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DIPLOMACY AND NATION-BUILDING IN AFRICA

Franco-British Relations and Cameroon at the End of Empire

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PREFACE

Half a century ago, on 1 October 1961, the British flag was lowered in the Southern Cameroons, as the territory and its people joined the Republic of Cameroun, the ex-French mandate that had been independent since 1 January 1960. As one looks across both sides of the symbolic River Mungo, the old boundary between the French and English worlds, signs of an original, officially bilingual, profoundly multilingual, Cameroonian nation appear. On 27-29 July 2011, the inaugural Commonwealth Summer School was held in Cameroon. The University of Buea was chosen as the location; the organisers also came from one of its partner universities, Douala; participants hailed from across the Commonwealth, and included representatives from all the universities in Cameroon. Cameroonian students have now launched a national students' association and the Buea event enabled the Commonwealth Secretariat to organise a youth consultation prior to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in Perth, Australia, in October. Having joined in 1995 at the same time as Mozambique, Cameroon is one of the Commonwealth's youngest members and its citizens across the territory have been giving increasing importance to the organisation, relying on its networks to promote political, economic and social rights.

Current membership, however, has not been the result of natural, smooth and simple evolutions. Nor is contemporary politics free from

controversies and struggles. National scrutiny and international attention have converged on democratic processes and wealth redistribution. Some emphasise the persisting dominance of the initial Republic of Cameroun in today's State and the more radical Southern Cameroons National Council call for the independence of the once British mandate. Only if the years of distance, misperceptions, misunderstandings and suspicions are taken into account can contemporary engagements between Cameroon and the Commonwealth be properly assessed and usefully acted on.

This book, therefore, does not focus on the application process which led to Cameroon's Commonwealth membership (1989–95) but on the complex national and international power struggles which occurred at the end of Empire. What I hope to achieve in these pages is to shed some light on the international connections, the forms of cooperation, conciliation, compromise and resistance that influenced the multilateralisation of international relations in the post-independence era. This research stems from the belief that Cameroon is central to the histories of French and British decolonisation processes and foreign policy choices, forcing the two European powers into conversations that did not occur elsewhere. It also intends to emphasise that international history is a central component of any national narrative: Franco-British relations in Cameroon, the emergence of Francophone and Anglophone international networks and the management of post-independence diplomacy will hopefully shed light on the history of the Cameroonian, French and British States. Transnational, transregional and multilateral histories of decolonisation are essential to understand the globalising and globalised networks of today's international affairs.

This book would never have been written without the support of a great number of people, whom I wish to thank wholeheartedly – the staff at all the archives centres I visited, for their highly valuable help, and my research centre at Paris Diderot which provided me with the necessary means to carry out this work. Very special thanks are owed to friends and colleagues who gave me undivided moral and intellectual support in this endeavour – particularly Jean-Claude Redonnet, for his unflinching enthusiasm, in the years of my PhD and much

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAMS	Associated African and Malagasy States
ACCT	Agence de coopération culturelle et technique
ALCAM	Atlas linguistique du Cameroun
APLF	Association des parlementaires de langue française
AUPELF	Association des universités partiellement ou entièrement de langue française
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BCEAC	Banque Centrale des Etats d'Afrique Equatoriale et du Cameroun
BEAC	Banque des Etats de l'Afrique Centrale
Camdev	Cameroon Development Corporation
CAR	Central African Republic
CCCE	Caisse centrale de coopération économique
CDC	Colonial Development Corporation
CFTC	Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CNPC	Cameroons People National Council
CNU	Cameroon National Union
CONFEJES	Conférence des ministres de la jeunesse et des sports des pays d'expression française
CPA	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
CPNC	Cameroons People National Council
CRO	Commonwealth Relations Office
CYP	Commonwealth Youth Programme
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa

ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EDF	European Development Fund
EEC	European Economic Community
ENAM	Ecole nationale de la magistrature
ENS	Ecole normale supérieure
FAC	Fonds d'aide et de coopération
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FO	Foreign Office
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
KNDP	Kamerun National Democratic Party
KPP	Kamerun People's Party
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
LGTC	Local Government Training Centre
MPLA	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
OAMCE	African and Malagasy Organisation for Economic Cooperation
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OCAM	Organisation de coopération africaine et malgache
ODA	Overseas Development Administration
ODM	Overseas Development Ministry
OIF	Organisation internationale de la Francophonie
OK Party	One Kamerun Party
PAID	Pan-African Institute for Development
PLR	Postes de liaison et de renseignement
SGAAM	Secrétariat général aux affaires africaines et malgaches
UAM	Union africaine et malgache
UAMCE	African and Malagasy Union for Economic Cooperation
UAMPT	Malagasy Union for Post and Telecommunication
UAR	United Arab Republic
UC	Union Camerounaise
UDEAC	Union douanière et économique de l'Afrique centrale
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
UN	United Nations
UPC	Union des populations du Cameroun
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VSO	Voluntary Services Overseas

INTRODUCTION

In late November 1967, British ambassadors and high commissioners from West Africa gathered in London to exchange information on their respective countries, discuss present foreign-policy choices in the light of British interests, and envisage future orientations. One of the items on their agenda for the first day of the conference was: 'Can outsiders influence the process of nation-building?'[1] This had strong resonance in the context of East-West competition in the cold war but the real point of interest in the West African region was to discuss what role Britain and France played, with what motives, consequences and foreseeable evolutions. Both France and Britain had handed over power to African governments in the region but two major differences marked their relations with Africa. First, while French sub-Saharan territories had all become independent by November 1960, Britain was still in the process of negotiating the transfer of power in Swaziland and faced failure in Rhodesia, where Ian Smith's government had proclaimed unilateral independence almost exactly two years previously and maintained a strict regime of racial segregation for the benefit of the white settlers. Second, at a time when the 'Franco-African State'[2] had emerged in Francophone spheres, Britain had retained little influence over its former West African territories. Membership of the Commonwealth did not protect Britain from the fierce attacks of its former colonies. While Britain often remained their most valuable Western partner, the new states repeatedly decried British policies, from restrictive immigration laws to failed decolonisation processes, in both closed and public circles. France, the British ambassador to the Ivory Coast underlined, had instead 'continue[d] to influence individual Francophone countries in every sphere – political, social and economic'[3] to an incomparable degree. British foreign policy and diplomacy undoubtedly sought to protect and promote British interests but in Africa, and even more acutely in West and Equatorial Africa, British interests could only be fully understood and preserved if French foreign policy and diplomacy were scrutinised with equal subtlety. At country level this French prism was central in Britain's relations with one State: Cameroon.

Born from the union of an ex-French mandate and an ex-British mandate on 1 October 1961, Cameroon was a unique experiment in nation building, facing a unique set of divisions imposed during the Franco-British era. The first essential division was territorial. The official partition of the German Protectorate of Kamerun on 22 July 1922 between France and Britain, who had conquered the territory in 1916 as the First World War had spread to the African continent, had given birth to three territories: a vast French mandate and a British mandate almost five times smaller, which had itself been divided into the Northern Cameroons and the Southern Cameroons.[4] Only the Southern Cameroons chose to reunify with their Cameroonian neighbours, while the Northern Cameroons integrated with Nigeria on 1 June 1961. The union of 1961 therefore rested on a double territorial imbalance: the absence of the Northern Cameroons and the much smaller size of the Southern Cameroons, four times less populated than the ex-French mandate.[5] Within a two-state Federation, land and population gave much greater weight to East Cameroon, the former French mandate, than to West Cameroon, the former Southern Cameroons.

The second division was temporal. The Cameroons were never a colony but League of Nations mandates, later UN trusteeships, and independence had always been envisaged. However, progress towards independence and more importantly, independence itself, came in very different ways. The Republic of Cameroun,[6] under President Ahmadou Ahidjo, celebrated its independence from France on 1 January 1960, following an agreement between the French and the Camerounian governments, approved by the UN. The future of the British Cameroons remained undecided by that date, although United Nations Resolutions 1352 (XIII) and 1473 (XIV) had stipulated that plebiscites would be held in both territories no later than March 1961, offering a choice between integration in the Nigerian Union or union with the Cameroun Republic. The options for the popular vote in the British Cameroons, however, did not include independence and a Republic of Cameroun existed for 21 months before the advent of contemporary Cameroon.

The third division was political. Calls for independence and reunification had first emerged from trade union movements and the UPC,[7] formed by Ruben Um Nyobé in 1948 to seek total independence from the colonial powers. Banned in 1955, violently repressed by the French authorities and the successive autonomous Cameroonian governments who acted in cooperation with France, the UPC struggle was only fully brought under control with the trials of 1971.[8] UPC militants had gone into exile in the British Cameroons, where they also met with official repression, and abroad, where they found sympathisers in Ghana, Guinea or the UAR. Cameroon therefore emerged in the midst of civil violence and competing claims to political legitimacy.

Finally, French and British legacies, from the modes of administering the mandates to the transfers of power, marked fundamental distinctions between the two parties to the union.[9] Administered from Nigeria under indirect rule, the Southern Cameroons was included in the Eastern region of the Nigerian Federation with the Richards Constitution of 1946. The objective of the first nationalist movements in the Southern Cameroons, which emerged from Lagos, focused on separation from Nigeria, which became official when the Lyttleton Constitution created the Southern Cameroons Parliament in 1954. On the French side, by contrast, Cameroon had been firmly linked to the metropolitan centre. Cameroon's Territorial Assembly was established in 1952, but between 1946 and 1958 representatives were also sent to the Assembly of the French Union in Paris. This was undoubtedly crucial in the career of Ahidjo, Cameroon's President until 1982. Vice President of the Territorial Assembly of Cameroon in 1955, its President by 1957 and Minister of the Interior in Cameroon's first autonomous government of May 1957, Prime Minister by February 1958 and founding leader of the UC in July 1958, Ahidjo had first been a councillor of the French Union in 1953. Seeking to negotiate independence in cooperation with the French government, which supported the UC against radical nationalist forces, Ahidjo held strong official and personal connections with French leaders. Politically therefore there existed intimate Franco-Camerounian links which had no Anglo-Cameroonian equivalent. But the distinct legacies of the Franco-British period pervaded all other spheres of Cameroonian life: French codified law versus British common law, EEC association versus Commonwealth economic preference, a centralised state school system with compulsory French versus a mission-led education which left far more space to national languages. Often referred to as a microcosm of Africa, host to 236 linguistic communities, most religions and philosophies, the Cameroonian nation would therefore have to build not only on pre-European diversity and on a single European legacy but on two very different European legacies.

In *The Two Alternatives*, published at the end of 1960 before the United Nations plebiscites, Ahidjo and the Southern Cameroons Premier, John Ngu Foncha, based the future of a reunified Cameroon on one fundamental promise: official bilingualism would be embedded in the Constitution, a national undertaking which would be translated on the international stage by the pledge not to join the French Community or the British Commonwealth. This was a formidable challenge at a time of solid linguistic barriers between French and English in Africa[10] and when neither Ahidjo[11] nor Foncha mastered the other's language. In 1952, less than 10 per cent of the population of the French Cameroons spoke French, while English speakers were even fewer

in the British Cameroons, where national languages and pidgin prevailed.[12] In 1962–63, the French ambassador noted that there were only around 1,500 English speakers in West Cameroon and that virtually nobody there understood a word of French.[13] The number of young Cameroonians attending secondary school increased from 12,000 in 1960 to around 100,000 in 1974[14] while the number of university students grew by an annual average of 35 per cent between 1969 and 1973.[15] By 1973 however, it was still essentially the political and business elite who spoke French and English.[16] The 'diglossia' in Africa after independence, when 'the prestigious social functions [were] dealt with through the European language',[17] was made more complex in Cameroon where most citizens of the officially bilingual state spoke neither French nor English and truly bilingual individuals were extremely rare. Cameroon's official languages had strong differential territorial connotations, more than anywhere else in Africa. Following the analysis of Alobwed Epie,[18] Anglophones in a Cameroonian context will here refer to those who identify strongly with both the English language and the former Southern Cameroons, irrespective of other simultaneous identity markers, religious, social or otherwise.

The 1960 pledge pervades official discourse in the first formative phases of reunified Cameroon. It accompanies the drive for political hegemony, which finds its first major expression in the formation of the one-party state in 1966. It supports the drive for territorial unification, from the construction of the Federation in 1961, around the ex-French East Cameroon and the ex-British West Cameroon, to its abolition in 1972, when seven regions were created out of the original two states in a clear move for territorial integration.[19] After independence, as Gilbert M. Khadiagala and Terrence Lyons demonstrate, African leaders became 'the source, site and embodiment of foreign policy' and diplomacy, which they used 'as a tool to both disarm their domestic opponents and compensate for unpopular domestic policies'.[20] International relations, therefore, became a means for the representation[21] and legitimisation of political power within the nation, with strong symbolic force being attributed to diplomatic representation. In 1976, the Quai d'Orsay still considered that virtually all of Cameroon's foreign policy decisions derived from a careful assessment of national unity requirements.[22] By founding reunified Cameroon on the 1960 pledge, Ahidjo and Foncha gave three sets of diplomatic relations exceptional importance: relations between Cameroon and each of the former trusteeship administrators, France and Britain; relations between France and Britain, as European neighbours, EEC partners after 1 January 1973 and dwindling imperial powers; and finally, relations between Cameroon and each of the multilateral international associations which emerged from the redefinition

and renegotiation of foreign affairs and diplomacy that decolonisation processes entailed.

In order to understand the dynamics of nation building and power politics in Cameroon deriving from the 1960 pledge, it is necessary to go beyond a comparative approach to French and British retreats from empire. What matters are the consultations, frictions, connections, compromises and agreements that brought into contact French, British and Cameroonian politicians and diplomats during the transfer of powers and in the first phase of Cameroonian nation-building. Investigating national identity in Cameroon itself, as Ndive Kofele Kale has argued, would imply analysing three levels: 'political consciousness[,] political knowledge [and] system affect [or] emotional attachment' to the country'.[23] This, however, is not the purpose of this book. In diplomacy and foreign affairs over the period, with limited literacy and in the absence of a free press, public opinion counted very little in decision making[24] and there are in fact no polls or other criteria to assess the national mood.[25] Public opinion, in the words of I. William Zartman, was in fact 'elite opinion'.[26] Just as Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale have distinguished between state building and state formation, this book will focus on relations between state processes for the deliberate creation of a nation and 'historical process[es] whose outcome is a largely unconscious and contradictory process of conflicts, negotiations and promises between diverse groups'.[27] While Cameroonian archival material remained largely unavailable,[28] French, British and Canadian archives, as well as the records of expanding multilateral organisations, such as the Commonwealth of Nations,[29] provide very valuable sources to assess Cameroon's evolving relations with the francophone and anglophone networks of the former trusteeship powers. This book focuses on the importance that France and Britain gave to Cameroon, on the influence that they sought to exercise in the country and that they had on each other, in the wider context of diplomatic decision making during decolonisation.[30] It therefore argues that Franco-British relations form an integral part of the study of the motives, strategies and consequences of the transfers of power in Africa. Beyond a comparative approach to French and British decolonisation processes, the history of Cameroon requires a combined approach to the negotiation of post-colonial international relations. The role of diplomacy in nation-building is not limited to Cameroon here. Franco-British relations in Cameroon, within the wider evolutions of bilateral and multilateral diplomacy between 1959 and 1975, also shed light on the redefinition of French and British identity at the end of empire and in the early days of their European partnership.

The 1960 pledge sought to manage the likely 'tensions between domestic and international society'[31] at a time when Cameroonian leaders, and Ahidjo

most particularly, seem to have been keenly aware of the constraints that limited resources placed on their capacity to implement foreign-policy decisions. Throughout the period, most diplomats based in Yaoundé, from the British to the French, the Americans and the Canadians, portrayed the Cameroonian President as a highly intelligent leader, who was simultaneously extremely cautious and pragmatic. In favour of a carefully planned drive towards African unity, opposed to the radical pan-Africanism of Ghanaian leader Kwame Nkrumah, Ahidjo instilled a strong sense of realism in Cameroonian diplomacy. In 1970, the Singapore Minister for Foreign Affairs expressed the view that for the developing countries which had recently gained independence, 'difficulties over foreign policy [derived] from enunciating policies which countries [were] not in a position organisationally to translate into action'.[32] If the decision to strike a balance between the two French and British spheres was motivated by the demands of nation-building in reunified Cameroon, to what extent did national and international evolutions, individual personalities and structural changes, influence Cameroon's determination and ability to follow this course? Official records highlight the role of bilateral and multilateral diplomacy in the complex negotiation and assertion of independence. The confrontation of the perceptions, discourse and actions of all diplomatic actors, individual and institutional, brings into focus French and British post-colonial strategies and their relations with Cameroonian objectives and achievements. The interconnections between French, British and Cameroonian policies, as Francophone organisations and the Commonwealth of Nations were fundamentally transformed, shed light on the opportunities and constraints that the international environment placed on nation-building and on the diplomatic strategies that national leaders sought to implement in return.

Looking at patterns of continuity and change in the higher echelons of politics between 1959 and 1975, Cameroonian and French decision makers were bound together by greater longevity than their British counterparts. Cameroonian diplomacy was highly centralised around Ahidjo, who had himself held the posts of President and Minister of Foreign Affairs simultaneously in early 1960.[33] The speed with which ministers succeeded each other at the head of Foreign Affairs, with ten incumbents in 15 years, reinforced Ahidjo's control over proceedings[34] while their linguistic origins favoured the Francophone element – as the French Ambassador noted in May 1962, French was the language of most Cameroonian elite, including those who might express 'hostility or reserve'[35] towards France, and this undoubtedly gave France a special place in Cameroon. While the first two Deputy Ministers, Nzo Ekangaki (14 February 1962–1 July 1964) and Bernard Fonlon (1 July 1964–1 January 1968), were Anglophones, all ministers but one were

Francophones from East Cameroon – just as at the Cameroonian Embassy in London, only Martin Epie (1962–1965) and J. Achidi Kisob (1973–1974) were Anglophones.[36] The role of the Foreign Affairs Minister, British diplomats in Yaoundé knew, was to be 'a faithful executant of the President's foreign policy [with] little influence on it' and to be hopefully 'happier at ceremonial than at substantive work'.[37] By 1975, the British Ambassador to Cameroon, Albert Saunders, considered that Ahidjo kept his ministers 'firmly muzzled and on a very short leash[, unable] to wag a polite tail of welcome let alone to go for a gentle and harmless stroll off the well-beaten tracks of diplomatic platitudes'.[38] Even Paul Biya, newly appointed to the resurrected function of Prime Minister in 1975, and who would become Cameroon's second President in 1982, knew 'his principal role [was] to co-ordinate Government business and to keep his hands off such matters as national defence, foreign affairs, internal security and the Assemblies'.[39] Yaoundé was the centre for foreign and diplomatic affairs, as the federated government of West Cameroon was told in no uncertain terms.[40]

French diplomats similarly emphasised the President's omnipotence. Ahidjo's control over Cameroonian foreign affairs and diplomacy was rather in line with African practices after independence',[41] but in the Cameroonian context such control was potentially damaging for balanced relations with the two former trustees. Decision making in foreign affairs and high-level diplomacy was firmly in the hands of a President whose relations were primarily with France, its leaders and its officials. Until 1975, Ahidjo paid one official visit to France, in July 1960, and one to Britain following reunification, in May 1963. Ahidjo, however, met President de Gaulle for private talks on seven occasions[42] over a nine-year period, and President Pompidou, who himself visited Cameroon in February 1971, twice.[43] Maurice Foley, then Undersecretary of State at the FCO, visited Cameroon in May 1969, followed by Lady Tweedsmuir, Minister of State at the FCO, in January 1973. But it was never envisaged that the British Monarch or the British Prime Minister should visit Cameroon[44] and no Secretary of State went before 1984. Although Ahidjo remained more distant from France than some of his Francophone counterparts in Africa, he maintained a clear link with French soil through his regular visits to his property in Grasse. The first two Cameroonian Ministers of Foreign Affairs also entertained very close links with the French: Charles Okala had been a member of the Senate of the French Union while Jean-Faustin Bétayéné had been a former administrator in Overseas France.[45] Paris, British officials believed by 1963, had become 'the clearing house of French African diplomacy'.[46] In 1965, the Ivorian President Felix Houphouët-Boigny[47] suggested that he and Ahidjo might meet in Paris, rather than on African soil. As the French capital

became the centre of flight connections between French-speaking Africa and the rest of the world, additional opportunities for exchanges arose between French and Cameroonian officials.[48]

Clear continuity in French politics also favoured relations. All three French Presidents between 1958 and 1975, Charles de Gaulle, Georges Pompidou and Valery Giscard d'Estaing, knew Africa and African leaders personally. All three maintained the successive French governments in right-of-centre politics, and all had been involved in African affairs before reaching the Presidency, as leader of Free France, Prime Minister or Finance Minister. Of all the African leaders who moved in French and Francophone circles, Ahidjo was said to have the most intimate knowledge and the keenest interest in French affairs, as well as the greatest concern for French heads of State.[49] The Cameroonian President sat in the front row at Notre-Dame de Paris for Pompidou's funeral[50] and told the French Ambassador in May 1974 that Giscard's victory against François Mitterrand in the presidential election was a real relief.[51] Relations with former French Africa were an integral part of French *grandeur*[52] as defined by de Gaulle, to an extent which was simply not true in British politics. As Tony Chafer argues, 'Africa has historically been a key arena for the projection of French power overseas'[53]. Close links between France and Cameroon also built on the stability in the ministries, divisions and secretariats in charge of African affairs. Maurice Couve de Murville remained in charge of foreign affairs at the Quai d'Orsay from June 1958 to May 1968 and Maurice Schumann from June 1969 to March 1973. Even though Michel Debré, André Bettencourt, Michel Jobert and Jean Sauvagnargues held shorter mandates, continuity was very much felt by African leaders. In any case, the Quai d'Orsay was only one of the actors in France's African policies – superseded in many ways by the SGAAM, established through Decree n°61–491 (18 May 1961) and entrusted to Jacques Foccart.[54] Couve de Murville claimed that Foccart's mission was not foreign affairs but 'the special relations, human relations in some way, between the President of each Republic and the President of the French Republic'[55] and that the Quai was generally strengthened under de Gaulle. However, Foccart's activities did curtail the power of the Quai d'Orsay. Jean-François Médard has emphasised the role of Foccart in 'clientelising', 'patrimonalising' and privatising Franco-African relations, based on his formal and informal networks in French and African politics and business.[56] Within Whitehall, the Foreign Office, Colonial Office and Commonwealth Relations Office were keenly aware of Foccart's 'wide influence'[57] for clandestine activities throughout the Francophone world. By contrast, British officials believed that British politics left a far more marginal place to African affairs, which remained a highly treacherous

terrain. Not only had Britain never practised assimilation as France had but the politics of decolonisation had left at least two open dossiers on British desks: South Africa and Rhodesia. Controversies over the use of military force and/or sanctions to force the segregationist governments out created clear international problems for Britain but also caused acute domestic dissensions, albeit on a more irregular basis. As the West African Department of the FCO noted in November 1972, 'black Africa tend[ed] to be a vote loser in British politics' and, unlike in France, could never be seen as 'salvation'.[58] This meant that African affairs were both potentially dangerous and essentially focused on Commonwealth Africa. Churchill's model of the three circles in British foreign affairs – balancing relations with the USA, Europe and the Empire/Commonwealth – may have been under review, but the Commonwealth certainly remained a clear distinguishing feature in British interpretations of Africa. While the French increasingly looked at Francophone or Anglophone Africa, fostering close relations with ex-Belgian colonies early on, the British tended to look at Commonwealth or non-Commonwealth Africa – ex-French and Francophone Africa being the major sub-category of the latter group. Cameroon's dual heritage mattered but it belonged, in effect, to non-Commonwealth Africa. The succession of Conservative and Labour governments throughout the period also had a clear impact. Not only did Cameroon initially have more tenuous links with Britain, but the succession of five different governments, under Prime Ministers who were far more personally detached from Africa than their French counterparts were, was a crucial difference. In parallel, there were nine successive Foreign Secretaries between 1959 and 1975, with only Alec Douglas-Home staying in the post for any prolonged period, first in the Macmillan Government (July 1960–October 1963) and then under Edward Heath (June 1970–March 1974). The rest, except Michael Stewart (March 1968–June 1970) and James Callaghan (March 1974–April 1976) under the two Wilson Governments, stayed for less than two years. In the early 1960s the Congo crisis was probably the key priority outside Britain's immediate sphere, but throughout the period Britain's primary preoccupations lay with Southern Africa and Commonwealth Africa.

In parallel, French assistance in Africa was led by the Ministry for Cooperation (*Coopération*), which was established on 27 March 1959 (decree n°59–462) on rue Oudinot where the Ministry for Overseas France had been and which was, according to Couve de Murville, 'a sort of remnant'[59] of the latter, all the more so as many of the former overseas civil servants worked there. The Cameroonian economy, based on five-year plans, fared rather better than some of its neighbours and the crisis which hit Kenya, the Ivory Coast or Nigeria in the mid to late 1970s only really affected Cameroon in

the mid 1980s. Between 1960 and 1976, three major sectors contributed to Cameroon's Gross National Product: agriculture (30 per cent), industries (20 per cent) and services and trade (50 per cent).[60] Real economic growth stood at around 6 per cent between 1960 and 1968 and 4.9% between 1974 and 1979.[61] The Cameroonian budget, however, relied heavily on external assistance and France was its major source of aid throughout the period. The *Coopération* was in charge of economic, financial, cultural, social and technical assistance – as well as military assistance although the decree did not explicitly state it – to 14 African territories. An inter-ministerial committee was created but the *Coopération* remained the main interlocutor for African leaders on issues related to aid, organised through the FAC and the CCCE.[62] Although most were Community states,[63] Cameroun and Togo were also included in the remit of the *Coopération*, until it was absorbed within the Quai in 1966[64] on Couve de Murville's initiative.[65] In the Quai, cooperation was divided between the *Secretariat d'Etat à la Coopération*, which dealt with Francophone Africa, and the *Direction Générale* for Cultural, Scientific and Technical Relations, which dealt with non-Francophone Africa.[66] This, British officials argued, 'reflect[ed] an emotional concentration on preserving French influence in that area'[67]and the division of funds, budgets and personnel certainly limited Franco-British and Anglophone-Francophone cooperation. They noted French ignorance and misconceptions about Commonwealth Africa – attributing it to distance more than anything else.[68] French embassies in Africa, Cameroon included, hosted a Mission for Aid and Cooperation, to which in the early years after independence, a number of Colonial officials had transferred.[69] Cultural action and technical cooperation were therefore inextricably linked within the French diplomatic system, to an extent which was not true in Britain. Even in its own Commonwealth sphere, British assistance programmes emerged later and remained far more limited than French initiatives. Only in 1961 was the Department of Technical Cooperation created and following Labour's victory in the 1964 general election, the ODM was established and given Cabinet representation. The seat in Cabinet, however, was lost less than three years later and the Conservative victory in 1970 led to the integration of Development within the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, as the ODA. At a time when Britain lacked 'any clear "development doctrine" or strategy'[70] in the Commonwealth, it was highly unlikely that non-Commonwealth Africa would feature highly in British plans.

The diplomatic channels between France and Africa differed markedly from those between Britain and Africa, particularly after the Foreign Office and the Commonwealth Office merged in 1968. While the FCO dealt with

African politics regionally, the *Direction Afrique Levant* in the Quai d'Orsay and its successor in 1972,[71] the *Direction Afrique*, remained organised around two distinct divisions for Francophone and non-Francophone Africa. British officials reported in July 1974 that cooperation with France was facilitated by the presence of 'able and broad-minded people in charge'[72] but admitted that the fact that Africa's linguistic divide was embedded in the structure of the Quai made 'things unnecessarily difficult'. They came to learn that their Quai d'Orsay counterparts 'ha[d] never been happy with th[is] curious division of responsibilities'[73] but no change was made until 1978, when a regional approach was adopted. Although the West Africa division still counted a desk officer for Anglophone Africa,[74] the changes reflected a new French determination to cast a more global look on Africa, geographically, politically and economically. For most of the period therefore, France looked essentially to Francophone Africa – and given the size of the ex-French Cameroon and the limited number of Anglophone Cameroonians, Cameroon was very much considered to be part of this core remit.

The Franco-British approach of this book rests on the fact that between 1959 and 1975 France and Britain engaged in regular consultations on Africa. In July 1959, British officials acknowledged that 'policies towards the emergent countries of Africa' should be harmonised with those 'prescribed by relations with other colonial Powers in Africa'.[75] Five months before, the Undersecretary in charge of Africa and the Levant at the Quai d'Orsay, Monsieur Sébilleau, had suggested to the British Ambassador in Paris that in African matters France and Britain 'must try to act in concert' and even 'ought between [them] to decide how to "*refaire l'Afrique*"'.[76] Regular talks between colonial officials since the Second World War and between foreign-affairs officials since 1958,[77] when the Quai d'Orsay proposed annual meetings,[78] provided the framework for consultation on African colonial and foreign affairs.[79] Officials also met before UN meetings and in the Commission for Technical Cooperation in Africa South of the Sahara – along with representatives from the main European powers with territorial interests in Africa, South Africa, the Central African Federation, Ghana, Liberia and Guinea.[80] Africa was also discussed at regular Anglo-American meetings,[81] but as Macmillan wrote to de Gaulle in June 1959: 'our two countries ought to be able to help each other. Certainly almost no other nations of the world now have these particular difficulties to contend with'.[82] British officials had a keener sense than the French of the consequences of imperial retreat on international influence[83] and were anxious for 'informal and not . . . too official'[84] talks, to avoid giving other governments the impression of another scramble for Africa. However, interaction with the French was very much welcomed. The United Kingdom and France were NATO partners, committed to

preserving close contacts with their African territories after independence and blocking Soviet penetration into the continent. High-level discussions were held in Paris and London – five in 1959 alone – and all diplomats in Africa were encouraged to exchange information and views.[85]

On de Gaulle's initiative, six-monthly Anglo-French talks on Africa between the Quai and the Foreign Office were broken off in May 1962, after the British only very belatedly invited France to talks on the Congo which had been planned with the Americans and the Belgians in London.[86] Contacts were made via embassies but direct ministerial discussions on Africa only resumed in 1966, on a British initiative. The British Ambassador in Paris had referred to the need 'to convince thinking Frenchmen that their idiosyncratic President [was] the odd-man-out and that her allies would be only too glad to work closely with France'[87] and Sir Harold Caccia, the Permanent Undersecretary of State at the Foreign Office, had approached the French Ambassador in London before Harold Wilson's visit to Paris in 1965. From a French perspective, Africa could become a problem for Franco-British relations in three major areas: the relations between their respective 'zones of influence', the negative impact of 'subversion, panafricanism, under-development, etc.' in the two zones, and relations with non-ex-territories.[88] The major interest of the discussions for the French was to glean information on Anglophone Africa from the British. Two concerns were expressed: that little publicity should be given to the talks, because of Britain's compromising position in Southern Africa, and that the risk of having to provide information on Francophone Africa in return should be assessed.[89] In reality, Anglo-French talks were severely limited in the late 1960s by the Nigerian civil war, as Britain officially backed the Federal Government and France provided support to secessionist Biafra.[90] But officials in the West Africa Department of the FCO emphasised in 1971 that France and Britain 'kn[e]w more about Africa than any other powers outside the continent and share[d] the same fundamental objectives, that is to see the African countries develop as stable, prosperous states pursuing moderate and sensible policies and to prevent them from being drawn under the influence of the Russians and the Chinese'.[91] Washington and Ottawa may have been the 'inner circle'[92] of British diplomacy, but on African affairs Paris remained a key agent and consultations with the French provided essential perspectives for British decision making.

As Jean-François Médard has argued, the Pompidolian management of African affairs occurred essentially along Gaullist lines and more radical changes were only made under Giscard d'Estaing. The Ministry for Cooperation was restored in June 1974[93] and given enlarged powers as decree

n°74–598 (21 June 1974) terminated Foccart's Secretariat and transfered its responsibilities on to the new ministry.[94] The influence and special status of the *Coopération* would be confirmed when, in 1979, all ministers *except* the *Coopération* minister were instructed to communicate with ambassadors via the Quai.[95] British ODA officials were amazed that cooperation with anglophone Africa remained handled by the Quai. French officials admitted that it 'was a terribly confused and unsatisfactory situation' and that *Coopération* looked forward to dealing with the whole of Africa. The fact that *Coopération* dealt with 'aid to the eighteen Francophone countries in Africa excluding the Maghreb . . . but including Mauritius on the grounds that they are an EEC Associate and speak French'[96] seemed to the British an amazingly outdated complexity. However, *Coopération* held enlarged powers, as Foreign Secretary Louis de Guiringaud's visit to the Ivory Coast, Ghana and Cameroon on 17–22 July 1977 was in itself a radical change. It was the first time a French foreign secretary had been to Africa since 1960; Francophone, Anglophone – and bilingual – countries were included, and the British Embassy in Paris emphasised the significance of the trip.[97] At least three major elements struck British diplomats: Giscard was actively seeking contacts with Anglophone Africa; he was promoting more multilateral relations, through the European 'Solidarity Pact' for instance and a more open attitude to the USA; and he seemed eager to improve France's image in Southern Africa.[98] 'In foreign affairs,' Christopher T.E. Ewart-Biggs in Paris noted, 'the change ha[d] been more in manner and method than in overt doctrine'[99] and neither 'the Fashoda complex [nor the] constant aversion to being seen to play second fiddle to the Americans'[100] had yet vanished. But it still markedly altered the pattern of France's international relations. This analysis was in fact confirmed by confidential French correspondence on the subject. Over 15 years after independence, French officials in Paris told British ambassador Nicholas Henderson that Africa was 'no longer a continent whose countries were to be treated in ex-colonial terms, mainly as the recipients for development aid. African states now had to be dealt with on a new footing with all possible emphasis laid on their political and international maturity and the role they could play in world affairs'.[101] The mid 1970s were therefore seen as a turning point in Franco-British relations over Africa. France's political ambitions were only curtailed by the financial constraints of the time[102] and significant developments required an increasingly wide-ranging French African policy: Portuguese decolonisation, Nigeria's growing dominance in West Africa, the influence of Zaire and tensions in the Horn of Africa.[103]

Following Michael Clarke's definition of foreign policy as 'a continuing and confusing "flow of action" made up of a mixture of political decisions, non-political decisions, bureaucratic procedures, continuations of previous

policy, and sheer accident,'[104] this book intends to demonstrate to what extent Franco-British relations form a central component of the 'impediments and opportunities that emanate[d] from the external environment'[105] between 1959 and 1975. French decolonisation, Tony Chafer has argued, 'has not been the product of some "grand plan" [but a] reactive'[106] process. In many ways, British decolonisation proceeded on an even more pragmatic, case-by-case basis and this was particularly true in Cameroon, which had none of the characteristics of any of its other former territories. The agreements, adjustments and tensions between central decision-making officials in Paris and London and local diplomats abroad also reveal the influence of diplomacy in nation-building processes. By the end of 1975, British membership of the EEC had been confirmed in a nationwide referendum; the collapse of the Portuguese empire in Angola and Mozambique had raised hopes for faster progress to black-majority rule in Southern Africa and more assertive action against South African rule over Namibia; Cameroon had signed the Lomé Convention, associating African, Caribbean and Pacific States, including Commonwealth associates, with the EEC, and had given much public press to the renegotiation of its original cooperation agreements with France, taking stock of over a decade of independence. For all its limits, the First Lomé Convention, as Frédéric Turpin has argued, marked a turning point in the relations between Europe and Africa.[107]

Between 1959 and 1975, there was constant tension between the nation-building strategies of individual states and the rise of multiple forms of multilateral diplomacy – at the regional, continental and international levels, ranging from the political to the economic and the cultural. The 1960 pledge stemmed from Cameroon's Franco-British heritage but was firmly grounded in how Cameroonian leaders interpreted the multilateral legacy of European empires and what they predicted these associations would become. By 1975, the Commonwealth of Nations had evolved tremendously from the association that Cameroon had seen in 1959. The creation of a Commonwealth Secretariat in 1965, headed by Canadian diplomat Arnold Smith, the growing membership of the new developing Commonwealth of the South, in pace with British imperial retreat, and the 1971 Declaration of Commonwealth Principles gave the original white club a collective yet diverse voice, on an unprecedented level. In 1975, Guyanese diplomat Shridath Ramphal was chosen to succeed Arnold Smith, confirming that small states and development had become core concerns. The French Community, by contrast, had disappeared. But regional African organisations, Francophone professional bodies and the *Agence de Coopération Culturelle et Technique* (ACCT) formed a network of Francophone multilateral associations, whose links with the French imperial legacy was somehow more complex than the British heritage

of the Commonwealth. The pattern of relations between France, Britain, Cameroon and these multilateral bodies breaks the distinction between what Christopher Clapham has called 'the sphere of equals [and] the sphere of outsiders'.[108] It is for this same reason that the Canadian factor deserves close scrutiny. Sharing with Cameroon a complex Franco-British heritage but a different set of domestic and international constraints, Canada is a recurrent diplomatic actor in the networks detailed above. The motives and strategies of Canada's engagement with Cameroon, its relations with France and Britain and its militant approach to multilateral diplomacy provide key insights into the dynamics of nation-building in a globalising world.

Nation-building in Cameroon has been the subject of detailed analysis, as have French and British African policies after independence. But there has been comparatively little focus on triangular relations between France, Britain and Cameroon in the context of rising multilateral diplomacy in a globalising environment. Chapter 1 will focus on the negotiations for independence and reunification between 1959 and 1961, emphasising the influence of bilateral diplomacy, European power relations and the UN on the strategies for the termination of the French and British mandates in Cameroon.[109] Chapter 2 will analyse the forces and motives behind Cameroon's retreat from Commonwealth dynamics and its consequences for federal harmonisation up to the assertion of the single party in 1966. The opportunities and dangers of emerging Francophone diplomacies in the second half of the 1960s will be the central concern of Chapter 3, while Chapter 4 will investigate the new conditions created by integration processes in Cameroon and Western Europe, as 1972 saw both the transformation of the Cameroonian Federation into a unitary state and the Treaty of Accession which secured British membership of the EEC starting on 1 January 1973. Finally, Chapter 5 will study the limits of multilateral diplomacy addressing the conflictual and persisting divides of European rule in Africa and of the Franco-British period in Cameroon. Often defined as a 'bridge', Cameroon sought to use its Franco-British heritage as a strength on which to build its international influence, with variable success. Diplomacy, as the following pages hope to show, provides an essential insight into decolonisation processes after formal independence, bridging the divide between national, international and global modes of analysis, influence and action.

CHAPTER 1

THE REUNIFICATION DIALOGUES: COORDINATING DECOLONISATION IN THE COLD WAR

Early consultations

During the Franco-British talks of February 1959, as discussions were about to resume after lunch, a message was given to the British delegation by a member of staff of French Secretary of State Louis Jacquinot: French Prime Minister Michel Debré was 'personally interested and regarded the future of the Cameroons as a test case for Anglo-French co-operation in Africa'.[1] Rather than an ominous warning, this was an indication that the French welcomed the consultations and wanted the exchange of information that had operated throughout the decade to continue. There had been tensions and disagreements, constantly alerting both sides to the formidable contrasts in their colonial policies, but the two European neighbours had not allowed them to prevail.

The issue of Cameroonian reunification had indeed been a recurring item of Anglo-French consultations since it was first promoted by early nationalist leaders on both sides of the River Mungo in the late 1940s. Ruben Um Nyobé and the UPC in the French Cameroons had called for independence and reunification, generating interest among Dr Emmanuel Endeley's Cameroons Federal Union across the colonial border.[2] The movement gathered pace in 1951 when UPC leaders

and Dr. Endeley's transformed party, the Kamerun National Congress (KNC), met. A few months before the Franco-British conversations of April 1952, official correspondence underlined the initial determination of both sides to cooperate against the Cameroons unification movement. The British Commissioner advised giving the French authorities 'full information regarding the political activities in the British Cameroons of people from the French Cameroons'.[3] In Paris, the French authorities were reluctant to grant too much negotiating power to their officials on the ground in Africa: it would interfere with the chain of command, as ministers had yet to agree on a common policy, and it might in fact encourage the nationalists, if they learnt that they now had a place on colonial agendas.[4] However, they welcomed exchanges at the metropolitan level[5] and the Cameroons unification movement was one of the three central issues discussed in April 1952 – with the Ewe movement in Togo and the Pan-African Congress in Accra.[6]

Both France and Britain initially opposed reunification, yet their common objective stemmed from distinct motives. British officials opposed the unification movement in Cameroon because they themselves favoured the integration of the British trust territories with their much larger Nigerian neighbour. Yet if independence came through reunification with the French Cameroons rather than integration with Nigeria, there was no reason to 'regard it as a failure':[7] no date had been determined but self-government and separation from the metropolis were already planned. The general feeling seems to have been that reunification would essentially be a great inconvenience, given the wide disparities between the French and British Cameroons. Conversely, as British officials underlined, the French position derived from a fundamental opposition to nationalist movements, which conflicted with the ultimate purpose of 'assimilat[ing] the Trust Territories into the French Union'.[8] Ruben Um Nyobé had clearly asserted his opposition to French organisations and would warn the Fourth Committee in December that links with the French Union would be an act of 'political swindling'.[9]

How the French interpreted British colonial policy in the neighbouring territories certainly magnified their concerns. Black African nationalism was to be contained in Central, Eastern and Southern African territories, which white settlers would turn into Commonwealth dominions, but encouraged, if not actually welcomed, in Britain's four West African territories – Nigeria, the Gambia, Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast – as long as British financial and economic supremacy remained virtually untouched.[10] French officials were increasingly concerned that their attempts to 'departmentalise French Africa'[11] contrasted with constitutional conferences leading to black self-government in British West Africa. In a sense, both France and Britain, through the French Union and the Commonwealth, aimed to keep territories within

a privileged realm of influence. Only in April 1949 had the British Monarch become merely the symbol of the Commonwealth association, when leaders had decided that securing continued membership for the Indian Republic should prevail over all other considerations. In 1956, the British Government still saw Britain as 'the keystone of the Commonwealth arch', 'incomparably more important internationally than even the most important of the Commonwealth countries'.[12] But more rapid evolutions in the British spheres at a time when pressure for decolonisation was stepped up at the UN alarmed the French, who noted that 'every important event on British territory [had] immediate repercussions on French territory'.[13] Nationalist and unificationist calls in both Togo and the Cameroons had in fact emanated from the British side and were fuelled by progress towards self-government in Nigeria. French officials acknowledged that '[a]ppropriate reforms'[14] would become necessary but also took comfort in the fact that the size of the French Cameroons played in their favour.[15]

The French and British authorities were equally determined that cooperation should prevail and their respective impressions of the April 1952 talks were very positive. As French officials acknowledged at the end of the decade, the major objective of Franco-British consultations was not to work towards any real partnership but to gather information – on nationalist movements, on plans for decolonisation, on global forces, in order to devise more efficient policies in the French territories and in international organisations.[16] The French highlighted the need for regional stability, for colonial cohesion at the UN,[17] and pleaded for all officials in the Cameroons to 'slow down'[18] the unification movements. While British officials saw 'no reason whatever to take any active steps to harry the Movement or its members', the delegation was instructed, 'in order to allay potential French suspicion', to express a 'desire to maintain the status quo' and 'reject as hypothetical' all suggestion that the British Cameroons might opt for reunification.[19] The unification movement was portrayed as 'artificially inflated and unrepresentative in scope'[20] and not to be encouraged.

The talks of April 1952 strengthened the British resolve to resist all attempts by nationalist movements to drive a wedge between the colonial powers by 'discrediting' the French and praising the British.[21] This proved essential as Cameroonian movements sought to instrumentalise diverging colonial policies. The year the Southern Cameroons was given 'quasi-federal status'[22] and Endeley elected Leader of Government Business, following the Nigerian constitutional conferences of 1953 and 1954, the appointment of Roland Pré as French Commissioner opened a period of intense violence in the French Cameroons.[23] UPC leaders and nationalist demonstrations were repressed in May 1955 and December 1956 and the movement was

outlawed, forcing leaders into the *maquis* or exile abroad. British Prime Minister Anthony Eden was contacted by the UPC in August 1955[24] and the British delegation to the UN also received correspondence from the Association of Cameroonian Students in France in January 1957, in the hope that Britain would support the case for reunification at the UN.[25] Both letters appealed to British political liberalism and love of freedom while condemning French policies. To some extent, British leaders and officials were concerned about the situation in the French Cameroons, particularly as the Southern Cameroons was the UPC's first port of call. However, it only offered temporary refuge. Firstly, John Foncha's newly-formed KNDP did support reunification, which the KNC had abandoned, but opposed any resort to violence – only the small OK Party could provide the UPC with very limited support.[26] Secondly, the British authorities outlawed the UPC in 1957 for fear of growing insurrection and remained convinced that reunification was a daunting prospect. At the Nigerian constitutional conference of 1957, the Colonial Secretary emphasised that the prolongation of the British mandate would be among the options offered to Cameroonians[27] but union with Nigeria remained the preferred option.[28]

At the regional level, British and French policies continued to diverge widely. On 11 May 1956, the Colonial Secretary had announced that the Gold Coast would become independent on 6 March 1957, accelerating the pace of constitutional conferences in the rest of West Africa.[29] As historians have emphasised, Macmillan's so-called 'Wind of Change' speech in February 1960 merely confirmed previous plans for decolonisation, after the Conservative victory in the 1959 general election had given the Government the confidence to press ahead with plans first evolved in 1956. Within the French Empire, the French Union was reformed through the Loi-Cadre, and in Cameroon itself, André-Marie Mbida became the first Cameroonian Prime Minister following elections. However, as T. Chafer has demonstrated, the reforms of 1956 were 'a belated and reluctant recognition by the French government of the increasing lack of acceptance of empire', 'a question of modernising the imperial link so as to make it more sustainable for France and more acceptable to Africans', and essentially, a way of ensuring a French presence beyond independence. In reality, through the Loi-Cadre, power was moved from the federal to the territorial level and to Paris, dreams of unity were ended, a greater financial burden was placed on Africa itself, and France retained control of all strategic matters.[30]

As nationalist movements and calls for reunification gathered momentum in the Southern and French Cameroons, the two territories were simultaneously pulled further apart by economic and financial evolutions in the

French and British empires. Within the British Empire and Commonwealth, the system of imperial preference as established at the Ottawa Imperial Economic Conference in 1932 prevailed. Reciprocal agreements were signed which favoured intra-imperial links, while customs tariffs against foreign countries were raised. Financial relations between Britain and its African territories were organised around three main principles: 'the automatic exchange of local currencies with the pound sterling on demand; the full backing of the local currencies with the pound; and the compulsory investment of sterling funds in Britain'.[31] Nigeria benefited from imperial preference and section 2(3)(d) of the Import and Duties Act of 1958 confirmed that 'countries administered by Her Majesty's Government under the Trusteeship system of the United Nations shall be part of the Commonwealth Preference area'.[32] Conversely, the French Cameroons belonged to the franc zone and all currency matters were overseen by the *Institut d'émission* of French Equatorial Africa and Cameroun – which became the BCEAC in April 1959.[33] More importantly, the French Cameroons became an associate member of the Common Market, after the Treaty of Rome[34] was signed in 1957 by France, West Germany, Italy and Benelux, while Britain itself remained outside. Under Part IV of the Treaty of Rome, a number of territories in Africa and the Caribbean were given special status in trade outside the EEC. France wanted the Common Market but equally wanted to pursue its ambitions for a symbiotic Eurafrican relationship and a reinforced Franco-African union. During the negotiations in 1956, Gaston Defferre and Christian Pineau, respectively Ministers for Overseas France and Foreign Affairs, had made clear that unless special preference was granted to its overseas territories, France would pull out, and the principle was eventually accepted at the Venice Conference of May 1956.[35] Part IV intended to support development in the associated territories through an investment fund, the EDF, to be reviewed after five years. It was to be distinct from bilateral aid, and as I.W. Zartman has observed, it did begin 'in a small way to dilute bilateral colonies ties through multilateralization',[36] while a number of councils, committees and courts were created to deal with association matters. Although no competition with European agricultural produce would be allowed and association was in fact not 'an act of decolonisation [but] a means of protecting colonial markets and assuring supplies of primary products for the Six',[37] the British were very much aware of the dangerous divisions brought about by the Treaty of Association:

> the Six, over a period of twelve to fifteen years, [would] eliminate their customs tariffs against goods coming from the associated territories,

> while their common tariff [was] being progressively applied during the same period to similar goods from elsewhere, thus creating new preferences in those countries of the Six which [had] not hitherto had a preferential system.[38]

Franco-African ties would thereby be maintained but divisions in Africa and the Caribbean between British and French territories would be magnified, as British territories would see the German, Italian and Dutch markets progressively restricted. At a time when 'Nigeria and Sierra Leone sent about 33 per cent, and 40 per cent, respectively of their total exports of cocoa in 1957 to the Six', this was an extremely worrying prospect.[39]

The evolution of French attitudes to reunification can be traced back to the consequences of the decision to outlaw the UPC. Achille Mbembe has demonstrated that the key notions of UPC discourse, 'independence, unification and non-integration in the French Union', became 'the hegemonic statement on which all other political actors and projects would take position'.[40] In June 1958, the French commissioner confirmed to the Colonial Office that although reunification was not the wish of the French authorities, it had gained vast support in the French Cameroons and no politician was prepared to oppose it.[41] In Ahidjo, who had become head of government in Yaoundé in February 1958, the French had a trusted ally but he was an ally who knew very well that his popularity in the territory would depend on his support for unification. Although outlawed, the UPC was in fact the central pillar of independence and nation-building projects. Its pro-reunification discourse was appropriated while the restoration of order against its activities was presented as the means of making national unity across the Mungo – their original objective – a reality. French officials interpreted Ahidjo's position as a rational rather than a sentimental choice, and Couve de Murville told his British counterpart in November 1959 that 'Ahidjo was being pulled in two directions: on the one hand annexation would create many formidable political and economic problems; on the other, there was the natural tendency to want to expand'.[42] As independence was being negotiated, reunification held two daunting prospects for the French Cameroons: 'the integration of 400,000 Bamileke', who as well as being potentially UPC sympathisers would upset the territory's delicate balance between the Muslim North and the Christian and animist South; and 'the costly necessity of promoting a more backward country to its level'.[43] But no risk was greater than leaving the popular reunification platform to the UPC.

By mid 1958, the French remained nonetheless uncomfortable with the practical and security consequences of reunification. At a meeting at the

Colonial Office in June 1958, the French commissioner in Cameroon learnt that with Nigerian independence planned for November 1960 at the latest, the British were looking to end their Trusteeship over the Cameroons and would ask the UN visiting mission to support plebiscites for early 1960.[44] Convinced that the prospect of plebiscites would fuel demands for reunification, French officials were alarmed by British intentions and attempted to persuade them to change their minds. French records of the meeting remain somewhat vague but there is no doubt that it was a heated debate. Eventually, the British reassured the French that they would not press for a date to be set – but would indeed ask the visiting mission to accept the plebiscites in principle, and the choice between union with Nigeria or independence.[45] Overall, maintaining good relations with Britain remained the priority in the instructions given to the French delegation at the UN. In a letter to the Quai d'Orsay in September, the Minister for Overseas France argued that France had to support Britain in delaying decisions on reunification until 1960 and could not be seen to side with 'the anti-colonial powers of the Eastern bloc'.[46] The pace of events was altered through decisions made in Cameroon's legislative assembly: on 24 October 1958, the elected body asked for full independence after 1 January 1960, envisaged good relations with France and claimed support for reunification. During the UN debates in November, France supported independence for the territory on 1 January 1960, which Resolution 1282 (XIII) approved on 5 December 1958. According to Robert Foulon from the US diplomatic mission in Yaoundé, both the British and the French were content for Ahidjo to become President at independence and for elections to be organised after the event. This, Foulon himself later argued, may not have been 'a very democratic decision perhaps, but probably a very wise one'.[47] The fact that nothing quite as definite was secured on the British side – the objectives of Article 76b of the UN Charter would be achieved in the course of 1960 – changed the balance of power between the French and British spheres in the Cameroons: Britain might have planned independence earlier but concrete independence would come first to the French trust territory.

Cameroon's legislative assembly's request for independence came barely a month after the joint birth of the Fifth Republic and the French Community. Through a referendum, French territories were given the option of forming one single institution[48] presided over by 'an Executive Council, composed of the Prime Ministers of France and the Republics and the French Ministers responsible for the reserved subjects, together with a Senate, composed of members chosen from the legislatures of France and the Member States'[49]: local autonomy would be given to each territory but defence, foreign affairs, energy, international economy and currency would remain in the hands of the colonial metropolis.[50] Given its special status as a Trust territory, Cameroon

did not take part in the referendum but all overseas departments and territories, all French colonies in West Africa and Madagascar voted to join the French Community. Only Sekou Touré's Guinea, publicly applauded by Ghana, cast a vigorous 'non' and became independent as all French presence, and most importantly French aid, were withdrawn. The British Ambassador in Paris was rather surprised to learn from official talks and private conversations with the French in February 1959 that reunification still seemed a rather daunting prospect to them. Following Guinea's defection, the British had expected that the possibility of an ex-British territory joining an ex-French territory would be seen as a sweet victory – or at least as a useful form of compensation to present to some parts of the French electorate.[51] The British themselves remained opposed to the idea of reunification and the Foreign Office told British representatives in no uncertain terms that 'unification with French Cameroons should not (repeat not) be an issue in any form'.[52] But the primary reason why full support for reunification was only a matter of time, as the Ambassador foresaw, was that the French wanted 'to ensure that the French Cameroons accede to independence on friendly terms with France'.[53] France hoped that Article 88 of the Constitution of the new Fifth Republic, providing for association beyond independence, might yet prove an attractive option for Cameroun.[54] Less than four months before independence, French officials were planning to entrust Franco-Camerounian relations to the African department of the Quai d'Orsay but remained hopeful that it might still become an associated state and deal essentially with the Community Secretariat.[55]

No separate independence for the Southern Cameroons: British doubts, Commonwealth indifference, French reluctance

The election of John Ngu Foncha as the Southern Cameroons Premier in January 1959 gave reunification renewed momentum, particularly at the UN. In Foncha's mind however, reunification remained a distant option and French and British officials meeting in early February 1959 before the UN session confronted the distinct wishes of their respective territories. The Colonial Secretary gave 'due weight'[56] to the reservations of Foncha, who now favoured 'secession from Nigeria and interval for negotiations with French Cameroons', not *immediate* unification.[57] Both the British and the French noted that it had been a general election, not a referendum on the territory's future, and local issues had weighed far more heavily in the political balance.[58] However, the French pointed out that Foncha's victory was considered across the border as a vote for reunification:[59] excluding reunification from the

plebiscite alternatives 'would be strongly resented in the French Cameroons and would make great difficulties for the French position there'.[60] The French were extremely clear on two points: they 'did not favour continued UK trusteeship as specific alternative in plebiscite' and nothing should come in the way of Cameroun's independence on 1 January.[61] The British agreed fully with the latter point and the consensus by the end of the meeting seems to have been to press Foncha, 'if he wanted anything other than straight choice between Nigeria and French Cameroons [to] make a firm statement'[62] at the UN. Most importantly, despite the distinct timetables they had to contend with, the two parties agreed to keep each other informed. The British noted with satisfaction that French officials 'were clearly anxious to cooperate and make things as easy as possible for' London.[63]

On 17 February, Foncha told Endeley and the British that if no satisfactory terms of union could be found, 'new terms might be agreed with Nigeria or, alternatively, the Southern Cameroons might remain a small independent territory within the Commonwealth'.[64] Just as they opposed reunification, the Nigerian leaders contested any form of separate independence for the Southern Cameroons and were anxious for the fate of the British Cameroons to be decided before their own independence. They therefore protested against Foncha's demands for full independence within the Commonwealth,[65] adding further pressure by threatening to turn their back on the territory.[66] The position of Southern Cameroonian politicians was weakened by divisions over what the plebiscite questions should be, as Endeley's transformed party, the CPNC, had always been clearly in favour of union with Nigeria. Tensions played on regional differences between the less developed Grasslands of the North West and the Bakweri-dominated South West, which had benefited from greater economic growth and better infrastructure during the mandate.[67] Cooperation was also made more difficult by the conflicting personalities of Foncha, described by Frank Stark as 'a good "grass roots" politician who travelled to the villages by bicycle and on foot', a 'primary school teacher with a secondary school education, [who] placed more emphasis on personal contact', and Endeley, 'his more intellectual rival [who] was aware of his coastal sophistication'.[68] The report of the UN visiting mission to the Cameroons in February/March 1959 underlined indecision in the Southern Cameroons, while it had observed a clear wish in the French Cameroons for independence and in the Northern Cameroons for union with Nigeria.[69] Resolution 1350 (XIII) of 13 March clearly requested Southern Cameroonian leaders to agree on the terms of the plebiscite before the fourteenth session. At the Colonial Office, Christopher Eastwood, the Assistant Undersecretary of State, expressed the UN's '*alarm* at the obvious lack of agreement between the parties on the second question',[70] and added: 'It would be a *tragedy* if

through [the Southern Cameroons' leaders'] failure to agree among themselves or state forthrightly what their wishes and demands are, the United Nations were to force on the people of the Southern Cameroons a choice which only a tiny minority of the people want'.[71]

On the whole, the Nigerian option was always secure and British correspondence demonstrates a clear desire to preserve good relations with the Nigerian leaders, both before and after independence. The September brief warned that 'the disentanglement of the territory from Nigeria might lead to friction with that country as it becomes independent'.[72] Extreme caution was therefore essential. In January 1960, the Colonial Office made clear that its 'major objective [was] that both countries should vote for union with Nigeria',[73] while the British Ambassador in Yaoundé stated just over a year later that 'the Nigerians [took] it as a matter of course that the UK should be in favour of the territory voting for Nigeria and therefore the Commonwealth'.[74] British support for the Nigerian option at the time stemmed from a mixture of pride in British traditions and awe at the practical difficulties of reunification, a unique experiment in decolonisation.[75] Colonial Office documents throughout 1959 underlined the 'economic, legal, financial and linguistic links which forty years of British administration had drawn between Nigeria and the Cameroons',[76] and these profound differences were frequently mentioned in the House of Commons debates on the matter. French officials were also aware of Britain's preference for the union of both their Cameroonian territories with Nigeria, which reinforced their conviction that Ahidjo was an indispensable man if French influence in the region was to persist. Political dynamics between Northern Nigeria, the British Northern Cameroons and the northern region of the French Cameroons partly explained France's staunch support for Ahidjo's leadership and the postponement of elections. Had Ahidjo lost the contest, France would have lost a close ally and the Muslim North of the Republic might have been inclined to look to their Muslim neighbours to the West, augmenting the risk of a break-up of the Republic of Cameroun and playing in favour of Nigerian aggrandisement.[77] In fact, the British noted that both the Nigerians[78] and a number of Southern Cameroonians[79] saw reunification as joining 'the French' and that even some British officials had adopted the habit. British decision makers were therefore aware that their relations with their French partner in Europe or their forthcoming Nigerian partner in the Commonwealth would necessarily be compromised in some way.

The dominant position in the Colonial Office and Foreign Office was that independence, whether definite or transitory, was not a viable option for the Southern Cameroons. Correspondence from the UK Mission to the UN in February 1959 shows that British officials only thought of the future

of the Southern Cameroons in relation to its two neighbours.[80] The notion that independence would give the Southern Cameroons added weight in negotiations with its neighbours seemed simply ludicrous. As a note from the Colonial Office stated in May 1959, it 'would be a poor weak country', 'unable to stand alone and would have to accept whatever terms were offered them'.[81] While they predicted immense practical difficulties, the British also knew that the Southern Cameroons represented only very limited interests for the Nigerian leaders[82] – in many ways, it seemed more a matter of international prestige than political or economic national interest. British support for separate independence was extremely rare. In June 1959, MP John Tilney, the chairman of both the Conservative Council's West Africa Group and the Economic and Development Sub-Committee of the Parliamentary Commonwealth Affairs Committee, wrote to the Colonial Secretary, Alan Lennox-Boyd, arguing that 'any territory under United Kingdom Trusteeship' should have the right to 'choos[e] independence within the Commonwealth, and in the last resort to do so by unilateral action if need be'.[83] Simultaneously, the West Africa branch of the Conservative Commonwealth Council 'unanimously resolve[d] that Independence in the Commonwealth should be included' in the plebiscite options.[84] Only Endeley's preference for integration with Nigeria stopped Tilney from advocating the option of separate independence more forcefully.[85] Within the Colonial Office, only one letter, dated August 1959, presented a moderately optimistic perspective. It still acknowledged, however, that independence for such a small state 'seem[ed] a nonsense'.[86]

In theory, nothing precluded the Southern Cameroons from seeking independence and Commonwealth membership. Following the 1931 Statute of Westminster and the 1949 London Declaration, Commonwealth membership was open to any independent state that shared a past constitutional link with an existing Commonwealth member as a former part of the Empire and acknowledged the British Monarch as the symbol of the organisation. English was the working language among members, who shared strong political, economic, legal and cultural links, beyond a profound diversity across continents. Although national wealth and international influence varied, both declarations also entrenched the fundamental equality of all members and even more disparity was expected as decolonisation proceeded and membership grew. Yet documents sought to guarantee a flexible association and as Winston Churchill had claimed, the Commonwealth 'found its "strength not in any formal bond but in the hidden springs from which human actions flow"'.[87] Until 1967, when the recently founded Commonwealth Secretariat took over, Britain was responsible for seeking the agreement of fellow members when territories approaching independence had requested membership

and the final decision depended on the consensual approval of the existing members.

At the turn of the 1960s however, Commonwealth membership for small states was the object of fierce debate within the organisation, as Britain's planned decolonisation in the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and the Pacific promised to give birth to a sizeable number of small countries whose economic viability seemed very doubtful. This can be interpreted as a strong factor against the possibility of Southern Cameroonian membership being fully explored. Eventually, the Brooke Committee on Commonwealth membership concluded that membership 'should be granted to all territories, irrespective of their size, which attained independence'[88] and suggestions of a two-tier organisation, with smaller members gaining the 'inferior status of "Associate Membership"' were entirely dismissed.[89] As Arnold Smith, the first Commonwealth Secretary General, reported in his memoirs, the decision was based on the opinion that 'the coming of more members would bring the larger countries the advantage of meeting a greater cross-section of opinion, while for the new countries, the association would offer a window on the wider world and links with some useful friends'.[90] Yet the conclusions of the Brooke Committee were only approved at the Prime Ministers' Meeting of March 1961 – as South Africa left the Commonwealth in reaction to the other members' opposition to apartheid.[91] Not only were Commonwealth Prime Ministers intensely preoccupied with tensions among existing members, but the Cameroons agenda had required decisions to be taken *before* a general agreement on membership was found.

In reality, the issue never seems to have been raised in Commonwealth discussions and those Commonwealth members who showed an interest in the Cameroons do not seem to have lobbied for membership. Private talks were held in February 1959 at the UN,[92] and Commonwealth members met the two main Southern Cameroonian leaders, Foncha and Endeley, on at least two occasions, in an atmosphere of 'frankness and freedom'.[93] South Africa is never mentioned and Ghana only attended the first meeting, but Canada, New Zealand, Pakistan, Ceylon[94] and most particularly, India[95] and Malaya,[96] were thanked by the UK mission in New York for their support at the UN. In the case of India however, it was essentially to thank them for accepting that the plebiscites in the Northern and Southern Cameroons should be held on different dates – facilitating Britain's administrative tasks[97] – and there is no evidence that potential Commonwealth membership for the Southern Cameroons was in fact discussed. Documents related to the Gambia shed some light, at least indirectly, on the Cameroonian case. In March 1959, the Colonial Office believed the Gambia's political and economic prospects to be very dire and union with Senegal to be an interesting option.[98] One official

concluded: 'ties of kinship, plus ... economic advantages ... will in the course of time outweigh the advantages of connection' with Britain.[99] The British government actively encouraged Senagalese–Gambian talks in 1962[100] and while welcoming Gambia's forthcoming Commonwealth membership in November 1964, Canadian Prime Minister Lester Pearson hoped that 'neither such membership nor any other step taken in connection with independence of Gambia would delay or inhibit advance towards union with Senegal'.[101] The prospect of separate independence for the Southern Cameroons therefore ran counter to contemporary trends towards federation in Africa, and it is important to note that French embassies and consulates kept official in Paris well aware that federation was actively sought across the spectrum of international politics.

As the champion of pan-Africanism, Nkrumah was one of the bitterest opponents of the admission of small states – and of Cyprus as a full member of the Commonwealth in particular – for fear that it would in effect encourage the balkanisation of Africa. No country with fewer than two million inhabitants, Nkrumah argued, should be allowed into the Commonwealth.[102] His concerns were shared by Canadian officials,[103] but particularly by British officials. By July 1959 the memorandum, *Africa: the next ten years*, favoured 'a more limited number of new members in the Commonwealth' and hoped for the success of federations across Africa – the British African Territories, the Central African Federation and Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika.[104] The French Ambassador in London told Couve de Murville in September 1961 – only a few days before Cameroonian reunification – that British policy in Africa rested on three major objectives: avoiding another Congo or Angola; maintaining a strong British influence through shared traditions in the Commonwealth; and, most importantly here, 'maintaining or reconstituting ensembles ... and if possible, granting independence ... within a federal framework to avoid the risk of fragmentation'.[105] Interestingly, the Africa memo raised potential difficulties regarding the Gambia and Somaliland, yet the Cameroons were never mentioned. Nor would they be mentioned when Nigerian membership of the Commonwealth was accepted by all existing members in September 1960.[106] Central in Franco-British discussions, the Cameroons remained marginal in Commonwealth consultations.

British and Commonwealth concerns also rested on the economic viability of 'small' and 'to some extent immature and hypersensitive'[107] members, as the Africa memo described them. Pakistan's Ayub Khan had similarly hinted that size did not matter but economic viability certainly did.[108] Constitutional talks in Sierra Leone – 'a rather doubtful starter in the Commonwealth Membership stakes',[109] as one official put it – had brought these issues to

the fore and the Colonial Secretary warned leaders in April 1960 that 'independence mean[t] independence financially as well as constitutionally'.[110] At a time when the British government feared Soviet penetration of the African continent, the emergence of 'a patchwork of independent States, politically at odds and economically weak' was a daunting prospect.[111] Back in January 1955, Endeley had portrayed the Commonwealth as a guarantee of prosperity for the Southern Cameroons[112] and welcomed prospective links with the organisation in February 1959 – but through union with Nigeria, not independently.[113] Similarly, what mattered to Britain was not membership of the Commonwealth but economic viability – with Nigeria if possible, but with the French Cameroons otherwise. Keeping the Cameroons 'forever in their "Commonwealth" pocket',[114] as UPC sympathisers had accused British officials of attempting to do, was not their priority.

Colonial Secretary Alan Lennox-Boyd informed Foncha early in 1959 that independence was not a financially and economically viable option[115] and the position of the Colonial Office was made explicit in June: 'independence within or without the Commonwealth' was 'meaningless'[116] for a 'territory [which was] very small, very much under-developed, especially so far as vital communications [were] concerned', without 'even a Public Service of its own' and which 'could not balance its budget at an acceptable level'.[117] As Lennox-Boyd wrote to Conservative MP John Tilney, 'immediate independence does not seem a practical possibility since the territory cannot yet stand on its own feet'.[118] The late Ruben Um Nyobé[119] had warned that British administration of the Cameroons through Nigeria was 'a subtle process as dangerous as the [French] policy of assimilation',[120] and indeed one of the major arguments in the UK brief for the UN meetings in September was that the Southern Cameroons ran on considerable Nigerian funding – about £500,000 a year.[121] The Colonial Office was also conscious that separate independence would translate into a heavy burden for the British tax-payers,[122] all the more so as the territory would not have the means to defend itself and would depend on the ex-trustee to do so.[123]

The central pillar of the Southern Cameroonian economy was the Camdev, managed by the British-funded CDC[124] and which owned 200,000 acres of land. Camdev was in effect established on Southern plantations in the Southern Cameroons in December 1946: the Custodian of Enemy Property Act allowed for German lands in the British Cameroons[125] to be seized and the Ex-Enemy Lands (Cameroon) Ordinance gave the Nigerian Governor the right to acquire the lands for the Southern Cameroons and appoint the chairman and members of the Corporation. Camdev was involved in a number of key activities, including 'cultivating crops and developing and managing the estates[,] constructing and maintaining roads, railways, waterways, quays

and wharves[,] conducting the export and import trade[,] constructing and/or acquiring buildings'.[126] Rubber, palm and almond oil production constantly increased between 1947 and 1965[127] on 58,000 acres of cultivated land and represented 40 per cent of total exports. The British Government commissioned Kenneth Berrill, a Cambridge academic, to report on the future of the economy in the region.[128] His findings welcomed the diversification of production away from bananas, favouring rubber and palm products, as well as the ongoing extension of cultivated areas. However, lack of funds in Camdev had led the CDC to invest £3 million in 1959, in exchange for managing the corporation and receiving part of the profits.[129] According to the agreement, which covered a ten-year period,

> [t]he Nigerian Government (who put money in originally) and the Southern Cameroons Government [would] each own stock bearing a fixed-interest return (the Southern Cameroons about three-sevenths and Nigeria four-seventh) and the risk capital [would] be held as to 50 per cent by the Colonial Development Corporation, 45 per cent by the Southern Cameroons Government and 5 per cent by Nigeria.[130]

The final report was therefore bleak: new plantations gave a low yield, they were far more costly, markets remained uncertain and the viability prospects of the small territory poor.[131]

Malcolm Milne, the Deputy Commissioner in the Southern Cameroons at the time of independence, has argued that the British ultimately did 'the Cameroonians a wrong [and] should have struggled harder to continue [their] trusteeship for several years longer'.[132] There were indeed still calls in the Commons in July 1959 to postpone a final decision until better information was available to the Cameroonian voters.[133] However, pressure for decolonisation at the UN itself played against prolonging the British mandate in the Cameroons, and the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office were acutely aware of the importance of 'tactics in the UN',[134] as the Cameroons were seen to be ready for self-determination.[135] Continued trusteeship would be 'evidence that the U.K was reluctant to abandon her "colonial" possessions',[136] postponing the plebiscites 'would be met with hostility',[137] and as Governor Grey in Lagos warned the Colonial Office, expose the British 'to all the anti-Colonial voices already ready to accuse [them] of double-dealing and to argue that [their] sole interest [was] to maintain the Colonial yoke for as long as possible'.[138] The atmosphere at the UN also played against separate independence. In March 1959, a Colonial Office note listed 13 territories which could possibly qualify 'at some stage in their evolution for being "Commonwealth States" on the Singapore

model'[139] but it was argued in the summer that the UN would oppose this being applied to a trust territory. New Zealand's moves to grant independence to Western Samoa were seen as an additional factor which would heighten the UN's growing fears of a general balkanisation.[140] Given that the UN mission had found no consensus among Southern Cameroonians, the Colonial Office was further convinced that independence within the Commonwealth had no support whatsoever in New York.[141] Members of the West Africa branch of the Conservative Commonwealth Council similarly reported a general determination at the UN, including in the Fourth Committee, to prevent the Southern Cameroons from obtaining independence within the Commonwealth.[142] In September, the British delegation was made aware that in fact reunification, which promised to erase the artificiality of colonial borders, prevailed as the most appealing option.[143]

Simultaneously, France put its weight behind reunification – to the extent that the British, albeit incorrectly, suspected Paris and Yaoundé of financing Foncha's campaign in early 1959.[144] Initially, Foncha's reluctance to countenance *immediate* reunification had been rather welcomed by the French.[145] France was still being fully reconciled to the prospect of reunification, and concern over the lower level of economic development in the British Cameroons played no small part in its position. The Colonial Office was fully aware that the Southern Cameroons lagged behind the French Cameroons[146] and Ahidjo himself was worried about the economic and financial consequences of reunification.[147] At the Franco-British meetings of March and April 1959, officials on both sides remained equally cautious and cooperative. The British were 'anxious not to embarrass the French in their plans for their own Cameroons'[148] and expressed their unwillingness to 'raise … difficulties'[149] if reunification was the express wish of the Southern Cameroonians. Although he remained vague over the questions that would ultimately be put to the voters, Lennox-Boyd, on Prime Minister Macmillan's instructions, drew a clear difference between the Northern Cameroons, whose future within Nigeria seemed virtually certain, and the Southern Cameroons, now led by the pro-reunification KNDP.[150] For his part, Prime Minister Debré underlined France's desire to cooperate over the British Cameroons[151] and Couve de Murville stated that 'the French Government certainly had no wish that the Southern British Cameroons should join the French Cameroons',[152] thereby confirming the impressions of the British Ambassador in Paris.

However, political and security concerns prevailed and the daunting prospect of reunification was ultimately considered by France to be the least damaging alternative, because it would save Ahidjo from immense political damage. The British were consequently advised that 'the French Government would have no option but to fight a resolution project' which did not include