



**PARTY POLITICS AND INTRA-ETHNIC
CONFLICTS IN THE NKAMBE CENTRAL
SUBDIVISION OF CAMEROON
IN THE 2013 LEGISLATIVE ELECTION**

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Abstract

Political deception is inherently 'conflictual' not only in the Western Democracies but also and even more so in Africa. Conflicts of political nature have often resulted from national and local elections in Africa and Cameroon. Prominently, such conflicts sometimes take an ethnic twist with far-reaching consequences. From this background, this article investigates into the forms and nature of intra-ethnic conflicts in the Nkambe Central Subdivision of Cameroon during the 2013 legislative election. With a combination of interviews and personal observations, including a good number of secondary/tertiary source-material, the article which is analyzed in thematic synthesis reveals that during the 2013 legislative election in the Nkambe Central Subdivision of the North West region of Cameroon, conflicts of clan-based, family and age-set nature emanated with far-reaching consequences on ethnic relations and development.

Keywords: party politics, intra-ethnic conflict, ethnic party, Mbum

Statement of the problem in general outlook and its connection with important scientific and practical tasks

History suggests that conflict is a common feature of political, economic and socio-cultural life within and among ethnic groups. Conflicts tend to occur not only in times of decay and decline of society but also of blossoming and healthy growth [1]. According to Otite & Albert [3], the three major structural levels at which ethnic conflict occur are intra-family, intra-community and inter-community. Intra-community or intra-ethnic conflict, denoting conflict that occur within the confines of an ethnic group, are driven by a plethora of political, demographic, and environmental conditions [4]. Political deception, for example, is inherently 'conflictual' in both Western liberal democracies and Africa. In Africa, it has often resulted from national and local elections and sometimes take an ethnic twist with far-reaching consequences. This article looks investigates into the forms and nature of intra-ethnic conflicts in the Nkambe Central Subdivision of Cameroon during the 2013 legislative election. It starts, herein, with a cursory survey of ethnic

conflict in Africa in general and in Cameroon in particular, followed by a contextual definition of an ethnic party, political evolution of Nkambe Central Subdivision, a short review of the patterns of ethnic conflict in the literature, an exposition of the social cleavage model, thematic analysis of findings and a conclusion.

Majority of the conflicts resulting from national and local elections in Africa are rooted in its ethnic orientation. According to Berman et al [5], the internal dimensions of contemporary ethnicities in Africa are both much larger in social scale and population leaving them vulnerable to political deception. Closely, Chazam [6] argue that post-independence Africa exhibits a political behaviour wherein ethnic groups underscore a persistence of internal or sub-ethnic schisms along lines of clan, age-set and areal differences. Sub-ethnic schisms refer to the divisions arising within an ethnic group from excessive political grandstanding whereby politicians hoping to escape criticism and accountability usually blame their overtures on Africa's historical experience, and the nature of its democratisation processes.

Analysis of latest research where the solution of the problem was initiated

Ethnic conflict in Africa follows a predominantly inter and/or intra-ethnic pattern and are usually engendered by identity politics [7]. Prominent examples include the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, the Liberian civil wars and constant minority uprisings in Nigeria. With a focus on Cameroon, this article examines the evolution of the "Wimbun identity" in Nkambe. Contrary to popular opinion that the Wimbun are a united people, intra-ethnic rivalries still loom on its horizon as a result of a combination of factors that appear to be at play: 1) an uneven process of identity formation that leads to weaker social capital among them; 2) ethnic homogeneity within a politically relevant unit (constituency); and 3) authoritarian impulses to break its opposition stronghold. All these are investigated in the context of the 2013 legislative election the Nkambe Central Subdivision of Cameroon.

Aims of study and methodology

The objectives of this article were to (1) examine the deceptive and conflictual nature of politics in Cameroon resulting from local elections (2) investigate the 2013 legislative election in the Nkambe Central Subdivision of the North West region of Cameroon as a source of intra-ethnic conflict amongst the Mbum (3) reveal the extent to which the 2013 legislative election in the Nkambe Central Subdivision of Cameroon during the triggered conflicts of clan-based, family and age-set nature with far-reaching consequences on ethnic relations and development of the Mbum. With regards to methodology, the article adopted a qualitative research method and relied on both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews and field observations dating back to 2013 during the legislative election in the Nkambe Central Subdivision whereas secondary data was collected from books, journal articles, and newspaper articles acquired from online and offline sources. Conducted interviews lasted between forty-five minutes to an hour each with selected militants from both the CPDM and the SDF, and books as well as journal articles were consulted to address theoretical and background challenges to the study while newspaper articles offered extensive information that could

neither be obtained from interviews, field observations nor academic sources. The data was analyzed using content analysis with themes developed along lines of clan-based, family and age-set conflicts. The study is nevertheless limited by its level of subjectivity.

Exposition of main material of research with complete substantiation of obtained scientific results. Discussion

What is an Ethnic Party?

For the purpose of this article, an ethnic party is defined as a party which uses available party resources to influence ethnic groups and plunge them into conflict and intentionally or unintentionally. Since the reintroduction of multipartyism in Cameroon in the 1990s, there has been the emergence of a myriad of and/or a never-ending process of the formation of political parties most of which are not only ethnic in name, structure, and composition but even more so in the manner in which they conduct political affairs. For instance, political parties such as the CPDM and SDF which claim to be nation-wide in scope and character have their own ethnic peculiarities in their utilization of available party resources to manipulate ethnic groups at clan, family, and age-set levels in their efforts to galvanize support and win votes during elections.

Evolution of ethnic conflicts in Cameroon

Cameroon, arguably the most diverse country on the Africa continent, suffers from various types of conflicts reflected in its over 250 ethnic groups based on indigenous language differences [5]. The post-colonial state in Cameroon, for example, inherited problems of "ethnic fragmentation and regional divisions exacerbated by a colonial history that had split the country into English-speaking and French-speaking groups" [8]. In attempting to hold the ethnic groups together, Ahmadou Ahidjo, the first President of the Republic of Cameroon and of the Federal Republic of Cameroon adopted a policy of ethnic balancing and succeeded in building a network of different elite groups at the national and regional levels comprising of politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen but equally the traditional rulers with very important ethnic groups such as the Fulfube and the Bamilike represented within the regime.

Mentam argued that the 1980s embraced a policy to achieve national integration by the New Deal government of President Paul Biya, which has increasingly endangered ethnic tensions. However, this article argues that very little has changed as far as ethnic politics in concerned. This argument is supported by the fact that the democratisation process in Cameroon which began in the 1990s is characterized by new forms of ethnic politics. Politicians like never before seek to capitalize on ethnic identities whilst trying to garner support during national and local elections. This political behaviour encourages ethnic divisions and thus conflict.

On the one hand, ethnicity has been fundamental to Cameroonian politics. For instance, Ahidjo's attempt at "regional balance" implicitly recognized larger ethnic blocs but relied heavily on the support of the Fulani. Biya's southern Beti-Bulu base of power is well established, and he has also succeeded to create wedges within the Anglophone community between the "Grassfield Kingdoms" and Southwestern Bakweri. The fact that ethnic

conflict in Cameroon has not turned bloody in most cases is true in a narrow sense, especially if the UPC rebellion and Anglophone separatism are seen as truly nationalist movements rather than a Bamileke-Bassa and Bamenda/Buea revolts.

Competitive politics is rooted in the very fabric of Northwest Cameroon and its people. Northwest Cameroon has been a stronghold for the SDF, and the CPDM has for decades tried to find ways to create wedges that would give it stronger footing. This means attacking and weakening ethnic bonds amongst ethnically homogenous NW Cameroon. The mere fact that Nkambe and Ndu specifically have been an SDF stronghold, even though falling under the rubric of Wimbun, and has been an important site for Wimbun identification does not dismiss the intra-ethnic conflict hypothesis as explicated in this article. The Wimbun are an ethnic group of the Bamenda Grassfields in the North West Region of Cameroon. Wimbun people are of Tikar origin; a name given to ethnic groups in the Bamenda Grassfields with a common lineage and ancestry. Worthy of note is the fact that classifying ethnic groups in Cameroon is a fraught exercise.

The terms "Tikar" and "Mbum" can be confusing, since they also categorize groups along the Adamawa Plateau (with a key difference between the Mbum language and the Limbum language). Tikar in the North West Region is often used to categorize a broad array of Grassfield Kingdoms in the Bamenda area, along with the Aghem, Bali-Chamba, Mbembe, and Widikum. Wimbun is at times recognized as its own ethnic group, but also as a sub-group of the Tikar Grassfield Kingdoms. This ethnic configuration of Cameroon in general and the Bamenda Grassfields in particular illustrates the social autotunes that arise in the midst of identity politics. This is especially so when various aspects of its ethnicities such as population size, social interwovenness, cultural exclusivity and leadership uniformity are beset by the weaknesses of social capital and the politics of belonging. Party politics and the exploitation of social capital is used in this article to apprehend ethnic conflicts. The choice of intra-ethnic conflict is informed by the fact that conflicts of this nature receive comparatively little scholarly attention [4, 9] in the case of Cameroon as opposed to inter-ethnic conflicts with particular emphasis on those usually caused by religious differences, land and chieftaincy disputes, defense against disappearing ethnic identities, social exclusion and the manner in which such conflicts are usually examined and connotated.

Political evolution of Nkambe Central Subdivision

Nkambe Central Subdivision is part of the Mbum in terms of ethnic orientation. It is one of the five subdivisions that makeup Donga Mantung Division in the North West Region of Cameroon. Other subdivisions in the Division include Ako, Misaje, Ndu and Nwa. Nkambe Central Subdivision was created by a Colonial Law in 1946 which came into effect in 1948 when Southern Cameroons was still being administered under British administration as an integral part of the Eastern Region of the Nigerian Federation [10]. In 1992, it was modified with its accompanying council and went effective in 1996. The villages that makeup Nkambe Central Subdivision include: Kungi, Konchep, Binshua, Bih, Saah, Wat, Nwangri, Kup, Chup, Mbot, Nkambe, Bongom, Tabenken, Mbaa, Njap and Binka [11]. The table below shows classification of chiefdoms or villages of Nkambe Central Subdivision according to clan lineage. The classification further sheds light as to

the reasons why politicians of the CPDM and SDF were at loggerheads and able to aggravate the incidence of conflict in the Central Subdivision during the 2013 legislative election through the exploitation of weak intra-ethnic social capital.

Table 1. Classification of chiefdoms according to clans.

Tang Clan	Tabenken, Kup, Binka and Bih
Warr Clan	Nkambe, Binshua, Kungi, Mbot, Wat, Chup, Nwangri, Mbaa, Saah, Njap, and Bongom.
Wiya Clan	Konchep

Source: CAMGIS field surveys 2012

The Warr, Tang and Ya Clans are variants of the Mbum who inhabit the Nkambe plateau. The Mbum who are of Tikar origin happen to have migrated from the Northern part of Cameroon in the 16th century and moved southwards due to constant raids from the Fulani and water crisis; first settling at Ntem, later moved to Kimi forming the present day Mbum ethnic identity [12]. The Mbum speak the same language known as Limbum. Nkambe Central Subdivision which constitutes 16 villages making up 94.50% of the Mbum has an estimated population of about 171,478 with a population density of 351.8 persons per km². Other ethnic minorities in the Central Subdivision include Mbororos, Moslems, Hausas, Fulanis, and a diverse people from various parts of Cameroon [30]. The 94.50% ratio of the Mbum in the Central Subdivision reinforces the argument of a single ethnic group hypothesis.

The defined administrative area of Nkambe Council is the same as that of the Nkambe Central Subdivision, albeit the differences in functions, duties and responsibilities. Contrary to the position of the Nkambe Council highlighted in the Nkambe Council Development Plan [30] that “the main conflicts existing in the area are farmer/grazer problems, boundary and chieftaincy problems”, this article contends that the said conflicts have been politicized over the years and there is no better way to describe it apart from ethnic. This is especially so during election periods where politicians do whatever it takes to win even at the expense of conflict. In other words, the existing farmer/grazer problems, boundary and chieftaincy disputes are understood as part of the intricacies usually exploited by greedy politicians in an attempt to galvanize support during elections thereby aggravating intra-ethnic divisions.

Since the reintroduction of multipartyism in Cameroon in the 1990s (Kah, 2012), politics in Nkambe Central Subdivision has been dominated by the SDF and CPDM political parties. The SDF succeeded to make Nkambe Central Subdivision a political stronghold, always coming out victories at every presidential, legislative and municipal election. After boycotting the 1992 legislative election on grounds of the non-existence of an independent Electoral Commission, the SDF won the legislative election of 1997 in Nkambe Central Subdivision with Awudu Cyprain Mbaya (45) elected as parliamentarian. Mbaya was re-elected in 2002, 2007 and 2013 (Njingti, 2019). It was not until 2013 when the SDF conceded to its main rival the CPDM in Nkambe Central Subdivision. That notwithstanding, the SDF retained control of the lone legislative seat as a result of the victory it

recorded in Ndu Subdivision which, according to the official distribution of electoral constituencies in Cameroon, is usually combined with Nkambe Central Subdivision to form a single electoral constituency. The CPDM, on the other hand, has struggled unsuccessfully to increase its lot in the Nkambe Central Subdivision until 2013 since many local inhabitants rejected its political leanings while identifying with the opposition SDF.

the rejection of the CPDM in favour of the SDF has often attracted hatred from government. This has contributed to conflict such as the Ndu massacre of 1992 which exposed “man’s inhumanity to man as orchestrated by CPDM cohorts and the then Nkambe administration” [15]. Ndi (1995) further argues that the massacre was instigated by the desire of frustrated CPDM Ndu party elites to eliminate their political opponents in disguise of what was described as an “alleged tax drive” engineered by government authorities in Nkambe which is one of the reasons that made the CPDM very unpopular in Ndu Subdivision in particular and amongst the Mbum as a whole. Incidents like the Ndu massacre which is critical to the political history of the Mbum informed the purpose for this article particularly considering the possibility of similar conflicts emerging in the future as a consequence unchecked party politicking and the exploitation of weak intra-ethnic social capital.

Dimensions of ethnic conflicts in the literature

There is a considerable amount of literature on ethnic conflicts. Writing in *Ethnicity and Ethnic Politics: An Impediment to Political Development in Nigeria*, Adegbami & Uche [7] have stressed about the inevitability of ethnic politics across Africa. This argument is of critical importance to this article since Nigeria shares great similarities with Cameroon “with over 300 ethnic groups, over 1000 dialects, who practiced several religions, with different cultures and histories” which has greatly impacted the politics of the country. Nigeria has three dominant, but exceedingly diverse ethnic groups made up of the Yoruba, Hausa/Fulani and Igbo. These ethnic groups are at center of frequent ethnic clashes resulting from the unceasing struggle for political and economic resources; revealing that alliances and coalitions between/among political parties to win election(s) are usually based on ethnic sentiments. The mention of intra-ethnic conflicts among these major ethnic groups and other allied minority is limited to causes such as unending political manipulation, manoeuvrings, calculations and permutation from politicians and political parties. The study failed to give an in-depth analysis of how the above causes correlate with intra-ethnic conflict. Hence, this article availed itself to the iniquities of intra-ethnic conflict resulting from political polarization with the 2013 legislative election in Nkambe Central Subdivision in Cameroon as case-study.

On a closer note, Tenuche [2] did a study of identity mobilization and intra ethnic conflict in Ebira land, north central Nigeria. The study focused mainly on the following: changes in the traditional institutions of governance occasioned by colonial rule and the impact of such changes on the organization of social life of erstwhile republican communities in Nigeria. These changes appeared to be the most fundamental and underlying cause of incessant violent conflicts and the seeming powerlessness on the part of State authorities to exert control and provide security to the communities.

Contrary to the above, other scholars have even limited their own research to identifying intra-ethnic fault-lines, thereby failing to effectively understand the extent to which these conflicts could be caused by party politics. Montesino [16], for example, looked at workplace inter and intra-ethnic conflicts in multi-ethnic Malaysia from the perspective of affirmative action policies whereas Bush [17], drawing inspiration from Bosnia, Rwanda, Northern Ireland, addressed 'other' intra-ethnic group dimensions of ethnic conflicts in Sri Lanka. Varshney [18] connected ethnic conflicts and civil society in India while Zuber [9] introduced a model of ethnic politics focusing on party competition in an ethnically segmented electoral market where no party appeals to voters across the ethnic divide. Warren & Troy [4] echoed on civil conflict and intra-ethnic violence systematically presenting a cross-national analysis of the conditions that promote violent and fragmentary conflict within politically active ethnic minorities. Onah [19] in a more context specific case uncovered the role of trans-border intra and inter-state conflicts across Africa. Esteran posits that conflicts within nation states account for an enormous share of deaths and hardship in the world today. This is particularly true about Africa and most conflicts tend to be ethnic oriented especially between as opposed to within ethnic groups. Despite enormous challenges, Caspersen [20], take a rather surprising look at the possibility of building bridges or promoting ethno-territorial demarcation lines through intra-group party competition in Eastern Europe.

Majority of the studies mentioned in the preceding section focus on ethnic conflict between and within states. However, this article, focused on intra-ethnic conflict emanating from political deception in national and local elections in Cameroon with the 2013 legislative election in Nkambe Central Subdivision as case-study since it is relatively understudied. The case of the 2013 legislative election in Nkambe Central Subdivision is used as ample evidence to support the argument that intra-ethnic oneness and indivisibility are only safe insofar as politicians and political parties are unable to penetrate and manipulate an ethnic group otherwise conflicts will set in and retard socio-economic and cultural development.

Frameworks for studying ethnic conflicts

Through a combination of the instrumentalism of Varshney [18] and constructivism of Chandra (2008), the theoretical momentum of this article is ushered. On the one hand, instrumentalism stipulates that ethnicity is neither inherent in nature nor intrinsically valuable. In other words, ethnic conflicts occur because politicians make them. One may ask; why and how do ethnic groups fall prey to the trappings of political parties? The response is quite glaring in the context of this article with reasons for ethnic conflict attributed to clientele politics-politicians exploiting the desperation of hungry voters to gain support. On the other hand, constructivists ponder: under what conditions are political parties likely to cause ethnic conflict? Are these conflicts part of a design or an aftereffect of political party activity? On this backdrop, Chandra (2008) found out that ethnic conflict relies on social interaction which involves interest and action. He posits that individuals have ethnic identities which can be targeted by political parties. This strengthens the argument that "ethnicity" may have a bad name, but it is not of its own making. The theories

of constructivism and instrumentalism as used by Chandra (2008) and Varshney [18] respectively target aspects of defining ethnicity at the inter-ethnic level. This article, however, uses these theories in a restrictively intra-ethnic manner. It builds on a logically consistent argument whereby political parties are seen as manipulating, through clientele politics, and exploiting weak intra-ethnic social capital knowingly or unknowingly thus triggering an unpalatable sequel of clashes among clan, family and age sets within the Wimbum ethnic group of Nkambe Central Subdivision during the 2013 legislative election. This is further exemplified using the so-called social cleavage model.

The social cleavage model

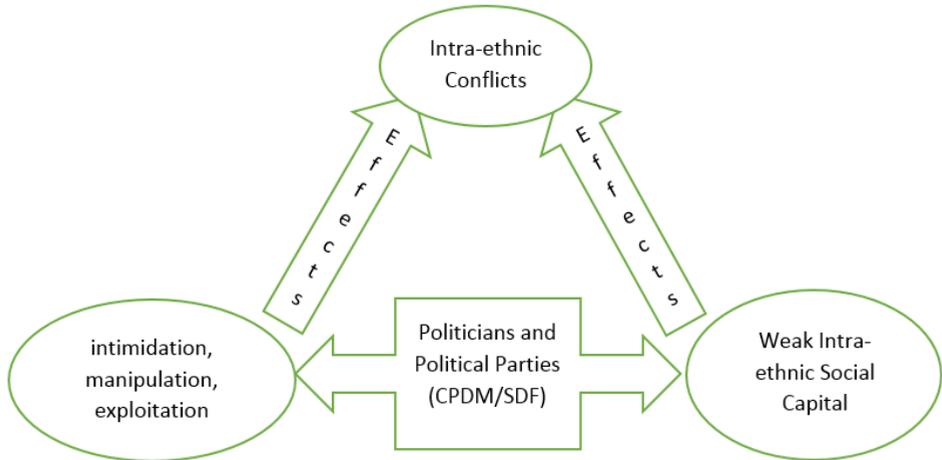
The social cleavage model is grounded on the basic assumption that political parties are to be blamed for ethnic conflicts. In the case of intra-ethnic conflict, the diminishment in “intra-ethnic social capital” exposes an ethnic group to the machinations of political parties during elections leaving politicians with the ability to infiltrate and destroy ethnic bonds. Intra-ethnic social capital refers to the social capital that arises within an ethnic group visible in relations between families, clans and age sets [21] marked by interpersonal trust, political interest and voluntary group participation. When intra-ethnic social capital weakens, social conflict emerges. This article used Borgas [22] and Azam’s [23] terminology of “ethnic capital” to further argue that intra-ethnic social capital goes beyond group relationships to encompass emotional attachments and a shared sense of responsibility to each other; be it at the clan, family or among members of a particular age set. During the 2013 legislative election in Nkambe Central Subdivision, the weakening of intra-ethnic social capital allowed politicians to influence voting decisions of individuals by creating an atmosphere of mistrust, hate and consequently conflict.

Summarily, Nkambe Central Subdivision could be divided into the following groups as per the 2013 legislative election with the following assumptions:

- Clan, family, and age sets of the Mbum in the Nkambe Central Subdivision suffered from the consequences of weak intra-ethnic social capital.
- CPDM and SDF politicians used intimidation, manipulation, exploitation and maneuverings to galvanize support during the 2013 legislative election in Nkambe Central Subdivision.

A diagrammatic representation causes/effects and actors in the intra-ethnic conflicts during the 2013 legislative election in the Nkambe Central Subdivision in Cameroon is illustrated below.

Figure 1. Diagrammatic presentation of party politics and intra-ethnic conflicts in Nkambe Central Subdivision.



Source: author's

From the diagram above, it is evident that a causal relationship exists between (1) the CPDM and the SDF manipulative, exploitative campaign strategies and weak intra-ethnic social capital, and (2) division of the Mbum of Nkambe Central Subdivision into clans, families and age sets contributed to clashes better explained as intra-ethnic. However, the difficulty to wholly associate weak intra-ethnic social with the manipulative and exploitative tendencies of political parties create loopholes in the model. That notwithstanding, the assumption that political parties in Africa in general and Cameroon in particular instigate intra-ethnic conflicts remain valid. The 2013 legislative election in Nkambe Central Subdivision as part of the larger Mbum is a glaring example as indicated in the above diagram.

Analysis of field observations

Local CPDM and SDF politicians in Nkambe Central Subdivision have used political gimmicks over the years to influence cross sections of the Mbum in mobilizing support and winning votes during elections. The 2013 legislative election in the Subdivision triggered a situation beset by clashes between clans, families, and age-sets as a result of political party competition. According to Hon. Awudu Mbaya “those who think money can buy everything are on the wrong side of democracy and that time has come for the truth prevail” cited in Ndi [13], harping on the political scramble in Nkambe Central Subdivision. Junior [28] argues that the political anarchy that reigned in Nkambe Central Subdivision during the election was spearheaded by the creation of clannish militias along party lines. Mohammadou [24] and Ndi, [13] describe the situation in Nkambe Central Subdivision as that which promotes “hatred, bitterness, exchange of blows and revenge”

especially in Nkambe, where hatred and bitterness did a great deal of damage on the ethnic orientation of the population.

A “school of thought has been projecting the notion that it is the politics of acrimony” in Nkambe Central Subdivision with those seeking political office using intrigues, blackmail and slanders leading infighting [26, 14, 25].

An excerpt from a press release published by Cassimania [26] in The Eye Newspaper saw Hon. Awudu Mbaya, SDF contestant in the election lament that “it is pathetic that politics has now turned deadly in Nkambe”. Even though this statement does not imply ethnicity and ethnic conflict, it nevertheless supports the argument that violent clashes during the election took the form of intra-ethnic cleavages evident from field observations. Interestingly, it appears that the two political parties were also dealing with a loose electorate in terms of intra-ethnic social capital in the case of Nkambe Central Subdivision. With the showoff of riches by politicians, the electorate was easy to sway with a few francs, bags of salt and rice, packets of Maggie and cartoons of soap confirming the supposition that dependency and political clientelism (contestant/voter imbalance) also contributed to the events of 2013 and could best be explained in terms of intra-ethnic cleavages. Political ego and manipulation transformed the pre, electoral, and post electoral periods into an era of conflict. An atmosphere of tension, name-calling, infighting, character assassination and witch-hunt reigned starting from campaigns, throughout voting, counting of the ballots and declaration of the election results.

Conflicts at clan level

Clan-based politics is not a new phenomenon in the Mbumland. It dates as far back as the late 1950s and early 1960s when the British colonial administration in the Mbumland “invariably made the people retrocede into clan partnership which obliterated their sense of ethnic identity.” [27, 32]. Like the J.T. Ndze’s (Tang Clan) of the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP), the A.T. Ngala’s (Ya Clan) of the Kamerun National Congress (KNC) and the Peter N. Nsakwa’s (Warr Clan) during the 1959 General Elections and the 1961 Plebiscite in Southern Cameroons, both the CPDM and the SDF political parties engrossed and proselytized intra-ethnic divisions in an attempt to win the 2013 legislative election in Nkambe Central Subdivision. For instance, out of a total of five developmental projects allocated for the Central Subdivision and sponsored by the CPDM, four were carried out in Nkambe-Binju, Tabenken, and Binka which are not only three out of the 16 villages that makeup the Central Subdivision but are also all villages of or demographically dominated by people of Tang Clan origin. This clearly explains why it was difficult to mitigate ethnic divisions on clan basis since it was clearly visible in the manner in which politicians distributed developmental projects with the objective to mobilize voters and gain political favour. This argument is supported by the fact that some indigenous people of Warr Clan villages understood the distribution of developmental projects from a clannish perspective, specifically pointing out to the fact that it was not strange for only villages of Tang Clan to have benefited from the projects since the CPDM candidate during the 2013 legislative election in Nkambe Central Subdivision in the person of Ngala Gerard was from Tabenken, a village under Tang Clan as Tenuche, [2] stated convincingly that the “tendency for political alignments to occur along clan line

has therefore made it convenient for politicians to manipulate clan sentiments in furtherance of their narrow ambitions.”

An evaluation of developmental projects carried out by the SDF paints the same clannish picture where Awudu Mbaya from Warr Clan who doubled as the SDF legislative candidate gave priority to Njap, Wat, Nkambe and Nfeingong. A notable example had to do with the rehabilitation of the Tabenken-Njap-Nkambe road; a project which ended up taking an intra-ethnic twist. The follow-up committee and winner of the contract was the CPDM party. By implication, the stretch of road passing through Njap was not graded simply because Awudu Mbaya was an indigene of Njap. According to Manjuh Florence (treasurer of the YCPDM subsection Nkambe branch in Tabenken) the decision not to rehabilitate the stretch of road passing through Njap was triggered by statements from indigenous people of Njap who claimed that it was a government contract. Therefore, "to show them that it was not a government contract, Ngala Gerald decided to prove them wrong by ending the rehabilitation works at "Mukyih"; the boundary separating Tabenken from Njap. This propelled a feeling of hate, mistrust and insults between indigenous people of the two villages and aggravated enthusiasm for clannish tendencies as Tabenken is of Tang Clan while Njap is in Warr Clan. Similarly, Akinteye (1999) showed in his study of the Igbo-Ora, Nigeria that groups in the region are frequently beset by cross-cutting cleavages which may be rooted in clans or tribe-based loyalties engineered by politicians.

Conflicts at family level

According to The Eye Newspaper (2013), the 2013 elections left some families shattered in the name of politics. Character assassination, influence peddling and rumor mongers helped in tearing the one-time loving people of Nkambe Central Subdivision apart. This is without doubt true as one mother in Tabenken suffered electricity cuts just because she was a supporter of the CPDM, and the electricity suppliers were from the SDF despite the fact that they makeup one family that is the "Bondunduh" of Tabenken.

Also, Tenuche [2] stated that “masquerades and traditional singers became divided along party lines leading to conflicts during the celebration of cultural festivities”. In the same vein, the case of Nkambe Central Subdivision during the 2013 legislative election reveals that conflicts existed among families with CPDM/SDF polling agents coercing traditional dances such as the "Toh", "Makwi", and "Njuh" of the Bonko family that make up the Keiku from performing at campaign rallies of opposing factions. Other scenarios predicated on support shaped by clientele reasons where voters received support as a form of compensation. For example, the Mbibu voted massively for the SDF because the party stood by them when they had a land dispute with Njilah (another sub-ethnic schism in Tabenken). Similarly, Tenuche [1] contends that “masquerades and singers who hitherto entertained during cultural festivals are aligned with the different political parties thus turning such festivals in to an arena of conflict and violence.”

Conflicts at age-set level

During the 2013 legislative election in Nkambe Central Subdivision, young people were caught in the business of politics leading to intra-ethnic conflict as there seems to be a strong link between unemployment and youth violence [2]. Youth unemployment has always stood at unprecedented levels in Nkambe Central Subdivision thus making them

desperate and election periods are viewed by many as job opportunities. During the 2013 legislative election, majority of the youthful population identified with the CPDM party (whose candidate Ngala Gerald; was age 35 at the time of the elections) because of shared commonalities. This natural factor played to the advantage of the CPDM with Ngala Gerald nicknamed by Panky [29] as the "Trump Card" of Nkambe Central Subdivision during the 2013 legislative election. However, his candidacy was criticized by a majority of the elderly who preferred Awudu Mbaya. This increasing polarization between the elders and the youths in Nkambe Central Subdivision cannot be ignored "with the latter blaming the woes of the land on the former and insisting on having a greater say in the leadership arrangement of the society" [2].

Some youths equally despised CPDM for organizing a soccer tournament in Tabenken to the tune of 500,000FCFA in 2009 with young people from other villages only allowed to participate under special registration requirements. Similar tournaments organized in other villages such as in Njap by SDF politicians equally exempted Tabenken youths from participating as each village wanted to punish the other. This could no longer be seen as a normal practice between villages but a political competition with intra-ethnic consequences. In another instance, campaigns in Binju saw CPDM thugs (youths) attacking those from the SDF leading to bloodshed Panky [29]. This had longstanding intra-ethnic repercussions most of which are still being felt today.

By and large, although the intentions of the CPDM/SDF could be said of to have been hardly intra-ethnic, the background of their various candidates, clientele nature of Nkambe politics, campaign strategies, political gimmicks and the presence of weak intra-ethnic social capital on clan, family and age set basis-of which parties formed a partly-produced what could best be described as intra-ethnic. Villagers went as far as stopping to drink in bars owned by relatives who were from the opposing parties, fighting at drinking spots became the normal because this or that man was thrown a slang against either of the two parties supported by his/her brother or sister: leaving the CPDM/SDF as the guarantors of intra-ethnic conflicts in Nkambe Central Subdivision during the 2013 legislative election.

Conclusion

When political parties are faced with the pressure to compete for scarce resources, intra-ethnic divisions can be hardened and polarized [31]. This argument is confirmed in the case of Nkambe Central Subdivision where the CPDM/SDF were seen taking advantage of weak intra-ethnic social capital and using unfiltered campaign strategies to steer intra-ethnic conflict during the 2013 legislative election. The evidence provided in this article leans substantial credence to the social cleavage model of group fragmentation; illustrating that intra-ethnic conflicts are to an extent caused by party politics. While having focused on Nkambe Central Subdivision which is part of the larger Wimbun ethnic community in Donga Mantung Division as a convenient case for empirical analysis, the results may be applied to other ethnic configurations within the Cameroonian political landscape. Therefore, the observation that the CPDM/SDF intrigues, gimmicks, manipulations, persuasions and in the extreme intimidation were

largely responsible for causing intra-ethnic conflicts in Nkambe Central Subdivision particularly among families, clans and age-sets suffices to conclude that intra-ethnic conflicts remain understudied across Africa and thus require scholarly attention. A further look at the Mbum ethnic group in both Nkambe Central Subdivision and Ndu Subdivision will be good for a start.

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