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West Cameroon Economic Malaise in the Cameroon Federation, 1962-1972

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Abstract: *This paper examines the economic difficulties faced by the West Cameroon State in the Cameroon Federation between 1962 and 1972. It argues that the challenges developed from the absence of a clear-cut federal economic policy to orientate specific and complementary actions for the two states (West and East Cameroon) produced after the reunification of the territory in 1961. It also contends that although the project of harmonizing the economies of the two states was aligned with the central vision of furthering national integration, its implementation was fraught with certain operational prejudices. Using both primary and secondary sources and employing a qualitative historical analysis, the investigation reveals that the economic malaise that the West Cameroon state experienced in the era of the Federation emanated largely from an untenable dependence on the Federal economic integration project which was entangled by conspiracies to terminate the Federal system.*

Keywords: *West Cameroon, Economic malaise, Cameroon Federation, historical evidence*

1. Introduction

The independence of most African countries in the 1960s was marked by high hopes for rapid economic growth and development.[1]This dream, to a large extent, recorded remarkable success during the first decade of independence as many states experienced high growth which became more prevalent between 1967 and 1968. Due to structural dynamics and unproductive policies, there was a reversal of this trend as some of the flourishing economies began experiencing acute financial and economic difficulties.[23]This was the case with Ghana that experienced severe economic decline due to the implementation of vain development projects. Similarly, Tanzania in the early years of independence enjoyed rapid economic development but before long stagnated and eventually experienced a long period of decline in the 1970s and 1980s. [4]

West Cameroon, one of the constituent units of the Cameroon Federation suffered severe financial and economic difficulties between 1962 and 1972. This was contrary to the convictions of the United Nations which had insisted on the Southern Cameroons attaining independence by joining either "economically buoyant" Nigeria or Cameroun in the hope of attracting economic development. In an attempt to establish why the economy of West Cameroon did not convert into sustained development, Ndille argues that it was the outcome of "deficiencies in the quantity and quality of manpower produced by the British colonial education system that was available to manage the affairs of the territory at independence".[5]Ebune corroborates Ndille's view when he says "a government that relied on the services of less qualified men, and built on ethnic sentiments was bound to go the way the

[1] Franz Heidhues and Gideon Obare, "Lessons from Structural Adjustment Programs and their Effects in Africa" *Quarterly Journal of International Agriculture* 50, No. 1 (2011): 55.
[2] Morten Jerven, Africa growing? Past, present and future, www.iss.europa.eu, accessed March 20, 2023.
[3] Donald Kaberuka, the African economy fifty years after independence, www.afdb.org, accessed March 25.
[4] Christina MangaardJørgensen and Christian Bjørnskov, "did Africa's First choices matter? Growth Legacies of Leaders at Independence*", IFN Working Paper* No. 1090(2015):11.
[5]Roland N. Ndille, "Black Men, English Suits and a Corner Office: Education and the Making of a West-Cameron Civil Service 1954-1972", *Social and Education History* 8 No. 2 (2019):143.

Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP) did meaning that a viable civil service would be difficult to create".[6]While several narratives have been crafted on the sources of this state's economic difficulties, the role of the Federal government has either been ignored or marginally discussed. This paper tries to move that state of knowledge forward by providing a systematic analysis of the Federal government's responsibility to the economic and financial distresses of West Cameroon. Structurally, the paper opens with background information on the establishment of the Cameroon Federation and proceeds with a discussion on the West Cameroon financial difficulties and then attempts an analysis of the role of the Federal government in triggering the economic recession in the State of West Cameroon.

2. Background to the Establishment of the Federal Republic of Cameroon

In 1914 a joint Anglo-French force invaded German Kamerun and eventually expelled the Germans from the territory in 1916.[7] What followed was the disproportionate partition of the war booty between Britain and France by one fifth and four- fifths respectively. Britain further partitioned her portion into two: British Southern Cameroons and British Northern Cameroons and appended them to the Eastern and Northern Regions of Nigeria respectively.[8]The decision of Britain to affix the Southern Cameroons to Nigeria was based on consideration that, "the incorporation would enable the Cameroons to take advantage of the comparatively higher standard of economic and social development which Nigeria had undergone".[9] Consequently, the British placed the territory's economy at the service of Nigeria with resultant exploitation and economic neglect.[10] The economic neglect somehow influenced the future of the territory as the form of independence was predicated on the territory's financial propensity.

On the eve of the termination of the UN Trusteeships in Cameroon between 1954 and 1960, three reports on the economic situation of the British Southern Cameroons were prepared. These were the Chick Fiscal Commission Report (1954), the Phillipson Report(1959) and the Kenneth Beril Report(1960). Notable among these reports were the Chick Commission and Phillipson Reports. The Louis Chick Commission was charged with investigating if Southern Cameroons would be financially viable to survive without assistance from Nigeria. The commission stated explicitly that the territory would not be financially stable without external assistance.[11] In 1959 the Southern Cameroons government commissioned Sir Phillipson to study the economic viability of Southern Cameroons as a potential independent state. The report indicated that revenues, mostly from agriculture in the territory "might just suffice to maintain and modestly expand its current services, but it would be a precarious hand- to- mouth existence"[12] if the territory would take the option to stand on its own economic resources.

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[6]Joseph B. Ebune, "The dilemma of the federal system in West Cameroon, 1961 – 1972". *Journal of Scientific Research and Studies* 3 No. 7 (2016): 138.

[7] Nicodemus F. Awasom and EttangodopMbu, "The Devolution of Power in the Trust Territories of the Cameroons" 1946-1960, *Epasa Moto* 1, No. 5(2001): 49., Emmanuel YenshuVubo "Levels of Historical Awareness: The Development of Identity and Ethnicity in Cameroon", Cahiers d'Étudesafricaines 3, No.171 (2003): 596.

[8] Victor Julius Ngoh, *the Untold story of Cameroon Reunification*, *1955-1961*(Limbe: PresprintPlc, 2011), 1-3. See TangieFonchingong, "The Quest for Autonomy: The case of Anglophone Cameroon", *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 7, No.5 (2013):224., Ngoh, the "political evolution of Cameroon, 1884-1961"(M.A diss., Portland State University, 1979), 77., Ruth Sloan, *The Educted African: A country by Country survey of Educational Development in Africa*(New York: Frederick A. Praegerinc., 1962), 519. See Joseph B. Ebune, "Impact of Nigerian Unionism on the Political Development of Southern Cameroons, 1922-1966: An Historical Appraisal", *Journal of Research in Peace, Gender and Development* 2 No.9 (2012):196., Walter Gam Nkwi, *Voicing the Voiceless: Contributions in closing Gaps in Cameroon History, 1958-2009*(Bamenda: Langaa Research and Publishing CIG, 2010), 122., Roland N. Ndille, "Black Men, English Suits and a Corner Office: Education and the Making of a West-Cameron Civil Service 1954-1972", *Social and Education History* 8 No. 2 (2019):143.

[9] Joseph L. Nfi, *Nigerians on a Mission in the British Southern Cameroons* (Bamenda: Baron Printing House, 2014), 46.

[10] Ibid.

[11]Victor Julius Ngoh, *Cameroon 1884-present (2018): the History of a People* (Limbe: Design, 2019), 189.

[12] Ibid. see File N0. Qb\a 1960\1, The Economy of the Southern Cameroons under United Nations Trusteeship.

These economic reports indicated that Southern Cameroons was not economically viable to attain independence on its own right. As a result, the United Nations carefully sidelined the option of “independence as a separate state” from the plebiscite options preferred by a cross-section of the Southern Cameroons population. On February 11, 1961, the Southern Cameroons electorates massively voted in favor of reunification with the Republic of Cameroon considered better among the two undesirable options of unification with the Republic of Cameroon and integration with the Nigerian Federation. This view is vividly captured by Konings and Nyamnjoh thus:

> …It soon became evident that the majority of Southern Cameroonians did not favor joining neither Nigeria nor French Cameroon but wanted to form an independent state. This wish was not honored because of the internal division among Southern Cameroons political elite and UN seeming indifference…[13]

After the plebiscite, the Foumban Conference was held to deliberate and adopt a constitution for the prospective Federal Republic of Cameroon. The conference was scheduled to run from July 17-21, 1961. The economic reports issued by the Chick Commission and Phillipson were going to play on the attitude of the Republic of Cameroon towards Southern Cameroons during the Foumban talks. Southern Cameroons was pictured as economically backward people who had voted for reunification in the hope of appropriating the buoyant economy of the Republic of Cameroon.[14]This marginal reasoning played a great deal in the economic policies that were later introduced by the Federal government.

It was however logical for the Cameroun Republic to have made such conclusion drawing principally from the economic reports which had conventionally labeled the territory, “economically impotent”. This finds credence in the fact that the authors of the economic reports were experts hired to perform the task of establishing the economic viability of the Southern Cameroons. The fact that the reports were issued by ‘trusted’ experts left the States with whom Southern Cameroons could possibly integrate in suspicion of the potential repercussions. Le Vine lucidly supports this when he states that:

> …Depending on whether they speak from a Lagos or Yaoundé rostrum. Privately, they admit that anyone who gets the Southern Cameroons acquires an economic and financial liability, and almost to come to wish it to someone else.[15]

Torrent notes that this “misconstrued” picture about the economic viability of the Southern Cameroons weakened its bargaining power at the Foumban Constitutional Conference as Ahidjo himself was worried about the economic and financial consequences of reunification.[16] Surely, it was against this backdrop that, at the Foumban conference, President Ahmadou Ahidjo made it clear that he could accept suggestions from the Southern Cameroonians but he and his delegation would be the final arbiters of what would be accepted.[17] The outcome of this was that most of the proposals of Southern Cameroonians that were adopted during the Bamenda All- party constitutional conference of June 26-28, 1961 were sidelined in favor of those imposed by President Ahidjo.[18]

After the Foumban constitutional conference of 17-21 July 1961, on August 2, 1961, the Southern Cameroons delegation led by Dr.John Ngu Foncha, and the delegation of the Republic of Cameroon led by President Amadou Ahidjo together with representatives from the British government met in

[13] Piet Konings and Francis B. Nyamnjoh, *Negotiating an Anglophone Identity: A study of the politics of recognition and representation in Cameroon*(Leiden: Brill , 2003),23.
[14] File No. Vc/b1963/3, Tripartite conference Yaoundé, August 1961.
[15] Victor T. Le Vine, *Reluctant February* Bride?6-7
[16] Melanie Torrent, *Diplomacy and Nation-building in Africa: Franco-British Relations in Cameroon at the end of Empire*(London: I.B. Tauris&co Ltd., 2012),31.
[17]Ngoh, 2004.
[18] After the plebiscite results of February 11, 1961 the Bamenda All party conference was organized from June 26-28, 1961. The purpose of the conference was to deliberate and adopt proposals that would be taken to the Foumban conference for the final constitutional talks. This was to enable Southern Cameroonians speak in a common voice at Foumban. At the conference the Southern Cameroonians opted for a dual nationality, ceremonial president with executive powers given to state prime ministers, a quota of ministerial positions to be indicated in the constitution, a bicameral legislature and many more. These terms were intended to guard against future domination of the Southern Cameroons by the Cameroun Republic. Most of the proposals of Southern Cameroonians especially those that were very sensitive were rejected in favor of those imposed by Ahidjo.

Yaoundé to trash certain constitutional issues that were left unresolved at Foumban.[19]During the first session of the Yaoundé Tripartite conference, Augustine Ngom Jua raised concerns as to the exclusion of some West Cameroon recommendations at the Foumban conference in the draft translation. He insisted that it was necessary for the West Cameroon House of Assembly to adopt the draft federal constitution in the same way as the East Cameroon House of Assembly had proposed to do on August 8, 1961. He emphasized that, in the event of East Cameroon accepting to the constitution as being legal, and West Cameroon objecting the constitution as being illegal, a problem could arise. In response to Jua's concern, the Attorney General, pointed out that "by virtue of the terms of the questions put at the plebiscite, whatever constitution is accepted by the Republic of Cameroon, Southern Cameroons is bound to accept it".[20]

On October 1, 1961 Southern Cameroons was proclaimed independent. It adopted the name West Cameroon while the Republic of Cameroon became the state of East Cameroon. This marked the beginning of the Federation. With the eventual reunification of the Southern Cameroons with the Republic of Cameroon, the need to forge fresh economic ties between the two states became imperative. Emerging from the perception of a "financial burden" Southern Cameroons entered the Federation without safeguards for economic takeoff. It was based on this consideration that the economic policies initiated by the Federal government that appeared more or less as a continuity of the Republic of Cameroon (transformed to East Cameroon)easily became counterproductive on the West Cameroon economy.

3. West Cameroon Economic and Financial Difficulties

The Cameroon Federation was a union between two entities that were at different stages of economic development. The state of East Cameroon was about four times larger in size and population than the State of West Cameroon and operated a more buoyant and vibrant economy.[21]The economy of West Cameroon was considered unsatisfactory and throughout the federal period it constituted a nightmare to the Government of West Cameroon and that of the Federation. The economic life of the state was stagnant while the cost of living continued to occupy an upward turn.[22] Between 1961 and 1968(a period of eight years), just 4 billion francs CFA was invested in West Cameroon by companies. Out of this amount, about 42.4 million francs CFA was for agriculture, 2.8 billion for commercial purposes and 1.1 billion for industry.[23] (See table 1 for analysis on various investments in West Cameroon).

Table1. *Analysis of investments in West Cameroon from 1961-1968*

No.	Investment/year	Agricultural investment	Commercial investment	Industrial investment	Total investment
1	1961	7.612.000	1.606.320.000	293.422.441	1.907.354.441
2	1962	-	306.559.200	244.757.559	551.316.759
3	1963	7.785.000	55.000.000	248.897.559	226.226.000
4	1964	-	161.226.000	65.000.000	695.879.559
5	1965	1.000.000	412.182.000	282.697.559	89.500.000
6	1966	-	49.500.000	-	75.442.000
6	1967	25.000.000	49.750.000	692000	157.000.000
8	1968	1.000.000	146.000.000	10.000.000	157.000.000
	Grand Total	42.397.000	2.826.537.200	1.145.467.118	4.014.401.318

Source: *NAB File no.Qb/a (1965)1.*

From the figures on table 1, it is evident that 1961 had the highest investment amounting to 1.9 billion francs CFA. Of the total amount of 4 billion invested in the eight years (1961-1968) 47.5 % was invested in 1961. Within this period more attention was paid to the commercial sector as it attracted 70.4% of the total investments while 28.5% went for industry and only 1.1% was devoted to agriculture.[24] (See table 2 for analysis on investment percentages).

[19]Victor Julius Ngoh, *History of Cameroon since 1800* (Limbe: Presprint, 1996), 232.
[20] NAB. File no.Vc/b1963/3.
[21] Joseph B. Ebune, "The dilemma of the federal system in West Cameroon, 1961 – 1972", *Journal of Scientific Research and Studies* 3 No.7 (2016) : 134.
[22] NAB. File no.Qb (1965)1, The state of west Cameroon economy.
[23] Ibid.
[24] NAB. File. Qb (1965)1, The State of West Cameroon economy.

Table2. *Analysis of the various investments in percentage*

No.	Years	Of total 8yearrs investment	Of yearly investment in agriculture	Of yearly investment in commerce	Of yearly investment in industry	
1	1961	47.5	0.4	84.0	15.4	100
2	1962	13.7	-	56.0	44.0	100
3	1963	7.8	2.0	18.0	80.0	100
4	1964	5.6	-	71.0	29.0	100
5	1965	17.3	0.1	59.0	41.0	100
6	1966	2.2	-	100.0	-	100
7	1967	1.9	33.1	66.0	0.9	100
8	1968	4.0	0.6	93.0	6.4	100

Source: *NAB. File no.Qi (1965)1.*

In the middle of 1962 and 1972, the Federal Government's financial subventions to West Cameroon accounted for about two-thirds of the territory's recurrent budget. For instance, between 1962 and 1963, West Cameroon received 1.150,000,000 francs CFA from the Federal Government while in 1963 and 1964 the amount stood at 1.270,000,000 francs CFA. This represented a total increase of 1200.000.000 francs CFA. Between 1968 and 1969 the amount increased to 1.600.000.000 francs CFA out of a total of 2,818,935000 francs CFA. Just about 25% of the territory's budget each year could be raised from income and poll taxes levied by the State Assembly as well as fees and penalty payments levied by Native Authorities.[25](See table 3 for details on government subventions to the State of West Cameroon).

Table3. *Federal Government Subvention of the State of West Cameroon and East Cameroon, 1962/63-1970/71(in millions of francs CFA)*

Year	West Cameroon	% Of State Budget	East Cameroon	% of State Budget
1962/63	1,150	57.0	283	3.9
1963/64	1,270	68.5	890	23.5
1964/65	1440	55.0	1,371	19.0
1965/66	1,350	51.5	1,285	14.0
1966/67	1,950	70.0	1,280	10.0
1967/68	1,800	64.0	1,000	0.9
1968/69	1,640	59.0	650	6.4
1969/70	1,400	50.0	-	0
1970/71	1,700	63.0	-	0

Source: *Victor Julius Ngoh, Abrogation of Federalism in Cameroon 1972: A Historical Analysis (Limbe: Design House, 2019), 6.*

The unhealthy financial situation in West Cameroon was clearly presented in a report of February 1967 by Peter M. Effange, the Permanent Secretary in the office of the Prime Minister of West Cameroon as follows,

> Our needs continue to outstrip our resources and we are continuing to maintain a rather precarious equilibrium by balancing as it were on a razor's edge. The present situation is so critical that a clearly defined financial policy for government is imperative….[26]

In the same vein, Ngoh notes that, the financial situation led the West Cameroon public to speculate that both the Cameroon Bank and the West Cameroon Government were bankrupt especially when the bank refused to honor cheques issued by the treasury to pay the salaries of civil servants.[27]In response to the economic quagmire in West Cameroon**,** a committee of experts was set up on August 11, 1966, to advice the West Cameroon Government on possible new sources of revenue and how to

[25]Ekali, "The Federal System in West and East Cameroon", 98.

[26] Victor Julius Ngoh, *Abrogation of Federalism in Cameroon 1972: A historical Analysis*(Limbe: Design House, 2019), 5., Nixon KahjumTakor and Kenneth N. Yufenyuy, "The Southern-West Cameroon(s) Development Agency, 1956-1973: Historical Evidence of Hope and Despair in Economic Development", *International Journal of History and Cultural Studies* 4, no.3 (2018): 50.

[27] Ibid.

devise a more efficient system of collection of existing revenues.[28]This committee examined and evaluated the precarious financial situation of West Cameroon and the challenges it posed. The sources of government revenue were discussed and 25 recommendations made.[29] Later, some of the recommendations were adopted. They were: women with visible and substantial means of income should be subjected to taxation, complete termination of free primary education, among others.[30] The recommendations were bailout strategies to redeem the economy but the implementation was wanting. Addressing the issue in 1972, President Ahidjo averred,

> It will be seen that although most services have been federalized the budget of the state of West Cameroon is still experiencing difficulties in spite of a balancing subsidy from the federation totaling more than 2000 million francs, that is to say an amount equivalent to approximately three-quarters of the budget.[31]

The President's speech depicted the severity of the economic situation in West Cameroon within the first ten years of the federal experimentation. It is uncontestable that throughout the existence of the Federation, the West Cameroon economy suffered grim malaise. The bases for this economic malaise are the principal preoccupation of this paper.

3.1. Attempting an Explanation to West Cameroon's Economic Malaise

This section of the paper highlights in depth, the reasons for the poor performance of the West Cameroon economy. This would be discussed under two main captions: detachment of West Cameroon from the United Kingdom and the Nigerian Federation, and the economic harmonization drive of the Federal Government.

3.2. Detachment of West Cameroon from the United Kingdom and the Nigerian Federation

During British Trusteeship, the economy of Southern Cameroons was inextricably linked to that of the British Nigerian colony. The Southern Cameroons was literally a Nigerian colony and depended on the latter for currency, electricity, foreign and domestic trade, among others. Though not buoyant as indicated by the pre-independence economic reports, it was an economy with great prospects especially in its agricultural potentials.

As part of their pre-unification engagements, in October 1960 Ahidjo and Foncha agreed that if the reunification option was voted, the new Cameroon nation would at no time be a part, either of the French Community or the British Commonwealth.[32] On February 11, 1961, an overwhelming majority of Southern Cameroonians voted for union with the Republic of Cameroon. This invariably meant an unconditional termination of the close socio-political and economic links that the territory ones shared with the Nigerian Federation and by extension, the Commonwealth.[33]The detachment of West Cameroon from Nigeria and the Commonwealth led to a drastic reduction in the resources available to finance capital investments. Previously, these resources were provided mainly by grants from the United Kingdom, the Nigerian Federation and transfers from the recurrent budget. The detachment of the Southern Cameroons from the United Kingdom and the Nigerian federation unconditionally ceased the payment of grants.[34]

As the West Cameroon membership in the Commonwealth under the United Kingdom Finance Act ended in 1963, the British Parliament immediately passed a legislation that removed the "preference advantages" for banana from West Cameroon and in 1964, the legislation took effect. This

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[28]This committee was constituted by S.J. Epale - Minister of Finance, Buea, S.N. Ekobena- Minister of Cooperative and Community Development, Buea, J. Thrupp from the ministry of Local Government, M. Sabum- ministry of Development and Internal Economic Planning Buea, W.M. Ntuba- ministry of Development and Internal Economic Planning Buea and F.M. Efange from the Prime minister's office Buea.

[29] Ibid.

[30] NAB Pmo 453/3/s.1, File No. Qb/a(1966)1, West Cameroon Financial Difficulties.

[31]T. Eyongetah and R. Brain, *A History of the Cameroon* (Burnt Hill: Longman Group Limited, 1974), 177. See also Ngoh, *Abrogation of Federalism in Cameroon 1972*, 27.

[32]NAB File no.Vc/1961/1, Bamenda conference, 26-28 June 1961.

[33] Richard Joseph, "The Gaullist Legacy in Franco-African Relations", in *Gaullist Africa: Cameroon under AhmaduAhidjo*(Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers,1978), 16.

[34] Ibid.

contributed to high degrees of decline in banana production by the CDC as well as the several independent farmers.[35] Previously, the price of banana exported to Britain was higher than that of the world market by 15 per cent.[36]Due to the withdrawal of Commonwealth preferences, West Cameroonians were forced against their desire to switch from British and Nigerian imports to French and East Cameroonian imports. Johnson estimates that the difference in prices between the West and East Cameroon states might have been as high as 100 per cent. These developments severely affected the West Cameroon population. The issue was so severe that the West Cameroon delegates at the Committee on Foreign and Internal trade and Exchange control had to emphasize the necessity for new sources of finance.

It should be noted that the agreement between Foncha and Ahidjo that the new Cameroon nation would at no time be a part, either of the French Community or the British Commonwealth was flouted with impunity by Ahidjo. Soon after this agreement, Ahidjo signed a series of cooperation agreements and treaties with France which directly tied the then Republic of Cameroon to France. Contrarily, West Cameroon's ties with the Commonwealth were technically cut off meanwhile the Franco-Cameroonian accords were preserved and jealously protected.[37] As part of this engagement, the Federal Government entered into a customs union with three other Central African states. Consequently, all goods imported from the sterling zone were subjected to a discriminatory customs tariff. Since most of the external trade in West Cameroon was still conducted with countries in the sterling zone, West Cameroonians had to pay far more for their imported goods than their counterparts in East Cameroon.[38]

There were equally certain administrative decisions of the Federal Government which negatively affected the West Cameroon economy. This was the case with the requirements for the registration of foreign nationals in the federation. The Federal Government compelled each adult foreigner to pay a substantial amount of money. This decision affected the Nigerians more than any other national group because some of them had been in Southern Cameroons/West Cameroon for so many years and had established large families.[39] Considering the large number of Nigerians resident in West Cameroon and their very prominent role in the economic life of the territory, the impact of this decision had to be felt more directly in West Cameroon. This situation forced a great proportion of Nigerians and their resources out of the territory. The result was a severe weakening of the commercial life of the West Cameroon state especially in rural areas.[40]

3.3. Federal Development Initiatives: Economic Absorption

In January 1959, the Southern Cameroons Financial Secretary issued circular No. 16 /1959 to all its departments requesting the submission of proposals with estimates for essential development over the period 1960-1965. The intention was to use the estimates to plan for future colonial development and Welfare assistance.[41] This move was frustrated by inadequate staff.[42] Further, the Executive Council emphasized the need for a development plan for the future and also, the need to prepare a corresponding revenue projection for the territory. This failed partly because of the future constitutional uncertainty of the territory.[43]Thus, at reunification, Southern Cameroons did not have any established development plan.

Contrarily, before reunification, the Republic of Cameroon was already a sovereign state with a clearly defined economic development agenda. President Ahmadou Ahidjo in synergy with the French economic experts mapped out an indigenous development strategy through a series of Five Year

[35] Victor Julius Ngoh, *Cameroon 1884-present (2018): the history of a people* (Limbe: Design, 2019), 189-90.
[36] NAB File. no. Qb/a(1962)2.
[37]Qb/a(1966)14, West Cameroon Financial Position.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41]Qb/a1961/10, Southern Cameroons Five year Development Plan. See also NAB P.1248, File No. Qb/a 1961/3, West Cameroon Economic Planning Committee.
[42] Ibid.
[43]Qb/a1961/10.

Development Plans to be successively implemented between 1960 and 1990.[44] This plan was operationalized fully in 1960 while the State of West Cameroon was still under British Trusteeship. It was implemented in two phases: the first and second five years development plans. The first plan, spanning from July 1960 to June 1965 produced by a French research and planning group did not include West Cameroon in the entire federation's economy.[45]

At independence and reunification, the newly created Federal Republic faced the challenge of aggregating the two economies to create a workable and successful national economic policy. Reunification triggered concerns on the possibility to manage and fuse the two economies in co-existence without competition, conflicts, contradictions and domination by one over the other. At the birth of the federation, East Cameroon was ten times the size of the West Cameroon. It had a population almost four times that of West Cameroon, immeasurably greater resources, and a much higher level of socio-economic development.[46]

In his address to the nation on January 2, 1962, President Ahmadou Ahidjo argued that "political and psychological unity had been accomplished leaving the fusion of the two economic systems as the main task."[47] In an open statement in January 1962, the French Ambassador in Yaoundé insinuated that in the nation building process, West Cameroon would be assimilated to its former Republic of Cameroon. Six months later, the French representative in Buea similarly remarked that "an ex-French territory was undoubtedly about to absorb an ex-British territory."[48]

Attempts to harmonize[49] the economies of the federated states worked against the West Cameroon state thereby compelling her to remain resolutely defensive throughout the existence of the federation. President Ahidjo formulated and implemented policies aimed at eradicating some of the West Cameroon economic and cultural heritage. These were calculated moves to integrate West Cameroon more and more into the East Cameroon- dominated Federal State. Surely this is what led Ardener to observe that, "the story of the first few years of the federation was one of various attempts to link West Cameroon in some effective way to its partner, and of the gradual discovery of new ways of doing this by the East."[50]

The harmonization process was rather a furtive attempt by the Federal Government to absorb the economy of West Cameroon. This was evident in the policies instituted by the Federal Government from 1962. These included the change of currency from sterling to franc CFA, the imposition of the East Cameroon Metric system of weights and measures, strings placed on internal and external trade, the sluggishness of the Federal Government to dismantle customs barrier and above all, the absence of a defined revenue allocation formula. All these helped to cripple the State of West Cameroon and left it perpetually at the mercy of Federal Government subventions.

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[44] Nixon KahjumTakor and George FuhKum, "Incubation of the Economic Crisis in Post-colonial Cameroon 1960-1987: An Experience in State Capitalism", *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education* 5, No.8(2018):55.
[45]Ibid. See also George FuhKum and Jude KawzuKum, understanding Agro-pastoral shows in a planned economy(1973-1987): 771-772
[46]Victor Julius Ngoh, *The Untold Story of Cameroon Reunification, 1955-1961*(Limbe: Pressprint, 2011),35., Nicodemus FruAwasom, The Reunification Question in Cameroon History: Was the Bride an Enthusiastic or a Reluctant One?www.peuplesawa.com/downloads/48.doc, *accessed on 3 December 2010.*
Nicodemus FruAwasom, "Anglo-Saxonism and Gallicism in Nation Building in Africa: The Case of Bilingual Cameroon and the Senegambia Confederation in Historical and Contemporary Perspective" *AfrikaZamani*, nos. 11 & 12 (2004):99. It is desirable that in a federation, the federating units should be equal in size and population. If anyone of the units outbids the other in power and importance, it becomes a dominant partner and the federal character of the union is likely to be impaired. The Cameroon federation was indeed a compromise between a lion and a score of mice.
[47] Melanie Torrent, *Diplomacy and Nation building in Africa: Franco-British relations and Cameroon at the end of empire*(London and New York: I.B Tauris, 2012), 74.
[48]Ibid., 73.
[49] Overtly, there was the insistence on harmonization of the two economies in order to forge development in a more comprehensive manner. However, what was termed harmonization was in actual sense economic absorption of West Cameroon wrapped behind the smokescreen of economic harmonization. It was a disguised attempt by the federal government to dilute the West Cameroon economy with that of East Cameroon.
[50]Ardener, 290.

3.4. From Sterling to Franc CFA: Economic Disruptions

At reunification, East Cameroon sustained its pre-independence currency, the CFA franc while the state of West Cameroon maintained the pound sterling as its legal tender.[51]Reunification implied that the Federal Republic of Cameroon would either belong to a single monetary area (that is, a choice between franc CFA and sterling), or set up an independent monetary system. Between December 1960 and February 1961, the Republic of Cameroon commissioned Kjell Anderson a United Nations economist to examine the economic consequences of reunification.[52] The monetary issue was examined by assessing three possible options, namely:

a) Membership of the sterling area,
b) Membership in the franc zone and,
c) An independent monetary zone.

The Anderson report recommended that, the Federal Republic of Cameroon should belong to the franc zone[53] and called for the replacement of the pound sterling with the franc CFA.[54]The report stated that membership in the franc zone would attract beneficial loans from France and from the European Economic Community (EEC). However, he advised against the immediate and abrupt elimination of the preferential tariff treatment. The currency change recommended by Anderson was accepted and 1962, the franc CFA was adopted as the federal legal tender. Consequently, traders in West Cameroon had to face difficulties buying goods from Nigeria due to the impossibility of obtaining sterling. While Cameroonian traders accepted Nigerian sterling, the Nigerians, contrarily, rejected the CFA franc.[55] Petty traders in West Cameroon needed to buy sterling in order to import from Nigeria. The Federal Government did not give the desired attention and the result was an unprecedented 50% rise in the cost of living in West Cameroon.[56]

The changeover in currency also affected the Cameroon Development Corporation, West Cameroon's second highest employer. The corporation suffered financial loss as a result of the adjusted exchange rates. Rather than the official exchange rate, the adhoc exchange rate of 692 francs to a pound was adopted. Until the official rate was adopted, the CDC was losing 7 francs for every pound exchanged. The highest and most common unit of the sterling currency in circulation at the time of conversion was the 1 pound note, and after conversion the highest and most common unit was the 1000 franc note.[57] Thus, in popular imagination, the equality of the 1 pound note and the 1000 franc note had become reality. Until the people became conversant with the new currency, the assessment of monetary values was mentally conducted in francs and then mentally converted into sterling. Goods, costing 1 pound, were mentally imagined and assumed to be worth 1000 francs. This further undervalued the franc in terms of the pound and raised the cost of living. For instance, goods, which before conversion amounted to 6 pounds, were marked 6000 francs and after conversion marked 6000. In reality, 6 pounds was equal to about 4000francs. Thus, a laborer earning 6 pounds before conversation earned 4000 francs after. This was an apparent reduction in the purchasing power by about 30%.[58]

[51]The two Cameroon federated states that came together in 1961 had originally, by virtue of their past history, belonged respectively to two monetary zones, the franc zone and the sterling area.
[52]The report was made at the request of the government of the Cameroun Republic. It was prepared in Yaoundé in the period from early 1960 to the middle of February 1961, of which two and a half weeks were spent in Buea in British Southern Cameroons. The assignment, limited to maximum 90 days, was financed by the International Cooperation Administration of the United States.
[53] The Franc zone is one of the monetary zones around the world, the best known besides it being the Dollar and the Sterling areas. The Franc zone simply refers to an association of countries which had or still have special political ties with France and which have retained privileged economic and monetary ties. See Qa/a/1967/3, the Franc Zone. The zone has developed empirically.
[54]Simon Joseph Epale, *Plantations and Development in Western Cameroon, 1885-1975: A Study in Agrarian Capitalism* (New York: Vantage press, 1985), 186. Vc/b/1960/6, southern Cameroons Plebiscite Financial arrangements.,Oc(1959)5, financial, economic and administrative consequences to the Southern Cameroons of separation from the federation of Nigeria.. See Vc/b/1961/8, report on the economic aspects of a possible reunification of the British Cameroons with the republic of Cameroon.
[55]Pmo 422, File NO. Qb/a(1962)2.
[56]Ibid., seeNdongko, *Regional Economic Planning in Cameroon*.
[57]Epale, *Plantations and Development in Western Cameroon*, 175.
[58]Epale, 186-187.

4. External trade and exchange control problems in West Cameroon

Exchange control problems were a disaster to the economy of West Cameroon and the lives of its citizens. This problem was reflected in the licensing system. Before July 1, 1962, the licensing system used in West Cameroon was the Open General Import License system. By this, traders enjoyed the luxury of free importation from any part of the world with the exception of certain communist countries.[59] On July 1, 1962, new regulations on external trade were introduced in the State of West Cameroon. This created inflation, shortages and increases in the prices of consumer goods to fantastically high levels. [60]

Another critical problem faced by the West Cameroon Government stemmed from irregularities in the allocation of import quotas.[61]These regulations were introduced 1962 and were primarily designed to re-orientate the commercial life of West Cameroon from the sterling to the franc zone. In introducing these regulations, it was necessary for the Federal Government to make adequate arrangements to ensure that the changes did not result in either a disruption or stagnation of the local economy. Contrarily no such precautions were taken and the recommendations made by West Cameroonians that any changes introduced in its commercial life should cause only minimum dislocation to the external trade of the territory were all rebuffed by the federal authorities.[62]

The import licensing system introduced was quite alien to West Cameroon. It was extremely tedious and expensive. For instance, an importer wishing to import goods as from ten rubrics had to fill sixty forms. Only one office was originally set up in Victoria to serve the whole of West Cameroon. This new office was staffed by inexperienced officers who only heightened the difficulties connected with the heavy documentation that licensing entailed.[63] The result was unnecessary delays in the clearing of goods.

Due to the historical links between West Cameroon and Britain, it was obvious that the bulk of her trade would for a long time remain with the sterling areas. The complicated system of import licensing was therefore bound to have an adverse effect on the trade of West Cameroon in that it more easily resulted to shortages than it did in East Cameroon where the bulk of imports were from the franc zone. This is because in the franc zone, no license was required to import.[64] Import licenses were required only when the goods were from countries outside the franc zone but the amount of goods that came outside the franc zone was by every standard very small and could not constitute any major problem to the economy of East Cameroon.[65]

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[59] Before reunification, the Southern Cameroons, as part of Nigeria was a member of the sterling area and the external trade regulations of the sterling area were operative in the territory. Under the terms of these regulations, all imports from the hard currency countries as well as goods from Eastern Europe and China were subject to a specific import license. Applications for these specific licenses were approved only if the goods to be imported were not obtainable in the sterling area or were considered very essential. Goods from both the sterling and soft currency countries (that is, practically the whole of Western Europe) were permitted freely under the omnibus open general license, with minor exceptions of a few goods from these sources for which a specific license was necessary.

[60]Ibid. See File No. Qb/a 1966/16, Circulars from Ministry of Economic Affairs and Planning.Earlier on, the government of West Cameroon had warned about the hasty introduction of these measures and suggested that, they should be applied cautiously, otherwise they would jeopardize the West Cameroon economy. In spite of the plea, the new regulations and decrees were drawn up completely ignoring what was proposed by West Cameroonians on the commission that was set up to investigate the matter.

[61] The import license served the dual purpose of trade licensing and exchanges, that is, it enabled goods ordered from abroad to be imported into the country and also at the same time provides the authority to pay for the goods imported. It was obtained for goods imported from all countries outside the Franc Monetary zoned by the Foreign Trade Department of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Planning, Victoria. See file N0. Qb/a1966/16, circulars from ministry of economic affairs and planning.

[62] NAB Sci 165/1, file N0. Qi/1962/10, Import Licensing Control Problems. See also, File No. Qb/a(1966)14, West Cameroon Financial Position.

[63]Epale, 188.

[64] File No. Qi/1962/10, Licensing and Exchange Control Problems.

[65]File No.Qb/a(1966)14.

F. Ndjountche, the Assistant Director of Economic Relations in Douala supposedly mishandled the system of allocation. Import allocations were the exclusive responsibility of the Technical Committee for Imports established by Decree No.62/DF/205. According to the decree, the committee was expected to meet annually to prepare allocations but this did not happen. Consequently, allocations had to be made entirely by Njountche with no consultation with West Cameroon authorities or members of the committee. The result was that allocations were made at variance with the terms of the decree and at Njountche's whims.[66]

The allocations deviated completely from principles articulated by the decree as it included the names of so many traders who did not satisfy the demands of the decree. To qualify for allocation, registered traders were expected to possess permanent installation warehouses or stores and would have realized in the previous year, an import turnover of at least one million francs. The allocations were done in Douala and merely handed out to West Cameroon readymade. This system was quite unsatisfactory because the officers responsible for the allocations had no personal knowledge of affairs in West Cameroon and were bound, therefore, to allocate arbitrarily. Due to the arbitrary allocations, a lot of "importers" who did not meet the requirements were granted allocations. Consequently, the big firms on whom the territory relied so much could not get enough allocations to import all their requirements. This resulted in shortages because the mushroom organizations that received allocations rarely utilized them. In fact, some of them did not even operate a bank account. Thus, a substantial portion of foreign exchange currency that could have been utilized had to be hoarded.[67]

This situation was further compounded by the fact that, once a license had been granted for the importation of a specific good in a particular rubric and the said good happened to be unavailable, the importer could not switch to another good within the same rubric until the license was amended and in many cases applications for the amendment in order to switch over to a new good were dismissed without any justifiable reasons.[68]

It is important to reiterate the fact the new licensing system introduced in West Cameroon had been in existence in East Cameroon with little complaint in that territory. However, the circumstances in West Cameroon were definitely unique and required a completely different system of control. It was against this backdrop that the West Cameroon Government insisted that a new system of allocation must be devised to meet these circumstances. No doubt, the federation at the early stages was a laboratory which required consistency in trying out new methods of doing things if existing methods were not in the best interest of both states. But, how ready were the decision makers to listen?

It was a common believe among West Cameroonians that the assistant Director of external economic relation was prejudiced against those who imported from non-franc zone countries. Due to these prejudices, detrimental policies aimed at forcing West Cameroonian traders to re-orientate their trade from sterling to the franc zone were introduced. Many large firms in West Cameroon which continued to trade mainly with Britain and the sterling zone were discriminated to French-based firms in West Cameroon. (See Table 4).

Table4. *Import allocations, 1963*

Name of firm	QOTA APPLIED FOR	QOTA GRANTED	APPROXIMATE % GRANTED
COMC(Printania) French	627,300NF	540,885 NF	87%
SONAC French	5,425000NF	2867, 460NF	50%
R.W KING British	23,989000NF	7204, 020NF	30%
JOHN HOLT British	12000,000NF	3,274004NF	27%
Cameroon Import and Export Company(CIEC) British	40320,000NF	4,463,268NF	11%
Cameroon Commercial Company British(CCC)	42000,000NF	4,495,785	10.7%

Source: *File No. Qb\a(1962)2, General economic situation of West Cameroon arising from Reunification.*

[66] In particular, the Technical Committee for Imports established in 1962 was not consulted during the allocation of import quota for 1963. To have ignored the committee without any justifiable reason was an abnormal procedure according to the West Cameroon fashion. Since the committee did not meet it was thus considered by the West Cameroon government that definitely the allocations would have been made arbitrarily.

[67] File No.Qb/a(1966)14.

[68] Ibid.

The figures above indicate that, the East Cameroon firms of Printania and SONAC got a substantial percentage of what they applied for. It was indeed a glitch because when the allocations were made these companies were just into their first year of operation in West Cameroon. So, therefore, the companies had no records of their activities in this state during the past year of which their applications could have been based.[69] In contrast, the long established West Cameroon firms of R&W Kings, John Holt and C.I.E.C. got just a meager percentage of what they applied for. Even the firm of C.C.C. where the state government had financial interests was granted only 10%.[70]

The arbitrary allocation of foreign exchange gave rise to a spade of suspicion among West Cameroonians. For instance, in the allocations, Printania, a French firm, got 87% of the allocation applied for and Sonac, another French firm got 50%, but two British firms R&W King and John Holt got 30% and 27% respectively of the allocation applied for. A situation like this could have only provoked suspicion that the person responsible for the allocation was partial to the French.

The figures also reveal that the territory had to face substantial shortages in consumer goods. In order to avoid these shortages it became nonnegotiable for the West Cameroon-based firms even against their will, to re-orientate their trade towards the franc zone. This was not in the best interest of consumers in West Cameroon especially in the case of agricultural goods ordered from France. Agricultural goods imported from France were more expensive than agricultural goods ordered from the United Kingdom. Thus, the West Cameroon consumer had to bear the brunt. It was against this backdrop that JN Foncha- Premier of West Cameroon, in a letter to Mr. Kamga- Federal Minister of Economy, noted that,

> The West Cameroon government fully appreciate that West Cameroon is now part of the franc zone but feels that a fairly lengthy period of time will be necessary before these implications can be fully realized in practice in view of the normal direction of the West Cameroon trade and the consequent freedom from restrictions hitherto enjoyed by the traders.[71]

Apart from being considered prejudicial to West Cameroon, these measures led to a decline in trade between West Cameroon and the United Kingdom. This was against the trade agreement reached in London between Great Britain and the Federal Republic of Cameroon part of which read,

> The Government of the Federal Republic of Cameroon for their part intends to make available facilities for the import of British goods destined for West Cameroon throughout the period until September 30, 1963, which will allow this trade to run at its present level. It is furthermore, the intention of the Government to provide all practicable facilities in encouraging the expansion of trade between the two countries.[72]

It is needless reemphasizing that this had disastrous effects on the West Cameroon exports of bananas, foreign investment and aid from the United Kingdom. It was expected that all matters related to the external trade of West Cameroon would be placed in the hands of someone who could really appreciate and who clearly understood the terrain. Unfortunately, Ndjountche was definitely most unsuitable as he was incapable of handling the problem because, he had not lived in the state of West Cameroon and was non-English speaking. Thus, he was unable to understand the problem of traders properly; neither could West Cameroonians understand him.[73]

The appointment of OS Ebanja as Director of Economic Services for West Cameroon, however, instilled some hope in the people of this territory. The popular suggestion was that this vital responsibility handled by F. Njountche should immediately be assigned to Ebanja. Surely, this was due to the consideration that West Cameroon's economic problems were better understood, and could be diligently handled by a West Cameroonian. The decision to transfer the functions of F. Ndountche to Ebanja was however, the discretion of the Federal Minister of Economy. While expecting a favorable response from the competent authority, it was further suggested that OS Ebanja be vested the powers to carry out the following functions:

[69]File No. Qi/1962/10, Licensing and Exchange Control Problems.
[70] For information on the quota system see NAB DI&B260, File No. Qb/a1966/16, Circulars from Ministry of Economic Affairs and Planning.
[71] File No. Qb\a(1962)2.
[72]SCI 165/1, Licensing and Exchange Control Problems.
[73]Pmo 422, File No. Qb/a (1962)2.

a) Initiate policy on all matters affecting external trade and exchange control.
b) To be directly responsible to the Federal Minister of National Economy and should be consulted on all matters local or international affecting West Cameroon.[74]

The direct immediate effect of the allocation system was a rise in the cost of living in West Cameroon. First, in order to recover the high expenses in the licensing system, importers had to inflate the retail prices of imports.[75]In order to lessen the suffering caused by high prices, the West Cameroon Government in April 1963 increased the salaries of low income government workers by up to 20 percent. This further added to the financial burden of the government to the tune of 151 million francs.[76]The inflationary prices in West Cameroon also badly affected the CDC. When the West Cameroon Government opted to assist some of its workers, the CDC employees also reacted promptly by submitting a demand for wage increases. After protracted negotiations, the CDC had to grant wage and salary increases to its workers averaging some 7 percent. [77]

5. Disruption of Frontier Trade with Nigeria

Frontier trade between the State of West Cameroon and Nigeria was an important historical asset for the West Cameroonian. Before the decree on frontier trade was promulgated, the West Cameroon Government reminded the Federal authorities of the need to allow trade with Nigeria to proceed with minimum interference. This plea was completely ignored and the regulations that were finally drawn up did not take into consideration the views of the West Cameroon Government. The new regulations were quite disappointing since they contained no provision for the continuance of petty trading transactions across the frontier with cash but confined all such transactions to barter trade only. [78]

Before the introduction of the new regulations, custom duties from frontier trade with Nigeria averaged 20,000 pounds a month or 13.840.000 francs CFA. After the regulations, monthly custom receipts averaged 3.578.981 francs CFA indicating a drop by some 10.261.019 francs CFA.[79] It is true that, the Federal Government was against petty trading because the traders trafficked in currency but if the government had heeded to advice of West Cameroonians there would certainly have been little trade in currency. The petty trading system was very important to West Cameroon because it helped to meet the deficiencies in foodstuff and imported goods. Moreover, they swelled the coffers of the federation by way of custom duties.[80]

The exchange control services established under the new regime were also not functioning satisfactorily as they were extremely tedious and complex.[81] Apart from simplification of the formalities involved, the West Cameroon Government had insisted that the Federal Government should publish all relevant information about the exchange formalities in English because most West Cameroonians were completely ignorant of these. Also, the existing regulations failed to take into cognizance the fact that West Cameroon was more connected mainly with a monetary zone other than the Franc zone.

Before the modifications, West Cameroon exporters who also imported equipment retained part of the proceeds of their exports on sterling bank accounts in London. The main advantage of this system was that it avoided unnecessary bank charges and ensured greater flexibility in the purchase of capital equipment for export. With the new regulations, foreign firms found it difficult to transfer their assets, profits or capital. For instance, it took Nigeria Airways six months to transfer their profits. Similarly, there was protracted delay before the Italian firm of Intercontinental could be allowed to transfer the money from the sale of their house in Buea to Italy. Such policy was bound to scare away foreign investment in the territory.[82]

[74] Ibid.
[75] Epale, 188.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid., 188-189.
[78] Qb/a/1961/7, Financial and Economic Implication of Reunification.
[79] Qi/1962/15, Petty trade : Nigeria and West Cameroon.
[80] File No. Qb/a (1962)2.
[81] The basic objective of any exchange control system is the conservation of foreign exchange without which the settlement of international indebtedness cannot be possible.
[82] File No. Qb/a (1962)2.

Applications to order books, magazines, pay for tuition fees were rejected without good cause. The West Cameroon Government also found it impossible to continue with its traditional method of ordering goods through the Crown in London. The exchange control insisted that all such applications must in the first instance be sent to the West Cameroon Government Bankers to endorse and transfer to the foreign suppliers the costs of the goods, upon the issuance of the licenses by the Foreign Exchange Office. The banks were unwilling to endorse the applications for government importations since West Cameroon Government funds had already been transferred to the Crown Agents.[83]

As part of the Nigerian Federation, young industries in Southern Cameroons were granted relief from custom duties under the Industrial Development (Import Duties Relief) Ordinance to import their machinery and new materials. After reunification, most commercial organizations were under the impression that they would continue to enjoy these benefits. Since customs had become a federal responsibility, it was impossible for the West Cameroon Government to grant them imports exemption from custom duties. The issue was a serious concern to the State of West Cameroon to the extent that a letter was addressed to Koddock of the Ministry of National Economy for redress, but it received no reply. Consequently, companies that had originally shown interest to establish in West Cameroon were reluctant to do so. Without the import exemptions, they were not sure to cover up the costs of their products. This was the case with Messrs Emen Textiles which requested to manufacture umbrellas, footwears and singlets; Messrs and Britind Footwear and Tiko Iron Works whose requests were held up because no decision was taken to grant relief.[84]

On several occasions, meetings were held and delegations sent abroad to attend conferences on issues that would have an impact on West Cameroon without the knowledge of the West Cameroon Government. It was against this backdrop that JN Foncha in a letter to Kamga, the Federal Minister of Economy noted"… the State of West Cameroon has been treated as if it was still under colonial status…."[85] Foncha emphasized that, more opportunities should be given to Secretaries of State and officials from the state to participate in such conferences and that full details of the deliberations of these conferences should be made available to the government of the state in the language best understood by the people.[86]

Earlier in June 1962, the West Cameroon Secretary of State Augustine Ngom Jua had reacted to a decree on the establishment of the Federal Chamber of Commerce (FCC) signed by the Federal President without prior consultation with the West Cameroon Government. The lengthy decree was in French without an English version. The signing of this decree was against an established rule which stated that no decision on external trade should be taken without first being referred to the Federal Commission on Foreign Trade and Exchange Control for their views and recommendations. The degree undoubtedly had a bearing on the role of the chamber of commerce and therefore an effect on external trade.[87]Jua, thus expressed dissatisfaction by the fact that the West Cameroon Government was not consulted. In a letter addressed to the Minister of National Economy dated June 16, 1962, he maintained,

> In my view, and to the view of the honorable Prime Minister [JN Foncha], the decree should have been submitted in draft form to the federal commission before receiving the president's approval and I wish to protest strongly at the lack of consultation in this matter. I should add that although a matter may fall within the competence of the Federal Government on purely constitutional grounds, this does not mean that measures affecting the states can be carried out without consultation. This, in fact, is a fundamental precept of a federal type constitution.[88]

Jua insisted that copies of the decree be forwarded in English for his perusal and pointed out that after going through the content of the decree, comments and where necessary and appropriate, proposals for amendments would be made. He did not end without stressing the necessity to consult the state on

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[83] Ibid.
[84] NAB Pmo.135, File N0. Qb/a/ 1966/14, West Cameroon financial position.
[85] Ibid.
[86] File N0. Qb\a(1962)2.
[87]For details on the decree see File No. Qi/1962/16, Cameroon Chamber of Commerce.
[88] NAB.109, File No. Qb/a 1962/1, Fiscal Commission.

issues that directly involved her. In his words, "in the meantime, I will be grateful if you will be good enough to assure me that in all similar cases in future, the fullest consultation will be held with the state government in matters which affect the economy of the state so closely."[89]

Closely linked to Jua's letter was that addressed to the Minister of Federal National Economy dated April 16, 1963, by PM Kemcha, the Secretary of State for Labor, Internal Trade, Marketing and Inspection, West Cameroon. In this letter Kemcha averred,

> I trust honorable minister, that you fully appreciate that as the accredited representative of our people we are all irrevocably dedicated to the struggle for their emancipation from poverty and want, and it is our sacred duty to ensure that the free flow of trade in all parts of the federation, which has as its primary objective the enhancement of their prosperity, is not impeded or stifled by bureaucratic controls. With the attainment of independence our people expect, as of right, greater freedom and expansion in the commercial life of this state otherwise we would merely have succeeded in replacing colonialism with economic instability. As you will no doubt further appreciate failure on our part to take cognizance of these facts would amount to a negation of all our struggles for self-determination and a dereliction of our responsibilities to the community we represent.[90]

When commissioned by the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labor, Internal Trade, Marketing and Inspection to comment on the prevailing situation caused by exchange control regulations, OS Ebanja, Director of Economic Services, Ministry of National Economy among other declarations, lamented,

> Decisions on these matters take a long time to come through. If the Gods of Douala [East Cameroon] smile on you then you are lucky; but if they frown, then you can dance around for a long time- six months is not uncommon- and you may be disappointed in the end.[91]

6. CUSTOMS BARRIER AND STRAINS ON THE WEST CAMEROON ECONOMY

In strict economic term, customs barrier is an obstacle to economic development. Even though reunited, the Federal Government did not immediately dissolve customs barrier between East and West Cameroon. The removal of customs barrier would have meant, produce from East Cameroon not meant for export could enter West Cameroon without duty and the same kind of produce of West Cameroon enters in the same way, East Cameroon. This was however, not the case because imports cleared in Douala had to pay duty again when sold to West Cameroon. The procedures to get back the duty paid in East Cameroon were so cumbersome that the merchants charged the customers the East and West Cameroon custom duties which meant an increase in cost. Furthermore, goods from West Cameroon on transit in Douala, but finally sold in East Cameroon had to pay export duty in West Cameroon and import duty in East Cameroon.[92]

Due to the customs barrier, important products such as rice and cement were on several occasions not available in West Cameroon especially in a town like Victoria. These shortages caused not only sudden price increases but also, delays in the execution of construction projects. Similarly, ships with goods, while sailing for West Cameroon ports, were ordered to call first on other harbors in East Cameroon and the delivery of their cargo at Bota or Tiko had to be unnecessarily delayed.[93]

During much of the existence of the federation, as late as 1966 when the plea was finally given consideration, the West Cameroon Government determinedly mounted pressure on the Federal Government to remove customs barrier because it was grossly detrimental. As Douala became the main distributor for West Cameroon, foreign trade of Victoria had to diminish. Douala, evidently, was a port where the large oil tankers could not enter. Moreover, the approach channels to the port of Douala especially in the stretch of river on which the port was situated were increasingly subjected to silting. It was against this background that foreign experts proposed the development of the Bota-

[89] Ibid.
[90] File No. Qi/1962/10,
[91] Ibid.
[92] Qb/a 1964, Harmonization of the Economic systems of East and West Cameroon.
[93] Ibid.

Victoria port to host the biggest ships while establishing connections with Douala through the Douala-Tiko-Victoria stretch of road. This proposal was ignored by the Federal Government and West Cameroon continued to depend on Douala thereby enduringly bearing the burden of double import and export duties.[94]

The lifting of customs barrier and the eventual harmonization of customs tariffs came to fruition in 1966. This, arguably was a good move but done at a wrong time. All along the Federal Government had resisted the dismantling of customs barrier and by the time this was done, it rather exposed West Cameroon businessmen to a competitive situation for which neither the West Cameroon businessmen nor the West Cameroon economy as such were properly prepared. As a more favorably placed sector of the federation, businessmen became more and more attracted toward East Cameroon at the detriment of West Cameroon.[95]

The Federal Government's lukewarm attitude towards appeals by the West Cameroon government for the harmonization of port charges between Douala and Kribi on the one hand and Victoria on the other hand was also interpreted by some West Cameroonians as a design to run down the economy of that State. Countless unfulfilled promises were made by the Federal Government to look into the matter. Relentlessly, West Cameroonians continued to drive home their frustrations and in 1966 it was suggested that a delegation be sent to Yaoundé to meet the Minister of transport on this matter for redress. Port charges in Victoria far outweighed those in East Cameroon ports. This did not only discourage importers from using the Victoria port but also increased the cost of retail goods in West Cameroon since the importers needed to recover the extra port charges.[96]

7. RELUCTANCE TO ENFORCE REVENUE ALLOCATION

The economic and financial difficulties of West Cameroon were compounded by the absence of revenue allocation between the two federated states and the Federal Government. This issue was carefully sidelined at Foumban while drawing up the federal constitution. Besides, West Cameroon gave up important sources of revenue and was to be financed by federal subventions until a formula was designed. Such a formula was never fixed. Although JN Foncha regularly requested the putting in of a revenue allocation committee during the first years of the federation's existence, Ahidjo simply refused to do so and West Cameroon continued to depend on the largesse of the Federal Government for survival from the beginning to the end of the federation.[97]

The absence of a clearly defined revenue allocation formula between the Federal Government and the Federated States meant that the West Cameroon Government had to rely on arbitrary subventions from the Federal Government in order to balance its budget. The notion behind this indifference with regards to the setting up of a defined revenue allocation scheme was that, the financial resources would be transferred from the wealthier to the relatively poorer state. Put differently, it was to ensure that West Cameroon which was relatively less developed was provided adequate resources in order to catch up with East Cameroon.[98]The Federal Republic of Cameroon therefore thought it fit to soft-pedal the issue; meanwhile the president had to administer the funds and give aid to each state as the need was justified for extra money over the annual budget. The extent to which this was realistic in the Cameroonian experience and the amount of cash that the Federal Government was ready to pump into the economy of West Cameroon on the basis of need could just be some of the unanswered puzzles.

In addition, all the financial houses and other institutions which provided credit were situated in East Cameroon and had relatively less interest in the development of West Cameroon.[99] The West Cameroon Government was not in the position to make contacts with foreign governments or other

[94] Ibid.
[95]Qb/a(1966)14, West Cameroon Financial Position.
[96] File No.Qb/a(1966)14, West Cameroon Financial Position.
[97] Ahidjo was definitely drawing from the experiences of other federations. Though it is always good to determine the methods of revenue allocation beforehand, experiences in Nigeria, East Africa and other countries did not support this wisdom. It always created a bone of contention between allocation on the principle of need and that of the principles of derivations. One state is always left dissatisfied.
[98]Ba/1967/1, On the Path to a Federal Republic.
[99] NAB.PMO135, File No.Qb/a(1966)14, West Cameroon Financial Position.

financial institutions abroad in order to ask for assistance for local development.[100] All such requests had to be made through the Federal Government; which unfortunately, had in many cases shown very little sympathy or empathy towards the state of West Cameroon. The Federal Government's lack of sympathy for West Cameroon was portrayed in 1966 when the Cameroon bank was at the brink of a collapse. The Federal Government was one of the bank's biggest shareholders with approximately 400,000,000 CFA franc deposit. In a period where it was expected that the Federal Government would do its best to salvage the bank, contrarily, it withdrew this amount on a very short notice. It also ensured that customs money held by the bank averaging about 120,000,000 CFA franc monthly was withdrawn.[101]

The actions of the Federal Government contributed immeasurably in placing the bank in an advanced state of decline. This explains why by 1966, the Cameroon bank could no longer grant loans or assist the Cameroon Development Agency in financing its projects. Even when it became clear after 1966 that the West Cameroon Government could no longer pay salaries of civil servants and finance other projects of economic interest, the intervention of Federal authorities to salvage the situation was unenthusiastic. This was under the pretext that the Federation was an expensive venture.[102]In 1972 President Ahidjo would use the abysmal performance of the West Cameroon economy to argue forcefully for the abrogation of the federation on the grounds that the state of West Cameroon was a burden to the federation.[103]

8. Conclusion

The main aim of this paper was to examine the responsibility of the Federal Government for the economic malaise of West Cameroon in the period of the Cameroon federation. The paper has revealed that the poor performance of the West Cameroon economy was a product of the economic policies initiated by the Federal Government after reunification. The policies emanated from the craving to leverage the West and East Cameroon economies in the spirit of national integration. Its implementation was however, more tailored to align with the economic development plan and emerging socio-economic exigencies in East Cameroon. This was manifest in the change of currency from the pound sterling to CFA Franc, strings on internal and external trade, slowness of the Federal Government to dismantle customs barrier and above all, the absence of a defined revenue allocation formula and dependence on Federal Government subventions. Such disproportionate economic considerations had major political implications. It shattered hope for a stable and sustainable West Cameroon economy and gave opportunity for the liquidation of the Federation on economic grounds.

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[100] Ibid.
[101]Nixon KahjumTakorand Kenneth N. Yufenyuy, "The Southern-West Cameroon(s) Development Agency, 19561973: Historical Evidence of Hope and Despair in Economic Development" *International Journal of History and Cultural Studies* 4, No. 3 (2018) : 48.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Willard Johnson, *The Cameroon Federation: Political Integration in a Fragmentary Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 37.

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