

Legitimacy and Legality in National Identity Construction

— A Study of Southern Cameroons' Secessionist Discourse

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Abstract

This article studies the use of discourses of legality and legitimacy in order to justify separation amongst Anglophone secessionists in Cameroon. It was motivated by the belief that the study of self-determination can be analyzed from legal, historical as well as linguistic perspectives. Building on previous works dealing with national identity construction, this article focuses on the linguistic strategies used by independence activists from the former British Trust-territory of Southern Cameroons to justify their fight for independence. The analysis of thirteen speeches given by prominent Southern Cameroonian nationalists was guided by Wodak et al.'s Discourse-Historical Approach and led to the identification of three semantic macrostructures. The latter were found to be enforced in discourse by strategies such as nomination and predication, as well as common place arguments, which in turn are achieved through word choice, intertextuality, storytelling and comparison.

Keywords

discourse, nationalism, identity, Southern Cameroons, discourse-historical approach

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1. Introduction

This paper aims to investigate the extent to which English-speaking separatists appeal to legality and legitimacy in order to discursively construct a separate nation. It is part of a broader study whose major aim was to demonstrate that language has been used as a form of political action by Southern Cameroonian nationalist groups, whose goals are the formation of the Southern Cameroonian identity, the legitimisation of their fight, and a call on all Southern Cameroonians to join the fight. The beginning of the 21st century will be kept in history as a period of time which witnessed the blossoming of sub-state nationalism in several parts of the World. For instance, as of 2021, Eastern Ukraine's Russian speaking people are still pushing fiercely for the international recognition of their independence from Kiev. In Spain, there is an ongoing debate over Catalonia and the desire of its local government to achieve independence, and in Africa, Biafran nationalists seem to have started rekindling their struggle to break away from Nigeria. Cameroon is no exception, as the Anglophone nationalist rhetoric has been spreading like wildfire in recent years. In fact, the situation, which was until very recently a rather peaceful one, has turned into an armed conflict between Cameroon's regular military and armed separatists.

The political struggle spearheaded by Anglophone nationalists who believe that the two English-speaking regions of Cameroon should secede and form a separate state has always had a lot of facets, one of them being a discursive one. As Anyefru (2010) notes, discourse has always been a key weapon in the Anglophone secessionists' political tussle, and as a reaction to this, their opponents, i.e., pro-union activists, have also been using discourse to make Cameroonians continue to value unity. Actually, discourse has always been an important weapon in the hands of politicians, as previously suggested by van Dijk, who posited that discourse is 'a form of political action' (1997: 20). Unfortunately, research on the discursive construction of nationalism amongst English-speaking separatists in Cameroon has been scanty. Therefore, this paper aims at adding knowledge to scholarship by answering the following research questions:

1. What ideas do English-speaking separatists use to present their fight as legal and legitimate?
2. What rhetorical resources do they use to convey those ideas?
3. What specific linguistic resources provide evidence of the discursive construction of a separate Anglophone nation?

Before tackling the above questions, research on discourse and identity in general will be presented, and this will be followed by a general overview of research on Anglophone nationalism in Cameroon. Then the methodological approach we chose for this study, namely Wodak's Discourse Historical Approach will be described.

2. Discourse and National Identity Construction

The construction of national identity is a topic that cuts across various fields of study such as linguistics, sociology and political science. In most situations, this process is backed by the use of specific narratives that are often spread through discourse, be it oral or spoken. Discourse shapes our world in ways that we can hardly imagine. Discourses may often get so rooted in people's minds that they forget that those discourses are mere abstract or theoretical constructions. This is what Phillips and Jørgensen (2002) call sedimentation. These fossilized theoretical constructs, also known as hegemonic discourses, are preeminent in many spheres of life. They include discourses of nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender, etc. Nevertheless, identity is never fixed, therefore these hegemonic discourses often get questioned, opposed and rejected. In fact, as Jensen (2008: 14) indicates, "a group becomes constituted once someone articulates it: that is speaks of it, to it, or on behalf of it" (for more on this, see Howarth, 2000; Phillip & Jørgensen, 2002). Therefore, in constructing one's group identity, it is unavoidable to assert its difference from other groups in what is referred to as social antagonism (Jensen, 2008).

As far as national identity construction is concerned, it is worth noting that it may build on various practices, such as the commemoration of an alleged common history (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983), which often includes a tendency to emphasize events that might contribute to consolidating what Anderson (2006) refers to as imagined communities, while rejecting other historical happenings that go against the idea of the nation that is being constructed. Therefore, as Renan (in Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussy & Levy, 2011) insists, national identity construction cannot be dissociated from history, which he defines as a "crucial factor in the creation of a nation" (80). This is definitely in accordance with Halbwachs, who found collective memory to be an important feature amongst social groups. People would therefore resort to narratives which are "told and retold in national histories, literatures, the media, and popular culture" (Hall, 1997: 613) in order for members of the community to see themselves in those narratives.

Research on the discursive construction of national identity has been carried out in various settings with European countries and nations being the target of most studies we were able to identify. First and foremost, we can mention Wodak et al.'s (1999) work, which not only discussed national identity construction in Austria but also provided scholars with a framework on how to analyse instances of national identity construction in discourse. Basically, Wodak and her colleagues posited that to analyse national identity discourse effectively, it was necessary to bring together the main ideas being discussed (which they refer to as contents), the rhetoric strategies used to achieve national identity and the specific linguistic structures in which the strategies are embedded. Furthermore, just as the scholars that have been mentioned earlier in this paper, Wodak et al. agree that history plays an important role in national identity construction, and this

is exactly why they decided to call their methodological framework the Discourse-Historical Approach.

Apart from Wodak et al.'s works, there have been other publications that tackled the discursive construction of national identity in Austria such as Karner's (2005) article, whose main point is the fact that Austrian-ness is being put to the foreground as a reaction against pan-Germanic ideologies that had until then enjoyed a considerable amount of support in the country. Elsewhere in Europe, Costelloe (2014) analyses the use of 'us-vs-them' rhetoric in newspaper accounts of the 2005 riots in France, where the rioters were allegedly depicted as external threads to the French nation. Nationalism in the media has also been discussed by Rosie et al. (2006), who found out that media representations of the nation in the United Kingdom did not follow preestablished models and patterns but were often complex and self-contradictory. They conclude by indicating that in certain contexts, the superficial application of theories such as Anderson's imagined communities might not fully help researchers understand trends in national identity definition and construction, most especially in complex national contexts like Britain. This observation is not that different from that of Zhu (2015), who, after having studied the discursive manifestations of Scottish nationalism, concluded that adherence to Scottish nationalism has fluctuated over time, depending on whether or not Scotland received economic help from the British central administration. The discursive construction of national identity amongst the Catalan minority in Spain has been studied by Echitchi (2017), who revealed that Catalan nationalists' arguments for self-determination lie in the presentation of Catalonia as a distinct nation, an emphasis on the idea that the desire for self-determination is backed by most Catalans and that the struggle for Catalonia's independence has been going on for centuries.

As mentioned earlier, there seems to be less research on the discursive construction of national identity in contexts other than Europe. In fact, until two decades ago, this specific area of research did not attract a lot of interest in academia and tended to be championed by European scholars. Nevertheless, out of Europe, Mummery and Rodan (2007) discussed narratives related to Australian national identity in the context of the global war on terror. Chan Chi (2014) carried out an in-depth analysis of the relationship between Hong Kong and mainland China and found out that Hong Kong citizens have conflicting attitudes towards the mainland. Nevertheless, Chan Chi suggested that many Hong Kongers feel the need to assert and construct distinct cultural identity from mainland China and fight for economic freedom. The consolidation of national unity can be achieved by various discursive means that go beyond official addresses or other types of direct communication. In fact, as Huang Hoon (2004) posited, a careful analysis of stamp texts could reveal Singaporean authorities' desire to construct a national identity in this multi-ethnic city-state. In the United States, which is said to be a melting pot for different nationalities and ethnicities, the need to foster a sense of belonging amongst all Americans has led to various issues. For instance, Gavrilos (2010) reveals

that the construction of American identity was often achieved by emphasizing the Anglo-American ethnicity while attempting to assimilate other nationalities. Though that assimilation was rather successful in the past, Gavrilos indicates that it is now faced with difficulties, thus leading to narratives about otherness, which consist in claiming that the others in the historical past, who readily assimilated to the broader Anglo-American culture, should serve as examples to nowadays' aliens. In the African context, South Africa has attracted a fairly important number of studies on national identity, especially when it comes to the construction of the Afrikaner identity. For instance, Verwey and Quayle (2012) discuss Afrikaners' dilemma between their desire to reject racism while at the same time promoting their ethnic identity in discourse.

3. The Cameroon Anglophone Identity in Scholarly Publications

There have been many studies devoted to the Anglophone movement in Cameroon, most of them investigating the origins and manifestations of the current antagonism between French-speaking and English-speaking Cameroonians. These publications, which did not necessarily fall within Discourse Analysis, mainly discussed the historical foundations of the so-called Anglophone Problem, and the current plight of the English-speaking population of Cameroon.

The Anglophone Problem can be said to have begun after World War I, when the German colony of Kamerun was partitioned into two territories administered by two distinct colonial masters, namely Britain and France. However, it is on the eve of independence, when the former French and British colonies were about to reunify, that grudges amongst some Anglophones started to emerge (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 1997; Ngoh, 1999; Kam Kah, 2012). In fact, during the 1961 Foumban¹ Conference, in which the British and the French territories agreed on reunification after Southern Cameroon's independence, Francophone Cameroonians' future numerical and ideological domination could already be felt. Five years later, things became clearer when the Francophone president of Cameroon, Ahmadou Ahidjo, dissolved all Anglophone political parties to enforce a one-party system he masterminded. Throughout these years, alleged political oppression and the absence of freedom of speech made Anglophone Cameroonians harbour resentment against Francophone Cameroonians, represented by President Ahidjo and his successor, Paul Biya. The grievances would become evident after the reintroduction of multiparty politics in Cameroon in the early 1990's.

Konings and Nyamnjoh (1997) also provide in their paper a number of social, economic and political situations which have given flesh to Anglophone nationalism. For them, the

¹ A town in the Francophone West Region, which borders the Anglophone territory.

most prominent of these reasons is the somewhat subordinate status of Anglophone Cameroonians when compared to their Francophone counterparts, as well as the alleged neglect of the territory that was formerly known as the British Southern Cameroons. These claims are reproduced by Fochingong (2005), who lengthily discusses the marginalization of Anglophones, reportedly characterized by their low representation in decision-making organs, the exploitation of the natural resources of the British Southern Cameroons without any benefit for the local populations, the branding of Anglophones as foreigners. Fochingong (2005) also indicates that the marginalization of Anglophones was preceded by a process of assimilation, which was characterized by a strong desire on the part of the country's Francophone-dominated administration to Francophonize the Anglophones as well as the institutions they inherited from the British administration of the territory.

This study aims at investigating the Anglophone problem, too, but differs from the above in the sense that it mostly deals with demonstrating how discourse has been used to construct and reproduce the Anglophone identity in Cameroon, with the ultimate goal of gaining greater autonomy and independence.

4. Methodology

As mentioned earlier in this paper, the theoretical method used in this paper is Wodak et al.'s (2019) Discourse-Historical Approach, which has been used to carry out research on power difference in discourse. The Discourse-Historical Approach falls within Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which is an interdisciplinary method for research on language in context. CDA clearly suits a study like the present one because it is built on the belief that discourse can be used to construct realities, to consolidate hegemonic relations or to resist or redefine them. This is exactly why Van Dijk, one of CDA's most prominent scholars, goes on to indicate that "Critical Discourse Analysis is a type of discourse analysis research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in social and political contexts" (2004: 352). As concerns Wodak's approach, it combines historical study, contextual analysis and linguistic analysis to achieve a better interpretation of pieces of discourse. Therefore, following in Wodak et al.'s (2019) footsteps, our analysis is made up of three main steps, which are discussed below.

4.1. Contents

This is the first step of the Discourse-Historical Approach. It consists in identifying ideas that are pervasive in discourses of identity-formation or nationalism. Wodak and

her colleagues noted that to easily identify contents, it is necessary to carry out background research aimed at obtaining information not only from empirical works, but also from common narratives and other literature related to the subject being investigated.

4.2. Strategies

In explaining what they refer to as strategies, the founding fathers of the Discourse-Historical Approach note the following: On the macro-level, we can distinguish between different types of macro-strategies employed in the discursive formation of national identity. These macro-strategies correspond to the main social macro-functions we discussed earlier, namely construction, perpetuation or justification, transformation and demontage or dismantling (Wodak et al., 2009: 33).

Discursive acts can serve to “construct and establish a certain national identity by promoting unification, identification and solidarity” (Wodak et al., 2009: 33), thus referred to as *constructive* strategies. If they serve to “maintain and [to] reproduce a threatened national identity” (ibid.), these discursive acts would be referred to as *perpetuation* or *justification* strategies. Furthermore, they can be *transformative*, that is, aimed to “transform a relatively well-established national identity and its components into another identity the contours of which the speaker has already conceptualized” (ibid.). Finally, discursive acts can “aim at dismantling or disparaging parts of an existing national identity construct”, which explains their description as *dismantling* or *destructive strategies* (ibid.).

4.3. Linguistic Means of Realization (Sub-Strategies)

Each macro-strategy is enforced in discourse by some other features that are referred to as sub-strategies. These sub-strategies are seen in the light of specific linguistic resources, which include the use of pronouns and other diction, resort to metaphor and metonymy, categorization, and positive self-presentation or negative-other presentation to enforce constructive strategies, or the use of storytelling and quoting credible sources to foster legitimization. As concerns transformation strategies, they are often realized through argumentation stereotypes known as *topoi*, disclaimers and speech acts like complaining. Finally, destructive or dismantling strategies are achieved by the variants of the sub-strategies used for building national identities, especially heteronomination (de Cillia et al., 1999: 161).

What can therefore be retained is the fact that identity, be it national, ethnic or religious, is not to be taken for granted, for it is constructed and enforced through discourse. Moreover, the construction of identity often involves the rejection of other

identities, especially if those identities are opposed to the social group one wants to create. This therefore gives way to what is known as social antagonism. It is thus within this framework that the present investigation was carried out, as the authors noticed that the revamping of Anglophone nationalism in Cameroon was the result of the myriad of discourses which all aim at building this social group.

4.4. Data Collection

To find out ways in which Anglophone nationalist leaders in Cameroon justify their struggle for self-determination, we decided to collect thirteen speeches (see Table 1) delivered by the most active Anglophone nationalist activists between 2010 and 2015. Those activists include Chief Ayamba, Nfor Ngala Nfor and Jude Ozughen, leaders of the Southern Cameroons National Council, which until 2017 was Southern Cameroons' main secessionist group, as well as Fon Gorji Dinka, the leader of another separatist faction known as The Republic of Ambazonia. Ngala Nfor is credited with coining an alternative appellation for Southern Cameroons, Ambazonia, whose use has skyrocketed over the past few years.

Table 1: Speeches to be analysed

Speech	Author	Year of release	Word count
New year message to the nation by the national chairman of the SCNC and chancellor of the provisional administration of the Federal Republic of Southern Cameroons	Chief Ayamba	2010	1330
SCNC national chairman's address to the nation on the occasion of the 49 th anniversary of the independence of Southern Cameroons	Chief Ayamba	2010	1775
Address to the nation and the people of Ambazonia	Fon Gorji Dinka	2010	1016
Address to the nation and people of Ambazonia silver jubilee	Fon Gorji Dinka	2010	793
Address to all Ambazonians on the occasion of the launching of the Ambazonian nationality campaigns	Fon Gorji Dinka	2010	2035
Fear changed sides	Fon Gorji Dinka	2011	573
Speech on the 51 st anniversary of Southern Cameroons independence	Nfor Ngala Nfor	2012	1859
A speech presented by the chairman of SCNC North America, Jude A. Ozughen on the SCNC North America Convention	Jude Ozughen	2012	2220

Message of the SCNC to the people of British Southern Cameroons end of year 2013	Nfor Ngala Nfor	2013	2064
Address on the occasion of the 53 rd anniversary of the confiscated independence of British Southern Cameroons	Nfor Ngala Nfor	2014	2289
Message to the people of British Southern Cameroons for the new year 2015	Nfor Ngala Nfor	2014	1616
Message to British Southern Cameroons students on the occasion of student cultural week	Nfor Ngala Nfor	2015	1931
SCNC message to the people of British Southern Cameroons end of year 2015	Nfor Ngala Nfor	2015	2334

5. Results and Analysis

After collecting the thirteen speeches, they were analyzed in accordance with the guidelines provided by Ruth Wodak et al. Since this paper is specifically about the construction of legitimacy and legality, emphasis will be laid on justification strategies. According to Paul Chilton (2004: 46), justification can be defined as a set of strategies that aim at enforcing political decisions and consolidating a certain rulership. This definition is thus not very different from Wodak's (2009: 33), who states that justification strategies are used to "emphasize the legitimacy" of certain acts or events. Therefore, justification is seen here, not only as a way to consolidate rulership or perpetuate a certain situation as Chilton posits, but first and foremost as a means of bringing out the legitimate and legal nature of Southern Cameroonians' political struggle. It is worth indicating that despite their contiguous meanings, legality and legitimacy are treated as two separate entities in this paper. Thus, legality is understood as being primarily about law, while legitimacy deals with issues such as morals and ethics. The justification strategies used by Southern Cameroonian nationalists fall within the realms of both legitimacy and legality. For those political activists, their struggle for independence is both morally acceptable and backed by international, and even domestic law. This is evidenced in the three contents or semantic macro-structures which were identified following the analysis of the thirteen speeches under study. As Table 2 shows, these semantic macro-structures encompass nomination and predication strategies as well as argumentation schemes such as the *topoi* of legality, comparison, history as a teacher, justice and equality, and the *topos* of religion.

Table 2: Justification strategies

Contents	Strategies	Linguistic means	Specific examples
Southern Cameroons' struggle is backed by law	Nomination and predication, topos of legality	Lexemes indicating illegality, intertextuality, reference to authorities, comparison	<i>Illegal, Art. 102 of the UN Charter, UNGA Resolution 1608 of April 21, 1961, Art. 4(b) of the AU Constitutive Act, uti possedetis juris</i>
Southern Cameroons is in a state of colonialism and annexation	Nomination and predication, topos of comparison, topos of Human Rights	Lexemes relating to colonialism and imperialism, storytelling	<i>imperial propaganda, annexation, foreign occupation, colonialism, colonial occupation, Francophone, Anglophone, Frenchification, Francophonised, arrested, tortured, detained, murdered in cold blood</i>
Southern Cameroons' struggle is a divine mission	Nomination and predication strategies, topos of religion, topos of threat	Reference to God, positive characterization, intertextuality	<i>Children of God, God's will, God on our side, Children of Israel's journey to the Promise Land</i>

5.1. Southern Cameroons' Independence Struggle is Backed by Law (Legality)

One of the most important justification strategies in the speeches under study is the desire on the part of Southern Cameroonian nationalist leaders to make it clear to everyone that their struggle is not just legitimate, but also fully legal. Self-determination groups in Cameroon's English-speaking territory are still considered to be illegal under national law, so it is not surprising that separatists take pains to prove the government of Cameroon wrong. The construction of legality in Southern Cameroonian nationalist discourse is underpinned by the use of intertextuality and reference to authorities, and all of these linguistic strategies are achieved by means of common place argumentation schemes appealing to legality. According to Southern Cameroonian nationalist leaders, International Law (United Nations and African Union), which definitely overrules national law, speaks in their favour.

To begin with, Southern Cameroonian nationalist leaders make use of UN law to justify the fact that British Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon were two distinct territories and that the current situation is a *de facto* cohabitation between two states and therefore is illegal.

[1] That argument can obviously be eviscerated with incontrovertible evidence that the union was not sanctioned by any legal instrument like a Treaty of Union signed between the two entities. **No such**

treaty was signed by the two parties and registered at the UN Secretariat in compliance with Article 102 of the UN Charter². (Ozughen, 2012, SCNC North America Convention speech)

[2] But as we all know **there is no treaty of union or any legal instrument binding British Southern Cameroons and la Republique du Cameroun**. Under international law any instrument binding distinct peoples and nations is not a matter discussed and resolved in “a mbuh house”, beer parlor, at sumptuous dinner tables with beautiful smiling ladies, whatever may be the caliber of leaders concerned. Such an instrument must fulfill conditions set out in **Art. 102 of the UN Charter**: it must be written and signed by the parties concerned and published by UN. (Ngala Nfor, 2014, 53rd anniversary speech)

Examples [1] and [2] evidence the use of various argumentation schemes centred around legality and illegality. The justification of separation begins with the use of two distinct toponyms for the territories at stake (as in Example [2]) One of them is in English (Southern Cameroons) and the other one in French (la Republique du Cameroun). This nomination strategy is followed by the use of the topos of legality in order to prove the illegal nature of the cohabitation between Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon. To achieve this, Southern Cameroonian nationalists appeal to the UN, which, according to them, guarantees the legality of their fight. They therefore make reference to the UN Charter, which states the following:

Every treaty and every international agreement entered into by any Member of the United Nations after the present Charter comes into force shall as soon as possible be registered with the Secretariat and published by it. No party to any such treaty or international agreement which has not been registered in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 1 of this Article may invoke that treaty or agreement before any organ of the United Nations. (chapter XVI, article 102)

Having the UN Charter in mind, Southern Cameroonian nationalists therefore indicate that, since no reunification treaty between British Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon was registered at the UN, it is therefore illegal for Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon to be making up a country today. As Southern Cameroons and French Cameroons never signed and/or registered a reunification treaty at the UN, Southern Cameroonian nationalists believe that their country has simply been annexed and should regain the autonomy it is entitled to.

In addition to the above, Southern Cameroonians activists readily anticipate on any counter claims made by the Cameroon government by stressing the right to self-determination, which is fully backed by the UN Charter.

[3] As I speak to you today, a new nation will soon be born in Africa when the people of **Southern Sudan** vote on January 9th, 2011, to take their destiny into their own hands. All indications point to the fact that the people of **Southern Sudan** are resolved to vote for separation and freedom. (Chief Ayamba, 2011, new year message)

[4] **Right to self-determination** is not only inherent and inalienable; it is equally an eternal right of a people. This **right** grows ever stronger in an annexed, occupied and subjugated people suffocating under foreign domination and alien rule. (Ngala Nfor, 2014, 53rd anniversary speech)

² Author's highlights

[5] We all hail and salute the brave and courageous proud people of Scotland who after 307 years democratically demonstrated their inherent and permanent **right of self-determination**. (Ngala Nfor, 2014, 53rd anniversary speech)

Examples [3], [4] and [5] indicate the fact that even if there was a union treaty between Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon, Southern Cameroonians as a people would still have the right to self-determination under UN law. To make their point clearer, Southern Cameroonians resort to case-law, which consists in establishing legality (or illegality) by drawing parallels. In the examples mentioned earlier, they make us consider South Sudan and Scotland, which share the fact that the populations in both territories were given the opportunity to decide on their political ties with Sudan and the United Kingdom (respectively) in referendums that took place in January 2011 in the case of South Sudan, and September 2014 for Scotland. While the overwhelming majority of South Sudanese went for outright separation, most Scots voted against independence. Southern Cameroonian nationalist leaders thus believe they are entitled to the same right as Scots and South Sudanese, as the right to self-determination is inalienable, in accordance with the UN Charter.

Southern Cameroonian activists don't just resort to UN law in order to justify the legality of their fight, but they even go further by invoking African Union law.

[6] That when French Cameroun became independent on January 1, 1960 and joined UN Membership in September of same year, British Southern Cameroons was not part of and that by **Art. 4(b) of the AU Constitutive Act** and international law once a country becomes independent its international boundaries can never change again. (Ngala Nfor, 2015, message to students)

[7] It is anchored on **Article 4(b) of the Constitutive Act of the African Union** which in time and space is one of the international treaties that the African Commission is habilitated to implement. Broadly speaking, in communication 337, the state of Southern Cameroons is asking the African Commission to declare the Republic of Cameroon to be in violation of the constitutive act of the African Union with respect to the westward expansion of the international boundary of the Republic of Cameroons to include former UN Trust territory of the Southern Cameroons. (Ozughen, 2012, SCNC North America Convention Speech)

Article 4(b) of the AU Constitutive Act, which is cited in examples [6] and [7], stipulates that “the Union shall function in accordance with the following principles: [...] b) respect of borders existing on achievement of independence”. This article is based on an international legal principle known as *Uti Posseditis*, whose main idea is that no country can extend the territory it inherited from colonialism without previously signing a unification treaty with the territory it will extend to. Therefore, in the above excerpts, Southern Cameroonian activists believe that, since Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon achieved independence on different dates, French Cameroon has violated the *Uti Posseditis* principle by annexing a distinct territory without signing and registering a unification treaty with its people.

What's more, some Southern Cameroonian nationalists like Fon Gorji Dinka even use Cameroon domestic Law to justify the fact that Southern Cameroons is not part of *La république du Cameroun*. In fact, Dinka interprets President Ahidjo's decision to change

Cameroon's official appellation from 'the United Republic of Cameroon' to 'the Republic of Cameroon' (the English translation of the Former French territory's appellation) as an automatic exclusion of Southern Cameroonians from the country. This is exactly what transpires from example [8].

[8] a) The demise of the Union (called United Republic of Cameroon) and the automatic resurrection of the French Cameroun and English Cameroonians that had been rendered extinct by **the merger of 1st October 1961**.

b) **The judgment of the Cameroon Military Tribunal** that Ambazonia is not part of the Republic of Cameroon and therefore the call for Cameroon to get out of Ambazonia is a call for enforcement of law 84/01. (Fon Gorji Dinka, 2010, address to the nation)

If the unity between Southern Cameroonians and *La République du Cameroun* is illegal and such illegality is even backed by international and domestic law, then for Anglophone separatist leaders, Southern Cameroonians have the right to fight for self-determination, and more so because in addition to being legal, their struggle is legitimate as they are living a situation of Human Rights violation and oppression which can only be likened to colonialism, racial segregation or slavery.

5.2. Southern Cameroonians Is in a State of Colonialism and Annexation (Legitimacy & Legality)

As opposed to the strategies that have been studied earlier, the strategies that fall within this section are characterized by a strong appeal to emotions in order to justify the need for Southern Cameroonians to fight for their political freedom. In fact, through storytelling, and comparison, Southern Cameroonian independence activists present the fate of their people in such a way as to make Southern Cameroonians aware of their suffering and cause sympathy from the others. According to Southern Cameroonian nationalists, their territory is in a state of colonialism and annexation by the French-speaking territory of Cameroon. This is directly related to the legal argument supported by these nationalists, whose underlying principle is the fact that Southern Cameroonians and French Cameroon are two distinct political entities and two different nations. The foregoing is confirmed by nomination and predication strategies that build on the use of specific lexical items. In fact, the lexemes such as *annexation*, *colonialism* and *occupation* are often used by Southern Cameroonian independence activists to describe their territory's plight. This is exemplified in excerpts [9] and [10].

[9] For fifty-one years have we suffered all the indignities under the **annexation and colonial occupation** of La République du Cameroun. (Ngala Nfor, 2012, 51st anniversary speech)

[10] ...for Southern Cameroonians to break off from the yoke of **annexation and colonialism** money is needed to lubricate the wheels of the struggle. (Ozughen, 2012, SCNC North America Convention Speech)

After they have made it clear that Southern Cameroons is being annexed, through nomination and predication, Southern Cameroonian nationalists then proceed to discuss the consequences of that situation. The occupation of Southern Cameroons by French Cameroon is characterized by Human Rights violations, the destruction of Southern Cameroonians' identity, as well as the exploitation of Southern Cameroons' natural resources.

First of all, Southern Cameroonian nationalists attempt to persuade their national and international audience that something needs to be done in order to set the people free from suffering and abuse. This idea is deeply grounded in the topoi of Human Rights and comparison. Nationalist leaders greatly rely on storytelling to talk about specific Human Right violations carried out by the Francophone-dominated regime. This is what transpires from examples [11] and [12].

[11] While asserting our right to celebrate 1st October 2001 as our 40th Independence anniversary, the cream of SCNC leadership was **arrested, brutalized, tortured and incarcerated** for long periods. Prior to that date, the occupation forces of la Republique du Cameroun had orchestrated a **diabolical** plot in 1997 during which they **arrested** several dozens of Southern Cameroonians in the so-called "terrorist attacks" carried out sporadically in parts of Southern Cameroons. They were later transferred to Yaounde where they faced a military tribunal **which tried them in French, an alien language they did not understand. Some were sentenced to life imprisonment while others received long jail/sentence for crimes they didn't commit.** Most of them **died as a result of torture** inflicted on them such as Julius Nguh Ndi, Philip Tete and last but not the least Pa Ndifet Zacharia Khan, who **passed away** just three months ago as a result of **torture** he was subjected to in 1997. (Chief Ayamba, 2010, 49th anniversary speech)

[12] In typical Machiavellian style, the **ruthless forces of la Republique du Cameroun swooped on** the patriots and freedom fighters and arrested 84 activists and leaders whom they **crammed into Gendarmerie and Police cells under very inhuman conditions.** (Ngala Nfor, 2013, end-of-year message)

While they tell stories of the abuse carried out by the Francophone-dominated administration in Southern Cameroons, Southern Cameroonian independence activists use very strong words such as *brutalized* or *tortured*. They claim that anytime the people of Southern Cameroons wanted to exercise their right to self-determination they would always be repressed by the Cameroon government in the most inhumane ways possible. The use of these lexemes is therefore part of what we called nomination and predication strategies, while the overall argument falls within the topos of Human Rights, as the major aim here is to state that Cameroon's violation of Human Rights in Southern Cameroons is a legitimate reason to push for independence.

Furthermore, Anglophone nationalists liken their situation to South Africa's Apartheid. This comparison is again aimed at telling the world that the presence of Cameroon's Francophone-dominated administration in Southern Cameroons is certainly a blatant violation, not only of international law but also of Human Rights. It is worth noting that the Apartheid is a racial segregation and white minority rule that was applied in South Africa and was unanimously condemned by the international community because of its undemocratic and racist foundations. We noted a tendency on the part of Southern

Cameroonian nationalist leaders to use Apartheid as a perfect illustration of what they and their people are struggling against, as seen in example [13].

[13] Should the UN and international Community doubt the resolve of our people to free themselves from the shackles of annexation, colonialism and **neo-apartheid**, it should, as was the case in East Timor, Namibia, most recently in South Sudan, to name a few, conduct a referendum in British Southern Cameroons. (Ngala Nfor, 2012, 51st anniversary speech)

So far, we have seen how Southern Cameroonian leaders make use of nomination and predication strategies and the topoi of comparison and Human Rights to describe their territory as colonially occupied and their people as being exploited and abused by the occupier, that is the former French Cameroon. In addition, Southern Cameroonian independence activists believe that their territory's resources are exploited by Cameroon. To further prove their point, Southern Cameroonian independence activists stress that before unification with French Cameroon, Southern Cameroons had a vibrant economy, which mostly relied on agriculture and its numerous natural resources, such as oil and timber. The topoi of comparison is also used here, and it involves comparing Southern Cameroons during British rule to the same territory nowadays. Linguistic means of realization such as storytelling and examples are used to emphasize the fact that unification with French Cameroon has been a deadly blow to Southern Cameroon's economy, as seen in examples [14] and [15].

[14] For fifty-one years we have seen our **seaports, airports closed down and roads that link our towns and regions abandoned while for purposes of assimilation** our towns are linked by tarred roads to La Republique du Cameroun towns. (Ngala Nfor, 2012, 51st anniversary speech)

[15] After 1972 anti-constitutional referendum, **seaports, airports, PowerCam, Santa Coffee Estate and other financial and economic institutions established by British Southern Cameroons Government were all closed while CamBank and Produce Marketing Board with a huge stabilization fund were transferred to Yaoundé and Douala respectively**. This political action was taken to make British Southern Cameroons economically subservient and entirely dependent on la Republique du Cameroun. There is no similar action that was ever taken in favour of Southern Cameroons. (Ngala Nfor, 2015, letter to the elite)

After reunification, all the infrastructure and other companies which contributed to Southern Cameroons' economic wellbeing were dissolved in order to allegedly impoverish the people of Southern Cameroon and make them dependent on French Cameroon. Moreover, Southern Cameroonian nationalists indicate that the money which Cameroonian companies make in Southern Cameroons is not used to develop the territory, but rather transferred to French Cameroon. This is why Southern Cameroonian nationalist leaders believe that this unfair situation is another justification for their fight for independence, as it is legitimate for any group of people to fight for what is theirs.

[16] Royalty for petrol and timber from British Southern Cameroons is paid to Douala City Council and Sangmalima council respectively of la Republique du Cameroun. (Ngala Nfor, 2015, letter to the elite)

[17] The first impediment is the fact that our elected representatives serve in Cameroon Parliament and claim that our 6 million people relish French Cameroon imperialism. These MPs constitute the conveyor belt that takes our oil wealth to Yaounde; (Fon Gorji Dinka, 2010, address to the nation)

So far, we have studied two semantic macro-structures used by Southern Cameroonian nationalists to justify their fight for independence. These contents include claims that the struggle for Southern Cameroons' independence is backed by law and that the territory is in a state of colonialism and annexation. While the first content we studied appeals to legality, the second one falls within the framework of legitimacy. Finally, Southern Cameroonians nationalist leaders may also resort to religion to justify their plight.

5.3. Southern Cameroons' Independence Struggle Is a Divine Mission (Legitimacy)

Religion is a very important part of the Southern Cameroonian culture, since traditional churches such as the Roman Catholic, Presbyterian and Baptist churches have always heavily influenced Southern Cameroons' politics and education. In addition to the aforementioned churches, Evangelical and Pentecostal denominations have been gaining ground over the last decades. Being well aware of this situation, the leaders of the Southern Cameroonian independence struggle frequently make use of religious references in order to legitimize their struggle amongst their territory's highly religious population. According to Southern Cameroonian independence activists, their fight is indeed a microcosm of the universal fight between good and evil, a God-ordained struggle. The linguistic strategies used to prove this point include nomination and predication as well as argumentative strategies. Nomination and predication strategies are evidenced by constant references to divinity and the use of positive characterization such as *Children of God* when talking about Southern Cameroonians. As concerns, argumentative strategies, they are mostly built on the topos of religion and enforced in discourse through intertextuality.

To begin with, secessionist activists emphasize the fact that the people of Southern Cameroons are children of God and that Southern Cameroons is their Promise Land. Following this argument, French Cameroon's occupation of Southern Cameroons is an act of defiance against God.

[18] Compatriots of the hour, **Fellow Children of God**... (Gorji Dinka, 2010, nationality campaigns address)

[19] But first of all let's unite to keep off the vultures of la Republique from occupying our **God-given land** which they are exploiting for their selfish ambition. (Ayamba, 2010, end-of-year message)

Being children of God and having Southern Cameroons as a divine inheritance, Southern Cameroonian independence activists therefore believe that their struggle is inspired

and ordained by God and receives divinity's full support. By so doing, they aim at encouraging more people to join the struggle, while threatening those Southern Cameroonians who may be lagging behind (topos of threat). This is clearly illustrated in examples [20] and [21].

[20] I found out since 1985 that ours is **a spiritual struggle initiated, organized and led by the Lord God Almighty Himself**. That the Ambazonian struggle grows stronger by the day evinces the spiritual dimensions of the struggle. (Fon Gorji Dinka, 2010, address to the nation)

[21] Live for a better humanity by first freeing yourself from foreign domination. **God sent you here on mission**. (Ngala Nfor, 2013, end-of-year message)

Presenting the struggle for independence as a divine mission not only justifies the independence struggle by bringing out its *raison d'être*, but also makes it clear victory is at hand, given that, according to the principles of Christianity, no one can resist God's will. To further illustrate this, Southern Cameroonian independence activists often liken their plight to the Biblical account of the Israelites' journey to the Promise Land.

[28] Here today 1st October 2012 in Buea, **we are crossing the Jordan to repossess our land, the only divine inheritance we have on planet earth**. In faith and courage, never again shall we look back. No! (Ngala Nfor, 2012, 51st anniversary speech)

This Biblical comparison found in example [28] clearly summarizes Southern Cameroonian leaders' religious strategies. As a matter of fact, the people of Southern Cameroons are seen as God's people, just like the Israelites, while French-speaking Cameroonians are compared to the Egyptians, who exploited and dominated the Israelites for 400 years. The Promise Land here is Southern Cameroons. Just like the people of Israel in the Bible, Southern Cameroonians have to cross a desert of difficulties and trouble in order to get to that Promise Land. But as Ngala Nfor suggests, victory is near, since according to Christian beliefs, God has always been with people and will remain by their side.

6. Final Considerations

This paper was aimed at describing the strategies used by Anglophone Cameroon independence activists to justify separation between their people and the French-speaking citizens of Cameroon. Thirteen speeches authored by some of Southern Cameroons' most influential nationalists were thus selected and analyzed, and the speechwriters' justification strategies were found to fit into three semantic macrostructures or contents aimed at proving that Southern Cameroons' struggle is backed by law, that the territory is enduring colonialism and annexation, and that independence is a divine mission. This confirmed the initial assumption that the justification of Southern Cameroons' struggle for independence is built around two main ideas, namely legality and

legitimacy. As concerns legality, Southern Cameroonian activists make use of various strategies such as intertextuality, quoting authorities, storytelling as well as the history-as-a-teacher topos to support the idea that the independence struggle is backed by law. After having mentioned that Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon had their independences on different occasions, Southern Cameroonian activists make reference to the principles of intangibility of boundaries as well as *Uti Posseditis* in order to justify the idea that French Cameroon cannot legally justify its presence in Southern Cameroons. To give further strength to their argument they mention the alleged inexistence of a treaty of union between Southern Cameroons and French Cameroons, as international law would require. In addition, the legitimacy of the struggle can be interpreted as the idea that even if there were no legal grounds for Southern Cameroons to fight for independence, the situation of exploitation and abuse faced by the people of Southern Cameroons could still justify their fight for independence. Southern Cameroonian nationalist leaders make use of storytelling and the topos of Human Rights and that of justice and equality in order to give some reasons why Southern Cameroonians want to be independent. Their natural resources are exploited to the benefit of the French-speaking part of the country. Finally, the struggle for independence is claimed to be inspired and ordained by God. Southern Cameroons is likened to the biblical Promise Land and the independence struggle the walk towards that promise land. In order to gain support from the international community, different argumentation schemes which involve not only the use of legal texts but also accounts of unfair treatment and suffering are therefore used. It may not be wrong to believe that storytelling and legal intertextuality are directed at international bodies while religious arguments target specifically the local population. This makes one understand that when dealing with unrecognized states, discourses for the construction of national identity involve not only strategies aimed at rallying in-group members, but also efforts to gain support from the international community, knowing that such external support can be used to gain more adherents within the community.

To conclude, it is worth noting that justification strategies, which were discussed in this paper, are just a small part of the vast array of strategies that Southern Cameroonian secessionist leaders have used to construct their national identity. Therefore, a complete study of national identity construction in Southern Cameroons should include what Wodak et al. (2009) refer to as constructive, transformative and dismantling strategies. Furthermore, it might be interesting to carry out research into the conflict between the discursive construction of *Cameroonian-ness* and Southern Cameroon independence discourse.

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