

An Agent-Based Modeling Approach to Peacebuilding: Simulating Lederach's Pyramid in the Context of the Ambazonia Crisis

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Abstract

The Anglophone–Francophone conflict in Cameroon represents a protracted identity-based confrontation rooted in post-1972 state centralization, linguistic hierarchy, and the gradual erosion of Anglophone institutional autonomy. Rather than treating the crisis solely as a secessionist insurgency, this study conceptualizes it as a conflict transformation problem shaped by competing constructions of legitimacy, recognition, and political belonging. Drawing on John Paul Lederach's three-level peacebuilding pyramid, the article develops an agent-based simulation model to examine how cross-level leadership interaction influences peace trajectories in the Ambazonia conflict. Eleven actors are categorized across grassroots, middle-range, and top-level leadership and evaluated through six coded indicators capturing political, military, diplomatic, economic, and ideological attributes. Six alternative geopolitical and institutional scenarios are simulated over 50 time steps. Leadership structure and interaction patterns function as independent variables, while actor-specific peace contribution scores constitute the dependent variable. The findings consistently demonstrate that structured cross-level engagement and coordinated top-level diplomatic leverage significantly increase aggregate peace indices compared to scenarios characterized by international disengagement or unilateral militarization. The study contributes methodologically by operationalizing Lederach's relational peacebuilding framework within a transparent computational architecture, offering a theory-driven platform for comparative scenario analysis in protracted identity conflicts.

Keywords: Cameroon, Ambazonia, John Paul Lederach, pyramid model in peacebuilding, agent-based modeling

Introduction

Following Germany's colonization of Cameroon in 1884, European competition in Africa intensified, culminating in the Berlin Conference, where 14 states negotiated the division of the continent and the delineation of spheres of influence. The effects of World War I soon reached Cameroon, which was occupied by the United Kingdom and France in 1916. Under the subsequent Anglo-French agreement, one-fifth of the territory was allocated to Britain and the remaining four-fifths to France (Şahin, 2018, pp. 250-253).

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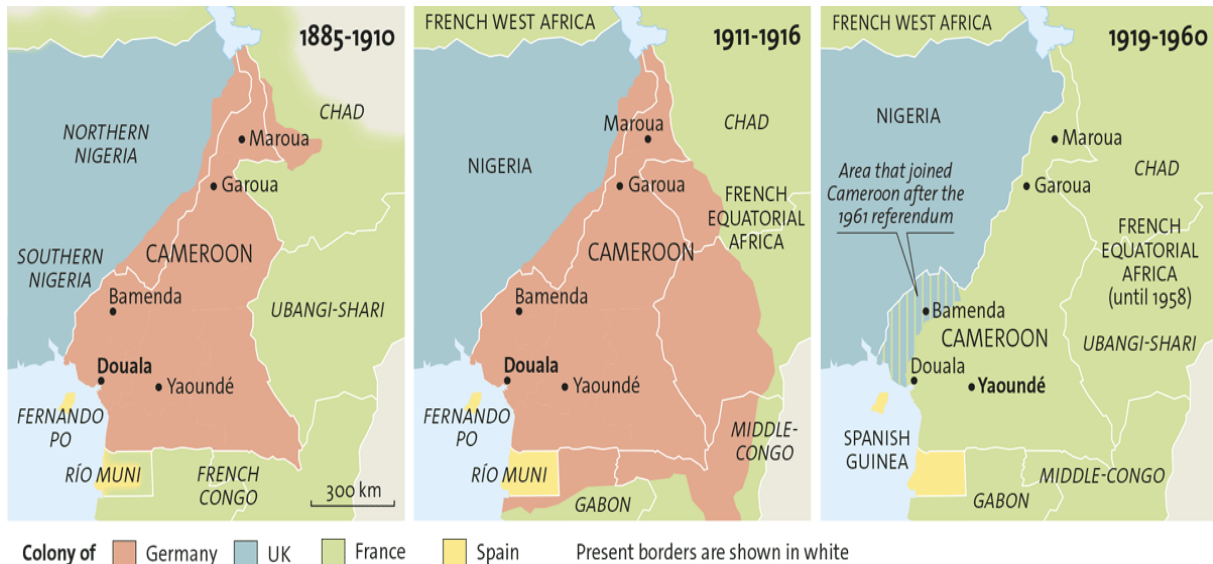
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Figure 1

Historical Development of Cameroon's Territory



Source: Colonial history (2018)

Cameroon is frequently described as a miniature Africa due to its colonial legacy, ethnic and cultural diversity, and borders imposed without regard for local identities (Atabongwong, 2020, p. 99). It is estimated that approximately 273 living indigenous languages are spoken in this ethnically complex country, according to Ethnologue Languages of the World (2025), a widely recognized linguistic database that provides systematically verified global language statistics. The coexistence of British and French governance models constitutes the foundation of contemporary social polarization and political conflict. Under British rule, an indirect administration relied on cooperation with local elites integrated into executive and judicial structures, enabling efficient governance with limited resources while securing economic interests (Rubin, 1971, p. 74). The spread of British education fostered a local elite aligned with British values, enhancing political legitimacy and reducing the risk of rebellion (Chiabi, 1997, pp. 15–19). In contrast, France implemented a system of direct administration based on systematic assimilation, imposing French culture and education on local populations (LeVine, 1964, pp. 92–98). While political institutions in British Cameroon were more participatory and stable, French rule excluded local actors from political and social rights (Fonchingong & Fongjong, 2003, pp. 85–88). This structural divergence helps explain why decolonization movements emerged primarily in French-administered Cameroon rather than in British-controlled regions.

This study examines the Anglo-Francophone tensions that began based on language and identity, how the political and social rights of the Anglophone minority were eroded in the process of creating a nation-state, and how all these systematic assimilation policies turned into an armed, separatist resistance movement in the Ambazonia region. Evaluated from a social constructivist perspective, the study argues that Anglophone identity was socially constructed by the Francophone majority, which had consolidated political, military, and economic power, and that the perception created of Anglophones was recreated in every political and social relationship, further marginalizing them. The centralization

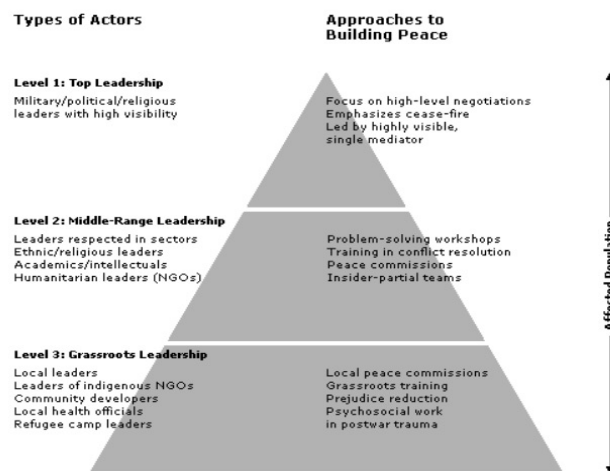
of Francophone identity, the imposition of French in Anglophone regions, and restrictions on access to public services, education, and the judiciary have produced a deep crisis of legitimacy and belonging among Anglophones. Against this backdrop, this study examines whether Lederach’s peacebuilding model can offer an effective framework for resolving Cameroon’s civil war. To address this question, a mixed-method approach combining exploratory and explanatory research designs is employed, analyzing the extent to which interactions among actors at different levels contribute to conflict resolution through Lederach’s conflict transformation framework. An agent-based conflict resolution model is developed to simulate interactions among multi-level actors across six scenarios and assess their effects on conflict dynamics. The model aims both to propose pathways for resolving the ongoing civil war and to provide policymakers with an analytical tool for testing alternative scenarios. As the first study to conceptually model the core dynamics of Cameroon’s civil war, the research contributes to the literature by opening space for further research to test, refine, and potentially falsify the proposed peacebuilding framework.

1. Literature Review: Lederach's Pyramid Model of Peacebuilding

Lederach conceptualizes peacebuilding as both a structure and a process, emphasizing the central role of actors and arguing that each level possesses distinct roles and capacities that contribute to consensus-building and conflict transformation. In his pyramid model, top-level leadership (Level 1) consists of highly visible political, military, and religious decision-makers. At the middle level (Level 2) are middle-range leaders, including respected figures such as civil society leaders, religious and ethnic leaders, academics, and NGO representatives who possess relational influence across communities. At the base of the pyramid (Level 3) are grassroots leaders, including local community leaders and actors who emerge directly from the affected population. Lederach maintains that a comprehensive and sustainable peace process is possible only when actors from all three levels of the pyramid are actively included (Miall, 2004, p. 73).

Figure 2

Pyramid Model of Peacebuilding



Source: (Lederach, 1997a:39)

Lederach proposes a process and relationship structure that includes all layers for sustainable peacebuilding (Figure 2). The leaders at the top refer to political and military leaders who play key roles in the conflict. These leaders represent people's will; thus, they are highly visible, also capable of conducting negotiations. Middle-range leadership has a sphere of influence that stems from these leaders' status and areas of activity, as well as their relationships with others, and their status have been recognized by the public. Middle-range leaders, who act as a link between the upper and lower levels, have more room for maneuver in conflict resolution and peacebuilding negotiations because they are less visible than top-level leaders. Grassroots leaders are local administrators, tribal chiefs, and clan leaders who have emerged from within the grassroots. As they are directly involved in the conflict, they witness polarization and hatred firsthand. For this reason, local leaders, who play a very important role in peacebuilding, convey initiatives that will allow daily conflicts to be addressed within a broader framework to senior leaders (Lederach, 1997a, pp. 39-41).

While social and economic insecurity fuels conflict at the individual level, identity-based conflicts operate vertically across society, cutting across hierarchical levels rather than opposed to them, as they are rooted in ethnicity, religion, language, and geography rather than class. Actors at different levels are therefore often connected through shared identities, while also maintaining horizontal ties within their own level. These complex relationships are central to peacebuilding. Although top-level leaders possess greater access to information and decision-making power, they are less directly affected by the everyday consequences of their decisions. Conversely, grassroots actors bear the greatest impact despite their limited influence, creating a structural challenge for peace process design (Lederach, 1997a, pp. 44-45). As each level of Lederach's peacebuilding pyramid fulfills a distinct function, conflict transformation requires actor-specific approaches. High-level actors are central to negotiations and formal conflict termination, but tend to produce short-term, problem-focused settlements constrained by public pressure. Lederach therefore argues that sustainable peace must extend beyond elite negotiations to include all levels. Middle-range leaders play a critical intermediary role due to their flexibility and communicative capacity, while grassroots leaders contribute to sustainability by fostering dialogue, addressing trauma, repairing relationships, and promoting political participation. These levels are mutually interdependent in transforming conflict into sustainable peace (Lederach, 1997a, pp. 46-58). Central to this process are continuous dialogue channels and coordinated use of socio-economic and socio-cultural resources, supported by a peace inventory that maps actors, enhances coordination, and mobilizes societal support.

Although Lederach's pyramid offers powerful relational architecture, the literature also points to recurrent implementation constraints. First, multi-level designs can reproduce elite bias when top-level negotiations set the agenda and lower-level participation becomes symbolic rather than decision-relevant. Second, spoilers may strategically exploit inclusion mechanisms, using dialogue periods to reorganize, fragment coalitions, or expand war economies, thereby weakening the bridging role of middle-range leaders. Third, cross-level interaction does not automatically produce trust; it can also intensify polarization if interactions occur under coercion, asymmetric recognition, or unequal security conditions. Finally, operationalization remains a methodological challenge: translating relational concepts such as reconciliation, legitimacy, and recognition into observable indicators requires explicit assumptions and sensitivity checks. These debates imply that the pyramid should be treated as a guiding framework whose effectiveness depends on sequencing, credible guarantees, and institutional design, rather than as a universally sufficient recipe for peace.

2. Theoretical Framework: Mapping Conflict Dynamics

2.1. The Historical Roots of the Conflict

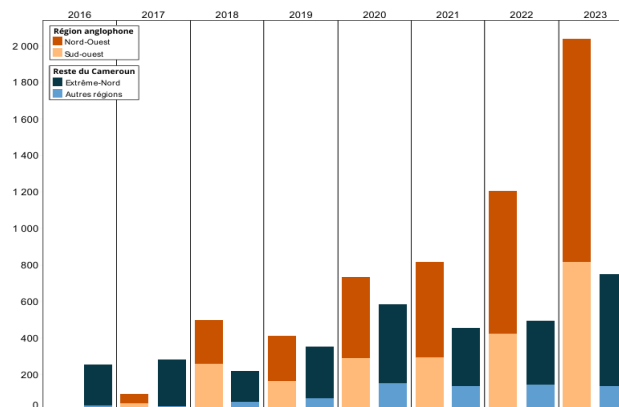
Cameroon gained independence on January 1, 1960, as East Cameroon. Following a referendum later that year, Northern British Cameroon opted for joining Nigeria, while the Ambazonia region united with East Cameroon, leading to the establishment of the bilingual and bicultural Federal Republic of Cameroon on November 1, 1961. LeVine argues that, soon after this union, Francophone dominance over Anglophone communities emerged, as the forced integration of groups with distinct sociolinguistic, cultural, and historical experiences generated a conflict-prone environment rooted in imperial design (LeVine, 1964, p. 273). Alidou (2006, p. 9) states that this instrumentalization is the only boundary that preserves the unity among Cameroonians. Stating that the bilingual system was insufficient in creating a common identity, that the existing federal system encouraged regionalism and hindered national consciousness, and that it hampered economic development, founding President Ahmadou Ahidjo expressed the need to establish a unitary state. It is believed that the main reason behind Ahidjo's demand for a unitary state was his desire for complete control over resources (Könings & Nyamnjoh, 1997, p. 210). In addition to existing economic reasons, the federal government was motivated by the belief that the Anglophone identity was eroding the government's cultural hegemony and hindering integration within the country (Atabongwoung, 2021, p. 100). In his study on the colonial legacy in Africa, Rodney (1975) found that when societies with unequal levels of sociopolitical and economic development interact with each other at any level, the developed society establishes domination over the less developed society, making the less-developed dependent on the superstratum. A similar process took place in Cameroon, where this relationship of domination was established immediately after unification; and, with the country's transformation into a unitary state under the name of the United Republic of Cameroon in 1972, the exclusion between the parties evolved into a deeper dimension.

Lazar (2019, pp. 1–2) identifies the marginalization and othering of Anglophones as the primary drivers of Cameroon's civil war. Language-based identity has generated a central conflict over political dominance, as French cultural hegemony under the Biya administration has increasingly permeated political and bureaucratic structures (Ngefac, 2010, pp. 149–164). French was imposed as a compulsory subject in Anglophone regions, Anglophones were systematically excluded from bureaucratic positions, and official English translations were largely symbolic, reinforcing the perceived superiority of French (Mforteh, 2006, p. 16). This form of symbolic violence contributed to the construction of Anglophones as second-class citizens. Mbembe (2016, p. 36) characterizes this imposition of French, despite formal equality, as a neocolonial practice rooted in colonial governance patterns. Colonial-style political pressure, economic marginalization and cultural exclusion fostered the radicalization of Anglophone nationalism and the erosion of a shared Cameroonian identity, while assimilation policies and internalized foreign discourse fueled destructive sub-nationalism (Boone, 2003, p. 8). The liberal democratization wave of the 1990s created a political opening for Anglophone mobilization, leading the community to coalesce around the Social Democratic Front (SDF) (Geschiere, 2018, p. 49). In the 1992 presidential elections, the SDF secured 36% of the vote against Biya's 40%, reviving debates on Anglophone marginalization. In 1993, the SDF and other groups convened in Buea under the All-Anglophone Conference (AAC) and issued the Buea Declaration, which demanded an end to systematic Frenchification and a return to the federal system enshrined in Cameroon's founding constitution (Kpwa, 2023, p. 8). Subsequently, the Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC) was

established, asserting that Southern Cameroon would pursue independence if federalism was to be rejected. The government’s dismissal of these demands led to the 1994 Bamenda Declaration, which formally denounced Anglophone marginalization and political and economic exclusion, and reiterated the SCNC’s commitment to independence were federalism to continue being denied (Chiatoh, 2019, pp. 690–691). In 1995, the Biya government’s declaration of the SCNC as an illegal organization signaled a refusal to engage in dialogue with the Anglophone community, further accelerating Anglophone radicalization (Awason, 2020, p. 270). Long-standing marginalization policies and systematic violations of Anglophone professionals’ rights culminated in mass protests led by lawyers, teachers, and students on October 6, 2016 (Amnesty International, 2023). Organized under the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC), protesters rejected the Francophone-imposed bilingual framework, demanding the exclusive use of English and the establishment of autonomous legal and educational systems (Ketzmerick, 2022, pp. 250–255). The government’s response was swift and coercive: within two weeks, schools were closed, six protesters were killed, and more than one hundred individuals were arrested and reportedly subjected to torture (BBC News, 2023). In early 2017, government-led dialogue initiatives failed as Anglophone leaders refused negotiations amid ongoing detentions, torture, and assimilation policies. Combined with escalating state pressure, these dynamics revitalized long-standing independence movements. In response to disproportionate security force violence, locally formed self-defense groups consolidated under the Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL) and openly demanded independence (International Crisis Group, 2017). Following its ban and the arrest of its members, the SCYL transformed into a more decentralized, yet operationally effective separatist movement known as the Amba Boys, with partial diaspora support (Orock, 2021, pp. 6–8). By 2017, escalating clashes and diaspora-influenced political mobilization had led to the emergence of two dominant actors: the Anglophone Ambazonia Interim Government (IG) and the Ambazonia Governing Council (AGC). The Interim Government consolidated various self-defense groups, including the Amba Boys, under its military wing, the Ambazonia Self-Defense Forces. The violent suppression of initially peaceful protests centered on Anglophone language and identity culminated in the declaration of the Republic of Ambazonia on October 1, 2017 (Beseng et al., 2023, pp. 95–98). Interviews with Anglophone militants further cite unemployment, oppression, exploitation, and marginalization as primary drivers of armed mobilization (ACLEd, 2024).

Graph 1

Conflicts in the Anglophone Region (2016-2023)

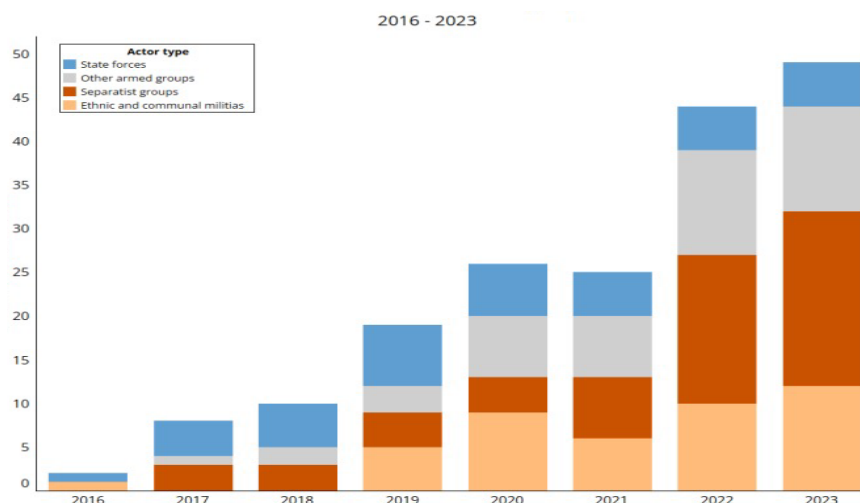


Source: (Acled, 2024)

In 2016, violence in the Ambazonia region accounted for approximately 1% of total violence in Cameroon; however, it gained significant momentum in 2018 and thereafter, and by 2023, more than 70% of total violence in the country was occurring in the Ambazonia region

Graph 2

The Development of Armed Actors in Ambazonia



Source: (Acled, 2024)

The sharp escalation of violence since 2019 has reinforced pro-independence mobilization in the region. In 2021, the number of separatist actors surpassed government security forces for the first time and continued growing thereafter (Graph 2). According to ACLED (2024), violence increased by 80% in 2022 and by 83% in 2023 compared to the previous years. As a result, more than 6,500 people were killed between 2016 and 2024 (GCRP, 2025). Official figures indicate that over 1.8 million people in Ambazonia require humanitarian assistance, more than 800,000 have been internally displaced, and approximately 76,000 have become refugees (OCHA, 2024). Despite the worsening security and humanitarian conditions, the Cameroonian government has failed to adopt credible measures to resolve the crisis, while international engagement has remained limited.

2.2. Actors and Levels of Leadership in the Anglophone Crisis

2.2.1. Grassroots Leadership

2.2.1.1. Ambazonia Defence Forces (ADF)

The Ambazonia Defence Forces (ADF) represent one of the most prominent grassroots armed actors within the Anglophone separatist movement in Cameroon. The organization was established on 9 September 2017 by the Ambazonia Governing Council (AGovC) with the objective of achieving the full independence of Ambazonia from the Cameroonian state. Within the fragmented landscape of separatist militias, the ADF is widely regarded as one of the most militarily active and ideologically uncompromising groups operating in the North-West and South-West regions. Compared with the Ambazonia Interim Government and its associated armed structures, the ADF has adopted a significantly more radical strategy toward conflict resolution. The group rejects political compromise

and consistently frames the conflict as a liberation struggle that can only be resolved through complete secession from Cameroon. In line with this position, the ADF has repeatedly refused to participate in negotiations with the Biya administration and has also declined integration into the armed coordination structures associated with the Ambazonia Interim Government, including the broader umbrella of Ambazonian self-defense forces. The organization's operational strategy primarily relies on guerrilla warfare tactics targeting Cameroonian security forces and state infrastructure. In April 2021, the ADF further expanded its transnational connections by announcing an alliance with the Eastern Security Network, the armed wing of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), a separatist movement operating in southeastern Nigeria (Cameroon News Agency, 2021). This cooperation illustrates the growing regional dimension of the conflict and highlights the emergence of cross-border networks among separatist movements in West Africa. The ADF also benefits from financial and logistical support from segments of the Ambazonian diaspora, which plays a significant role in sustaining separatist mobilization. Diaspora networks have provided funding, communication platforms, and international advocacy, enabling armed groups such as the ADF to maintain operational continuity despite internal fragmentation within the broader separatist movement. In July 2023, the organization escalated its rhetoric by announcing its intention to expand attacks into Francophone regions of Cameroon, reflecting its increasingly confrontational strategy and its rejection of negotiated political settlements. Within the framework of Lederach's peacebuilding pyramid, the ADF can therefore be categorized as a grassroots-level actor whose behavior significantly influences the dynamics of violence and the feasibility of peacebuilding initiatives. Because such armed groups possess direct control over local security conditions and battlefield dynamics, their willingness or unwillingness to engage in de-escalation remains a critical determinant of conflict transformation processes.

2.2.1.2. Ambazonia Self-Defense Council (ASC)

The Ambazonia Self-Defense Council (ASC) was established in March 2018 by the Ambazonia Interim Government as a coordinating structure for armed groups operating within the broader Ambazonian separatist movement. The council functions as a central platform designed to organize and supervise various local militias that had previously operated in a fragmented manner. These armed formations are often collectively referred to as the Ambazonia Self-Defense Forces (ASDF) and include different local units such as the Ambazonia Military Forces (AMF) and the Ambazonia Restoration Forces (ARF). Compared to other separatist armed organizations such as the Southern Cameroons Defence Forces (SOCADEF) and the Ambazonia Defence Forces (ADF), the ASC represents a broader umbrella structure composed of locally organized militias with diverse ideological orientations and relatively loose hierarchical coordination. While the ASC aims to provide strategic direction and coordination among separatist fighters, the decentralized nature of the militias often limits the council's ability to exercise full operational control over all armed factions. Internal rivalries and clashes among separatist militias, particularly during 2022, weakened the operational cohesion of the movement and reduced the effectiveness of coordinated resistance against Cameroonian government forces. Despite these internal tensions, the ASC continues to operate as the principal coordinating body linking the political leadership of the Ambazonia Interim Government with armed actors on the ground (ACLED, 2024; International Crisis Group, 2019).

2.2.2. Middle-Range Leadership

2.2.2.1. Ambazonia Lawyers' Union

Lawyers in the Anglophone regions are primarily organized through professional associations such as the Common Law Lawyers' Association (CLLA), the Fako Lawyers' Association (FAKLA), and the Northwest Lawyers' Association (NOWELA) (Ndoumbe, 2019). Together with teachers' unions, these organizations played a central role in mobilizing the mass protests that erupted in 2016. They argued that the increasing appointment of Francophone judges and the growing use of the French legal system in Anglophone courts undermined the common law tradition historically practiced in the North-West and South-West regions. In response, the associations organized demonstrations demanding the protection of the common law system, the continued use of English in judicial proceedings, and an end to Francophone judicial appointments. Although these actors initially advocated institutional reforms within the Cameroonian state, their position gradually hardened as the conflict escalated, while still largely supporting a federal arrangement that would safeguard Anglophone legal and cultural autonomy (International Crisis Group, 2024).

2.2.2.2 Ambazonia Teachers Union

Teachers in the Anglophone regions are primarily organized through associations such as the Cameroon Teachers Association (TAC) and the Cameroon Teachers Union (CATTU). Following the lawyers' demonstrations, teachers played a crucial role in the mass protests that emerged in 2016. Their mobilization focused on the increasing use of French in Anglophone educational institutions and the perceived erosion of the Anglo-Saxon educational tradition in the North-West and South-West regions (Tassang, 2021). Teachers demanded the protection of English-language education, the removal of Francophone teachers from Anglophone schools, and the preservation of the existing educational system. Prolonged strikes followed due to government inaction, drawing students and parents into the protests. While some members of the unions have supported calls for independence, many continue to advocate a federal arrangement that would guarantee the institutional protection of Anglophone educational and cultural rights (International Crisis Group, 2017).

2.2.3. Top Leadership

2.2.3.1 Ambazonia Interim Government (IG)

The Ambazonia Interim Government (IG) was established on October 31, 2017 by the Southern Cameroons Ambazonia Consortium United Front (SCACUF), which had initially organized nonviolent political mobilization in the Anglophone regions (Ezemenaka & Ekumaoko, 2021, p. 201). The Interim Government presented itself as the provisional political authority representing the independence movement of Southern Cameroon. Although the early phase of the movement relied largely on civil resistance and political advocacy, the escalation of state repression after 2017 pushed the IG toward a gradual militarization of its strategy. In this context, the leadership supported the formation of armed coordination structures, including the Ambazonia Self-Defense Council (ASC), which sought to organize locally emerging militias under a broader separatist framework (Isidore, 2019). Politically, the IG has pursued a strategy centered on internationalizing the conflict and gaining diplomatic recognition for the Ambazonian independence movement. Through diaspora networks and international advocacy campaigns, the organization has attempted to draw attention to alleged human rights violations and

mobilize external support for its political claims. At the same time, the IG has encouraged various forms of civil resistance, including the weekly “ghost town” boycotts that aim to disrupt state authority in the Anglophone regions.

Despite these efforts, the organization has faced significant internal fragmentation since 2019. Leadership disputes and competition among separatist factions have weakened the cohesion of the movement and reduced the IG's capacity to exercise effective control over armed groups on the ground. Nevertheless, the Interim Government continues to position itself as the primary political representative of the Ambazonian independence movement and maintains that full independence remains the only viable resolution to the conflict (International Crisis Group, 2019).

2.2.3.2. Cameroon Government

The Government of Cameroon, led by President Paul Biya, represents the primary state actor in the Anglophone conflict and frames the Ambazonian separatist movement as a direct threat to constitutional order, national unity, and territorial integrity. From the perspective of Yaoundé, the crisis is not a question of minority self-determination but a security problem driven by armed insurgency. Consequently, the government has largely adopted a security-oriented and centralized approach aimed at restoring state authority in the North-West and South-West regions, areas historically associated with Anglophone political grievances. Within this framework, the Biya administration firmly rejects both independence and federal restructuring, instead emphasizing the preservation of the unitary state established after the abolition of the federal system in 1972. Government policy has therefore prioritized military operations, security deployments, and administrative control over the separatist regions. At the same time, the state has attempted to address international criticism by introducing limited institutional reforms. The most notable of these measures is the 2020 Decentralization Law, which expanded the formal powers of regional assemblies and introduced a “special status” for the Anglophone regions. However, these reforms largely preserved the centralized structure of political authority and did not fundamentally alter the distribution of power between the central government and regional institutions.

As a result, many Anglophone political actors and separatist groups have dismissed these initiatives as insufficient, arguing that they fail to address long-standing grievances related to political marginalization, linguistic rights, and institutional autonomy (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 2019). Within the dynamics of the conflict, the Cameroonian government therefore functions as the central state authority seeking to maintain territorial integrity while confronting both armed insurgency and growing international scrutiny.

2.2.3.3. United States of America (USA)

The United States represents an important external actor in the Anglophone crisis, primarily engaging through diplomatic pressure and human rights advocacy. Washington first addressed the conflict in 2016 by calling for de-escalation and respect for human rights in the Anglophone regions (International Crisis Group, 2019). In subsequent reports, the U.S. Department of State documented a range of human rights violations, including unlawful detentions and harsh prison conditions, drawing international attention to the humanitarian dimension of the conflict (U.S. Department of State, 2017). While consistently affirming Cameroon's territorial integrity and rejecting Ambazonian independence, the United States

has emphasized the need for political dialogue and institutional reforms to address Anglophone grievances. In 2019, this position was reflected in House Resolution 358, which called for inclusive negotiations, the protection of human rights, and increased international engagement in resolving the crisis (U.S. Congress, 2019). The Trump administration subsequently introduced targeted measures against the Cameroonian government, including the suspension of certain trade preferences and visa restrictions against individuals considered responsible for undermining peace efforts (Reuters, 2021; Voice of America, 2019).

Despite these measures, the practical impact of U.S. involvement has remained limited. Although Washington has maintained a strong rhetorical commitment to human rights and conflict de-escalation, the absence of sustained mediation initiatives, direct engagement with separatist actors, and substantial support for long-term peacebuilding mechanisms has constrained the overall effectiveness of U.S. policy in shaping the trajectory of the conflict.

2.2.3.4. France

France represents one of the most influential external actors in the Anglophone crisis and has largely adopted a pro-government stance toward the Cameroonian state. Unlike the United States, which has occasionally emphasized political reforms and dialogue, France has consistently supported the Biya administration's security-oriented approach to the conflict (Reuters, 2018). Paris frames the crisis primarily as a threat to state stability and territorial integrity rather than as a question of minority self-determination. As violence intensified in the Anglophone regions, France repeatedly condemned separatist attacks while reaffirming its support for the Cameroonian government. French officials have firmly rejected both independence and federal restructuring, emphasizing the preservation of the unitary state and recognizing the Biya administration as the sole legitimate authority in addressing the crisis. At the same time, France has maintained political and military cooperation with Cameroon, a position that has led separatist groups to accuse Paris of indirectly supporting the government's security operations (Voice of America, 2019). Although France has formally called for dialogue and a peaceful resolution to the conflict, its diplomatic stance has remained closely aligned with the Cameroonian government. Statements by Presidents Paul Biya and Emmanuel Macron between 2018 and 2020 reaffirming Cameroon's territorial integrity further illustrate this alignment (BBC News, 2024). Consequently, France's continued political backing of the incumbent regime and its reluctance to support structural political reforms have positioned it less as a mediator and more as a stabilizing ally of the Cameroonian state within the broader conflict dynamics.

2.2.3.5. United Nations (UN)

The United Nations represents a key multilateral actor in the Anglophone crisis, primarily engaging through humanitarian assistance, human rights monitoring, and diplomatic calls for dialogue. In May 2018, the UN formally recognized the situation in the Anglophone regions as a humanitarian crisis and subsequently launched several initiatives aimed at providing relief to affected populations and supporting conflict de-escalation efforts. Within this framework, humanitarian programs coordinated by UN agencies provided food assistance, emergency support, and aid to internally displaced persons in the North-West and South-West regions. At the same time, the United Nations has repeatedly called for impartial investigations into human rights violations committed by both Cameroonian security forces

and separatist armed groups. Senior UN officials have also drawn international attention to the humanitarian consequences of the conflict. In 2019, UN Humanitarian Coordinator Allegra Baiocchi described the situation as a “forgotten crisis,” while the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights emphasized the need for the Cameroonian government to rebuild trust with the Anglophone population (Becket, 2019). Despite these diplomatic statements and humanitarian activities, the overall political impact of the UN's involvement has remained limited. Critics argue that the organization's response has been slow and cautious, with the crisis receiving relatively little attention within the UN Security Council (Kurupati, 2018). As a result, the UN has largely confined its role to humanitarian coordination and normative pressure rather than adopting stronger political or institutional measures capable of significantly influencing the trajectory of the conflict.

2.2.3.6. Nigeria

Nigeria represents a significant regional actor in the Anglophone crisis due to its geographic proximity and security interests in the Lake Chad Basin. As Cameroon's immediate neighbor, Nigeria officially supports the territorial integrity of the Cameroonian state and maintains security cooperation with the Biya administration, particularly in counterterrorism efforts against Boko Haram. At the same time, Nigeria hosts thousands of Anglophone refugees who have fled violence in the North-West and South-West regions, making the conflict a matter of direct humanitarian and security concern for Abuja. Although Nigeria possesses diplomatic leverage that could potentially facilitate mediation between the Cameroonian government and separatist actors, its position remains complex. Public opinion in Nigeria, particularly in the southeastern regions, often shows sympathy toward Anglophone separatists due to shared linguistic, historical, and cultural ties (International Crisis Group, 2018). However, the Nigerian government remains cautious in its approach, largely because of its own domestic security concerns. Ongoing separatist tensions in southeastern Nigeria, especially those associated with the Biafran movement, have encouraged Abuja to avoid supporting separatist claims in neighboring states. Nevertheless, the prolonged conflict in Cameroon poses economic, political, and security risks for Nigeria, including refugee flows, cross-border instability, and disruptions to regional trade. These dynamics reinforce Nigeria's interest in preventing further escalation while maintaining regional stability. Consequently, although Nigeria continues to support Cameroon's territorial integrity, it also retains the potential to play a constructive mediating role should diplomatic conditions become favorable.

2.2.3.7. African Union (AU)

The African Union has adopted a cautious and largely reactive stance toward the Anglophone crisis. While the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights has condemned human rights violations committed during the conflict, the Union has primarily emphasized the need for inclusive dialogue between the parties (International Crisis Group, 2019). However, the AU has refrained from applying direct political pressure on either the Cameroonian government or separatist actors and has not developed a proactive mediation strategy. As a result, its role in the conflict has remained largely limited to normative statements rather than active conflict resolution efforts.

2.2.3.8. United Kingdom (UK)

As the former colonial power with a direct role in the historical origins of the conflict, the United Kingdom (UK) is frequently cited as a critical external actor in the Ambazonia crisis. Separatist groups consistently expect active intervention from the UK and the Commonwealth due to this historical responsibility (Fearnley, 2020, pp. 108-109). However, the UK government strictly categorizes the conflict as an internal Cameroonian affair and continues to defend Cameroon's territorial integrity. It also maintains ongoing security cooperation with the Biya administration against regional threats such as Boko Haram (International Crisis Group, 2016, p. 15). Rather than employing unilateral sanctions or active mediation, the official British strategy relies on a low-profile normative approach termed quiet diplomacy. This strategy primarily consists of urging all parties to cease violence and engage in an inclusive dialogue, thereby deferring the mediation mandate almost entirely to multilateral institutions like the UN and the African Union (UK Government, 2023).

Although the UK holds significant historical relevance, it was deliberately excluded from the agent-based simulation model as an active top-level actor. This methodological decision is directly grounded in the UK's contemporary diplomatic disengagement. Official parliamentary records indicate that the UK consistently avoids unilateral coercive measures, such as economic sanctions or binding arbitration, prioritizing its broader regional security collaborations and avoiding interference in France's traditional sphere of influence (Lunn & Brooke-Holland, 2019, pp. 13-15). Because the UK does not exert direct, independent, or measurable diplomatic leverage capable of altering the behavioral parameters of grassroots or middle-range actors, its inclusion as an independent variable in the simulation would not yield statistically significant variance in the peace index. Unlike the proactive engagement of the US or the direct military and political backing of France, the structural inaction of the UK positions it as a passive actor supporting the status quo. Therefore, while acknowledging its historical context, the UK does not function as a primary active agent in the current conflict resolution architecture and was excluded from empirical modeling.

3. Method and Data

Agent-based modeling (ABM) is particularly suitable for conflict systems in which outcomes are shaped by repeated interactions, heterogeneous actors, and feedback effects across levels of authority. In such settings, aggregate patterns often emerge from micro-level rules rather than from a single central driver. ABM therefore enables systematic comparison of alternative institutional and diplomatic environments, while making assumptions explicit and falsifiable. At the same time, ABM results are parameter-dependent; the credibility of inference increases when models report validation logic, convergence criteria, and robustness checks. For this reason, the present study treats simulation outputs as theory-driven scenario evidence that complements, rather than replaces, empirical field-based measurement.

3.1. Simulation on Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding in Cameroon

Based on Lederach's three-level leadership framework, the simulation classifies the ADF and ASC as grassroots actors; the Lawyers' Union and Teachers' Union as middle-range leaders; and the Interim Government, the Government of Cameroon, France, Nigeria, the United States, the United Nations, and

the African Union as top-level actors. Actor attributes are coded through six indicators: political capacity and legitimacy, military capacity and use of violence, diplomatic capacity and negotiation capacity, economic leverage, and radicalism. Each indicator is assigned a value between 0 and 1 by triangulating public statements, documented strategic behavior, and secondary sources.

The model is an agent-based simulation in which leadership level and cross-level interaction structure are specified as independent variables, while each actor's peace contribution score constitutes the dependent variable. Six scenarios are designed to represent distinct institutional and geopolitical environments and are simulated over 50 time steps. The choice of 50 steps is intended to allow the system to stabilize under repeated interactions. Convergence is operationalized as a stability criterion: an actor is treated as having reached equilibrium when its peace contribution score changes by less than 0.01 for at least five consecutive steps. Under this operational definition, most scenarios stabilize around the first ten steps, although equilibrium timing varies across scenarios. Peace contributions are implemented as incremental updates. As a simplifying assumption, the model assigns baseline contribution increments of +0.30 for top-level actors, +0.15 for middle-range actors, and +0.20 for grassroots actors, reflecting differentiated access to leverage and the ability to either enable or disrupt bargaining environments. These weights are heuristic and serve as a transparent starting point rather than a calibrated causal estimate. To address concerns about parameter dependence, the analysis includes a robustness check: the six scenarios are re-run under alternative weighting schemes in which each increment is varied by ± 10 percent, and the direction of scenario ranking is compared. The model's validity is assessed through face validity and internal consistency: the direction of change produced by interaction effects is examined against the theoretical expectations of Lederach's framework, and repeated runs are inspected for stable convergence patterns under identical settings. The model is therefore best interpreted as a theory-driven exploratory tool for comparing peace-building architectures and identifying which combinations of interaction, trust-building and institutional settlement are most likely to raise the aggregate peace index under specified assumptions.

The Peace Contribution Score should not be interpreted as an empirical measurement of actual actor behavior or a predictive probability of real-world outcomes. Rather, it functions as a heuristic modeling device designed to compare relational architectures across alternative peacebuilding configurations. The objective of the scoring system is not to quantify moral legitimacy or normative desirability, but to simulate how different distributions of leverage and interaction patterns structurally alter the trajectory of conflict transformation. In this sense, the model evaluates relative systemic tendencies under specified assumptions, not empirical truth claims about actor intentions.

Table 1

Peace Impact Score and Interpretation

Peace Impact Score	Interpretation
0	Full contribution to conflict
0.10-0.40	Negative impact on conflict resolution
0.50	Neutral
0.60-0.70	Positive impact on conflict resolution
0.80-0.90	High positive impact on conflict resolution
1	Full contribution to peace

Source: Table created by the author.

Table 2*Actors and Strategies*

Leadership Levels	Actors	Attitude	Strategy	Goals	Opinion on Independence
Grassroots Leadership	Ambazonia Defence Forces (ADF)	Rejects outcomes short of independence and frames the conflict as a liberation struggle for an independent Ambazonian state.	Insurgent armed resistance aimed at weakening state control and sustaining separatist territorial influence.	Achieve international recognition and establish a fully independent Ambazonian state.	Full independence
	The Ambazonia Self-Defence Council (ASC)	A coordination platform for multiple separatist militias that endorses armed self-defence and aligns with the broader independence agenda.	Operational coordination across armed groups, mobilization of local units, and facilitation of joint action to consolidate separatist capabilities.	Coordinate self-defence forces and expand territorial influence to advance the independence project.	Full independence
Middle Range Leadership	Ambazonia Lawyers Union	Mobilizes around perceived erosion of the Anglophone common-law system and broader political marginalization.	Professional strikes, court boycotts, legal advocacy, and public campaigning to pressure institutional reform.	Safeguard the common-law legal system and secure meaningful political reforms in Anglophone regions.	Federalism
	Ambazonia Teachers' Union	Opposes perceived Francophone imposition in Anglophone education and frames language policy as central to Anglophone rights.	Teacher strikes, school closures, and collective mobilization to protect the Anglophone educational framework.	Protect and restore the Anglophone educational system and ensure institutional guarantees for English-language schooling.	Federalism
Top-level leaders directly involved in the conflict	Ambazonia Interim Government	Positions itself as a provisional government-in-exile representing the independence movement.	Diaspora-driven political organization, international lobbying, and coordination of separatist governance efforts.	Advance independence claims through diplomatic advocacy and political representation.	Full independence
	Cameroon Government	Maintains a commitment to the unitary state and emphasizes territorial integrity.	Security operations combined with political initiatives such as dialogue offers and administrative reforms.	Preserve territorial integrity and restore state authority in the North-West and South-West regions.	Unitary state
Top-level leaders indirectly involved in the conflict	United States	Advocates a peaceful resolution and applies targeted diplomatic pressure.	Diplomatic engagement and targeted measures including visa restrictions.	Encourage a negotiated settlement and reduce violence.	Full independence
	France	Calls for dialogue and restraint while supporting state stability.	Diplomatic messaging urging dialogue and condemning violence.	Prevent escalation and support a political process compatible with territorial integrity.	Unitary state
	Nigeria	Supports Cameroon's territorial integrity and cooperates on border security.	Security cooperation and cross-border coordination against separatist activity.	Contain spillover risks and maintain regional stability.	Unitary state
	United Nations	Calls for cessation of hostilities, protection of civilians, and inclusive dialogue.	Normative pressure, humanitarian coordination, and facilitation of dialogue.	Reduce civilian harm and promote a negotiated settlement.	Unitary state
	African Union	Emphasizes dialogue while affirming territorial integrity.	Diplomatic engagement and support for mediation initiatives.	Support a political solution and uphold regional stability.	Unitary state

Table 3

Actors and Strategies

Indicators	Explanations
<p>Political capacity and legitimacy</p>	<p>The value assigned between 0 and 1, based on the BTI political transformation index, indicates an actor's capacity to leverage political legitimacy in conflict resolution. Official governments and international organizations possess stronger political capacity and legitimacy than other actors.</p> <p>Actor with High Political Capacity and Legitimacy: 1 Actor with Low Political Capacity and Legitimacy: 0</p>
<p>Military capacity and use of violence</p>	<p>This indicator measures the armed capacity of actors involved in the conflict, assigning high impact to armed groups and no impact to actors not engaged in armed struggle. Accordingly, international organizations such as the UN, the US, and the African Union, which are neither parties to the conflict nor militarily involved in its resolution, are assigned a military capacity of 0.</p> <p>Actors with high military capacity and use violence: 1 Actors with low military capacity and use violence: 0</p>
<p>Diplomatic capacity and negotiation skills</p>	<p>Actors with high diplomatic capacity possess greater negotiation ability, enabling the establishment of more credible and effective platforms for dialogue among conflicting parties.</p> <p>Actor with high diplomatic capacity and negotiation ability: 1 Actor with low diplomatic capacity and negotiation ability: 0</p>
<p>Economic power</p>	<p>This indicator captures actors' economic influence through mechanisms such as trade, foreign direct investment, economic aid, and financial ties, with higher dependence increasing economic leverage. In Cameroon's case, the United States possesses less economic power than France does due to its comparatively limited economic engagement.</p> <p>High Economic Power Actor: 1 Low Economic Power Actor: 0</p>
<p>Radicalism</p>	<p>Actors' radical positions hinder peacebuilding by obstructing negotiation processes. Accordingly, groups advocating federalism exhibit lower levels of radicalism than separatist actors and those favoring a unitary state.</p> <p>Actors advocating federalism: 1 Actors opposed to federalism: 0</p>

Source: Table created by the author.

4. Findings

4.1. Scenarios and Simulation Studies on Conflict Resolution

a) Scenario 1: The Cameroonian government and the interim government are peaceful, and a federal system is negotiated.

Table 4

Actors and Peace Impact Score

Actors	Peace Impact Score
Grassroots Leadership	
Ambazonia Defence Forces (ADF)	0
The Ambazonia Self-Defence Council (ASC)	0.20
Middle-Range Leadership	
Ambazonia Lawyers' Union	1
Ambazonia Teachers' Union	1
Top Level Leadership	
Ambazonia Interim Government	0.30
Cameroon Government	1
United States	
France	0.30
Nigeria	1
United Nations	1
African Union	1

Source: Table created by the author.

In the first scenario, it is assessed that the Cameroonian government, which traditionally aims to preserve a unitary state and pursue assimilationist policies demonstrates political flexibility and becomes open to negotiating a federal system, while the Francophone population supports the reconstitution of the Ambazonia region as a federal state to resolve the conflict (Awasom, 2020, pp. 68-70). Under these circumstances, based on the official statements and armed liberation strategy of the radical separatist group ADF, indicating that they will not accept any political outcome other than independence (International Crisis Group, 2019, pp. 15-16), it is concluded that they would reject a federal solution; therefore, their contribution to peace would be zero. However, the Interim Government (IG), whose primary objective is to achieve full independence in the international arena, and its armed coordination platform, the ASC, presents a different dynamic. Although the IG positions itself as the legitimate representative of Ambazonia, its direct dependence on diaspora remittances and international lobbying networks renders it highly vulnerable to external diplomatic pressures (International Crisis Group, 2019, pp. 18-20). Therefore, it is anticipated that the IG, and indirectly the ASC, would partially comply with the decisions supported by international actors such as the US and the UN, adopting a more pragmatic stance due to their lack of material resources to sustain an isolated war. While the IG's contribution to peace is evaluated at 0.30 due to its diplomatic maneuverability, the ASC's contribution is estimated to be 0.20. The primary reason for the score differential between these two groups is that

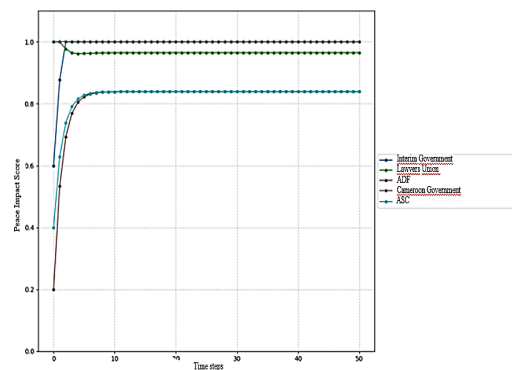
the ASC finds transitioning to a stable political platform riskier in terms of its own material interests and gains compared to the diaspora-based IG.

The Ambazonia Lawyers' Union and Teachers' Union, representing middle-range leadership, established their primary political goals as the preservation of the Anglophone common-law system and educational structure when organizing the initial protests in 2016 (BBC News, 2016). Their official stance advocates safeguarding this institutional autonomy within a federal structure rather than seeking full independence. Since the Cameroonian government's acceptance of federalism directly aligns with these actors' foundational principles and primary political demands, their contribution to the post-conflict peacebuilding process is rated as 1. Similarly, the Cameroonian government's contribution to peace in this scenario is rated as 1, assuming it relaxes its unitary structure and adopts federalism as an official solution. At the international level, the official diplomatic stance of the US is directed toward promoting dialogue, humanitarian access, and peaceful resolution (U.S. Department of State, 2021). In accordance with House Resolution 358 of 2019 (U.S. Congress, 2019), the US supports federal-like structures that would guarantee minority rights in the region; thus, its contribution to conflict resolution in this scenario is rated as 1. Nigeria's primary regional objective is to ensure border security, contain spillover risks that could trigger its internal Biafran separatist movement, and maintain regional stability (Mutah, 2022). The continued existence of a federal Cameroon would entirely satisfy these political objectives for Nigeria, as it would eliminate the risk of an independent Ambazonia establishing ties with Biafran rebels. Therefore, its contribution to peace and stability is rated as 1.

In parallel, the UN and the AU, whose fundamental missions involve reducing civilian harm, supporting negotiated settlements, and ensuring democratic representation while respecting the territorial integrity of member states (Global Rights, 2023), would naturally support a federal consensus. Hence, their contribution to peace is determined to be 1. Finally, France, which bases its foreign policy on supporting the state stability and strong centralist structures of its Francophone allies (Reuters, 2018), traditionally opposes federalism. However, it is anticipated that France will not pursue an active policy to sabotage the peace process in order to avoid the risk of a new crisis, taking into account its diminishing geopolitical influence in West Africa, particularly if the US, the UN, and the local will forge a strong consensus toward federalism. Although it would not provide active support, its contribution score to peace is set at 0.30, as it would not impede the process.

Graph 3

Levels of Actors Interacting in the First Scenario



Source: Graphic created by the author.

The simulation, conducted over a 50-step time frame based on the data in Graph 3, examined interactions among the Interim Government, the Cameroonian government, the Lawyers' Union, the ADF, and the ASC, reaching equilibrium around the eighth step. Owing to the strong influence of top-level actors on grassroots dynamics, the peace contribution indices of the ADF and ASC increased as early as the second step. Although the model anticipated downward pressure among grassroots actors, negative interactions stabilized at an early stage due to the growing peace orientation of top-level actors. The sharp rise in the Interim Government's peace contribution, the widespread adoption of conciliatory positions among top-level actors, and the strengthening belief in conflict resolution at middle-range and grassroots levels point to an increasing acceptance of federalism and effective political representation. The final distribution of peace indices is presented in Graph 3. While the total peace index before the simulation was 0.709, at the end of the scenario, the total peace index was measured as 0.964 thanks to the interaction between actors at different levels and their contributions to peace.

b) Scenario 2: The Cameroonian government insists on unitary governance and armed struggle.

Table 5

Actors and Peace Impact Score

Actors	Peace Impact Score
Grassroots Leadership	
Ambazonia Defence Forces (ADF)	0
The Ambazonia Self-Defence Council (ASC)	0
Middle-Range Leadership	
Ambazonia Lawyers' Union	0
Ambazonia Teachers' Union	0
Top Level Leadership	
Ambazonia Interim Government	0
Cameroon Government	0
United States	
France	0.40
Nigeria	0
United Nations	0.50
African Union	0.60

Source: Table created by the author.

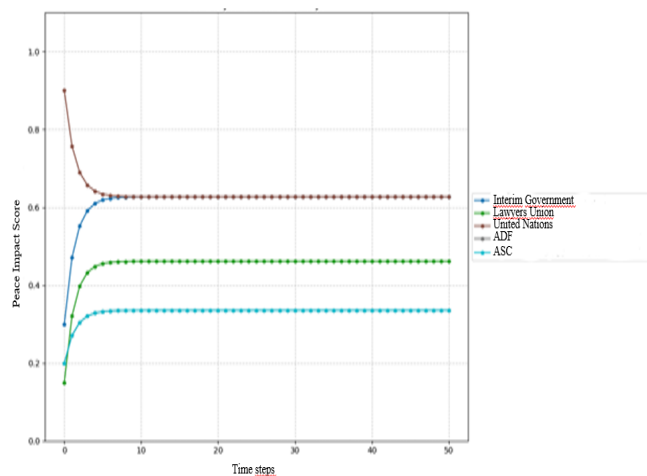
In the second scenario, which models the Cameroonian government's strategic decision to preserve the existing centralized unitary system through a policy of militarization and armed pacification, the prospects for negotiation are eliminated. Faced with the state's uncompromising security-centric approach, grassroots leaders, primarily ADF and ASC, are assumed to reject conflict resolution under all

circumstances. Because their foundational strategy relies on insurgent armed resistance and guerrilla-style operations to weaken state control and achieve full territorial independence, the government's military escalation directly reinforces their zero-sum approach to the conflict (International Crisis Group, 2019 pp. 10-14). Consequently, their contribution to peace is evaluated at zero. Middle-range leaders, such as the Ambazonia Lawyers' Union and Teachers' Union, initially mobilized to pressure the government for institutional reforms to protect the Anglophone common-law and educational systems (BBC News, 2016). However, as state-sponsored violence escalates and the government violently suppresses dissent, these civil society actors are expected to conclude that meaningful peacebuilding within a unitary framework is impossible. Driven by an existential threat, they abandon their demands for federalism and reframe full independence as the sole viable mechanism for ending systematic violence and marginalization. Consequently, they are not expected to contribute to peace, severing potential reconciliatory ties with the Cameroonian government and aligning their rhetoric with the maximalist goals of the Interim Government (IG), resulting in a peace contribution score of zero.

At the international level, the United States, despite its federalist rhetoric and legislative documents such as House Resolution 358 calling for the respect of human rights and inclusive dialogue (U.S. Congress, 2019), is anticipated to remain largely passive. Constrained by a reluctance to intervene militarily, the US limits its response to normative condemnatory statements and targeted sanctions, avoiding active, coercive engagement in conflict resolution. France, prioritizing its geopolitical interests in Central Africa, continues its traditional foreign policy of supporting the Biya administration to preserve state stability and territorial integrity (Reuters, 2018), resulting in a zero contribution to the peacebuilding process. Similarly, Nigeria, whose primary strategic goal is to contain spillover risks and secure its borders against separatist contagion (Mutah, 2022), is projected to abstain from mediation. The UN and the AU, whose operational frameworks rely heavily on local consent and diplomatic facilitation (OCHA, 2025), are also expected to remain inactive. Their abstention reflects the complete absence of peace demands from grassroots and middle-range actors, compounded by France's continued diplomatic and military backing of the Cameroonian state's armed confrontation.

Graph 4

Levels of Actors Interacting in the Third Scenario



Source: Graphic created by the author.

Simulation revealed that the Interim Government, the Lawyers' Union, the UN, the ADF, and the ASC interacted extensively throughout the conflict timeline. Interestingly, the simulation demonstrated that because top-level international actors refrained from actions that would actively exacerbate the conflict, adopting a relatively neutral-passive attitude, this diplomatic restraint exerted a subtle moderating effect on the radicalization of middle-range and grassroots leaders. Although all leadership levels continue the armed struggle in this scenario, the simulation observes that the operational intensity of the conflict is maintained in a less radical manner when top-level actors do not actively provoke or fund proxy escalations. However, due to the protracted nature of the conflict and the persistent failure to raise the peace index to a sustainable level, the UN's initial optimism and structural capacity for peacebuilding deteriorate over time. While the total peace index before the simulation was measured at 0.182, it only marginally increased to 0.544 at the end of the 50-step interaction process, illustrating the severe limitations of achieving stability when state actors prioritize military pacification over political dialogue.

c) Scenario 3: The Trump administration remains silent on the crisis, and France supports the Biya Government.

Table 6

Actors and Peace Impact Score

Actors	Peace Impact Score
Grassroots Leadership	
Ambazonia Defence Forces (ADF)	0
The Ambazonia Self-Defence Council (ASC)	0
Middle-Range Leadership	
Ambazonia Lawyers' Union	0.50
Ambazonia Teachers' Union	0.50
Top Level Leadership	
Ambazonia Interim Government	0
Cameroon Government	0
United States	
France	0
Nigeria	0
United Nations	0.20
African Union	0.20

Source: Graphic created by the author.

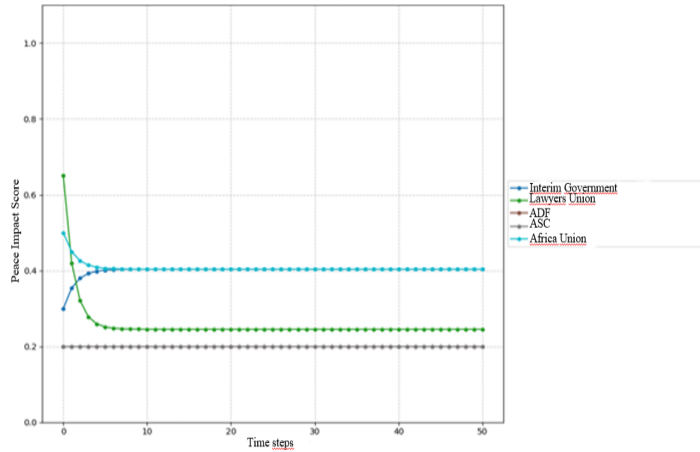
The third scenario models a geopolitical environment defined by international apathy and unilateral state reinforcement. The premise of the United States remaining silent on the Ambazonia crisis is grounded in the "America First" foreign policy doctrine, which fundamentally prioritizes domestic interests and mandates a reduction in political engagement and liberal interventionism in distant regions.

This strategic disengagement from Africa is empirically evidenced by diplomatic regressions, including plans to close several embassies and consulates in Sub-Saharan Africa, notably in Cameroon (Africanews, 2025). Given this diplomatic vacuum, the US's contribution to conflict resolution is rated as zero. Simultaneously, France is projected to pursue its traditional geopolitical and economic interests by strictly adhering to its policy of preserving a Francophone-led, highly centralized unitary state in Cameroon (Reuters, 2018). Empowered by US silence and explicit French diplomatic and military backing, the Biya government is expected to entirely abandon any prospects of federalist negotiation. Instead, it will consolidate its power through a strategy of military pacification, intensifying the cycle of violence in the Anglophone regions to force systemic capitulation. Because its official strategy shifts completely toward coercive suppression rather than political accommodation, the Cameroonian government's contribution to peace is zero.

This structural closure of political dialogue heavily impacts the separatist actors. The complete abandonment of federalism and the aggressive expansion of Francophone dominance effectively block any constitutional avenues for Anglophone political representation. Consequently, the Interim Government (IG) and its armed wing, the ASC, are compelled to view armed struggle as the only viable mechanism to achieve their goal of full independence (Deutsche Welle, 2019). Similarly, the radical ADF, facing intense state violence, will escalate its asymmetric warfare against both state security forces and perceived civilian collaborators. Since all three separatist entities are forced into a survivalist, maximalist armed resistance, their peace contribution scores are evaluated at zero. Middle-range actors, such as the Ambazonia Lawyers' Union and Teachers' Union, find themselves trapped between state repression and separatist radicalization. Their foundational demands for institutional and legal reforms (BBC News, 2016) are rendered moot in a fully militarized environment. The lack of international protection, combined with increased state repression backed by France, severely demobilizes these pro-federalist and peaceful civil society organizations, marginalizing moderate voices within Anglophone society. While they do not actively participate in the armed rebellion, their capacity to build peace is critically crippled; thus, their contribution score is reduced to 0.50. Regionally, although Nigeria shares close bilateral relations with the Biya administration and vehemently opposes separatist movements to prevent a resurgence of its own Biafran conflict, it is highly unlikely to endorse Cameroon's unrestricted coercive approach. The massive escalation of violence orchestrated by the Biya government carries a significant risk of triggering unprecedented waves of Anglophone refugees across the porous border into Nigerian territory, threatening Nigeria's own regional stability. Due to these spillover concerns, Nigeria adopts a cautious, semi-passive stance, yielding a limited peace contribution score of 0.20. Finally, international organizations are rendered structurally ineffective in this scenario. The UN is incapable of taking binding, active measures in conflict resolution, as the UN Security Council (UNSC) cannot pass robust resolutions without the active leadership and backing of the US. Similarly, the EU and the AU, strictly adhering to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states and prioritizing cooperation with the Biya government to combat regional terrorism, refrain from concrete interventions. Their involvement is reduced to issuing non-binding, normative statements expressing "concern," which fails to alter the conflict dynamics on the ground (Global Rights, 2023). Therefore, the collective contribution of these international organizations to peace is predicted to be a mere 0.20.

Graph 5

Levels of Actors Interacting in the Third Scenario



Source: Graphic created by the author.

Simulation revealed that the deliberate non-intervention of the US and France's active backing of the Cameroonian government's violent policies severely degraded the motivation of international organizations to mediate the conflict. Crucially, this geopolitical configuration negatively affected the attitudes of middle-range leadership. Deprived of international diplomatic support for their political rights demands, these middle-range actors became highly demobilized and increasingly conflict-prone. As a result, the peace score of the civil society unions dropped dramatically. While the baseline total peace index calculated before the simulation was 0.145, the compounding effect of international apathy and state-sponsored violence drove the final peace index down to a critical low of 0.100 by the end of the simulation.

d) Scenario 4: Radical groups on both sides prevent the establishment of an effective dialogue mechanism, and rhetoric calling for war and independence intensifies.

Table 7

Actors and Peace Impact Score

Actors	Peace Impact Score
Grassroots Leadership	
Ambazonia Defence Forces (ADF)	0
The Ambazonia Self-Defence Council (ASC)	0
Middle-Range Leadership	
Ambazonia Lawyers' Union	0.10
Ambazonia Teachers' Union	0.10
Top Level Leadership	
Ambazonia Interim Government	0

Cameroon Government	0
United States	
France	0.50
Nigeria	0.20
United Nations	0.50
African Union	0.60

Source: Table created by the author.

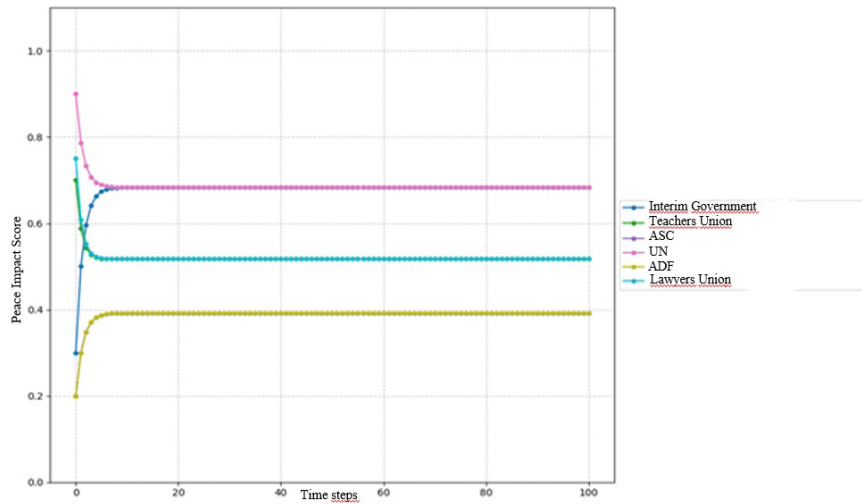
In the fourth scenario, the conflict environment is dominated by "spoiler dynamics," wherein radical grassroots actors deliberately obstruct negotiation efforts to sustain the war economy and their political relevance. Driven by its foundational strategy of insurgent armed resistance and its absolute rejection of any outcome short of full independence, ADF is expected to intentionally escalate violence. By doing so, the ADF aims to bolster its radical legitimacy, monopolize the liberation discourse, and sabotage any moderate attempts at dialogue (International Crisis Group, 2019). Consequently, its contribution to peace is entirely negated, resulting in a score of zero (0). Similarly, the ASC and the Interim Government (IG) find themselves in fiercely outbidding competition for grassroots supremacy. To enhance the IG's political legitimacy and sustain the uncompromising independence narrative, the ASC is likely to intensify its military clashes not only with the Cameroonian state but also in fratricidal confrontations with the rival ADF to consolidate its territorial monopoly over the armed struggle. Because the IG and the ASC actively generate a new, multidimensional cycle of violence to protect their hegemonic status within the separatist movement, both actors are assessed as contributing zero to peace. This radicalization at the grassroots level structurally paralyzes the middle-range leadership. According to Lederach's framework, actors like the Ambazonia Lawyers' Union and Teachers' Union function optimally when they can act as a bridge between high-level diplomatic initiatives and grassroots realities. However, as radical militias block all negotiation mechanisms and violently enforce adherence to the independence mandate, these civil society unions are stripped of their mediating capacity (BBC News, 2016). Unable to advocate for their core demands of institutional and legal reform without facing violent reprisals from separatist militias or the state, their contribution to peace plummets to a marginal 0.10.

At the international level, top-level actors face a severe lack of operational entry points due to the absence of a viable local dialogue partner. The United States, guided by its official stance of promoting inclusive dialogue (U.S. Congress, 2019), is not expected to significantly alter its position; it will maintain a passive diplomatic posture, resulting in a moderate peace contribution of 0.50. Nigeria, strictly prioritizing its national security and border integrity, adopts a strategy of absolute containment. To prevent the escalating violence and radicalization from spilling over into its territory and agitating its own secessionist factions, Nigeria refrains from engaging with either the Biya government or the separatist groups, yielding a neutral peace contribution score of 0.50. France's geopolitical calculus remains tied to the survival of the unitary Cameroonian state (Reuters, 2018). The failure to establish a dialogue mechanism inherently benefits the Cameroonian government's military strategy, providing it with a pretext to ruthlessly extend its martial control over the Anglophone region. Since this aligns with France's overarching goal of state stability, its contribution to conflict resolution is estimated at a low 0.20, reflecting tacit complicity in the state's militarized approach. Conversely, international organizations such as the UN and the AU rely heavily on normative pressure to reduce civilian harm.

Due to the intensifying violence, they are predicted to issue strong condemnatory statements and calls for cessation of hostilities. However, lacking the hard power to force radical spoilers to the negotiating table, their actions remain structurally ineffective, capping their peace contribution at 0.60.

Graph 6

Levels of Actors Interacting in the Fourth Scenario



Source: Graphic created by the author.

The agent-based simulation provides critical insights into the temporal dynamics of this protracted escalation. Initially, the simulation indicates that the peace indices of the UN and the trade unions decline sharply as the conflict intensifies, severely undermining the motivation of middle-range leaders to pursue conflict resolution. However, as the simulation progresses toward its later steps, an emergent property of war fatigue and logistical attrition appears. Grassroots leaders (ADF, ASC) and the Interim Government are eventually forced to adopt more conciliatory positions, driven primarily by the economic unsustainability of prolonged violence and crippling constraints on their militant capacity. While the total peace index before the simulation was an abysmal 0.236, the compounding effect of resource exhaustion eventually forced a strategic de-escalation at the grassroots level, resulting in a post-simulation peace index of 0.604.

e) Scenario 5: The United Nations Security Council adopts a binding resolution on the civil war in Cameroon.

Graph 6

Levels of Actors Interacting in the Fourth Scenario

Actors	Peace Impact Score
Grassroots Leadership	
Ambazonia Defence Forces (ADF)	0.20
The Ambazonia Self-Defence Council (ASC)	0.60

Middle-Range Leadership	
Ambazonia Lawyers' Union	1
Ambazonia Teachers' Union	1
Top Level Leadership	
Ambazonia Interim Government	0.70
Cameroon Government	0.70
United States	
France	1
Nigeria	1
United Nations	1
African Union	1

Source: Graphic created by the author.

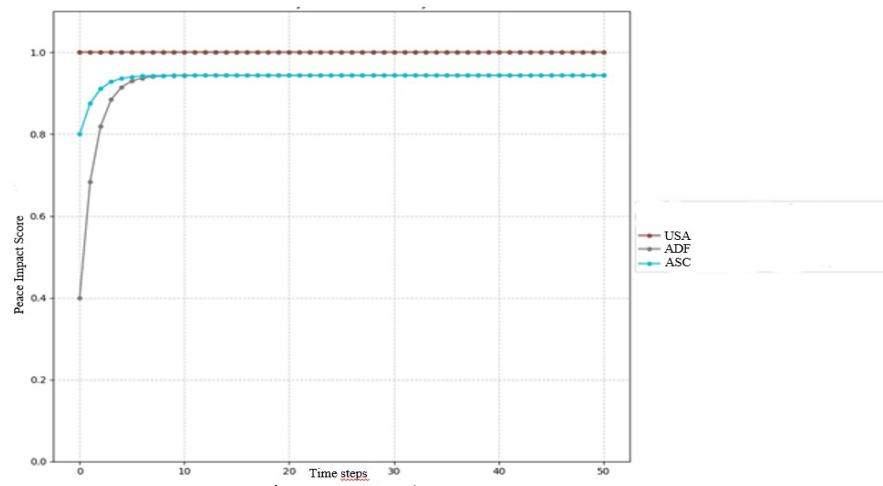
The fifth scenario models a systemic geopolitical shock: the adoption of a binding United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution mandating an immediate cessation of hostilities and structural political dialogue in Cameroon. The realization of this scenario fundamentally requires a unified consensus among the veto-wielding P5 members. Therefore, it is assumed that the United States and France prioritize regional stability over passive disengagement or unilateral alliance preservation, actively utilizing their diplomatic leverage to enforce peace. Because a binding resolution cannot pass without their explicit consent and political commitment, the peace contribution of both the US and France is rated at an absolute 1. Consequently, international and regional organizations are fully empowered to execute their normative mandates of humanitarian coordination and conflict resolution (Global Rights, 2023). Nigeria, benefitting from the internationally enforced stabilization of its borders which neutralizes the spillover threat to its own territory, fully aligns with this multilateral framework. Thus, the peace contributions of the UN, AU, and Nigeria are firmly set at 1. At the state level, the Cameroonian government historically resists external mediation, viewing it as a violation of its sovereign unitary status. However, a binding UNSC resolution, particularly one backed by its traditional ally France, critically limits the Biya administration's capacity to continue its militarized approach. Faced with the threat of international isolation, targeted sanctions, and a withdrawal of bilateral military support, the Cameroonian government is structurally compelled to cooperate. Although mutual trust with separatist factions remains extremely low and institutional reluctance persists, the state's forced compliance yields a strong peace contribution score of 0.70. This top-down international pressure radically alters the strategic calculus of separatist actors, albeit asymmetrically. The Interim Government (IG), whose primary geopolitical strategy relies on gaining international recognition and diplomatic legitimacy (Deutsche Welle, 2019), views the UNSC resolution as a monumental diplomatic victory. To prove its capacity as a responsible state-in-waiting and a legitimate political actor, the IG is highly anticipated to cooperate with the UN framework. In parallel, its armed coordinating body, the ASC, is expected to adhere to the IG's directives, declaring a tactical ceasefire to comply with international demands. Consequently, the peace contribution of the IG and the ASC rises significantly to 0.60 and 0.70, reflecting their strategic pivot from armed struggle to international diplomacy.

Conversely, the radical ADF explicitly rejects international frameworks that do not guarantee immediate

sovereign independence, viewing compromises as betrayals of the liberation struggle (International Crisis Group, 2019). Despite the binding UNSC resolution, the ADF is expected to maintain its militant commitment to independence. However, the overwhelming presence of international monitoring, potential targeted sanctions against its diaspora leadership, and the loss of logistical cover due to the ASC's ceasefire will severely constrain the ADF's operational capacity. Forced into a defensive posture, the ADF cannot fully spoil the peace process but refuses to actively support it, resulting in a marginal peace contribution of 0.20. In this secure, internationally monitored environment, middle-range actors are deeply revitalized. According to Lederach's model, a robust top-level security umbrella provides the necessary operational space for civil society to function. The Ambazonia Lawyers' Union and Teachers' Union, effectively shielded from state and radical militia violence, can resume their crucial bridging role (BBC News, 2016). By cooperating with UN agencies, they actively engage both top-level diplomats and grassroots communities in transitional justice and institutional reform efforts, driving sustainable peacebuilding. Their contribution to the peace process is thus estimated at a robust 0.80.

Graph 7

Levels of Actors Interacting in the Fourth Scenario



The agent-based simulation highlights the profound efficacy of coercive top-down peacebuilding. In instances where the UNSC adopted a binding resolution, it was observed that top-level actors radically influenced grassroots actors, structurally transforming the conflict environment in a peaceful direction. The coercive diplomatic pressure fundamentally altered the behavioral attitudes of separatist militias (such as the ASC) and state forces, mitigating their reliance on violence. The systemic impact of this international intervention is starkly reflected in the quantitative data: while the total peace index stood at 0.836 prior to the simulation, the synergistic alignment of top-level mandates and middle-range mobilization drove the final peace index to an optimal 0.990 by the end of the simulation steps.

f) Scenario 6: To end the civil war, the US begins to impose comprehensive economic sanctions on Cameroon and encourages other countries to do the same.

Table 9

Actors and Peace Impact Score

Actors	Peace Impact Score
Grassroots Leadership	
Ambazonia Defence Forces (ADF)	0
The Ambazonia Self-Defence Council (ASC)	0
Middle-Range Leadership	
Ambazonia Lawyers' Union	0.20
Ambazonia Teachers' Union	0.20
Top Level Leadership	
Ambazonia Interim Government	0
Cameroon Government	0.20
United States	0.20
France	0.20
Nigeria	0.20
United Nations	0.20
African Union	0.20

Source: Table created by the author.

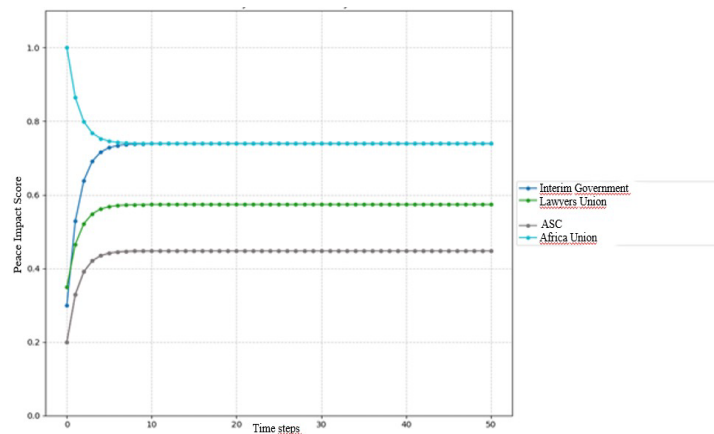
The final scenario models the application of coercive economic diplomacy, wherein the United States initiates a comprehensive economic sanctions regime against Cameroon and pressures the international community to follow suit. While the US implements this strategy based on the assumption that economic asphyxiation will force a negotiated settlement, historical empirics suggest a high failure rate for such measures. In an extensive empirical study evaluating 204 cases of economic sanctions, Hufbauer et al. (2007, pp. 156-160) demonstrated that comprehensive sanctions achieve their intended political outcomes in only about 34% of instances. Similarly, United States International Trade Commission (1998, pp. 3-19) highlighted the structural limitations of US unilateral sanctions throughout the 20th century. Drawing parallels to the recent ineffectiveness of sweeping sanctions in halting the war in Ukraine, the structural utility of economic coercion as a direct peacebuilding tool is highly questionable. Consequently, the US's actual contribution to sustainable conflict resolution in this scenario is estimated at a low 0.20. At the state level, the Cameroonian government's response is dictated by the logic of authoritarian survival. As Escribà-Folch and Wright (2010, p. 355) emphasize, leaders in authoritarian regimes frequently respond to international sanctions by deepening social polarization, increasing the mobilization of their core supporters, and utilizing patronage networks to insulate their regime from economic shocks. Instead of capitulating, the Biya administration is expected to dig in, effectively passing the devastating economic burden onto the civilian population. Because this survivalist strategy inherently blocks structural peace reforms, the Cameroonian government's contribution to peace is evaluated at 0.20. Correspondingly, middle-range actors such as the Ambazonia Lawyers' Union and Teachers' Union, whose constituents bear the brunt of the socioeconomic collapse, find their operational capacity decimated. Struggling simply to survive the economic fallout, their

ability to act as peacebuilders is severely constrained, resulting in a peace contribution score of 0.20. The imposition of a global financial blockade critically disrupts the separatist movement. Cut off from formal diaspora remittances and international funding networks, the Interim Government (IG) faces severe legitimacy and operational crisis. Driven into a state of structural survival, the IG is unable to contribute to diplomatic peacebuilding, yielding a score of zero. Similarly, grassroots armed groups are stripped of their conventional funding sources. In response, these radical actors are heavily predicted to turn to illicit war economies, extortion, and increased resource predation against local civilians to sustain their insurgencies. Because this economic marginalization further disrupts regional stability and fuels predatory violence, the peace contribution of both the ADF and ASC is absolute zero 0.

Regionally and internationally, the secondary effects of the sanctions trigger defensive diplomatic posturing. France, constrained by its geopolitical alliance with the US but fundamentally opposed to the destabilization of its primary Francophone ally (Reuters, 2018), is forced to reluctantly and partially comply with the sanctions regime. Its passive-aggressive compliance yields a minimal peace contribution of 0.20. Conversely, Nigeria suffers acute economic blowback. The collapse of formal cross-border trade and the potential influx of economically desperate refugees directly threaten Nigeria's domestic stability. Consequently, Nigeria is forced to abandon its passive stance and play a highly proactive, urgent role in mediating the conflict to restore bilateral economic normalcy, driving its peace contribution to a robust 0.70.

Graph 8

Levels of Actors Interacting in the Sixth Scenario



Source: Table created by the author.

The agent-based simulation highlights a paradoxical outcome driven by economic attrition rather than genuine conflict resolution. Initially, the simulation indicates a decline in the diplomatic motivation of international organizations, particularly the AU, as the heavy-handed US sanctions bypass traditional multilateral mediation frameworks. However, as the steps progress, the escalating economic pressure renders the continuation of the conflict logistically unsustainable. Crippled by severe resource deprivation, lack of ammunition, and acute food shortages, the Interim Government and grassroots leaders are eventually forced into a pragmatic willingness to halt hostilities. Consequently, while the total peace index before the simulation was heavily suppressed at 0.282 due to the initial shock of the

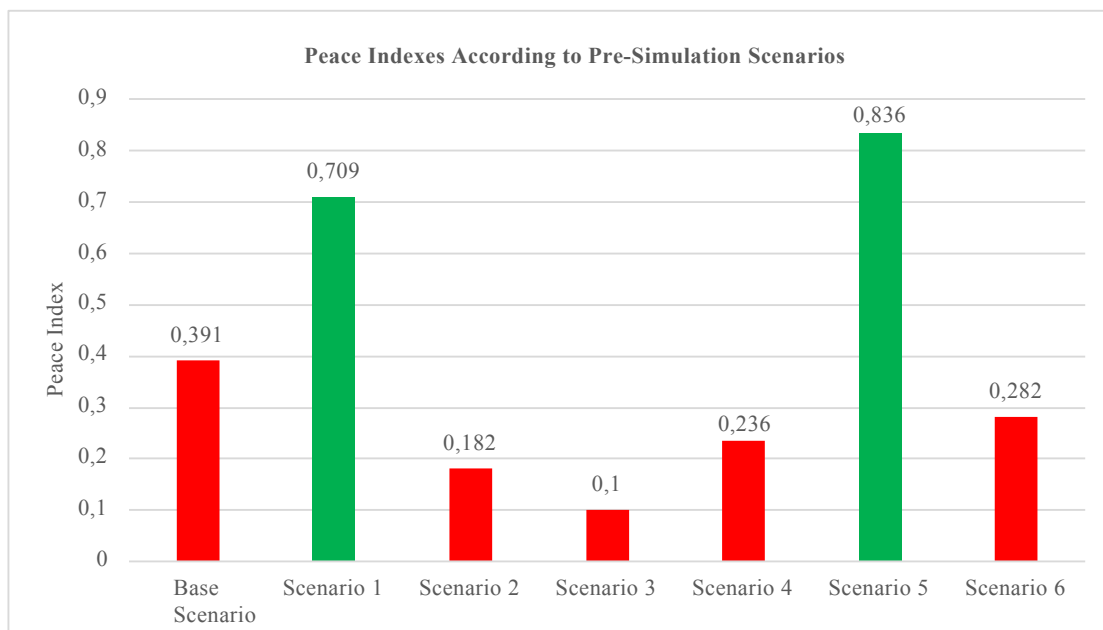
sanctions and state polarization, the compounding effect of mutual logistical exhaustion drove the final peace index to 0.656 after the simulation.

4.2. Comparative Analysis of Pre-Simulation and Post-Simulation Peace Indices

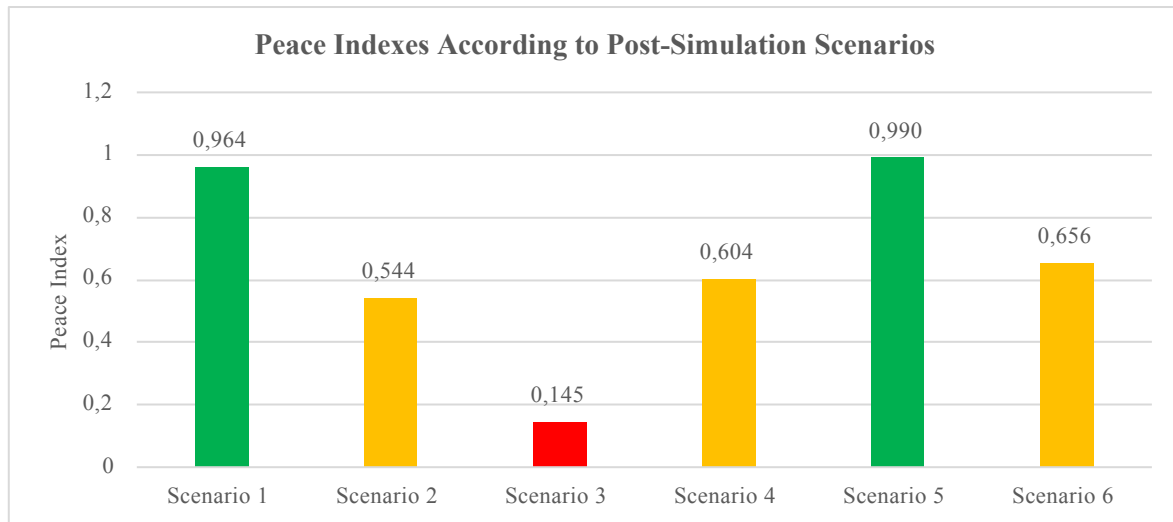
Figure 9 and Figure 10 illustrate the structural transformation between the actors' initial peace contribution scores and the final peace levels achieved after 50 steps of agent-based simulation interactions across six different scenarios. According to the findings, Scenario 1 (Federalism) and particularly Scenario 5 (UNSC Binding Resolution), where top-level actors actively and bindingly participate in peacebuilding, represent the highest peace indices both initially and at the end of the simulation. For instance, in Scenario 5, the peace index, which was 0.836 prior to the simulation, reached an optimal level of 0.990 by the end of the simulation, as top-level diplomatic pressure transformed grassroots groups in a peaceful direction. In contrast, Scenario 3, which models international apathy and unilateral state repression, presented a dramatic picture where the peace index regressed from a pre-simulation level of 0.145 to a post-simulation low of 0.100. This starkly demonstrates how the silence and disengagement of top-level actors radicalize middle-range and grassroots actors, severely derailing peacebuilding efforts. On the other hand, in Scenarios 2, 4, and 6, where radical armed groups or international economic sanctions dominate the conflict environment, emergent factors such as logistical exhaustion and resource deprivation during the simulation process eventually forced actors into pragmatically conciliatory positions, leading to a relative increase in the final indices. Overall, this comparative analysis robustly confirms that, as posited by John Paul Lederach's multi-level peacebuilding model, proactive cross-level interactions and top-level diplomatic consensus are of critical importance for achieving sustainable peace.

Figure 9

Peace Indexes According to Pre-Simulation Scenarios



Source: Graphic created by the author.

Figure 10*Peace Indexes According to Post-Simulation Scenarios**Source: Graphic created by the author.*

Conclusion

The findings of this study underscore that the Anglophone Francophone confrontation in Cameroon is not a single-issue dispute but a layered conflict in which language policy, identity construction, and political representation reinforce one another over time. As these layers accumulate, the categories through which actors interpret one another become increasingly rigid. The result is a narrowing of the perceived space for compromise and a widening legitimacy gap between Anglophone constituencies and the central state. In this sense, the crisis is best understood as a conflict transformation problem: the core driver is not only the presence of violence, but also the reproduction of exclusion through institutions, symbols, and everyday governance practices. Within this context, the simulation results provide consistent scenario-based support for the central expectation of Lederach's multi-level peacebuilding framework: sustainable de-escalation is more likely when leadership tiers are connected through structured interaction rather than operating in isolation. Across the scenarios, the aggregate peace index improves most clearly when top level leverage is combined with mechanisms that enable middle range brokerage and grassroots compliance. This pattern matters because each tier carries distinct capabilities. Top level actors can change bargaining environments through legal authority, resource allocation, and enforcement. Middle range actors can translate demands across social divides and reduce misrecognition through trusted brokerage. Grassroots actors, particularly armed groups, remain decisive because ceasefire credibility and local security conditions depend heavily on their compliance. The model therefore highlights that peacebuilding strategies that privilege only one tier tend to be brittle. Elite only approaches may secure temporary bargains but struggle to penetrate local mistrust. Bottom-up initiatives can build social cohesion yet remain vulnerable when they lack credible guarantees from the state and external mediators. The comparison between baseline settings and interactive simulations sharpens this conclusion. In scenarios where interaction effects are ignored, peace outcomes remain substantially lower than in the corresponding simulations that permit cross level

influence. This difference is especially visible in the federal negotiation scenario and in the binding UNSC resolution scenario, where structured top-down leverage amplifies the incentives for grassroots restraint and enables middle range actors to function as bridges. Conversely, when the conflict environment is shaped by international disengagement, unilateral state reinforcement, or spoiler dynamics, the model produces persistently weak peace indices or even deterioration. The implication is not that any single external actor can impose peace, but that the absence of coordinated top level engagement reduces the constraints on escalation and weakens the social space in which moderate brokers can operate. Substantively, the findings point toward a sequencing logic for policy and practice. First, credible de-escalation requires a verifiable ceasefire framework that includes monitoring, humanitarian access, and minimal guarantees for civilian protection. Without these conditions, dialogue initiatives tend to collapse into symbolic exercises, and middle range actors lose legitimacy in the eyes of both grassroots communities and armed factions. Second, negotiation design should explicitly address spoiler risks. Targeted measures that increase the costs of violent sabotage, while protecting nonviolent civic leadership, are essential for preventing armed outbidding from hollowing out dialogue. Third, institutional settlement must be treated as a recognition problem as well as a constitutional one. The scenarios that perform best are those in which political restructuring is compatible with meaningful territorial autonomy and with safeguards for Anglophone cultural and legal rights. In practice, this means that any political settlement must specify not only institutional forms but also enforceable guarantees regarding language use, legal and educational administration, and fair access to state services.

Methodologically, the study contributes by operationalizing Lederach's conceptual pyramid within an explicit computational framework. The agent-based model makes its assumptions transparent and enables systematic comparison across alternative institutional and geopolitical environments, thereby providing a replicable platform for theory-driven scenario testing. At the same time, the simulation outputs must be interpreted within clearly defined boundaries. The weighting scheme and behavioral rules are heuristic in nature and are intended to illuminate relational mechanisms of conflict transformation rather than to generate calibrated causal estimates or predictive forecasts. It is important to emphasize that the model deliberately abstracts from moral hierarchies and instead focuses on structural compatibility with negotiated settlement under specified geopolitical constraints. Actors coded as less flexible are not normatively delegitimized; rather, they are treated as holding positions that reduce bargaining overlap within the simulated interaction space. In this sense, the model evaluates systemic interaction effects under explicit assumptions, not the ethical validity of actor preferences. Alternative structural assumptions, modified interaction rules, or re-coded flexibility indicators may therefore produce different equilibrium patterns.

Future research should prioritize three directions for refinement. First, fieldwork-based calibration would strengthen contextual validity by refining actor preferences, interaction probabilities, and the empirical interpretation of peace contribution scores. Second, greater behavioral heterogeneity should be introduced by incorporating sociolinguistic identity variables, evolving trust dynamics, and differentiated forms of legitimacy that shift over time. Third, robustness analysis should be expanded beyond incremental weighting variation to include alternative network topologies, stochastic interaction effects, and sensitivity testing of key assumptions regarding external leverage and spoiler capacity.

Overall, the study suggests that the most plausible pathway to de-escalation in Cameroon is not a single diplomatic event or institutional reform, but a coordinated architecture that links tiers of leadership through sustained interaction, credible guarantees, and institutional arrangements that address recognition and political representation. In this respect, Lederach's framework is most analytically valuable when treated not as a normative call for inclusion, but as a structured design principle for sequencing, brokerage, and enforcement in a protracted identity-based conflict.

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