, a severe blow because the stem of a banana was worth 10 shillings.

In this light, natural occurrences such as hurricanes that posed a serious threat to bananas were unpredictable, and worst still, little efforts were made to minimize the impact apart from the earthing-up technique, which was even an expensive initiative. In addition, Panamá was a notorious disease that frequently attacked bananas and did not have a cure. In this regard, the Beril Report concluded that the economy of the Southern Cameroons could not be expanded with primary reliance on the banana sector. This influenced the C.D.C. to start shifting away from bananas and move towards the cultivation of rubber, oil palm, cocoa, and tea, which were less speculative and were slow-yielders as compared to bananas. The C.D.C. never accumulated reserves to earn capital and transform the banana plantations into other suitable commodities, and the Southern Cameroons' government was in no position to advance the money.

Again, one can clearly speculate the difficult position in which Southern Cameroons found itself during this era, and things were further made difficult by the British colonial administration, which did not stimulate a holistic development agenda for the territory. The colonial administration was, by and large, more concerned with the imminent challenges that faced the territory than proposing concrete solutions that could alleviate the precarious economic situation of the territory. However, the British colonial policy of *Indirect Rule* was inclined to rely on indigenous resources, which made it difficult to accelerate aggressive development initiatives or take responsibility for the improvement of the territory by pioneering alternative development projects in the social, economic, and other domains. In spite of the issues raised in his report, the findings were palatable as it concluded that the economy of the territory was relatively in a good state but needed more improvements that were hoped would propel the Southern Cameroons into more stability, hence making the territory economically viable. However, by this time, the British colonial authorities were already negotiating a possible reunification option between French Cameroon and the British Southern Cameroons. This is because, by 1960/1, another commission was called up to re-examine the economic implications that reunification would orchestrate and how best such challenges could be mitigated. Taking into account the above political gesticulations, it was obvious by this time

that another study was mandated to make or mar, and this was led by Mr. Kjell Arderson, dubbed the Anderson's report.

The uncertainties surrounding the economic viability of the Southern Cameroons dragged on until 1960/1. In 1960, Mr. Kjell Anderson was commissioned by the Republic of Cameroun from December 1960 to February 1961 to examine the economic repercussions of a possible reunification of the British Southern Cameroons with the Republic of Cameroon. In practice, the report was a hypothetical survey that studied the budgetary problems that would arise in the event of reunification between the French Cameroon and Southern Cameroons (Ngoh, 1996). The central mission of the Commission was to investigate how the federal and regional budgets could be harmonized and factored into the reunified Cameroon. In brief, Anderson examined the following issues: the need for a common currency, a common external tariff, the absence of an internal tariff, and the federal budget (NAB, Anderson, Qb/a/1960). The need to reassess these aspects stemmed from the fact that the British Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon belonged to two different monetary or fiscal zones: the Sterling and the Franc zones.

Regarding trade, incompatibility was conspicuously identified because the two entities belonged to different trade blocs; the Republic of Cameroon belonged to the Common Market, while the Southern Cameroons was associated with the Commonwealth. Owing to the differences in their fiscal policies, it was obvious that certain problems could meaningfully affect a future reunification. Anderson's report noted challenges like fiscal disparities, foreign trade, as well as possible administrative problems. Raising trade deficit and other structural differences, Anderson was to reinforce the belief that the economy of Southern Cameroons was weak and that in the event of a future reunification with the Republic of Cameroon, difficulties would undoubtedly emerge, but this would be better than granting self-rule to the territory.

In spite of all the studies, the British tactfully prepared Southern Cameroons for reunification rather than working towards granting her autonomous self-rule. In fact, according to Ngoh (2019; Ngoh, 2023), the interests of British and French colonial authorities towards Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon, which, at times, clashed conspicuously, negatively impacted the results of Southern Cameroons' choice for independence. Both colonial powers serially and tactfully opposed Southern Cameroons' independence as a separate political entity for different reasons (Mukete, 2013; Ngoh, 2023). According to Fanso (2017), Britain wanted Southern Cameroons to achieve independence in association with Nigeria and rejected the option for a separate

independent Southern Cameroons, a hypothesis which, in the view of Ngoh (2023), was linked by some politicians like J. N. Foncha and P. M. Kale at various periods.

By coldshouldering the option of separate political entity for Southern Cameroons, the British Colonial Office, once again strengthened its earlier position by stating that Southern Cameroons "*would be a poor - weak country*" and, it would be "*unable to stand alone and would have to accept whatever terms were offered to them*," (Ngoh, 2023; Mukete, 2013; Elango, 2018). This certainly led Britain to reject the option of independence for Southern Cameroons. This reminds us that the British had already nurtured a complex agenda for the territory not to achieve self-rule but to either reunite with the Republic of Cameroon or in association with Nigeria. Therefore, it is clear from this perspective that the various commissioned studies on the economic viability or unviability of the territory were highly doctored and tailored to satisfy imperialistic interests.

Post-colonial scholars are today confronted with many unanswered questions that seek to uncover the true picture of the economy of the former Southern Cameroons. The findings of the study indicate that after independence and reunification in 1961, several oil deposits were discovered off the creeks of Bakassi, Cape Limbo, and Tiko. New fields for the opening of plantations in Ndian and Kupe Muanenguba have been flourishing in recent years. Besides, the region, today called the South West Region, is a haven for cocoa, palms, and other cash crops, which continue to fetch the post-colonial Republic of Cameroon huge revenue in taxes and foreign exchange earnings. During the colonial period, the C.D.C. was the sole state corporation and the second-highest employer after the state.

Available evidence shows that trends have changed drastically, and other sectors of the economy, like tourism, contribute enormously to the livelihood of nations. Tourism and exploration of minerals were among the key economic potentials that the three economic studies failed to consider as potentials for the Southern Cameroons. Taking the above into account, we assert that the colonial economic reports were paradoxical and characteristically inconsistent in nature. In comparative terms, Southern Cameroons was larger in size than many African countries like the Gambia, Zanzibar, Togo land and a host of others that got independence in the later part of the 20th century. In terms of resources, some of these countries lacked the necessary resources that were required to put a nation on its feet as an autonomous entity.

Discussion

The study's findings reveal that the former Southern Cameroons (the same area as the South West and North West Regions of Cameroon or anglophone Cameroon) have been the country's backbone since independence. This region, especially the Southwest region, is the country's bread basket. The findings indicate that the former Southern Cameroons was endowed with lots of untapped mineral resources as well as touristic attractions, which could have made the country self-reliant, independent, and economically stable as an autonomous political entity. The paper found that the economic resources or potentials discovered, population size, and other factors should have advantaged the territory to achieve political independence of Southern Cameroons. Studies show that the British deliberately and consciously propagated the doctrine of economic unviability because they actually preferred the reunification or integration option over self-rule, which some southern Cameroonian politicians wanted at the time (Ngoh, 2023).

Post-Coloniality of Economic Potentials and the Paradox of Economic Viability in Anglophone Cameroon

Contemporary decolonial studies have authoritatively proven that the area previously described as the Southern Cameroons (Now known as South West and North West Regions or simply as Anglophone Cameroon) is endowed with stupendous cultural, natural and human resources capable of sustaining the other 8 regions that constitute present-day Republic of Cameroon. A recently published 2018 Extractive Industries Transparency International (EITI) Report on natural resources like oil reveals that crude oil represents the bulk of production and export of the extractive sector in Cameroon, followed by gas and gold. During the period under review, the country recorded significant revenues generated by the extractive sector, amounting to 763.95 billion FCFA, and those included in the state budget amounted to 568 billion FCFA, compared to 2017 with 441.97 billion FCFA.

Another source claims that Cameroon now has an estimated 200m barrels of oil reserves. The offshore Rio del Rey Basin, located mostly in Ndian Divisions in Southwest Region and close to the border with Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta, is home to 89% percent of the deposits. The remaining 11% is spread across the Douala, Kribi-Campo, Mamfe, and Logone-Birni basins (EITI Report, 2018). The above statistics reveal that the former Southern Cameroons had the resources that, if exploited gainfully, could have contributed to economic development and, therefore, a sustainable economy for the territory. However, the study further reveals that despite the availability of such celebrated oil-rich deposits in the Southwest, the region has continued to

experience marginalization and gruesome injustice in the hydrocarbon sector which is still heavily controlled by the central government in Yaounde which is several miles from the capital town of the South West Region or its oil peripheral zones of Bakassi peninsular and Ndian for example. This also reinforces the idea that the French and British may have had their backstage negotiations against the wishes and aspirations of the colonized people of Southern Cameroons, who were virtually sacrificed due to colonial politicking.

To further elaborate on the economic potentials of the territory, the findings also indicate that the former Southern Cameroons after 1972 were further divided into the Northwest and Southwest provinces (now regions). These regions host the biggest agro-companies in Cameroon, like the Cameroon Tea Estate (CTE) in Tole in Buea sub-division, the Upper Nun Valley Development Authority, Delmonte Bananas and the C.D.C., and PAMOL. In addition, some of Cameroon's major economic export commodities like banana, palm oil, tea, cocoa, coffee, timber, sand, and rice for example come from these regions. The Upper Nun Valley Development Authority is in charge of developing the agricultural sector in the Upper Nun Valley of the North West Region, particularly with rice production, processing, and marketing; including provision of subsidies to the farmers. About 75% of Cameroon's Arabica coffee comes from the North West Region. Unfortunately, these sectors were either left out or undervalued by the colonial reports occasioned by Beril, Sydney and Philipson, but post-colonial investigations have re-positioned these sectors as the most crucial and reliable sectors for the economic prosperity of the state of Cameroon today. In fact, one can not talk about agriculture in Cameroon after reunification without citing the C.D.C. or PALMOL.

The Agro-pastoral production capacities are accompanied by many forest resources, especially non-timber forest products, which are great sources of income for the country. Revenue also comes from the sales of labor associated with market gardening, fishing, tourism, and timber sales.

Conclusion

The political and economic history of the former Southern Cameroons would be incomplete without mentioning the salient issues of the territory's struggles to stand on its own as an independent entity or in association with Nigeria. A cursory look at the history of the territory suggests a complicated evolution of the territory, and the impacts of this complication have sadly survived the post-colonial era. This, therefore, suggests that the foundations upon which the

territory concluded its future by reunifying with the Republic of Cameroon were shaky. The British colonial experience gave birth to three decisive economic studies that sealed the fate of the territory through the prism of economic unviability.

Admittedly, the colonial hypothesis of economic viability or unviability of the economy of Southern Cameroons, therefore, appears naïve as findings suggest since it was dominated by imperfections and wrong judgments in the private investment process of the British government's colonial policies. It was driven by the competitive self-interest protecting British and French self-assertive interests, which they domesticated throughout the mandate and Trusteeship periods in Cameroon. Within that period, they looted Cameroonian resources such as land, labor, and valuable artifacts only to turn around to castigate the economic viability of the economy as weak, limping, and derogatorily called it a 'banana republic.'

Barely less than 11 years after the independence and reunification of Cameroons, the erstwhile colonially doctored hypothesis of the economic unviability of Southern Cameroons has been vigorously and systematically debunked by post-colonial de-constructivist scholars who believe that the colonial assertions articulated in the already discussed economic studies were no accident. They deliberately justified the colonial agenda by saying Southern Cameroons could not stand alone as an independent state. Britain either wanted the territory to associate with Nigeria or reunify with the Republic of Cameroon. The "Third Option" was not given to the territory, nor did the politicians agree with it.

Today, it is more than obvious that the present-day South West and North West Regions of Cameroon, to an extent, can support countries of the CEMAC zone like Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, and the other eight regions of Cameroon by virtue of its natural resources like foodstuffs of various kinds as well as cash crops which the British underlooked and often placed little or no importance to them. In addition, recent studies suggest that large deposits of pozzolana sand and gravel have been discovered in volcanic areas of the Southwest and Northwest Regions. Not only are there industrial quantities of sand used as building materials and servicing but there are also very fine sand materials that could be exploited to produce glass and other commodities of high commercial market value. In fact, much of the sand used in Equatorial Guinea, a border maritime country, is imported from Cameroon's Southwest region, particularly from the Mungo River. Other resources exported to Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, and the Central Africa Republic are varieties of foodstuffs,

vegetables, and timber, most of which originate from the Anglophone regions of Cameroon (Awachi, 1993; Basung, 1975; Bederman, 1968; Aloangamo, 2002).

In addition to agricultural resources, other mineral resources like diamond deposits, gold, ore, etc., have been discovered in Mamfe, while new gold deposits have been found in Misaje in the Northwest Region. The former Victoria (Limbe) has the finest natural deep seaport in the whole of West Africa. If well harnessed, this seaport could serve more than five countries in the African sub-region alongside its CEMAC members. Unfortunately, the British never wanted to consider those resources that could have been genuinely evaluated on the basis of economic viability; rather, the studies they commissioned intentionally watered down all these by hyperbolically describing the economy of Southern Cameroons as a 'banana state' that could perish after a heavy storm.

By way of conclusion, it can be asserted that although Southern Cameroons, like many entities that were still under colonial occupation, had its challenges, which ranged from human to natural setbacks, the territory, however, evolved politically, culturally, and economically along the paths predetermined by the colonial authorities and the politicians. Despite the efforts made by the politicians, the colonial administration succeeded in putting a 'knife' between them, hence derailing them from achieving a common political objective for the territory. The Premier of Southern Cameroons, Foncha, and the other politicians of Southern Cameroons, like E.M. Endeley, P.M. Kale, and Jua, for instance, failed to agree on a common political framework. The result was that the "Third Option," which could have advocated independence without association or reunification, was categorically rejected by Britain, France, and the United Nations.

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