

CAMEROON IN 1688 ENGLAND; “CAMEROON TOWARDS A NEW TESTAMENT”

Nwana Titus,

Researcher Scholar, Department of History, University of Buea, Cameroon

Abstract

This paper draws a comparison between the Glorious Revolution of 1688 in England and the contemporary political condition of Cameroon under President Paul Biya. Using the linear historical theory, the study purports that the socio-political and economic dynamics that led to the fall of James II in England are being replicated in modern-day Cameroon. Through a comparative historical analysis, philosophical reasoning, and empirical evidence, the article cautions of a revolution brewing in Cameroon that could reshape the nation's political structure. It has been realized that many rigorous policies and moves made by king James II of England which led to his fall from power has also been adopted by president Biya which include; the Divine Rights of Kings, birth of the Prince of Wales, Declaration of Indulgence, constitutional blunders, vindictive cabinet reshuffle, creation of standing army, tussle between the king and the parliament and taxation policies. All these made James II's reign short lived and while reflecting on these issues in the current status of the Cameroon government, it is hypothesize that the country might inevitably welcome civil war which will open a new testament in the historiography of the country. The paper therefore concludes that when autocracy meets systemic decay and confrontation is kindled by elite disgruntlement; historical disagreement becomes inevitable to change a country narrative.

Keywords: *New Testament, Autocracy, Revolution, Linear Theory*

1. Introduction

All through history perhaps since the seventeenth century the question of despotism in ‘rulership’ of leadership has been alarming. Peacock (1982) posits that, despotic rulers have emerged over time with the main vision to dominate power by developing administrative and military machines designed to silent political opponent. Autocratic governance and its effects on the societal fabric have triggered revolutions that reshaped nations. Though liberal and nationalist governments have emerged, they have not been as swift and strong as the despot until the appearance of the revolutionary proletariat of Karl Marx and his collaborator Friedrich Engels in the 19th century (Peacock ibid). The different forms of rulership adopted in Europe from the 16th century till the first half of the 20th century laid the foundation for the post-independence states in Africa which has sank deep into the roots of the political systems within the continent as a result of colonial imperialism. These foundations have been the brain behind the countless revolutions in Africa with far reaching effects. A close observation of the failures of many governments in Africa has been as a result of unhealthy promised liberation which ended up turning into entrenched autocracy. Cameroon under Paul Biya exemplifies this descent. This paper hypothesizes that the structural conditions that led to the Glorious Revolution in 1688 are today mirrored in Cameroon, forecasting a likely political upheaval. The study employed a comparative and historical method to highlights how governance failures, elite betrayal, economic injustice, and identity politics congregate to forecast a turning point in Cameroon politics.

2. Frames of Analysis; what causes a revolution?

Revolutions have been the bedrock to the development of the concept of state ‘idealism’ which has been a foundation to which many philosophers of history held as a standpoint to the establishment of their theories (Herbert M. 1941). A critical examination of this issue brings to light that idealist such as; Kante, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel who emerged largely as a responses to the challenges of the French revolution. The fact that France was unable to recognized the

state and society on a rational basis, so that social and political institutions might accord with the freedom and interest of the individual, gave birth to revolution which became a core of an idealistic system all through the 19th and 20th century (Herbert, 1941., MacCullochs, 2001). Voltaire coinage of the term “philosophy of history” was a new paradigm which created a shift in historical analysis to bring to understanding and provide guide to accepting whether history is cyclical as held by; Ibn Khaldun (Muqaddimah), Giambattista Vico (New Science), Oswald Spengler (The Decline of the West), Arnold Toynbee (Rise and Fall of Civilizations), or linear as viewed by; St Augustine (The City of God), George Hegel (State Reasoning), Karl Marx (Historical Materialism), Immanuel Kant (Universal History) or speculative; F. Nietzsche, G. Hegel, Leopold Von Ranke and Benedetto Croce. However, history whether philosophical, remains analytic in nature. Linear conception of history, guided by dialectical movement came up not from cyclic reappearance but through advanced resolution of contradictions. James II’s regime which represented a contradiction between Divine Right dominion and governmental authority resulted to the development of a constitutional monarchy (Allan 2014). From foreshadowed historical lenses, these contradictions within the Cameroon political system, which is highly seeing between authoritarian governance and the silent but observant masses, might brew into a revolution and the rise of a new leader.

Justifications advanced by philosophers and historians such as; Karl Marx, Engels, Hegel, Feuerbach, Kierkegaard, Lorenz, Taylor, Fisher and Gottschalk to discuss the causes of revolutions remain significant all through history even till current times. Gottschalk (1944) defined causes as that from which something known as the result proceeds and without which the thing known as result cannot happen. He further examine several attributes to the concept of cause; (1) cause must be antecedent to result in chronological order, (2) antecedent must be logically interrelated with the result, (3) it must be sufficient to account for complex results, (4) the issue of necessity for no result can appear with a cause. Using these as the basis for analysis though not exhaustive will help give a clear view into understanding the major focus of this paper. Assimilating different scholarly views on why revolutions erupt, we can disagree to agree that the ‘Social Contract’ of Jean Jacques Rousseau is a frame that encompasses several historical and philosophical justifications of the causes of revolts. Though Voltaire, Montesquieu and the Encyclopedists focus on enlightenment of a small (rule) than the masses (Peacock, 1982), for messing up with the masses was a great nightmare to revolutionary proletariat of Marx, Engels and Lenin. This is because capitalist exploitation has been throughout history, frequently overturned and redefined by revolutions (MacLulloch, 2001). Hegel justify that state is the realization of reason and is a structural foundations to understanding why many revolution emerge (Herbert M., 1941). Swiftly, some of the causes of revolution include; doctrine of lapses, dissatisfactions with systems of government (economic inequality), legal misconducts, despotism, ethnic and religious discrimination, hereditary principles, foreign influence and propaganda

3. Causes of the 1688/89 English Revolution

The English revolution of 1688 is highly known in history as an important period in the restructuring of the English historiography as it ignited great transformation within the country’s monarchy. Several factors contributed to the outbreak of this revolution among which Romanization policies, political and social maneuvers remain significant.

James II of England by the 1680s has been generally considered to be a tyrant (Allan, 2014). His tyranny and autocratic rule mounted the pulpit for a revolution in England. James despotism and autocratic rule came up due to his belief in the Divine Rights of King which influenced the concentration of power. This excess power affected the English political system most especially when he dissolved the parliament in 1687, and ruled without its consent. Allan again argued that before the glorious revolution, the monarchy was not unconstrained in what they could do, but the parliament had some checking powers though it was not clear how much (Allan, *ibid*). James II however used his royal prerogative to subdue the parliament creating an outright fiction and finessing within the English political system.

Also, James II reforms and the fact that England for a long time was predominantly a protestant nation since the period of the Reformation largely contributed to the revolts (D. MacCullochs, 2003). This can be justified from the fact that, the country witnessed increasing catholic infringement when he came to power, and it was an issue which the English protestant never loved (Duffy, 1992). James went ahead to appointing Catholics into offices and high positions contrary to the Penal Laws of between 1559 and 1610 which prohibited such act (Duffy, *ibid*). Also, his absolutist policies made him to use suspending and dispensing laws and his noble privilege to alienate nobility and commoners (Russell, 1990). His absolute power equally made him to embark on vindictive cabinet reshuffle which further increased the frustration of many English people. James’ creation of a standing army (30,000 men) at peace time in

England contrary to the people's hope as it reminded them of the days of Oliver Cromwell's harsh rule, made visible his despotic rule. Paying this established standing army was another problem to the king and English government. James, most especially after the summer recall of the House of Commons demanded for more money to maintain a standing army which was refused between 12 and 19 November 1685 (Allan, 2014., Russell, 1990). This influenced the king to impose taxes to raise income and keep this standing army. All these couple with the fact that his foreign policy was geared towards France a catholic nation ignited widespread public sentiment and propaganda against his regime. The birth of the Prince of Wales was predominantly the immediate cause of the revolution. The birth of James II's son in 1688 raised the prospect of a catholic succession which intensified protestant fear of a catholic dynasty in England (Richard, 2014., Geoffrey 2016). The numerous stories behind the arrival of Francis Edward in 1688, was centered on one major concept "continuity". The English people therefore concluded that, accepting the baby boy into the English throne will indirectly be accepting Catholic continuity and expansion in England, something that was unacceptable. In analyzing these factors and tasting them within the current Cameroon's political system, will give us a direction towards which the country is heading too.

4. Biya's Regime Towards the Dark Age

Paul Biya has served as Cameroon's president since 1982 as the lone and unbeatable man in the seat. His regime, built on Cold War-era political structures, is fundamentally out of step with a youthful globalized population. Biya's accession to the power was greeted with a lot of ecstasy because it was believed he will restructure the long Ahidjo's autocratic rule. Between November 1983 and January 1984, he modified the constitution which influenced change of the name of the Cameroon from the United Republic of Cameroon to the Republic of Cameroon (Ngoh, 2018). The early years of his government was however threatened by a coup d'état which acted as a lens cleaner to his administration in the years after. The immediate effect of this was administrative and military restructuring which has been a dominant political stratagem in his government. Biya's regime since 1984 has never been the same as he centralized political power even after the introduction of decentralization in 1996 which has been the major proponent to his despotism.

The question of authoritarianism has been long active in almost all administrative systems within the country, against the concept of democracy simply because senior states officials are appointed to work based on the whims and caprices of the boss (Nyamnjoh, 1999). Takougang (1993) explained that the height of his autocratic rule was compounded in 1992 when his New Deal was faded due to his inability to manage the precarious transition to authentic democracy. The socio-economic and political upheavals of the 1980s and early 90s fastened Biya's administrative philosophy into a harder one to overcome future and unexpected oppositions. In an effort to strengthen his administration, Biya stick tight to almost all the errors James II applied which contributed to his demise. In justifying this view, Biya has greatly exercise suspending and dispensing powers often through decrees, constitutional changes and selective law enforcement within the Cameroon's political system. Konings and Nyamnjoh (2003) elucidated that president Biya has frequently governed by decree, bypassing the parliament. He appoints governors, judges, military officers, and public state official without legislative approval. This practice effectively suspends legislative participation as was the case of James II of England. Furthermore, his dispensing power has run through selective enforcement of laws where prosecution of opposition leaders under strict laws seems active against those implicated by corruption. The Human Right Watch in their 2020 overview cited the case of Maurice Kamto's detention in contrast to impunity in corruption cases. As if that is not enough, constitutional manipulation has been a visible issue within his government. Owono Nguinim (2008) justified that in 2008, Biya amended the constitution and removed presidential term limit, enabling indefinite rule. A reflection of these issues within the political system will give no contradiction nor can sustain itself indefinitely, rather a revolution in this schema, which is the dialectical resolution to leap a higher political order.

The application of democracy in Cameroon has been short down by creation of "standing army" at peace time simply because of fear of any uprising as result of administrative brouhaha. Biya's efforts towards strengthening the military have been one hundred percent more effective to other sectors within the country. The question of the creation of the Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR) in 2001 remains clearly unanswered as only the curator knows the reason behind it. This military unit is directly answerable to the president not minister of defense as stated in the Presidential Decree No.2001/135 of 21 May 2001 (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2003). The BIR as justified by the International Crisis Group in 2016 was created to counter terrorism, carry out specialized operation against insurgencies just to name a few. The Anglophone crisis and other internal riots have proven that this arm force has been operating far beyond its purpose of creation which has made thinkers to consider it a standing army for Biya's government. If the BIR is directly under

the presidency of Cameroon and having unique chain of command by the president, it therefore tells that the force is personal. To further weep for the system, Cameroon has over fifty different taxes and parafiscal charges, multiple and overlapping taxes which reduces the profit margin and discourage investment. This has made corruption and arbitrary taxation discourages the formalization of an accountable tax system there by discouraging foreign investment. The aspects of double taxation has left many traders in a state of constant complain because they suffer at both the local and national levels, an equation that runs from municipal licenses to value added tax plus income tax. All these issues are embodied in the system because of loopholes created by the system operator which has giving many room to embezzlement, corruption and capital flight.

A critical dive into this issue reveals a great dissatisfaction for the existing economy ranging from infrastructural development particularly transport difficulties as examined by Nwana (2019), high levels of unemployment, system 'operationality' and above all high rate increased in the prices of agricultural produce. It should be noted that, "if rice is failing to solve the problem of rising hunger within the country, the government should be held responsible because their foreign policy towards China that led to the demise of "Ibo coco" in the South West, West and North West Regions". This is still to be revealed by members of the "Big Men Club" being a treacherous issue to be pardon. The questions of what happened to our Ibo coco? Or where is our Ibo coco? Will be answered in the days ahead, and this might contribute to the gradual demise of Chinese operation in Cameroon due to a revision in foreign policy by a new system. A dive into these issues will be revealing 'Cameroon's New Testament'.

4.1 Summary comparison between James II and Biya's Regimes: Cameroon towards a Revolutionary Horizon

4.1.1 Autocracy: More like James II, Biya since 1982 has presided over an increasingly autocratic and centralized regime, highlighted loyalty over competence, undermined independent institutions, and entrenched a patronage-based political system. This partly evolved as a result of the loyalty of the people of Cameroon which made him to undermine the electoral system of the country (lacking credibility). This has however influenced brake down among elites, institution and civil societies, constituting a key defecting factor within the Cameroon's political system. Predominantly, the realization of the Glorious revolution was as a result of defection of elites, military leaders, church officials, and members of Parliament, from the king to William of Orange. Cameroon's elites are similarly showing signs of discontent. Former allies have broken ranks; some members of the ruling party have defected and called for reforms. The resignation of Issa Tchiroma Bakary in June 2025 is a glaring example though it is still questionable among political thinkers.

4.1.2 System Division: The ideological foundation of resistance to James II was religious divisions formed. The re-imposition of Catholic control threatened Protestants authority in England. Though religious division has not been that imposed in Cameroon, but the equivalent lies on linguistic and ethnic divergence. A case here is the Anglophone crisis which has been a decades-long marginalization of English-speaking regions (Koning and Nyamnjoh 2003). The government's militarized response to peaceful protests in 2016 and 2017 inspired a revolution which the end is till to unfold.

4.1.3 Economic hardship: Despite its natural resources within the Cameroon's landscape including oil, timber, and minerals, the country is ranked low on most growth indices, just like the English economy under James II that suffered from debt, war expenses, court indulgence, which aggravated public bitterness. Cameroon today faces a serious economic hardship resulting from rampant corruption, poor infrastructure, high youth unemployment, and widespread inequality and war expenses. As if that is not enough, the flagship Vision 2035 being a historical sarcasm promises inclusive evolution and great transformation, yet under Biya's rule, it remains largely aspirational. The deepening crisis within the government and state institutions makes the vision ironical since there is no trust in the leadership of the country except the clients of the system. Similarly to James II's Divine Right philosophy, Vision 2035 seems to be a thought of disconnected flaws to win the support of the masses. However, a revolution will need to test the validity and applicability of the idea, so as to program the realignment of the country.

5. Culturing the Idea of Cameroon's New Testament

Exploring the idea of Cameroon's New Testament in the light of this study might sounds very repugnant to people that hate change most especially to decaying system controlled by political gangsters. The Cameroon's New Testament based on the synopsis of this paper refers to the great socio-economic and political transformation which the country

Cameroon is about to undergo to test the applicability of the vindictive Biya's 2035 vision of Cameroon becoming an emerging nation. The question to ponder here is; can this vision be achieved in a platter of gold? Historians and philosophers of history will agree with me as I say **'NO'**. Reason for this justification is that over ninety percent of great nations in the world today are where they are because of either internal revolution or the barbarous effects of the two great world wars. This therefore tells that Vision 2035 most likely will be baptized by a revolution owing to the cracks existing within the system. This sound oppressive to a system where 'chop a chop as examine by Kah and the concentration of the national cake (Ndeh, 2023), have eaten up the fabrics of policy implementation leaving the masses in the wilderness where going forward or backward seem impossible.

Peacork explains that revolution is a way of deeply affecting man's idea and conduct which for generation it has a mechanism of sweeping monarchy and the old privilege aristocracy aside and replacing them with the creation of new states and ideologies (Peacork, 1982). This expresses that, it has been a medium through which extremely difficult questions are broken. Within a state where only the "club of big men" enjoys while the masses keep suffering from operation, communicates the fact that a revolution is inevitable. The current political system of Cameroon has been juxtaposed in such a way that any attempt to explain seem to be a daunting task, since the people have been programmed like a fisherman setting his net to continuously catching fish. For example; I wonder why a 65cl bottle of beer is sold for '850frs'. We keep complaining of western capitalism of which the height of it is operating effectively within the different administrative structures of the country.

The beginning of the year 2025 has not been appreciated as being a positive year by many, as it is believed that the Cameroon's atmosphere is saturated and needs to pour. This has started within the administrative units of the country as we see ministers resigning. By examining the chronological parallels, the paper foreshadows that Cameroon's tragedy unless redirected is leading toward a transformative moment, that will be triggered by a small misunderstanding and quarrels in the neighborhoods of the political capital-Yaounde and will later escalate due to the barbarous military intervention. The porous foundations sets in the past will influence many masses to go out in the street questing for freedom from the long despotic Biya's regime. The revolution may not take the form of a single event but could unfold through coordinated protests, elite defections, mass mobilization, or international pressure. Due to infection syndrome, some towns will pick up the struggle two days after which will gradually spread to other French speaking towns within the country. Moslem north will be coming in to revenge what the regime did to their brother Ahidjo. The immediate effect of this revolt will be the fast revival of the depleting Anglophone crisis. This revolution will be the first major test of the effectiveness of the Biya's government and African unity, and to answer the question of whether Cameroon in particular and Africa in general has been "Ruled or Led".

6. Conclusion

This paper examined the concept of Cameroon's New Testament which simply explains what is likely to take place within the country in the days ahead. We drew example from the glorious revolution that took place in England in 1688. It is realized that, the lessons of 1688 England are profoundly relevant to Cameroon today making a revolution inevitable. The study again explains that, changing reforms in Cameroon have less helped the innovativeness of the country. It has rather influenced continuity and authoritarian rule. This issue through administrative networking, has left the country in a client-master state where only a few benefits from the national cake. The paper gives a philo-historical overview of the causes of revolutions, conceptualizing it to the present day Cameroon. It is realized that autocratic rule through vindictive cabinet reshuffle, appointment and dismissal of state officials, creation of a standing army, taxation policies and hereditary principle, doctrine of lapses have being a big stake within the existing system which is a good breeding ground for a revolution. The existing structure as explained by Allan has "paid the money and must pick the poison". The people of Cameroon are as coined by W.E.B Du Bois "ready to give up what they are for what they might become. We conclude with the cotes by Edward G, Bulwer-Lytton, he said; "Patient is not passive, on the contrary, it is active; it is concentrated strength" (Steward 2009). Perhaps it seems that the people of Cameroon have patiently waited with their strength to face the system of injustice which is active and unstoppable.

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