How can we understand structural violence in the context of the "Anglophone Problem" in Cameroon?

Following secession marches in the anglophone regions of Cameroon (formally Southern British Cameroons) on 1st October, violence erupted and left 17 dead (Amnesty International, 2017). At a press briefing on 31st October, UNHCR spokesperson Babar Baloch stated that due to the renewed violence in these regions, 2,000 people have been registered in Southeastern Nigeria and 3,000 people are awaiting registration. The agency speculated receiving an influx of an additional 40,000 as a conservative estimate (UNHCR, 2017). The "Anglophone Problem" in Cameroon has once again erupted to the point of physical, direct violence and now to cross border displacement. The Cameroonian government's policies and practices of repression and exploitation, constituting structural violence towards the anglophone minority, are arguably a major contributing factor to the secession movement and current escalation, however, how can we understand this contribution and through it, structural violence itself? In order to evaluate the violence and its effects, it is necessary to delve into the mechanics of structural violence and how it can be wielded in order to create and maintain subordination.

Structural violence is defined by Galtung (1996, p.31) as being divisible into "political (repressive) and economic (exploitative); supported by structural penetration, segmentation, fragmentation and marginalization". These last four terms are key, since they are the means by which the structure prevents consciousness formation (relating to the two former) and mobilisation (relating to the two latter). Consciousness formation and mobilisation, should they be achieved, are seen by Galtung as necessary to challenge structural violence, and their avoidance is crucial to its proliferation. This provides us with a useful framework through which to evaluate state policy in contribution to the "Anglophone Problem". We will look at each of the four, their definition, and then take significant examples from the context of Cameroon in order to understand their role in structural violence as a whole. It is worth noting at this point that select contextual examples, whilst useful for our purposes, will not be exhaustive of the role of the state within the formation and escalation of the "Anglophone Problem" and thus do not constitute a full analysis.

The first dimension of structural violence is 'penetration', which Galtung (1996, p.93) describes as the infiltration of members of the oppressive majority into the subversive minority, or the "conditioning of the mind from above". This infiltration can take many forms, however within the context of Cameroon this can be demonstrated by the francophonisation of the anglophone educational system. For instance, the consistent posting of francophone teachers to schools and institutions within anglophone regions who teach in French and provide assessments only in French language (Joseph, 2014, p.125) can be seen as a subtle attempt at conditioning through imposition of language. This is a persistent point of protest by anglophone teachers, as well as having formed a key part of the teachers' association demands during the strikes of October 2016 (Pommerolle and Heungoup, 2017, pp.5-6). In addition, attempts at harmonisation of the two distinct education systems, remnants of colonial past, have been recognised as a penetrative attempt at assimilation and therefore marginalisation of anglophone identity (Ngalim, 2014). In September 1983, the anglophone General Certificate of Education (GCE) was ordered to be modified to bring it in line with the francophone baccalaureate, supposedly in order to ensure equal opportunity for entry into higher learning institutes. Anglophone students at the University of Yaoundé saw this as an assimilation tactic, stating that disharmony in educational structure was not the problem, rather the lack of institutes based on or accepting of their system (Konings, 2002, pp.185-6). That the

harmonisation also would have meant modification to the GCE alone was surely a sticking point, and would constitute penetration via modification of an overarching system whose purpose is in the conditioning of the mind itself. Whilst we can agree that state intervention within the education system can be seen as penetrative, within Galtungian rhetoric this should penetrate and condition in a way that consciousness formation is impeded – which in this case was not achieved. Within Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence, this would be deemed misrecognition – violence that is "wielded precisely inasmuch as one does not perceive it as such" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.168).

The second structural method to quell consciousness formation, Galtung argues, is 'segmentation'; that is, "giving the underdog only a very partial view of what goes on" (Galtung, 1996, p.199). For the purposes of this analysis, this will be interpreted as censorship, or impeding the anglophone population from enjoying the equal freedom of information. Since 1990, anglophone journalists have been the target of violent attacks or have been arrested 'without cause'; they have resigned, fled the country (self-censorship) or have been killed. (Ebai, 2009, p.644). Furthermore, as of 20th November, the second internet blackout of 2017 in the anglophone administrative regions of Cameroon has spanned 52 days. The first lasted 93 days from 17th January to 20th April of this year (Pommerolle and Heungoup, 2017, p.10), constituting almost five months without internet within the calendar year. Konings and Nyamnjoh (2003, p. 106) note the rise of the internet as an outlet for anglophone Cameroonian dissatisfaction, including those in country and of the international diaspora, and has therefore been closely monitored by the government. De Bruijn (2012, p.11) highlighted that the use of internet within the context of the anglophone problem bears similarity to the Arab Spring given the political tone of its discourse and global engagement. Of course, this internet shut down did not go unnoticed by the diaspora or international community. The UN Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/32/L.20 (2016) "condemns unequivocally measures to intentionally prevent or disrupt access to or dissemination of information online in violation of international human rights law". Media censorship and internet shut downs mark a conscious effort to deny anglophones equal access to information in their own language and, whilst could be seen as a direct method to quash any potential rebellion, can constitute a basic attempt at segmentation through restriction of communication. We can therefore see that such segmentation as a part of structural violence would result in a lack of being able to see the 'big picture' and thus entrenchment in a fragmented and curated consciousness, hindering any cognition of the presence of structural violence.

The third dimension of structural violence is 'fragmentation', wielded to impede mobilisation, and defined as "splitting those below away from each other" (Galtung, 1996, p.93) or effectively 'divide and rule'. The logic is that the strength that is found in numbers is easily quelled through identification of polarising differences within the same group. This has been, according to Konings and Nyamnjoh (2003, pp.136-7), one of the most important strategies employed by the Biya regime to prevent mobilisation. The government was able to capitalise on existing rifts between the two anglophone provinces, the South West and the North West, and their distinctive ethnic identities. These rifts were also due to factors such as a pre-independence political power shift from the South West to the North West, and an agriculture rich economy in the South West which meant a substantial loss of workforce for the North West (Konings, 2004, p.301). Through government concessions, the South West elite, who saw themselves at a disadvantage in the distribution of power compared to the North West, accepted strategic and politically advantageous appointments in a move to excerpt power over their neighbour. In doing so, they lost sight of their unity with the North West, and also the fight against the francophone state (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2003, pp.136-7). Unfortunately, these divides still thrive to some extent today, though

intermittent spells of cooperation can be seen – such as during the wide support for the 'ghost town' strike movement of late 2015 (Pommerolle and Heungoup, 2017, p.6). Fragmentation, as a form and means of structural violence can be seen as a powerful tactic. If successful, it can remove organisational capacity from a movement, and therefore delegitimise, preventing mobilisation. The endurance of the anglophone movement in Cameroon, however fragmented, provides a counter to this in that unification, even across economic, governance or ethnic disparities, can endure despite the best efforts of a regime.

As a fourth dimension, Galtung defines 'marginalisation' as "setting those below apart from the rest" (Galtung, 1996, p.93), that is, creating a sense of innate differentiation or distinction by any other means. Within Cameroon this is borne out via underrepresentation of anglophones within government, through economic deprivation and through the acceptance of "othering". Firstly, with regard to governance, the representation of anglophones within the state has declined since 1975 due to a "regional balancing" policy adopted to a point where of 36 ministers, only one is English speaking (Pommerolle and Heungoup, 2017, pp.3-4). Since one fifth of all regions are deemed anglophone, and one fifth of the population of 17 million are anglophone (Banseka, 2006, p.97), this constitutes a sever underrepresentation and marginalisation compared to the francophone majority. Economically, although the two anglophone regions contain all oilfields within the country, they are comparatively very much less developed than the main administrative regions of Douala and Yaoundé (Pommerolle and Heungoup, 2017, pp.3-4). This is compounded by limited employment opportunities due to the concentration of public and private sector jobs within the francophone domain (ownership and geographically), but also the francophonisation of every day public life, administration and bureaucracy (Eyoh, 1998, p.262). Lastly, but arguably most powerful, is the concept of "othering", meaning the creation of a concept of tangible divide by use of stereotyping or association with foreign culture. For example, often instead of referring to anglophones as Cameroonian, they will be called Biafrans or Nigerians, invoking secessionist presumption and colonial connotations (Jua and Konings, 2004, p.625). Otherwise, it could be a case of being publicly identified as anglophone whilst speaking French in public, creating a differentiation conveying second class status (Eyoh, 1998, p.263). Marginalisation, by the definition and examples given, could indeed prevent mobilisation by weakening the capacities of individuals within a society through degradation of their self-worth, psychological wellbeing and feelings of legitimacy. On the other hand, however, Jua and Konings (2004, p.625) argue that the feeling of being an "other" can "raise the individual and collective consciousness of anglophones in everyday space and to create open or secret support for anglophone movements."

Galtung's framework for identifying structural violence and its methods of repression and exploitation, whilst useful, only provides for part of the puzzle and is by no means infallible. The tactics themselves, if employed consistently and in unison, can mean that structural violence endures through a lack of consciousness on the part of the oppressed and by preventing mobilisation, two conditions for effective struggle against exploitation. The key to this seems to be, however, in the notion of the former. Once recognition of conditioning and a restricted worldview is achieved, this then encourages scrutiny of the wider structure, and can lead to mobilisation. An awakening can be seen to have happened within our example of Cameroon, which has partially begun negating the facets of the structural violence imposed. Galtung would say their consciousness has formed through the failure of penetration and segmentation and critically, it could be argued that once this occurs, both fragmentation and marginalisation would be exposed. That being said, Galtung (1996, p.93) emphasises that all four facets have to be overcome since conscentisation will yield consciously held values and mobilisation transforms a "non-organized, non-

crystallized party (to a structural conflict) into an actor (in a conflict)". That is not to say that each has to happen at the same time, and the process may well be gradual and ebb and flow towards achievement over an arbitrary period of time. If, in the case of Cameroon, these goals are partway to being achieved already, then this constitutes tangible steps towards the goal of overcoming repression and exploitation in the form of structural violence.

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