

Cameroon: The Threat of Religious Radicalism

Africa Report N°229 | 3 September 2015

Translation from French

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	i
Recommendations.....	iii
I. Introduction	1
II. A Diverse Religious Landscape	3
A. The Erosion of Sufism.....	3
1. Traditional Islam in Cameroon.....	3
2. The erosion of traditional Islam.....	5
B. The Emergence of New Muslim Currents and Actors	6
1. The development of Sunnism and Wahhabism	6
2. Minority currents	8
C. The Diversification of the Christian Landscape: Rise of the Revivalist Churches	10
1. The causal factors	10
2. The revivalist churches' support for the regime	12
III. Intra-Muslim Divisions and Religious Intolerance	14
A. Intra-Muslim Divisions	14
1. The politicisation of religion and the Fulani-Kirdi division	14
2. Fundamentalist Islam versus local Islam	15
3. Boko Haram: radicalism next door	17
B. The Ferment of Religious Intolerance	20
1. Negative perceptions between religions	20
2. The exclusion and self-exclusion of the revivalist churches	22
C. Critical Review of the Present Initiatives	22
1. Weak and dispersed interreligious dialogue structures.....	23
2. The flaws of the government's response to radicalism	25
IV. Anticipate the Danger.....	26
A. The Risks of Conflicts	26
B. Organise a Coherent Response	27
1. Understand the radicalisation process.....	27
2. Create representative Islamic and Pentecostal church bodies	28
3. Boost the development of vulnerable regions.....	28
4. Increase surveillance of proselytising websites and adopt a policy of non-stigmatisation	29
5. Support associations promoting interreligious dialogue.....	29
V. Conclusion	31
APPENDICES	
A. Map the Religious Landscape of Cameroon.....	32
B. History of How Religions Spread in Cameroon	33
C. Glossary	34

Executive Summary

In Cameroon, the rise of Christian revivalist (born again) and Muslim fundamentalist movements is rapidly changing the religious landscape and paving the way for religious intolerance. Fundamentalist groups' emergence, combined with communal tensions, creates a specific risk in the North and increases competition for leadership of the Muslim community: such competition has already led to local conflicts. Moreover, the various religious groups have negative perceptions of each other. The state and the mainstream religious organisations' response to the emerging radicalism is limited to the Boko Haram threat and therefore inadequate, and in some cases carries risk. A coherent and comprehensive response has to be implemented by the government and religious organisations to preserve religious tolerance and to avoid the kind of religious violence seen in neighbouring Nigeria and the Central African Republic.

Unlike these two countries, Cameroon has never experienced significant sectarian violence. However, the emergence of radical religious groups risks destabilising its climate of religious tolerance. Traditional Sufi Islam is increasingly challenged by the rise of more rigorist Islamic ideology, mostly Wahhabism. The current transformation is mainly promoted by young Cameroonian Muslims from the South, whereas the Sufi Islam of the North, dominated by the Fulani, seems on the decline. These southern youths speak Arabic, are often educated in Sudan and the Gulf countries, and are opposed both to Fulani control of the Muslim community and to the ageing religious establishment. Disagreements between Sufi leaders, traditional spiritual leaders and these newcomers are not only theological: the conflict between "ancients" and "moderns" is also a matter of economic and political influence within the Muslim community.

These changes have divided Muslim communities and already degenerated into localised clashes between Islamic groups. Fundamentalist groups' growth in the North, combined with local communal tensions, is a potential source of conflict. In the South, the competition between Sufi members and Wahhabi-inspired groups over leadership of the Muslim community will increase and could lead to localised violence.

Within Christian communities, the rise of revivalist churches has ended the monopoly of Catholic and Protestant Churches. Most revivalist churches have no legal status and are poorly-regarded by Catholics. Born again pastors often preach religious intolerance, stay away from interreligious dialogue and are kept out of official religious spheres, although they mostly support the regime.

In the face of these new forms of religious intolerance, interreligious dialogue initiatives are weak, dispersed and only reach a small fraction of the population. Yet, the religious changes are not perceived as problematic by Cameroonian political and religious authorities. They underestimate their conflict potential as their attention is focused only on Boko Haram. It was only after Boko Haram launched attacks in the Far North that the government launched awareness initiatives, but they were late and ineffective, as seen in the harassment and stigmatisation of Kanuri populations from border villages, as well as arrests and arbitrary detentions by the security forces. The religious developments are worrying in the present regional environment as

both Central African Republic and Nigeria are experiencing conflicts with religious dimensions, and the consequences are having impact on Cameroon.

The struggle against the threat of religious radicalism in Cameroon requires a coherent and comprehensive strategy including a better understanding of the current religious changes, support for a charter on religious tolerance, the creation of representative bodies for the Muslim communities and revivalist churches, and the economic and social development of fragile regions. More immediately, the government must improve its monitoring of fundamental proselytisation, support interreligious dialogue and improve communities' awareness of the dangers of radicalism.

Recommendations

To combat the threat of religious radicalism

To the government of Cameroon:

1. Promote socio-economic development by allocating a third of the triennial emergency program to the development of the North and by coordinating with the other countries of the Lake Chad Basin to request donors support.
2. Improve populations' awareness by:
 - a) Assessing interreligious dialogue initiatives and funding the most effective ones;
 - b) Avoiding stigmatisation, arbitrary detentions, acts of torture and other human rights violations, of populations living close to the border with Nigeria; and
 - c) Involving organisations of Muslim and Christian women in awareness initiatives.
3. Create a local certification for imams and *ulama* trained abroad; make sure that only imams with officially recognised training teach in Quranic schools and preach in the mosques; and monitor foreign preachers within the country.
4. Monitor the financing of religious associations and ensure they do not receive funds from fundamentalist organisations.
5. Monitor fundamentalist proselytism sites, including in social media, refugee camps and the Maroua prison in the Far North.
6. Create research programs on religious changes in Cameroon.

To religious leaders and the leadership of religious associations, both Christian and Muslim:

7. Adopt a community approach for religious tolerance with a focus on outreach and communication, as well as further coordinate awareness and interreligious dialogue activities.

To the donors:

8. Support development projects in northern Cameroon and the coordinated initiatives of the regional countries to develop the Lake Chad area.
9. Assess Cameroonian associations promoting interreligious dialogue initiatives, and support the most effective among them.

To reduce divisions within religious communities

To the government of Cameroon:

10. Engage in dialogue with religious leaders and the leadership of religious associations in order to create consensual representative bodies for revivalist churches and Muslim communities. Each body should elect its own national representative for a non-extendable one-year term to interact with the authorities.
11. Encourage Muslim and Christian representative bodies to elaborate a religious tolerance charter and have it accepted by all Cameroonian religious groups.

12. Implement a one-year moratorium to enable unauthorised revivalist churches to register legally and, once it ends, close unregistered churches and those that have not adhered to the charter for tolerance.

To religious leaders and the leadership of religious associations:

13. Work for a more inclusive Islam by reinforcing dialogue within the Muslim community and by supporting a better representation of the various Islamic and ethnic groups, as well as youth, within the associations, and the implementation of development projects in all the Muslim areas without any preference.
14. Involve revivalist churches and the various Islamic groups in interreligious dialogue activities.

Nairobi/Brussels, 3 September 2015

Cameroon: The Threat of Religious Radicalism

I. Introduction

Cameroon has a mosaic of a thousand Christian, Muslim and traditional religious organisations, 47 of which are registered.¹ Religious freedom and secularism are guaranteed by the constitution and the law of 19 December 1990. Christians account for 63 per cent of the population, Muslims 22 per cent, traditional or animist religions 14 per cent and gnostic currents 1 per cent.² Muslims form a majority in the North and in the western town of Foumban, but there are also significant numbers of Muslims in southern towns, such as Douala and Yaoundé.³ Christians are in the majority in the South. Animists are found in all regions, but they are more numerous in the West and North.⁴ This geographical distribution of religions is a result of the country's history.

Islam spread to Cameroon after 1715 as the Kingdom of Kanem-Bornou and the Sokoto Caliphate expanded to Kotoko cities in Logone and Chari.⁵ At the beginning of the 19th century, inspired by the jihad against the Hausa launched by Ousman dan Fodio (founder of the Sokoto Caliphate), the Fulani, led by Modibbo Adama, the Emir of Adamawa, conquered land in the Adamawa plateau, brought Islam to the indigenous populations and settled in North Cameroon.⁶ They created *lamidats*, led by traditional and spiritual chiefs known as *lamidos*. The Fulani jihad in North Cameroon came to a halt when it reached the Mandaras Mountains.⁷ In the south of the country, the Bamoun kingdom, which welcomed Hausa traders, was converted to

¹ Radio and press communiqué N°77/CRP/MINATD/DAP/SDLP, Ministry of Local Government and Decentralisation (MINATD), 11 July 2008.

² In the absence of official religious statistics, these figures were obtained by consulting several written sources and by interviews. Catholics form about 35 per cent of the Christian community, Protestants about 20 per cent and revivalist churches about 8 per cent. Crisis Group interviews, religious leaders and researchers at the National Institute of Statistics, Yaoundé and Ngaoundéré, September 2014.

³ In the North, a bare majority of people are Muslim (about 40 per cent), followed by animists and Christians accounting for 30 per cent each. Crisis Group interviews, sub-prefects and academics, Ngaoundéré, September 2014.

⁴ However, syncretism is prevalent, as many Cameroonians are both Christian and followers of traditional religions. Crisis Group interviews, administrative authorities and religious leaders, Douala, Ngaoundéré and Garoua, September and December 2014.

⁵ See Hamadou Adama, *L'Islam au Cameroun: entre tradition et modernité* (Paris, 2004), p. 22, and Bernard Onomo Etaba, *Rivalités et Conflits religieux au Cameroun* (Paris, 2014), p. 36.

⁶ Well before the jihad was launched, in the middle of the 18th century, Fulani pastors from Nigeria were already moving into the North to graze their cattle and trade with local chiefs. See Elridge Mohammadou, *Le Royaume du Wandala ou Mandara au 19^{ème} siècle* (Tokyo, 1982).

⁷ The Mandaras Mountains are inhabited by about twenty tribes, the largest of which are the Mafa, Mofou, Mada, Kapsiki, Ouldémé, Podokwo and Vame. See Christian Seignobos, Francine Lafarge, *Montagnes et hautes terres du Nord Cameroun* (Paris, 1982), p. 25. Crisis Group interviews, administrative authorities, Ngaoundéré, September 2014.

Islam after the Manga civil war at the end of the 19th century.⁸ Trade with the Hausa resulted in the spread of Islam to Mbam, in the centre of the country, and to other towns in the south. Initially, it was a Sufi brotherhood type of Islam that was introduced to Cameroon and the first Muslim communities were Fulani, Kotoko, Hausa and Bamoun.

Christianity arrived in Cameroon in the 19th century, at first in the form of Protestantism, then Catholicism. English Baptist missionaries established themselves in Douala from 1843 onwards and American Presbyterian missionaries in the South in 1879.⁹ In 1884, when Cameroon became a German protectorate, they were replaced by German missionaries, at first in the form of the Bale mission, then the German Baptist mission, which evangelised the Centre and West of the country. The first Catholic missionaries (Pallotins, Spiritans and Mill-Hill) only arrived at the end of the 19th century and Christianity only gained a foothold in the north of the country in the 1920s.¹⁰

The religious landscape has changed considerably since the arrival of the Fulani and the English missionaries. The growth of Pentecostal movements and the emergence of hardline Islamism, which tried to displace the traditional Islamism of the *lamido*, signalled this reorganisation. The emergence of new religious movements took place throughout almost the entire African continent,¹¹ but the situation in Cameroon is particularly worrying because the country is already suffering from the repercussions of two conflicts that have a religious dimension, the crisis in the Central African Republic (CAR) and Boko Haram in Nigeria.¹²

This report is based on several dozen interviews conducted between September 2014 and August 2015 in various regions of Cameroon with religious leaders, the security forces, administrative authorities, youth organisations, Muslim and Christian women and local communities. It analyses the changes within Cameroonian Islam and Christianity and the resulting perceptions and risks of conflict. The report highlights the weakness of the state response and formulates recommendations to prevent the development of pockets of religious radicalism.

⁸ According to Bamoun tradition, the power of the young King Seïdou Njimoluh Njoya was undermined by a rebellion (1892-1894) led by Gbètkom Ndombu, a senior adviser at court. Njoya asked the *lamido* of Banyo for military assistance. The two armies united and crushed the rebellion. The king converted to Islam and, little by little, his subjects followed. Crisis Group interviews, Bamoun leaders, Yaoundé, January 2015. See Loumpet Galitzine Alexandra, *Njoya et le royaume Bamoun* (Paris, 2006), p. 16.

⁹ Louis Ngongo, *Histoire des forces religieuses au Cameroun: de la première guerre mondiale à l'indépendance (1916-1955)* (Paris, 1982).

¹⁰ Christianity was introduced to the country by evangelising missions of American and Norwegian Lutherans who came from Nigeria. They were followed in 1947 by Catholic missionaries from Chad (Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate). Yves Plumier, *Mission Tchad-Cameroun: l'annonce de l'évangile au Nord-Cameroun et au Mayo Kebbi (1946-1986)* (Paris, 1990).

¹¹ Jean-Paul Ngoupandé, *L'Afrique face à l'Islam* (Paris, 2003). For more on the situation in Côte d'Ivoire see the report by the Institute for Security Studies, *La Côte d'Ivoire est-elle confrontée au radicalisme religieux*, no.13, June 2015. The emergence of fundamentalist currents within Islam and neo-Pentecostal churches within the Christian community occurred to different degrees in Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroon.

¹² See Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°101, *Cameroon: Prevention is Better than Cure*, 4 September 2014; Thierry Vircoulon, "Cameroon: Africa's pivot", *World Policy Journal*, vol. 32, no. 2 (2015).

II. A Diverse Religious Landscape

In Cameroon, the old dualistic religious landscape has given way to a plural and diverse landscape. Sufi Islam faces competition from Wahhabi fundamentalism and radical currents.¹³ Within Christianity, new religious movements have emerged during the last 25 years, especially revivalist or “born again” neo-Pentecostal churches. These new currents are opposed to the Catholic Church, which is losing ground.¹⁴

A. The Erosion of Sufism

1. Traditional Islam in Cameroon

Islam in Cameroon was influenced by three Sufi brotherhoods: the Tijaniyya, the Qadiriyya and the Mahdia. The Tijaniyya spread to Cameroon first and remains the majority current. Its main centres are in the northern part of the country and in Foumban.¹⁵ The Cameroonian Tijaniyya is notable for its association with traditional Fulani and Hausa rites.¹⁶ The Qadiriyya is much less important but continues to have a presence in the north of the country. The Mahdia disappeared after fierce repression by German colonists.¹⁷

Current Tijaniyya practices include the use of the rosary (*tasbeih*),¹⁸ wearing long trousers, rejection of long beards, payment of the *zakât* (tax) to the *lamidos*, the *zîkr* (a kind of proclamation of the *shahâda* faith), the “factorisation” of prayers,¹⁹ the pervasiveness of prayers for petition (*du’â*) and intercessory prayers (*tawassoul*). In Foumban, where the Tijaniyya is influenced by Bamoun and Hausa traditions, other

¹³ Sufism is an esoteric, spiritualist and poetic current of Islam, which is separate from Sunnism. Sufis aspire to a spiritual state of being that will allow them to gain access to hidden knowledge. The first Sufi groups appeared in Koufa and Bassorah in 7th century Iraq. From the 13th century onwards, Sufis organised in brotherhoods (*turuq*, plural of *tariqa*). Following contact with Arab traders, sub-Saharan Africans converted to Sufism, combining it with African rites. The development of this sub-Saharan African Sufism began in the 13th century and took the form of brotherhoods, the most important of which were the Qadiriyya, the Tijaniyya, the Sanusiyya, the Mahdia and the Mouridiyya. Daniel Cruise O’Brien, “La filière musulmane: confréries soufies et politique en Afrique noire”, *Politique africaine*, no. 4 (1981), p. 7-30.

¹⁴ The term “new religious movements” refers here to the neo-Pentecostal churches, the new independent African churches, millenarian churches and various initiatory currents such as New Age, Christian Science, the Universal White Brotherhood, the Baha’i Faith and Eckankar. See Francis Arinze, “Le défis des sectes et nouveaux mouvements religieux: une approche pastorale”, *L’observatore Romano*, 26 April 1991; and Eric de Rosny, *Des nouveaux mouvements religieux et philosophiques à Douala* (Douala, 2000). During the last 25 years, the Catholics have gone from 40 to 35 per cent of the population. This decline has resulted in a loss of political influence. Crisis Group interviews, priests and Catholic leaders, December 2014-February 2015.

¹⁵ The Tijaniyya was founded in the 18th century by Ahmed Tijani from Algeria. Bah Thierno Moutar, Gilbert Taguem Fah, “Les élites musulmanes et la politique au Cameroun sous administration française (1945-1960)”, *Peuples et cultures de l’Adamaoua* (Paris, 1993), p. 103-133.

¹⁶ Except for the use of different prayer languages (Fulfuldé by the Fulani and Hausa by the Hausa), the traditional Islamism practised by the Hausa and the Fulani are similar.

¹⁷ The Mahdia inspired the resistance launched by Goni Waday against the German presence in Adamawa. Eldridge Mohammadou, “Le mouvement mahdiste de Goni Waday dans la haute Bénoué (1907)”, *Senri ethnological studies*, no. 31 (1992).

¹⁸ Although the *tasbeih* is not required by the Quran, it is widespread among most Sufi brotherhoods.

¹⁹ All Muslims must pray five times a day at particular times. Factorisation means combining these prayers and saying them all at once or on less than five occasions. Crisis Group interviews, imams, Ngaoundéré and Garoua, September 2014.

practices are the *homidi* (evening incantations) and the *saraka* ritual (three-day funerals).²⁰

Another feature of the Tijaniyya in Cameroon is the sacralisation of the *lamido* or sultan and his family members, as well as the construction of mausoleums for conducting rites in honour of former *lamidos*. The marabouts are at the centre of traditional Tijaniyya rites. Ordinary people consult them about problems of daily life (illness, infertility, unemployment, etc.) and the *lamidos* ask their advice when taking major decisions.²¹ Non-Islamic practices, such as female circumcision and forced marriages practised by Tijanis have appreciably diminished in response to pressure from the government, Muslim associations and NGOs.²² On the other hand, Muslim girls still do not have much access to educational opportunities. Despite government and civil society initiatives, this phenomenon persists among Muslim communities in the North.²³ Among the Tijanis, the Maliki school of jurisprudence and rites are the most widespread.²⁴ Historically, Tijaniyya imams trained in Nigeria, mainly in Maiduguri and Yola. Imams and Muslim law scholars increasingly study in Cameroon because the country is now home to many scholars of the Maliki school.²⁵

The uniqueness of traditional Islam is its historic incarnation in two communities: the Fulani and the Bamoun. It is dominated by the Fulani and divided into *lamidats* (traditional authority of the Fulani in the North) and the sultanates (traditional authority of the Bamoun in the West). The *lamido* is the political and spiritual chief of his area. Below him are the *lawan* (or *ardo* in some Fulani communities), a district chief and the *djaoro*, a neighbourhood chief.²⁶ The *lamido* appoints imams and Friday prayer leaders in the largest mosques. The *lamido* and the sultan rule with the agreement of the *Faada* (Fulani government) or the *Tita-Nfon* (Bamoun Council). The *lamido* is assisted by the *alkali* (judge of Quranic law), the *modibo* (master of Muslim law) and the *maloum* (master of Quranic schools).²⁷ Fulani dom-

²⁰ Crisis Group interview, Bamoun dignitary, Yaoundé, 18 January 2015.

²¹ Crisis Group interviews, dignitaries and imams of Foumban, Yaoundé and Foumban, January and March 2015.

²² Female genital mutilation (FGM) affects about 2 per cent of Cameroonian women. The government and UN organisations have funded public education programs on this issue. Muslim associations, such as the Cameroon Council of Muslim Imams and Dignitaries (CIDIMUC) and the Cameroonian Muslim Women's Association (CAMWA) campaign against FGM and forced marriage. These practices are also common in non-Muslim areas because they are based on tradition and not religion. Crisis Group telephone interviews, imams and Ecole normale supérieure (ENS) researchers, Maroua, 21 April 2015. "Mutilations génitales: l'indignation du conseil des Imams", *Mutations*, 25 November 2013. See Severin Cécile Abega, *Les violences sexuelles et l'Etat du Cameroun* (Paris, 2007); and Jean-Claude Muller, *Les rites initiatiques des Dii de l'Adamaoua* (Paris, 2002).

²³ Crisis Group telephone interviews, CAMWA members and Muslims, Maroua, 26 June 2015.

²⁴ Along with Hanafism, Hanbalism and Shafeism, Malekism is one of the four schools of Sunni Islamic law. Malekism is different to the others because, in addition to the Quran, the *sunna* (*hadiths*), the *ijman* (consensus of the prophet's companions) and reasoning by analogy (*qiyas*), it also uses the customs of the first inhabitants of Medina (Amal Ahl Al-Medina) as a source of jurisprudence (*fiqh*). In addition, taking into account the general interest (*istislâh*) and local custom (*urf* or *âda*) is more important than in the other schools, while the use of reasoning by analogy is limited. The introduction to the schools of law in Cameroonian Quranic schools, entitled *ar-Risâla*, is Malekite. Crisis Group interviews, teachers at the Tsinga Islamic complex, Yaoundé, February and March 2015.

²⁵ Crisis Group interviews, imams, Garoua, September 2014.

²⁶ Crisis Group interviews, *Faada* members Ngaoundéré, September 2014.

²⁷ Hamadou Adama, "La mosquée au Cameroun: espace privée ou public?", CODESRIA, communication to the General Assembly, 7-11 December 2009.

ination is manifested by the pervasiveness of Fulani culture in traditional Islam and the leadership of the “grand Friday mosques” by Fulani imams.²⁸

2. The erosion of traditional Islam

Traditional Islam is tending to decline as the *lamidos* become less powerful and Fulani domination weakens in the North and in the Muslim community.

The power of the *lamidos* has weakened under the influence of modernity.²⁹ In cosmopolitan cities like Ngaoundéré, Garoua and Maroua, where the Fulani are no longer in a majority, people do not operate on the basis of their ethnicity and have no link to the traditional structure of the *lamidat*.³⁰ For example, people generally turn to the country’s courts rather than the *lamido* to settle their differences. Practices such as the *zakât* (tax paid to *lamidos*) have become less common in almost all *lamidats*.³¹ Even within the Fulani community, interbreeding has reduced attachment to Fulani traditions, especially among young people. Pure Fulanis are now in a minority in the Fulani community in Cameroon.³²

The 1982 decree and the politicisation of the *lamidos* also contributed to reduce their power. The government issued the decree on the reorganisation of traditional chiefdoms in order to increase its control over them. Not only have they seen their territories diminish, but the decree conferred on the president of the republic the right to appoint traditional chiefs. This called into question the local domination of most of the *lamidats*. Moreover, the militancy of the *lamidos* in the ruling party, the Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement (RDPC), has helped to discredit them, especially in the areas where the local population support the opposition.³³

The *lamidos* were also religious leaders in the Fulani community but the lack of piety of some *lamidos* seems to have contributed to weakening their authority among the faithful. *Lamidos* were famous for their religious scholarship and piety but their only claim to legitimacy today is hereditary.³⁴ Some have not even had a traditional Islamic education, which means they have to rely on *ulamas* (scholars) to help them

²⁸ The “grand Friday mosques” get their name from their importance and because Friday prayers and sermons are conducted there. This is the day that Muslims assemble for prayer and worship. In the Muslim hierarchy in North Cameroon, the central mosque is more important than the Friday mosque. Crisis Group interviews, imams and academics, Maroua, February 2015.

²⁹ Gilbert Taguem Fah, “Crise d’autorité, regain d’influence et pérennité des *lamidats* peul du Nord-Cameroun” in Claude-Hélène Perrot and François-Xavier Fauvelle- Aymar, *Le retour des rois* (Paris, 2003).

³⁰ Crisis Group interviews, residents, Ngaoundéré, Garoua, September 2014.

³¹ Crisis Group interviews, imams and Islamic scholars, Yaoundé and Ngaoundéré, September 2014. See Gilbert Taguem Fah, “L’Adamaoua: des origines à nos jours”, *Challenge nouveau*, no. 139 (2000), p. 2.

³² This is a result of Fulani matrimonial strategies when settling in Cameroon. They married into indigenous tribes in order to control them. Crisis Group interviews, deputy prefects and mayors, Ngaoundéré and Garoua, September 2014.

³³ Several *lamidos* are members of the RDPC central committee and head office. Some have been appointed senators or are members of President Biya’s government. Crisis Group interviews, Fulani, Ngaoundéré and Garoua, September 2014.

³⁴ Crisis Group interviews, Islamic scholars and university teachers, Yaoundé and Ngaoundéré, September 2014. Gilbert Taguem Fah, “Tendances actuelles de l’islam au Cameroun”, *Afrique contemporaine*, no. 194 (2000), p. 53-66.

take decisions on religious matters. Several have been criticised for the non-Islamic ethics of the life they lead.³⁵

The fact that the successor to Ahmadou Ahidjo, a Fulani Muslim, was Paul Biya, a Christian from the South, also weakened traditional Islam. Many people had previously converted to Islam opportunistically but now there was no reason to do so. Moreover, the conversion of members of ethnic groups in the South to Islam changed the sociological and demographic balance within the Muslim community and challenged Fulani domination. This was especially true in some Muslim districts in the South, such as the Briqueterie in Yaoundé, where a distinction is made between Fulani, Hausa and Bamoun mosques.

B. *The Emergence of New Muslim Currents and Actors*

1. The development of Sunnism and Wahhabism

The two currents spread

Traditional Islam based on brotherhoods and the marabouts came under increasing competition from a purist Islam based on the strict application of the Quran's ethical-regulatory principles. This purist version of Islam preaches literal application of the Quran, imitation of the life of the prophet Mohammed and a refusal of all practices not prescribed by the Quran. This is an internal jihad that aims to put the believer on the true path to Allah.³⁶ The most important fundamentalist current in Cameroon is Wahhabism, which represents about 10 per cent of the Muslim population.³⁷

Cameroon was exposed to a dual movement of Islamic proselytisation after independence. The initial phase took place between the 1960s and 1980s. Saudi Arabia built Islamic institutes, mosques and Franco-Islamic colleges in the country and supported many development projects, including Ngaoundéré University and the Tsinga Islamic complex in Yaoundé. Meanwhile, the government encouraged young Cameroonians to study Islamic law and non-religious subjects in Saudi Arabia and Egypt (Islamic University of Madinah and al-Azhar University).³⁸ In addition, Saudi Arabia and Egypt sent young men to the new educational and theological establishments. On their return, young Cameroonians were integrated, not without problems, into the local clergy and gradually began to take control of most Islamic institutes, grand mosques, schools, associations and media.³⁹ This proselytisation was more widespread in Adamawa, in the Far North, and to a lesser extent, in the North.

³⁵ Crisis Group interviews, Muslims, Yaoundé, Ngaoundéré and Garoua, September 2014.

³⁶ Gilbert Taguem Fah, "Dynamique plurielle, regain de spiritualité et recomposition de l'espace islamique dans le bassin du lac Tchad", *Saharan Studies Newsletter*, vol. 12, no. 1 (2004).

³⁷ Wahhabism is a fundamentalist political religious movement that emerged from Sunnism and was founded in the 18th century by Mohammed El Wahhab. He preached a rigorist Islam based only on the *sunna* and the *hadiths*. He opposed all popular forms of religiosity. Crisis Group interviews, imams and Islamic scholars, Yaoundé and Ngaoundéré, September 2014. See Crisis Group Middle East Report N°37, *Understanding Islamism*, 2 March 2005.

³⁸ Crisis Group interview, Gilbert Taguem Fah, Yaoundé, 2 October 2014. See Maud Lasseur, "Islam et christianisme en mouvement: mobilités géographiques et changement religieux au Cameroun", *Espace Populations Sociétés*, vol. 2, no. 3 (2010), p. 84.

³⁹ For example, Islamic radios such as al-Rissalat in Yaoundé and Fouban, Alhouda in Douala, An Nour in Ngaoundéré and television programs such as *Connaissance de l'islam* on Channel 2, *Vitrine de l'Islam* on Vision 4. Crisis Group interviews, researchers, Maroua, March 2015.

Wahhabism spread in the second phase of proselytisation from the mid-1980s.⁴⁰ This proselytisation was conducted informally. Associations in the Gulf funded study trips to Arab countries. Although Wahhabism has a presence in Adamawa and the North, its most important centres are Foumban, Douala, Yaoundé, Bafia, Mbalmayo and the Far North. Although it is still a minority, the movement is growing. Thus in Foumban, the number of Wahhabis is estimated at 20 per cent of the Muslim population.⁴¹ In the big cities of the South, Wahhabis build their mosques next to the central mosque (often Tijani). In Yaoundé, the Tsinga Islamic complex, directed by a Saudi national, has a much greater influence than the Briqueterie central mosque, controlled by the Tijanis. In the North, some imams, for example, the imam of Ngaoundéré, were appointed by the *lamido*, but are now close to the Wahhabi current. In Foumban, Garoua and Maroua, some of the imams at the central mosque and the Friday mosques are Wahhabis.⁴²

The rise of Wahhabism also manifests itself through the introduction of Wahhabi standards into social life: sexuality, marriage, funeral rituals, wearing of the burqa, construction of hospitals where only female doctors can treat female patients.⁴³

Wahhabi proselytisation

The development of the Wahhabi current in Cameroon is generously funded by the Saudi Arabia government and Qatari, Kuwaiti and Egyptian foundations and NGOs. They fund the construction of mosques and Quranic schools (madrasas), award scholarships in Saudi Arabia and Qatar, promote the learning of Arabic, popularise the Quran in French and, in the case of Egypt and Saudi Arabia, send preachers.⁴⁴ In a town like Foumban, Wahhabi proselytisation among young people is facilitated by free schooling, contrary to traditional Quranic schools. Books and cassettes as well as lunch are provided. The Wahhabis have more libraries and they stock books in non-Islamic subjects (physics, chemistry, literature, English, etc.), which also attracts a lot of pupils.⁴⁵

In Yaoundé, Douala and Ngaoundéré, Wahhabi Quranic schools teach both Islam and science and therefore attract many young people,⁴⁶ as traditional Quranic education does not provide vocational training.⁴⁷ Wahhabi communication strategies are different to those of the Tijanis. Wahhabis use radio and television programs. Wahhabi teachings are broadcast on state television, in the program “The Friday Sermon”.

In Foumban, Wahhabi men can be recognised by their short trousers and long beard. The women are less recognisable because they do not all wear the full veil. The arrival of the Wahhabis in Cameroon has also led to a change in where imams

⁴⁰ It experienced rapid growth in 1990-1991 and 2000.

⁴¹ Crisis Group interviews, imams and residents, Foumban, March 2015. See “Noun: la prolifération des mosquées réveillées inquiète”, *La Nouvelle Expression*, 17 March 2015.

⁴² The lamidats of Ngaoundéré, Tibati and Banyo accepted donations from Wahhabi foundations in recent years. Crisis Group interviews, deputy prefects and Fulani, Ngaoundéré, September 2014; and telephone interviews, imams and residents, Foumban, November 2014.

⁴³ For example, in Ngaoundéré, Foumban and Maroua. Crisis Group interviews, academics, Yaoundé, September 2014.

⁴⁴ For more on Wahhabi proselytisation in Africa, see “How Saudi Arabia exports radical Islam?”, *The Week magazine*, 8 August 2015.

⁴⁵ Crisis Group telephone interviews, imams and residents, Foumban, November 2014.

⁴⁶ The Ikhwans (Cameroonian Muslim Brothers) were the first to build this type of school.

⁴⁷ The great majority of young people that join the ranks of the Wahhabis are men. Crisis Group telephone interview, dignitary, Foumban, November 2014.

are trained. They used to be trained in Yola and Maiduguri in Nigeria but Sudan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt are now more popular.⁴⁸ Sociologically, many more young people and Muslims come into contact with Wahhabism in the South. In the great mosques of the South, several central imams are Wahhabis.

Wahhabi proselytisation also uses social media. Some young people listen to the sermons of Wahhabi preachers on the internet or use Bluetooth to share videos.⁴⁹ The breakthrough made by Wahhabis in Cameroon can also be explained by two other factors: the 1990 law on religious freedom and the economic crisis of 1994. These two factors contributed to the explosion of religious currents in Cameroon, including Wahhabism.⁵⁰ Given the decline of the state social role due to structural adjustment policies, the Wahhabis were ready to respond to the needs of the population by building health centres, Quranic schools, mosques and wells and by funding development projects proposed by traditional Muslim chiefs.

Secondly, the South lent itself easily to the establishment of Wahhabism because, unlike the North, there are no *lamidos* to appoint imams and monitor preaching in the mosques. Islam is decentralised in the South and it was easy for the Wahhabis to gain access to the mosques in Douala and Yaoundé. In Fommban, the sultan was attracted to this current of Islam and by Saudi readiness to fund community projects.⁵¹

2. Minority currents

Other Islamic currents have spread in Cameroon: the Ahmadiyya, the Nakchbandia, Shiism, the Ikhwan, the Tabligh and Takfirism. There is also the reformist movement Ahali Sunna. In the Muslim district of Briqueterie in Yaoundé, other forms of traditional Islam have developed, such as the Mouride Brotherhood, popular among Senegalese immigrants.⁵²

Moderate currents

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat Cameroon (Ahmadiyya) is a Muslim reformist and messianic movement founded at the end of the 19th century in the Punjab, India, by Mirza Ghulâm Ahmad. The Ahmadists give special importance to Mohammed and Jesus. The great majority of Sunnis and Shiites consider it to be heretical. In Cameroon, it spread via Douala and is noted for its prayers in support of the defence forces' fight against Boko Haram. In the fifteen years since it first became established in Cameroon, the Ahmadiyya has grown in most of the big cities of the South and claims to have more than 10,000 members.⁵³

The Nakchbandia Brotherhood spread to Cameroon in the 2000s with the aid of NGOs funded by Turkey such as the Cameroon Association for Aid and Solidarity

⁴⁸ A minority are trained in Chad, Qatar, Kuwait, Pakistan and Iraq. Crisis Group interviews, imams, September 2014-March 2015.

⁴⁹ Crisis Group interview, academic, Yaoundé, 23 January 2015.

⁵⁰ Crisis Group telephone interview, ENS researcher, Maroua, November 2014.

⁵¹ Crisis Group telephone interview, Bamoun dignitary, November 2014.

⁵² The Briqueterie district is densely populated with non-Cameroon nationals, especially West African traders (Senegalese, Malians, Nigerians, and Nigeriens). Cameroonian ethnic groups living there are the Hausa, the Bamoun and the Fulani. Crisis Group interviews, traders, Briqueterie, Yaoundé, February 2015.

⁵³ Crisis Group interviews, members of the Ahmadiyya, Maroua, February 2015.

(ACAMAS). The brotherhood has a presence in Turkey and Iraq. The Nakchbandis are gradually establishing themselves in Cameroon and have mosques in Maroua.⁵⁴

The second biggest current of Islam, Shiism, arrived in Cameroon at the end of the 1990s via Douala. Of all the new currents, Shiism is the one that is most disliked by Tijanis and the Sunnis and there have been inter-Muslim conflicts between these currents. There were clashes between Sunnis and Shiites in Douala in 1999, during the construction of the first Shiite mosque.⁵⁵ In Ngaoundéré, the construction of a Shiite mosque in 2012 provoked anger among Tijanis and Sunnis, who destroyed it and chased away the Shiite imam.⁵⁶ The Shiites do not have a strong presence in Cameroon but have a dozen mosques in Douala, Maroua and in the department of Noun.⁵⁷ The biggest Shiite mosque is in Douala and is led by Sheikh Hassan Nsangou.⁵⁸

Fundamentalist currents

The Tabligh (Jamaat at-Tabligh) has been present in Cameroon since the 1980s. This organisation was founded in India in 1920 by Muhammad Ilyas. The Tabligh is a revivalist Muslim preaching movement. There are Tabligh groups in a dozen or more towns, but the current is based in Maroua and Fouban. Their leader in Cameroon, Sheikh Hassan de Médine, lives in Saudi Arabia and Fouban.⁵⁹

Born in Egypt, the Ikhwan or Muslim Brothers are a Salafi group that promotes the political application of Sharia. They entered Cameroon in the 1980s in Fouban. However, the Ikhwan of Cameroon seem to have moved away from the doctrine of their Egyptian brothers to the extent that they are pro-government and perceived as such. They are influential in the young Muslims' associations, such as the Cameroon Muslim Students' Union (CAMSU). Their leader is Sheikh Awal Sin.⁶⁰

Takfirism (*takfir*, *kufir*) is an extremist current close to Kharidjism (the third most important Islamic current after Sunnism and Shiism) and takes the form of jihadi Salafism (*salafiyya-jihadiyya*).⁶¹ Although this is an old ideology in the Muslim world, it was revived in the 1960s in Egypt by Sayyid Qubt.⁶² Until 2014, the preachers and followers of the Takfirist current, who entered the country from Nigeria, came and went in the mosques of the Far North, especially in Maroua, Kousséri and

⁵⁴ Crisis Group telephone interviews, imams and ENS researchers, Maroua, 22 April 2015.

⁵⁵ Crisis Group interviews, imams and security forces, Douala, March 2015. See Roger Bernard Onomo Etaba, op. cit.

⁵⁶ Crisis Group interviews, squadron leader and mayors, Ngaoundéré, September 2014.

⁵⁷ "Comment le chiisme est entré dans le Noun", *Le blog de la Shia-Fouban*, 16 March 2010.

⁵⁸ Some see him as leader of Cameroonian Shiite Islamism. Crisis Group interviews, imams and Islamic scholars, Yaoundé and Ngaoundéré, September 2014.

⁵⁹ The Tabligh specialises in itinerant preaching. Its main activity is the "sortie" (*khourouj*) in which a small group travels around and preaches. Crisis Group interviews, imams, Maroua, February 2015.

⁶⁰ Crisis Group interviews, imams and residents, Fouban, March 2015.

⁶¹ Originally, Salafism was a Sunni movement that wanted Islam to return to its origins and base itself on the Quran and the Sunna. The term now describes a heterogeneous fundamentalist movement, composed of quietist, political and jihadi currents. Jihadi Salafism (*salafiyya jihadiyya*) is different from the Salafism of the *ulamas* (*salafiyya ilmiyya*), which is quietist, and the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt, which is political. See Crisis Group Middle East and North Africa Briefing N°12, *Islamism in North Africa (I): The Legacies of History*, 20 March 2004, p. 6.

⁶² Egypt is the only country to have experienced a non-violent form of Takfirism, but the original ideology (*qutbisme*) has been appropriated by many different terrorist groups. See Crisis Group Middle East and North Africa Report N°37, *Understanding Islamism*, p. 4, op. cit.; the Briefing, *Islamism in North Africa (I)*, op. cit, p. 10, and Syed Saleem Shahzad, "Une idéologie messianique, le takfirisme", *Le monde diplomatique*, July 2007.

Goulfey.⁶³ Their presence is controversial, with some religious authorities believing they are non-violent Salafi preachers and not Takfirists.⁶⁴

The Ahali Sunna movement is the Cameroon branch of Nigeria's Yan Izala movement (Jamaat Izalat al-bida wa iqamat as-sunna).⁶⁵ It was brought to Cameroon in the 1980s by Hausa traders and grew in the Muslim neighbourhoods of Douala and Yaoundé. It is known for its use of tape cassettes and its virulent sermons against the Sufi Marabouts and the traditional Muslim hierarchy. It has clashed with the Tijanis in the Briqueterie district.⁶⁶ In the same period, Malian Muslims, living in the Congo neighbourhood of Douala and nicknamed the "black tunics" because of the clothes worn by their women, propagated a radical religious message.⁶⁷ Radicalism also spread from Cameroon to Nigeria. A Cameroonian from Maroua, Mohamed Marwa, nicknamed Maïtatsine, launched a movement of the same name in Kano in the 1970s, which was responsible for violent riots in Nigeria.⁶⁸

C. *The Diversification of the Christian Landscape: Rise of the Revivalist Churches*

The proliferation of revivalist churches since the 1990s has broken the monopoly of the Catholic Church and the historic Protestant churches in Cameroon.

1. The causal factors

Pentecostal churches began to establish themselves in Cameroon in the 1970s, first in the English-speaking part of the country and then in Douala, but their growth was hindered by the monolithic nature of the Ahidjo regime. Foreign English-speaking pastors founded local branches of Pentecostal churches based in Germany, Nigeria and the rest of West Africa. The theology of these churches is centred on the Holy Spirit and its liturgy is predominantly oral. They formed the first wave of the Pentecostal movement in Cameroon.⁶⁹

The growth of revivalist churches⁷⁰ in Cameroon followed the enactment of the law on religious freedom in 1990.⁷¹ Since 1991, dozens of revivalist churches have

⁶³ Crisis Group interviews, imams, Maroua, Kousseri and Goulfey, February 2015.

⁶⁴ Crisis Group interviews, imams, Ngaoundéré and Garoua, September 2014; and ENS researcher, Maroua, 18 February 2015.

⁶⁵ The movement was founded by Abubacar Gumi in Jos, Nigeria, in 1978. He claimed to be the rightful heir of Ousman dan Fodio. He sought the purification of Islam. This movement and the Maïtatsine were the precursors of Boko Haram in Nigeria. See Crisis Group Africa Reports N°216, *Curbing Violence in Nigeria (II): The Boko Haram Insurgency*, 3 April 2013; and N°168, *Northern Nigeria: Background to Conflict*, 20 December 2010.

⁶⁶ Crisis Group interview, imam of the Friday mosque, west Briqueterie, Yaoundé, 25 January 2015.

⁶⁷ Crisis Group interviews, imams, Douala, March 2015.

⁶⁸ Crisis Group Report, *Curbing Violence in Nigeria (II)*, op. cit.

⁶⁹ For example, the Full Gospel Mission (based in Germany) and the True Church of God (based in Nigeria), which established themselves in Cameroon in the mid-1970s. They have chapels in several towns and regions. The True Church of God claims to have 230 chapels in the country. Although this may be an exaggeration, Crisis Group has counted 26 chapels in Douala alone. Crisis Group interviews, believers and pastors of the True Church of God, Douala, March 2015.

⁷⁰ The concept of *born again*, which inspires the revivalist churches is based on several passages in the Bible, including John chapter 3 verses 3-7: "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above".

⁷¹ See articles 22-30 of Law 90/053 of 19 December 1993 on the Freedom of Association in Cameroon. The preamble to the constitution also guarantees religious freedom.

been created every year. Meanwhile, Cameroonians began to found their own local revivalist churches, which expanded the number of “born again” churches tenfold. Between 1992 and 2003, 471 churches applied for registration at the Ministry of Local Government and Decentralisation (MINATD). These neo-Pentecostal churches formed the second wave of the Cameroonian Pentecostal movement. Their discourse focuses on material prosperity and miracles, and they borrow, theologically and culturally, from Pentecostalism, American evangelism and the Baptist movement.⁷²

In Cameroon, the revivalist churches grew in the English-speaking regions of the North-West and South-West and in the big cities of the South, such as Douala, Yaoundé and, in the West, Bamiléké.⁷³ In recent years, some have expanded in the North. Bamenda, in the North-West, seems to be the point of entry for many neo-Pentecostal churches. Although the first Pentecostal wave was the work of German and Nigerian evangelists and missions, the second was essentially the work of pastors from or trained in the U.S., Nigeria, Côte d’Ivoire, Benin, South Africa and more recently, Central Africa. Most pastors are now trained in Cameroon itself.

There are now about one thousand revivalist churches in Cameroon.⁷⁴ They are varied in nature and include legally registered institutions that have tens of thousands of followers throughout the country to small churches with congregations of just a few dozen members who worship at the pastor’s home. As well as being radically opposed to the Catholic Church, these churches are in fierce competition with each other. With time, the clergy of revivalist churches become “Cameroonised”. Contrary to missionary churches, which build schools and health centres, revivalist churches have few social development activities. However, churches such as Winner Chapel International and Kingship International are registered, well organised and have a presence in several regions. They own a secondary school, health centres and a television channel.⁷⁵

The growth of new religious currents has been stimulated by political, administrative, economic and theological factors. In addition to the law on religious freedom, the churches benefited from the economic crisis in the period 1986-1994.⁷⁶ By presenting God as a source of wealth and miracles, who could provide a solution to unemployment, sorcery, infertility, celibacy and educational failure, the revivalist churches attracted people disappointed by Catholicism and a significant number of poor people. Competing with a Catholic Church that was a victim of its own institutional rigidity, the revivalist churches offered lively acts of worship and a close relationship between believers and pastors.⁷⁷

⁷² Crisis Group interviews, Pentecostal pastors and Baptists, Douala and Yaoundé, March 2015. See Ludovic Lado, “Les enjeux du pentecôtisme africain”, *Etudes*, tome 409 (2008), p. 61-71.

⁷³ Crisis Group interviews, revivalist pastors, Douala and Yaoundé, March 2015.

⁷⁴ Crisis Group interviews, policy researchers, MINATD, Yaoundé, March 2015.

⁷⁵ Winners Chapel International claims to have 50,000 followers, Liberty Ministry International and Kingship International claim 25,000 each. Crisis Group interviews, pastors and followers of these churches, Douala, December 2014.

⁷⁶ Juan Noting, “Cameroon: jump-starting an economic crisis”, *Africa insight*, vol. 21, no. 3 (1991), p. 162-170.

⁷⁷ Some people see the Catholic Church as being elitist and distant. Catholic priests are accused of delivering homilies that are scholarly and disconnected from real life. Crisis Group interviews, believers, senior seminarists and priests, Douala, December 2014.

2. The revivalist churches' support for the regime

Although the Catholic Church has often criticised successive governments, the revivalist churches preach respect for authority and even call directly on their followers to vote for the head of state.

Revivalist churches and pastors rarely criticise the president. Very much on the contrary. They pay homage to him for maintaining peace and administrative tolerance. Legally registered churches salute the president of the republic's initiatives to promote peace, while illegal churches thank him for the administration's tolerance.⁷⁸ The central government's tolerance of the creation of revivalist churches does not only attributable a laissez-faire approach to the anarchic proliferation of revivalist chapels. In 2013, prefects suspended about 50 illegal revivalist churches in Bafoussam, Yaoundé, Douala and Bamenda for disturbing public order. One month later, President Paul Biya ordered the suspensions to be lifted and signed a decree giving the MINATD responsibility for deciding on the closure of religious organisations.⁷⁹

Some members of the government are close to well-known pastors, such as Tsala Essomba and Achille Mendongo. Commenting on these relationships, the pastor of one church said: "We regularly work with politicians and members of the government. They consult us. They often visit us and we help them".⁸⁰ Members of the government have attended the inauguration of some revivalist churches. Politicians admit to "consulting" revivalist pastors.⁸¹ "Consulting" means both asking for electoral support and also protection from sorcery. These pastors have in effect become the Christian marabouts of some politicians.⁸²

In addition, the way in which the theology of wealth provides hopes to church members implicitly benefits the regime. Faced with the government's inability to alleviate unemployment or poverty, the churches play the role of social stabilisers and purveyors of dreams for part of the population. By inviting their followers to trust Jesus Christ to resolve their problems and protect them from the cause of those problems, that is, the Devil, they deflect grievances against the government, which is further legitimised by their belief that "there is no authority except from God".⁸³ In fact, most pastors are grateful for the way they are tolerated and for the private assis-

⁷⁸ Crisis Group interviews, theologians, Yaoundé, January 2015.

⁷⁹ "Le Cameroun ferme des dizaines d'églises pentecôtistes", *La Croix*, 24 August 2013; "Dozens of Pentecostal churches being shut down in Cameroon" *Christian Post*, 4 September 2013.

⁸⁰ Crisis Group interview, revivalist prophet, Douala, February 2015.

⁸¹ The social affairs minister, Catherine Mbaka Mbock, often attends the parish church of Marie Goker in Yaoundé. The head of state often sends a personal representative to services conducted by pastor Tsala Essomba at International Go Tell Ministry. The general secretary of the presidency and members of the government attended the inauguration of the Chapel of the Glory of Christ in Yaoundé. Crisis Group interviews, politicians, Yaoundé, January and February 2015.

⁸² Crisis Group interviews, politicians and revivalist pastors, January and February 2015.

⁸³ This verse of the Bible (Romans 13: 1) is often quoted by revivalist pastors to emphasise their loyalty to the government.

tance they sometimes receive from politicians.⁸⁴ The result is a system of mutual recognition and indebtedness.⁸⁵

In addition to displaying the president's photo in places of worship,⁸⁶ the revivalist churches' support for the regime is sometimes more explicit, especially during elections. During the 2011 presidential election, pastors called on their followers to vote for Paul Biya. The leading figures in this group were Tsala Essomba of the International Go Tell Ministry and Achille Mendongo of the Christian Pentecostal Church of Cameroon (EPCC). As well as campaigning for Biya, Tsala Essomba launched an initiative entitled "How to Develop Cameroon Ourselves", inviting all Cameroonians to pay FCFA 1,000 per month into a national fund.⁸⁷ The money collected, estimated at FCFA 240 billion, was to fund projects that form part of Paul Biya's program. This initiative failed because Cameroonians did not support it, but it nevertheless made the regime look kindly on him.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Crisis Group interviews, politicians and revivalist pastors, Douala and Yaoundé, January-March 2015. See "Les églises de réveil en Afrique centrale et leurs impacts sur la stabilité des Etats: les cas du Cameroun, du Gabon et de la République du Congo", Ministry of Defence, Strategic Affairs Delegation (Paris, 2012).

⁸⁵ However, there is also an opposition political party whose leaders are members of revivalist churches. The Union for Fraternity and Prosperity (UFP) states that it puts God and faith at the centre of its political ideology. Crisis Group interviews, UFP leaders, Yaoundé, September 2014.

⁸⁶ Crisis Group observations in a dozen revivalist churches, January-March 2015.

⁸⁷ Paul Ango Ela and Friedrich Ebert Foundations, "Intégrisme religieux et insécurité au Cameroun", Discussion Paper no. 3, Plateforme de dialogue sur les questions de sécurité, August 2013, p. 6.

⁸⁸ "Cameroun: le culte cathodique de Tsala Essomba", *Jeune Afrique*, 4 February 2014.

III. Intra-Muslim Divisions and Religious Intolerance

The growth of Wahhabism and revivalist churches in Cameroon has been followed by divisions within the Muslim community and fuels religious intolerance.

A. Intra-Muslim Divisions

1. The politicisation of religion and the Fulani-Kirdi division

Under the regime of President Ahidjo, a Fulani Muslim, Islam enjoyed the government's implicit support. Ahidjo aided the cultural dissemination and spread of Islam. He encouraged the building of mosques and Islamic institutes, established close relations between Cameroon and the Gulf countries and made donations to imams.⁸⁹ He promoted the Islamisation and reaffirmation of Fulani hegemony in the North to the point of creating a climate of religious intolerance.⁹⁰ In his desire to make the North of the country appear to be a homogeneous Muslim entity, Ahidjo only appointed Fulani ambassadors to Muslim countries, which made the Fulani the favoured interlocutors of the Gulf foundations.⁹¹ He encouraged Islam because Christianity seemed to represent a latent political danger to the regional Muslim bloc, as the churches had the ideological and organisational potential to unite the Kirdi (animists and Christians) in North-Cameroon.⁹² An alliance between southern and northern Christians could threaten the political unity of the province of North Cameroon.⁹³

After Biya took power, the regime stigmatised and discriminated against North Cameroon Muslims and nationals because of their association with the leaders of the coup that tried to overthrow his regime on 6 April 1984. However, when there were calls for democracy in 1992, the regime opted for reconciliation and an alliance with the traditional chiefs (mainly the *lamidos* in the North and the sultan in Foumban). The *lamidos* and the sultan contributed to the victory of the ruling party, the RDPC, by supporting Biya's electoral campaign and intimidating opponents.⁹⁴ Some, including the sultan of Foumban, have stood as RDPC candidates at local elections since 1996.⁹⁵

Religious politicisation and Fulani domination caused resentment among two groups: Muslims in the South and the Kirdi in the North. Muslims in the South complained about this domination. They called for greater recognition of the country's

⁸⁹ Hamadou Adama, *L'islam au Cameroun*, op. cit.

⁹⁰ Christian Seignobos, "Boko Haram: innovation guerrière depuis les monts mandara", *Afrique contemporaine*, n°252 (2004), p. 165.

⁹¹ Crisis Group interview, ENS researcher, Maroua, 18 February 2015.

⁹² Kirdi is a choa Arab term meaning "infidel". The Fulani use it to describe non-Muslim ethnic groups in North Cameroon, namely the Toupouri, Massa, Moundang, Guiziga, Mafa, Mofou, Diï, Guidar, Gbaya, Zoulgo, Mada, Namchi, Fali, Tikar, Mousseye, etc. For more on the Kirdi, see Christian Seignobos and Henry Tourneux, *Le Nord-Cameroun à travers ses mots. Dictionnaire des termes anciens et modernes* (Paris, 2002), and Jean-Baptiste Baskouda, *Baba Simon. Le père des Kirdis* (Paris, 2010).

⁹³ See Gilbert Taguem Fah, "Dynamique plurielle, regain de spiritualité et recomposition de l'espace islamique dans le bassin du lac Tchad", op. cit.

⁹⁴ See Charles Nach Back, "La chefferie traditionnelle au Cameroun: entre ambiguïtés juridiques et dérive politique", *Africa Development*, vol. 25, no. 4 (2000). Luc Sindjoun, *L'Etat ailleurs: entre noyau dur et case vide* (Paris, 2002).

⁹⁵ "Cameroun: Foumban, un marigot pour deux crocodiles", *Jeune Afrique*, 27 November 2013.

ethnic diversity and the diversity of the currents within the Muslim community.⁹⁶ They also criticised the way in which most Cameroonian Islamic associations only initiated development projects in the northern part of the country.⁹⁷

In North Cameroon, the Kirdi still resent the way they were enslaved by the Fulani and forced to abandon some of their land in order to escape Islamisation. They also suffered discrimination and marginalisation under the Ahidjo regime between 1960 and 1982. Some forms of discrimination and symbolic violence persist, such as police harassment, distrust by the administration services and discrimination at school or in employment.⁹⁸ In response, the Kirdi created associations to defend their interests and identity in the 1990s.⁹⁹ It remains difficult for a non-Muslim to get elected in the North. Most elected representatives in Adamawa and the North are Fulani Muslims.¹⁰⁰

2. Fundamentalist Islam versus local Islam

The arrival of the Wahhabis in Cameroon did not take place without problems. Their attempts to establish themselves in Douala, Yaoundé and Mbalmayo in 1993-1994 provoked sometimes deadly conflicts.¹⁰¹ In Foumban, the sultan's appointment of a Wahhabi as central imam in 2002 caused violent clashes following which the grand mosque was closed for two years. A compromise was found with the appointment of a Tijani as central imam and two Wahhabis as assistants. Similar disputes between Wahhabis and Tijanis led to fatalities in 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2012 in Foubot, Koutaba, Bafia, Yaoundé and Ngaoundéré.¹⁰²

The main bone of contention between the Wahhabis and the Tijanis is the purification of local Islam. The Wahhabis seek to impose a fundamentalist Islam, purged of local cultural practices. The traditional marabouts, who earn their living from fortune-telling consultations, are fiercely opposed by Wahhabis, who ask their followers

⁹⁶ Crisis Group interviews, imams from the South and Muslims, Yaoundé and Mbalmayo, March 2015.

⁹⁷ The Islamic associations include: the WAMY (Cameroonian branch of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth), the African Development Foundation (ADF), the Cameroon Association for Education and Culture (ACEC), the Cameroon Association for Aid and Solidarity (ACAMAS), the New Muslim Center for Charity (NMCC) and the Cultural Islamic Association of Cameroon (ACIC). Crisis Group interviews, imams in the South and Muslims, Yaoundé and Mbalmayo, March 2015.

⁹⁸ In July 2004, a document entitled "Plan de lutte contre les Chrétiens" attributed to Islamic Youth of Cameroon (JIC), which denied this, circulated secretly and tracts were distributed in the Far North. Crisis Group interviews, president of the JIC, security forces and administrative authorities, Yaoundé, Maroua and Kousséri, February 2015. See "Tracts anti-chrétiens dans le Nord du Cameroun", Agence France Presse, 12 July 2004.

⁹⁹ The Movement for the Defence of the Republic (MDR), founded by a Kirdi in 1991, was designed to act as a counterweight to the National Union for Democracy and Progress (UNDP). The UNDP was founded by a Fulani and dominant in North Cameroon during the 1990s, and the Kirdi believed it defended Fulani interests rather than the interests of the North. Crisis Group interviews, administrative authorities and academics, Ngaoundéré, September 2014. However, anti-Fulani "kirdité" or "kirditude" remains an artificial identity because most of the associations that are supposedly kirdi are in fact tribal and the Kirdi populations define themselves more in relation to their tribal origin. Crisis Group interviews, association leaders, students and young people in North Cameroon, September 2014-March 2015.

¹⁰⁰ Crisis Group interviews, mayors and deputy prefects, Ngaoundéré and Garoua, September 2014.

¹⁰¹ Crisis Group telephone interview, academic, Paris, 8 May 2015. "Guerre des Musulmans à Yaoundé", *Le nouvel indépendant*, 17 April 1995.

¹⁰² Crisis Group interviews, imams and project coordinator at the Cameroonian Association for Interreligious Dialogue (ACADIR), Yaoundé, September 2014 and February 2015.

not to consult them. Under the influence of the Wahhabis, practices tending to sacralise the king or the sultan have diminished in Foumban, Ngaoundéré and the Far North. They have also promoted the *tahajjud* (a night-time prayer, which is recommended, but not obligatory).

In Foumban, the Wahhabis are also opposed to the celebration of Nguon, a traditional Bamoun festival.¹⁰³ A Wahhabi Sheikh, Saïd Albani, circulated cassette tapes questioning the Islamic nature of the festival and the status of the sultan as a leader of believers in Foumban. The security forces arbitrarily arrested him and detained him for a week.¹⁰⁴ The conflict between Wahhabis and Tijanis is so deep-rooted that compromises have had to be reached on several questions of doctrine. Tijanis who have converted to Wahhabism have renounced some practices such as dancing, the use of drums during services, consultations with marabouts and *homidi*, but have refused to renounce others, such as the *saraka*, three-day funerals. The Wahhabis have gained general acceptance for use of the simple veil (hijab) by women in Foumban and the North, but have not managed to do so for the full veil (burqa).¹⁰⁵

Muslims in the South have also converted to Wahhabism as a way of taking revenge against the Fulani. Long considered to be second-class Muslims, the “people who were eating pork just a few years ago or whose parents ate pork”, “who do not speak Fulfuldé”,¹⁰⁶ that is, southern Muslims, saw conversion to Wahhabism as a way of increasing their prestige vis-à-vis the Fulani and countering their hegemony. Many speak Arabic, not only those who have benefited from a scholarship, and they all pride themselves on practising authentic Islam and collaborating directly with the “source of Islam”, namely, Saudi Arabia.¹⁰⁷ The Fulani, being the first Muslims in Cameroon, have often refused to pray behind a southern imam.¹⁰⁸ Converted Muslims in the South who have improved their knowledge of Islam in Saudi Arabia or

¹⁰³ The Bamoun ethnic group in western Cameroon accounts for 85 per cent of the population in the department of Noun. The Bamoun kingdom was established in the 14th century. See Claude Tardits, *Le royaume Bamoun* (Paris, 1980).

¹⁰⁴ Crisis Group interviews, Bamoun dignitary and imam, Yaoundé, February 2015.

¹⁰⁵ Crisis Group interviews, Bamoun dignitary and imam, Yaoundé, February 2015. Wearing the hijab is advocated by Muslim women’s associations, such as the Princess Khadija Foundation, and is based on sura 33 verse 59 and sura 24 of the Quran. In March 2015, the prefect of Noun department tried to introduce the burqa, but retracted his decision in the face of strong opposition from both men and women and from the sultan. Crisis Group telephone interviews, Muslims, 26 June 2015. See “les musulmanes du Cameroun veulent célébrer la journée mondiale du Hijab”, camer.be, 17 April 2014. At the end of June 2015, after suicide attacks by Boko Haram in Fotokol and Maroua, the prefect of Noun, who is a Christian, banned the burqa in Foumban, despite the indignation of some Muslims in the town. Several other regions in Cameroon also banned the burqa after these attacks (the Far North, the Littoral, which includes Douala and the department of Mfoundi, which includes Yaoundé). See “Cameroon bans Islamic face veil after suicide bombings”, BBC, 16 July 2015; “Cameroun: le préfet du Noun interdit la circulation des personnes non identifiées à vue” (www.cameroon-info.net), 12 July 2015.

¹⁰⁶ Fulfuldé is the language spoken by the Fulani. Crisis Group interviews, beti imam and Muslims, Yaoundé, September 2014.

¹⁰⁷ Crisis Group telephone interview, ENS researcher, Maroua, 18 November 2014.

¹⁰⁸ Crisis Group interviews, Muslims from the South, Yaoundé, September 2014. However, this Fulani feeling is not so strong in the North, where local Fulani told Crisis Group “that was before, that doesn’t really exist anymore”. Crisis Group interviews, Fulani and Hausa citizens, Ngaoundéré and Garoua, September 2014.

Sudan believe that the Fulani, most of whom do not speak Arabic, only recite the Quran and do not understand it.¹⁰⁹

In Foumban, the discord between Wahhabis and Tijanis is fuelled by the antagonism between Adamou Ndam Njoya, president of the Democratic Union of Cameroon (UDC), and Sultan Ibrahim Mbombo Njoya. Adamou Ndam Njoya, the sultan's brother and mayor of Foumban, believes himself to be the legitimate heir to the throne, which has created a political-religious division within the sultanate.¹¹⁰ Ndam Njoya is backed by the UDC, which has a Tijani majority, while the king is supported by the ruling party and most Sunnis. Ndam Njoya's supporters say: "the king is Wahhabi and it is he who has invited them to come to Foumban".¹¹¹ This political and religious antagonism within the Bamoun community extends beyond Foumban, as demonstrated by the quarrels between the supporters of Ndam Njoya and the sultan in Douala and Yaoundé.¹¹²

At the start of the 1990s, a dozen Bamoun Muslims went to the Sudan to study at the International Islamic University of Africa and at institutes influenced by the Ansar Al-Sunnah Al-Muhammadiyah group, a Sudanese Salafi movement.¹¹³ On their return in the 2000s, and encouraged by the king in his quest for legitimacy vis-à-vis his brother, Ndam Njoya, they tried to enter the local clergy, which provoked a struggle with traditionalists.¹¹⁴ The sultan himself takes care not to take sides. He says he is open to all non-violent Muslim and Christian regional currents because, according to Bamoun tradition, he has the title of *Amir Al Mouminin* (commander of the faithful) in Foumban.¹¹⁵

3. Boko Haram: radicalism next door

The first indications of the presence of Boko Haram (which renamed itself Islamic State in West Africa in March 2015)¹¹⁶ in Cameroon date from 2004. After the riots in Kanama in Nigeria and the subsequent repression, many members sought refuge in the Mandaras Mountains of Cameroon.¹¹⁷ In 2009, after the clashes in Maiduguri during which Mohamed Yusuf, the group's founder, was killed, Boko Haram's lead-

¹⁰⁹ Crisis Group interviews, Islamic scholar and political scientist, Yaoundé, September 2014.

¹¹⁰ This dispute over the succession is part of the long history of the Bamoun sultanate. Aboubakar Njiasé-Njoya, "Njimoluh Seidou et Mbombo-Njoya dans l'action politique au Cameroun (1948-1998)", in Claude-Hélène Perrot et François-Xavier Fauvelle-Aymar, op. cit., p. 307-313. "Foumban: le sultan et le maire se déchirent", Cameroun Actu (www.camerounactu.net), 11 March 2010; "Après les échauffourées, le sultan Bamoun Ibrahim Mbombo Njoya sur les béquilles", *Le Messager*, 7 January 2013.

¹¹¹ Crisis Group interviews, UDC militants, Yaoundé, January 2015.

¹¹² "Douala: indépendantistes et royalistes Muslims se déchirent à New-bell", (cameroun.link), 18 June 2015; "Lutte contre Boko Haram: ceux qui coupent la barbe aux sunnites à Foumban n'ont rien compris", *Africa Presse*, 10 July 2014.

¹¹³ For more on Ansar Al-Sunnah in Sudan, see Jam Al Sharif, "Salafis in Sudan: Non-interference or confrontation", Al Jazeera Center for Studies, 3 July 2012; and May Ali, "Salafis vs Sufis: A simmering conflict in Sudan", Al-Akhbar (www.al-akhbar.com), 14 March 2012. This movement is also present in Egypt. See Hani Nasira, "Salafists challenge Al-Azhar for ideological supremacy in Egypt", *Terrorism Monitor*, vol. 8, no. 35 (September 2010), p. 7-9.

¹¹⁴ Crisis Group interviews, Islamic scholar and Bamoun Muslims, Yaoundé, January 2015. "Foumban livré à une guerre de confréries", (www.cameroon-info.net), 26 October 2000.

¹¹⁵ Crisis Group interview, imam and Bamoun dignitary, Yaoundé, February 2015.

¹¹⁶ In March 2015, Boko Haram swore allegiance to the Islamic State and changed its name. See "Le groupe Etat islamique accepte l'allégeance de Boko Haram", AFP, 12 March 2015.

¹¹⁷ See Marc-Antoine Perouse de Montclos, *Islamism, politics, security and the State in Nigeria*, Waposo series N°2, (Ibadan and Leiden, 2014).

ers, including Abubakar Shekau, once again fled to the Mandaras Mountains.¹¹⁸ It was then that Boko Haram proselytisation spread to Cameroon. A handful of radical preachers close to Boko Haram were present in Maroua, Goulfey and Kousseri.¹¹⁹ Several were seduced by their discourse and Boko Haram recruited followers.¹²⁰ In 2013, the sect became invisible after the arrest of preachers and others suspected of colluding with Boko Haram.¹²¹

To this day, it is difficult to identify the group's followers or supporters because of the new anti-terrorist law and the many arrests made by the security forces.¹²² However, the group certainly does have followers and supporters in the Far North and probably further afield.¹²³ Boko Haram is reported to have recruited more than 3,000 combatants in Cameroon, mainly among the Kanuri, because the sect's leader is a member of this ethnic group and the Kanuri community straddles the Cameroon-Nigeria border.¹²⁴ Although the great majority were recruited by force or joined for financial reasons, several members have told the security forces during interrogations that they joined the group willingly between 2011 and 2014.¹²⁵ In July 2015, Boko Haram also detained more than 700 Cameroonians as hostages.¹²⁶ In December 2014, the army announced that it had dismantled a Boko Haram training camp in Guirvidig, in the department of Mayo Danay, in the Far North. 84 young people aged between seven and fifteen years, and 45 instructors were arrested.¹²⁷ These young people were released in July 2015 under pressure from NGOs. The authorities acknowledged that the camp was in fact a Salafi Quranic school and not a Boko Haram

¹¹⁸ See Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°101, *Cameroon: Prevention is Better than Cure*, 4 September 2014; and Crisis Group Report, *Curbing violence in Nigeria (II)*, op. cit.

¹¹⁹ Crisis Group interviews, intelligence officers, Yaoundé, January 2015; and "Boko Haram", *Fulan's Sitrep*, 10 August 2014.

¹²⁰ Crisis Group interviews, students and residents, Maroua and Kousseri, February-March 2015.

¹²¹ Crisis Group interviews, Muslim leaders, security forces and administrative authorities, Maroua, Kousseri, Mokolo and Goulfey, February-April 2015.

¹²² In December 2014, Cameroon passed anti-terrorism legislation. The opposition and civil society strongly criticised this law, especially article 2, which includes unauthorised public demonstrations, disruption of public services and any act forcing the government to adopt or renounce any particular policy in the list of terrorist acts and makes them punishable by the death penalty. Its detractors believe this law is an infringement of civil liberties and the regime's way of warning the public not to copy Blaise Compaoré's overthrow in Burkina Faso. Crisis Group interviews, political leaders and trade unionists, Yaoundé, February 2015. In addition, the vagueness of terrorist offences, including the justifying of terrorism and complicity in terrorism has created a grey area that facilitates the arbitrary arrest and detention of Kanuris and imams, as well as journalists and researchers. See "Cameroon: Paul Biya accusé d'instrumentaliser une loi antiterroriste à des fins politiques", *Jeune Afrique*, 16 January 2015; "L'opposition prise au piège de l'arsenal antiterroriste de Biya", *La lettre du continent*, no. 696, 7 January 2015; and "Deux journalistes arrêtés au Cameroun", BBC, 31 August 2015.

¹²³ Crisis Group interviews, intelligence officers and security forces, Yaoundé, Maroua and Kousseri, January-April 2015. "In the shadow of Boko Haram, Cameroon combats extremism at home", *New York Times*, 26 March 2015.

¹²⁴ See Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°101, *Cameroon: Prevention is Better than Cure*, op cit.; Denis Tull, "Cameroon and Boko Haram. Time to think beyond terrorism and security", *SWP comments* 42, August 2015 and "Terrorisme: Boko Haram aurait recruté plusieurs centaines de jeunes au Cameroun", *Jeune Afrique*, 6 August 2014.

¹²⁵ Crisis Group interviews, intelligence officers and security forces, Yaoundé, Maroua and Kousseri, January-March 2015.

¹²⁶ "Plus de 700 Camerounais otages de Boko Haram", *L'œil du Sahel*, 6 July 2015.

¹²⁷ "Cameroon army says dismantles Boko Haram training camp", Reuters, 22 December 2014.

training camp.¹²⁸ Prisons and refugee camps seem to provide fertile ground for Boko Haram.¹²⁹ Proselytisation is rife in Maroua prison, which holds more than 1,200 presumed members of Boko Haram, and in the Minawao refugee camp.¹³⁰ In August 2015, alleged Boko Haram suicide bombers were arrested in Minawao camp in possession of explosives.¹³¹

The arrest of Wahhabi imams in Fouban in May 2014, human rights violations and the stigmatisation and arbitrary arrest of Kanuris and the border communities in the Far North were all counter-productive in the fight against Boko Haram.¹³² In addition, some operations cause resentment in communities and hinder cooperation with the security forces.¹³³

In general, Muslims in Cameroon condemn Boko Haram, which they consider to be a non-Islamic sect that has nothing to do with the Quran. The *lamidos* and Muslim clergy collaborate with the security forces.¹³⁴ When Catholic priests and other members of the church were abducted in November 2013 and April 2014, imams and Muslim associations held prayers for their release.¹³⁵ Muslim religious leaders often hold prayers against Boko Haram and attend interreligious conferences and meetings.¹³⁶ However, the dominant feeling among Muslims and Cameroonians in general is one of denial. They think that Boko Haram has no support in Cameroon and is funded by westerners to discredit Islam and destabilise Nigeria and Cameroon.¹³⁷ They believe that the French want to punish President Biya because he has

¹²⁸ "Cameroun. End six-month illegal detention of 84 children held following Quranic school raid", *Amnesty International*, 19 June 2015. Crisis Group telephone interviews, Maroua administrative authorities, July 2015. The Far North has more than 600 Quranic schools. See "Extrême Nord: 606 écoles coraniques recensées", *L'œil du Sahel*, 31 August 2015.

¹²⁹ "Lutte contre Boko Haram, Yaoundé veut éviter l'endoctrinement de la population carcérale par les prisonniers islamistes", *Koaci*, 31 August 2015.

¹³⁰ In March and May 2015, the security forces arrested suspected members of Boko Haram. Crisis Group interviews, administrative and humanitarian authorities, Maroua and Minawao, February-March 2015; and telephone interviews, security forces, April 2015.

¹³¹ "Cameroun: arrestation de deux présumés Kamikazes au camp de réfugiés de Minawao", *BBC*, 5 August 2015.

¹³² See the section on Cameroon in the report of the U.S. Department of State on human rights, "Cameroon: country reports on human rights practices for 2014", U.S. State Department, 25 June 2015.

¹³³ See the section on Cameroon in "Annual Report 2014/2015: the State of the World's Human Rights", *Amnesty International*, 25 February 2015. The minister for communications acknowledged that 25 people in custody were asphyxiated in a cell at the gendarmerie in the Far North.

¹³⁴ However, collaboration between traditional chiefs and administrative authorities is limited. In the Far North, traditional chiefs are reluctant to cooperate with the security forces for fear of reprisals by Boko Haram, which has killed several traditional chiefs for cooperating with the security forces. Since May 2014, some of them have sent their families to Maroua and even to Garoua. Crisis Group interviews, deputy prefects and mayors, Garoua, September 2014; and telephone interview, assistant prefect, Maroua, July 2014.

¹³⁵ "Deux prêtres italiens et une religieuse canadienne enlevés au Cameroun", *Le Monde*, 5 April 2014. These associations include the Conference of Cameroon Imams (CIC) and the Islamic Union of Cameroon (UIC). Crisis Group telephone interview, UIC member, Douala, April 2015.

¹³⁶ Although the Sunnis do not see eye to eye with the Shiites, the latter sometimes join in with these prayers. See "Cameroon worried over spread of ideology", *Voice of America*, 16 June 2015; "Lutte contre Boko Haram: les imams des dix régions prient pour Paul Biya et pour la paix au Cameroun", *CIN* (www.cameroon-info.net), 14 June 2015.

¹³⁷ Crisis Group interviews, Muslims, September 2014-April 2015; and president of the Cameroon Consumers' League (LCC), Yaoundé, February 2015. "Cameroun: la thèse du complot a la peau dure", *Le Jour*, 23 January 2015.

increasingly turned to other countries, including China and Russia, as international partners.¹³⁸

These perceptions are fuelled by historic resentment against France.¹³⁹ They re-emerged after French intervention in Côte d'Ivoire and NATO's intervention in Libya and were amplified by the local media under the protection of the authorities.¹⁴⁰ This view of Boko Haram as a western conspiracy is shared in northern Nigeria.¹⁴¹

B. *The Ferment of Religious Intolerance*

Religious leaders claim there are no religious problems in Cameroon. Despite friendly exchanges, the ferment of religious intolerance is gradually growing. Religious groups distrust each other. Some are excluded and others stay out of official religious life.

1. Negative perceptions between religions

The origin of religious intolerance lies in the negative perceptions that different religious communities hold about each other. The lack of dialogue between Catholics and revivalist churches promotes mutual distrust. The revivalist churches have a radical discourse towards Catholic clergy, who they demonise. They present the Pope as a masonic grand-master in league with the Devil and affirm that Catholics are doomed to damnation.¹⁴² Catholic clergy say they do not feel threatened by the rise of the revivalist churches and generally adopt a condescending attitude toward them. They view the revivalist churches as sects and their pastors as religious entrepreneurs and swindlers without religious training.¹⁴³ The revivalist churches are therefore not involved in the interreligious initiatives initiated by Catholic associations.¹⁴⁴ Revivalist pastors retort that they "want nothing to do with people who adore statues".¹⁴⁵

¹³⁸ The French ambassador in Cameroon was forced to deny several times the alleged links between France and Boko Haram. The French Foreign Affairs minister did the same on his visit to Yaoundé in March 2015. During the march against Boko Haram in Yaoundé on 28 February 2015, demonstrators challenged the presence of the French ambassador and chanted anti-French slogans. "Les relations entre la France et le Cameroun se sont détériorées", Mediapart, 25 April 2015.

¹³⁹ Richard Joseph, *Le mouvement nationaliste camerounais: aux origines sociales de l'UPC* (Paris, 1986); and Manuel Domergue, *Kamerun: une guerre cachée aux origines de la Françafrique* (Paris, 2011).

¹⁴⁰ The Afrique media channel leads the anti-French current. It enjoys the blessing of the Cameroon authorities and financial support from the Equatorial Guinean president. In 2014, when the National Communications Council (CNC) summoned the channel to answer accusations of a lack of ethics, senior officials at the presidency put pressure on the council, which withdrew the summons. Crisis Group interview, CNC member, Yaoundé, January 2015. On 4 June 2015, the CNC finally suspended the channel for one month and two of its journalists for six months. The channel's supporters believe that France put pressure on the government to obtain this outcome. The channel continues to broadcast and has the support of the journalists' trade union. Crisis Group telephone interviews, Afrique media policy consultants, June 2015. See "Afrique media émet toujours malgré la sanction du CNC", *Mutations*, 9 June 2015.

¹⁴¹ Nigerians living in the North believe that the U.S. rather than France instigated Boko Haram. Crisis Group interview, academic, Paris, June 2015.

¹⁴² Crisis Group interviews, revivalist church pastors and members, December 2014-April 2015.

¹⁴³ Crisis Group interviews, Catholic Church members and leaders, December 2014-February 2015.

¹⁴⁴ Crisis Group interview, ACADIR project coordinator, Yaoundé, January 2015.

¹⁴⁵ This is because of the images and statues of Jesus and Mary in Catholic churches. Crisis Group interviews, revivalist church pastors and members, Douala, December 2014.

Within the Muslim community, the Tijani, Sunni, Wahhabi and Shiite currents all hold negative perceptions of each other. The Muslim interreligious dialogue associations are Tijani and Sunni. The representatives of other currents are generally not invited to their activities.¹⁴⁶

Christians and Muslims are also suspicious of each other.¹⁴⁷ The revivalist churches have a radical discourse against Muslims. The latter do not know the revivalist churches very well and view them as Christian sects and even Catholics. The coexistence between the Christian missionary churches and the dominant Muslim currents is fragile, as shown by the fact that the head teacher of Yagoua secondary school had the headscarves of Muslim pupils burned in October 2014.¹⁴⁸ This fragile coexistence could be disrupted if terrorist attacks such as those carried out by Boko Haram in N'Djamena in June 2015 and Maroua in July 2015 were to hit the big cities of southern Cameroon.¹⁴⁹

In fact, three suicide attacks hit Fotokol and Maroua in July, leaving about 50 people dead and more than 120 wounded. The authorities upgraded security following these attacks and took a series of measures that have established a de facto state of emergency in Maroua.¹⁵⁰ The government deployed 2,000 soldiers, increased police controls and introduced a 7pm curfew. Some measures were more controversial, such as a ban on the burqa and the closure of some mosques and Quranic schools.¹⁵¹ These measures are generally accepted by the public, but they also cause frustration, especially among Wahhabis and Salafis, who feel they are being targeted. The government believes that these measures have the unanimous support of the Muslim community, because the representatives of the major Muslim associations are either Tijanis or Sunnis and are therefore not worried about the ban on the burqa, unlike the Wahhabis.¹⁵² These measures risk antagonising further one section of the Muslim community that is already close to Salafism and Wahhabi fundamentalism, all the more so in a context of abuses by the security forces and the public. In the Far North, Yaoundé and Douala, women wearing the burqa and sometimes the hijab are harassed in the streets and there have been incidents in which members of the public have removed the veil from Muslim women.¹⁵³ The July suicide bombs and the arrest of bombers, including Cameroon nationals, that followed, confirm that Salafi jihadism has well

¹⁴⁶ Crisis Group interview, JIC president, Yaoundé, 7 February 2015.

¹⁴⁷ There have only been violent conflicts between Christians and Muslims in northern parts of the South. In Douala, the only dispute in 2012 was over land in the New Bell district. Crisis Group interview, vicar general of the archdiocese, Douala, 28 December 2014.

¹⁴⁸ "Cameroun: 300 foulards brûlés au lycée classique de Yagoua", *L'œil du Sahel*, 24 October 2014.

¹⁴⁹ On 15 June 2015, Chad was hit by two terrorist attacks that left 34 dead and 105 injured. These were Boko Haram reprisals against the deployment of the Chad army against Boko Haram since January 2015. "Chad suicide attacks kill many in N'djamena", BBC, 15 June 2015; "Attaques de N'Djamena: le gouvernement tchadien décide une série de mesures sécuritaires", Anadolu Agency, 19 June 2015.

¹⁵⁰ "Cameroun: nouvel attentat meurtrier à Maroua", RFI, 26 July 2015; "Le Cameroun frappé à son tour par Boko Haram", *Le Monde*, 22 July 2015.

¹⁵¹ "Terrorisme: les neuf mesures phares prises par le Cameroun pour se protéger de Boko Haram", *Jeune Afrique*, 30 July 2015.

¹⁵² Crisis Group interviews, Wahhabi Muslims, Yaoundé, July 2015.

¹⁵³ Crisis Group interviews, brigadier and Muslims, Yaoundé, August 2015; "Interdiction de la burqa: des musulmanes victimes de harcèlement", 237 online, 21 August 2015.

and truly spread to Cameroon.¹⁵⁴ These attacks also tarnished the image of Islam in the eyes of some Cameroonians, who associate Islam with terrorism and don't know the difference between burqa, niqab and hijab.

2. The exclusion and self-exclusion of the revivalist churches

The radical posture of the revivalist churches is inherent in their theological orientation, which contributes to their self-exclusion. Their intolerance is a product of their literal interpretation of the Bible and exclusivist conception of salvation.¹⁵⁵ They are inward-looking and tend to demonise other churches. Many are not open to interreligious dialogue and this tendency to self-exclusion harms their relations with other religious groups.¹⁵⁶

Their marginalisation by the authorities and exclusion by other churches reinforces this radical posture. Their support for the government does not mean they automatically enjoy recognition by the regime.¹⁵⁷ Their need for official registration predisposes them to support the head of state¹⁵⁸, but they are not often invited to interreligious meetings or national celebrations organised by the government.¹⁵⁹ Similarly, although the government has consulted the missionary churches at election time, it has never consulted the revivalist churches.¹⁶⁰

C. Critical Review of the Present Initiatives

There is no coordinated strategy to deal with the spread of fundamentalism. Civil society organisations have taken some initiatives, while the government has concentrated on trying to stop Boko Haram from establishing itself in the country.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁴ See Olga Bogorad "Cameroon's extreme northern region: fertile ground for Boko Haram", *Daily Maverick*, 14 August 2015; "Cameroun: arrestation à Maroua de trois personnes transportant des explosifs", AFP, 1 August 2015; and Marafa Hamidou Yaya, "Cameroun: comment repousser la menace Boko Haram", *Le Monde*, 30 July 2015.

¹⁵⁵ The neo-Pentecostal churches think that only the "born again" will inherit Paradise at the end of time and that the followers of other Christian religions and currents will go to Hell. They believe in the same eschatological scheme of things as the Wahhabis. See Moïse Samuel Lindjeck, *Le ministère de la délivrance au Cameroun: quels repères? Essai d'analyse exégétique et théologique* (Paris, 2015).

¹⁵⁶ Crisis Group interviews, revivalist church pastors and members, Douala and Yaoundé, February 2015.

¹⁵⁷ By way of comparison, revivalist churches in Cameroon are still far from exercising the political influence they have in Côte d'Ivoire and Kenya. See the report by the Institute for Security Studies, *La Côte d'Ivoire est-elle confrontée au radicalisme religieux?*, op. cit. and Ben Knighton, *Religion and politics in Kenya* (New York, 2009).

¹⁵⁸ The government uses legal registration to contain and control revivalist churches. The last neo-Pentecostal church to be registered was the Christian Pentecostal Church of Cameroon (EPCC) in December 1999.

¹⁵⁹ With the exception of the Pentecostal pastor Achille Mendongo, only the representatives of missionary churches and Muslim leaders attend events such as the 20 May parade commemorating national unity and other official ceremonies at the presidency.

¹⁶⁰ The missionary churches are also the only ones to send observers to elections.

¹⁶¹ Cyril Bensimon, "Boko Haram met en lumière les fragilités du régime camerounais", *Le Monde*, 18 March 2015.

1. Weak and dispersed interreligious dialogue structures

The associations that promote interreligious dialogue are weak and dispersed. Their activities are sometimes restricted to the organisation of meetings and workshops for church leaders and have little impact on the general public.

Catholic Church interreligious dialogue initiatives are supervised by the National Episcopal Conference and the Justice and Peace National Service (SNJP). The SNJP is funded by the Association for Development Cooperation (AGEH) and Bread for the World, both German NGOs. In addition to the SNJP, several Catholic associations have invested in interreligious dialogue. The most important of these is the Cameroon Association for Interreligious dialogue (ACADIR).¹⁶² The Sant'Egidio Community, Catholic Relief Service, Fokolari Movement, the Faith, Culture and Education Network, the Biblical Pastoral Commission and the Ecumenical Movement also contribute to interreligious dialogue.¹⁶³

ACADIR describes itself as a platform for dialogue between religions with a view to promoting peace, harmony and social progress in Cameroon. It is based in Maroua and Yaoundé, but recently expanded into the East and South and it has just created a regional branch in the Far North.¹⁶⁴ The following organisations participate in its activities: the National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon (CENC), the Council of Protestant Churches in Cameroon (CEPCA), the Orthodox Archdiocese of Yaoundé, the Higher Islamic Council of Cameroon (CSIC) and the Islamic Cultural Association of Cameroon (ACIC). Since 2006, it has organised interreligious conferences in Maroua and Yaoundé, attended by bishops, pastors, Muslim leaders, administrative authorities and lay experts. It also provides leadership training for religious and traditional leaders in the East and South. In 2014, it launched the pilot phase of a training and awareness raising project on interreligious dialogue for school pupils.¹⁶⁵

Protestant interreligious dialogue initiatives are coordinated by the CEPCA.¹⁶⁶ The main associations to have invested in dialogue are the World Dynamics of Young People (DMJ), Cameroon Forum (FM) and the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PRICA). From 22 February to 4 April 2015, the CEPCA organised two months of fasting and prayers for peace and support for the authorities and defence forces in the fight against Boko Haram. In addition to evenings of prayer and hymn-singing in Yaoundé and the Far North, the event included silent marches and support for refugee camps, the internally displaced and the families of soldiers killed in the war.¹⁶⁷ In 2013, the DMJ piloted a Strengthening Interreligious dialogue and Social Cohesion (REDICOS) project that covered the entire country.¹⁶⁸ The

¹⁶² See the ACADIR statutes, 2007. The ACADIR was founded in 2006 at the Maroua Forum on Inter-religious Dialogue, which has been an annual event since 2001. It is funded by Misereor, a German Catholic NGO. The president of its Permanent Council is Mgr Adalbert Ndzana, bishop of the diocese of Mbalmayo, and the president of its board of directors is Adamou Ndam Njoya.

¹⁶³ Crisis Group interview, bishop of Mbalmayo and president of the SNJP, Mbalmayo, January 2015.

¹⁶⁴ Charter of the ACADIR of the Far North Maroua, 5 June 2015.

¹⁶⁵ Crisis Group interview, ACADIR member, Yaoundé, January 2015.

¹⁶⁶ The CEPCA is formed by eleven churches and is currently chaired by the Reverend Robert Goyek of the Fraternal Lutheran Church of Cameroon (EFLC).

¹⁶⁷ See www.cepca-protestant.org.

¹⁶⁸ Crisis Group interview, DMJ member, Yaoundé, February 2015.

Cameroonian branch of the Civil Service for Peace (SCP) has organised conferences on the peaceful resolution of religious conflicts.¹⁶⁹

Within the Muslim Community, the Muslim League for Peace, Dialogue and Solidarity (LMPDS) and the ACIC are among associations that promote interreligious dialogue. They have organised interreligious meetings and training workshops on interreligious dialogue for imams in Douala, Yaoundé, Maroua, Garoua and Fomban.¹⁷⁰ The Cameroon Council of Muslim Imams and Dignitaries (CIDIMUC) organised awareness raising caravans for peace and distributed gifts to Central African Republic refugees in the East in April 2014.¹⁷¹

In addition, Muslim and Christian women's associations organised awareness raising days against Boko Haram, involving prayers and marches in support of the armed forces.¹⁷² Created in 2005, the Cameroon Muslim Women's Association is a religious, cultural and social organisation.¹⁷³ In 2008, it founded a school for women (School of Generations), then a school for men in 2011, where its leaders say they teach a tolerant version of Islam.¹⁷⁴ The association's leaders have made public statements condemning terrorism and organise conferences and seminars on tolerance and interreligious dialogue. However, their closeness to CAMSU, an association under the influence of the Ikhwan, casts doubt on their sincerity in the eyes of some observers of the religious scene in Cameroon.¹⁷⁵ The Association of Apostolic Women of Cameroon (ADAC), a Catholic Women's Association, held prayers in support of the armed forces, organised conferences on religious tolerance and publicly condemned the activities of Boko Haram.¹⁷⁶

However, these associations do not include the revivalist churches and minority Islamic currents in their activities, even though currents such as the Ahmadiyya and some revivalist churches have said they support interreligious dialogue.¹⁷⁷ The lack of coordination and dialogue dilutes the effectiveness of their actions. They also suffer from a lack of government support, because they are funded by foreign donors, mainly German in the case of Christian churches and Arab in the case of Muslims. Moreover, most of their activities are confined to conferences and meetings attended by senior figures (religious leaders and the administrative authorities from the major cities).¹⁷⁸

¹⁶⁹ "Rapport de l'atelier du SCP du 16 au 19 mai 2011", AGEH and Service des églises évangéliques en Allemagne pour le développement (Kribi, 2011).

¹⁷⁰ Crisis Group interviews, leaders of Muslim associations, Yaoundé and Maroua, February 2015. "Cameroun: sunnites et chiïtes contre Boko Haram à Douala", Anadolu Agency, 18 February 2015.

¹⁷¹ "Cameroun: des imams au secours des réfugiés", *Cameroon Tribune*, 21 April 2014.

¹⁷² "Cameroun: des femmes se mobilisent contre Boko Haram", Anadolu Agency, 29 May 2014.

¹⁷³ CAMWA Statute, 2006.

¹⁷⁴ Crisis Group interviews, CAMWA member, Maroua, 25 June 2015. See "L'ambassadrice américaine accueille l'Association des femmes musulmanes", http://french.yaounde.usembassy.gov/Insfr_04142015.html, 14 April 2015.

¹⁷⁵ Crisis Group telephone interviews, imams, 26 June 2015.

¹⁷⁶ Crisis Group telephone interviews, Apostolic Women of Douala, Yaoundé and Mbalmayo, 27 June 2015.

¹⁷⁷ Crisis Group interviews, Ahmadiyya member, Yaoundé, February 2015.

¹⁷⁸ Crisis Group interview, expert on interreligious dialogue, Yaoundé, January 2015.

2. The flaws of the government's response to radicalism

In the face of the growing fundamentalism, the government has privileged a security response, and it was only in 2014 that it took any socio-economic initiatives.

It has no effective policy on the surveillance of places of worship. The intelligence services rely on reports by members of the security forces who are also members of the various religious currents.¹⁷⁹ The police considers religious fundamentalism a “potential threat” they are preparing to deal with.¹⁸⁰ In the North, the security forces say they are working with religious and traditional chiefs. Local anti-radicalisation policies consist of raising the awareness of imams and Christian religious leaders. The administrative authorities say they raise the awareness of local populations when working in the field.¹⁸¹

In the Far North, the government has taken initiatives to reduce poverty and illiteracy. In February 2015, it announced a FCFA 5 billion emergency plan to build schools and recruit 2,000 young people from the Far North.¹⁸² These social and economic measures are accompanied by the arrest of imams alleged to be Wahhabis in Fouban and Kanuri in the Far North, for example, in May 2014. The police harassment suffered by residents of villages on the border with Nigeria may be counterproductive and radicalise these communities.¹⁸³

All these initiatives are poorly coordinated and not very effective. The ACIC is the only association to receive government grants but interreligious dialogue is not even its priority.

¹⁷⁹ Crisis Group interview, chief superintendent, Yaoundé, August 2013; security forces, Ngaoundéré, September 2014.

¹⁸⁰ Paul Ango Ela and Friedrich Ebert Foundations, “Intégrisme religieux et insécurité au Cameroun”, op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁸¹ Crisis Group interviews, administrative authorities and security forces, Ngaoundéré and Garoua, September 2014.

¹⁸² See “Le Cameroun lance un plan d’urgence de 5,3 milliards pour la création des écoles à l’extrême Nord”, Investir au Cameroun (www.investiraucameroun.com), 9 March 2015. “2000 emplois aux jeunes camerounais dans l’Extrême Nord”, Andalou Agency, 9 March 2015. “Mobilisation contre Boko Haram: les différents fronts”, *Cameroon Tribune*, 20 March 2015. “A Yaoundé, une ambiance d’unité nationale contre Boko Haram”, RFI, 8 February 2015. And Jean Patient Tsala, “Cameroon and Boko Haram: government calls on the people to fund mobilization”, *African Arguments*, 3 June 2015.

¹⁸³ Crisis Group interviews, imams, Fouban, March 2015. See “Cameroun: arrestation de 13 chefs traditionnels pour complicité avec Boko Haram”, Koaci (koaci.com), 7 January 2015.

IV. Anticipate the Danger

A. *The Risks of Conflicts*

Unlike in Nigeria and the Central African Republic, the religious climate in Cameroon is relatively peaceful. The country has avoided religious conflicts thanks to the role of moderate Sufi Islam, controlled by the *lamidos*, combined with an alliance between northern and southern elites and a Catholic-dominated Christian establishment. However, the spread of Wahhabism and radical Islamic currents, the erosion of the authority of the *lamidos* and the rise of the revivalist churches are all undermining the foundations of this coexistence. This is accompanied by growing divisions within each religious group and the long-standing resentment of communities in the northern part of the country.¹⁸⁴ These religious changes are weakening the North-South axis that forms the foundations of political stability.¹⁸⁵ The combination of religious fundamentalism and ethnic and political divisions is potentially destabilising.

While much attention is being given to Boko Haram attacks in the Far North, religious radicalism is emerging throughout the country. The government and inter-religious dialogue associations need to prepare a response to two threats: ethno-religious conflicts in the North and local inter-Muslim conflicts. However, their response has been dispersed and weak. They need a coherent strategy to preserve religious coexistence.

The risk of ethno-religious conflict in the North

The risk of religious conflicts is real because of the persistence of ethnic divisions that are superimposed over the country's religious geography.¹⁸⁶ In North Cameroon, in addition to the traditional opposition between the Fulani and the Kirdi, there are divisions between the Kotoko and the Mousgoum in Logone and Chari, between the Fulani and the Gbaya in Adamawa and between the Fulani and indigenous tribes in the Far North, such as the Guiziga and the Massa.¹⁸⁷ These are old divisions and

¹⁸⁴ For more on intercommunal problems and clashes, see Antoine Socpa, "L'hégémonie ethnique cyclique au Nord Cameroun", *Africa Development*, vol. 24, no. 2 (1999).

¹⁸⁵ Government policy has long been based on maintaining a balance between North and South. The reduction of Fulani influence and the diversification of the population in the North have changed the geopolitical map of Cameroon, which is no longer dualistic. However, opposition between Northerners and Southerners remains a driver of conflict, and most Muslim dignitaries in the North say that the alliance between the North and the South depends on individuals. For the moment, they respect this alliance because Biya is in power. A badly-organised political transition could unleash the North-South tensions dividing Muslims and Christians. Crisis Group interviews, academics and politicians, September 2014; and Fulani elites, Ngaoundéré and Garoua, September 2014-April 2015. In 2011, Amadou Ali, vice-minister told the U.S. ambassador that the North would not support any Bamileké or Bété candidate other than Paul Biya. "Cameroon's Justice Minister says North will support Biya, but not another Bété or Bami", U.S. embassy cable to Yaoundé, 12 March 2009, WikiLeaks, <https://wikileaks.org/cable/2009/03/09YAOUNDE256.html>.

¹⁸⁶ Most of the ethnic divisions in North Cameroon have their origin in disputes over land and access to natural resources. Crisis Group telephone interview, academics, Ngaoundéré, 10 June 2015. For more on the religious geography of Cameroon, see Maud Lasseur, "Cameroun: les nouveaux territoires de Dieu", *Afrique contemporaine*, vol. 3, no. 215, p. 93-116.

¹⁸⁷ Fendjongue Houli, "La construction et la politisation de l'ethnicité Kirdis au Nord du Cameroun", *Revue camerounaise de science politique*, vol. 13, no. 2 (2006); "Logone et Chari: Kotoko et Musgum s'entretuent", *Mutations*, 12 January 2007.

still degenerate into sporadic clashes despite arbitration by the authorities.¹⁸⁸ They also cut across religious divisions: the Gbaya are Christians and animists, while the Fulani are Muslims; most of the Kotoko are Muslims, while the Mousgoum are Christians and animists.¹⁸⁹ In the North, the risk that an ethnic conflict will degenerate into a religious conflict and vice-versa is exacerbated by the conflict-ridden regional environment that has developed since the emergence of Boko Haram and the outbreak of the war in the Central African Republic, which has spilled over into Cameroon.¹⁹⁰

The risk of conflicts between Muslim communities

The competition between Islamic currents has already degenerated in the past into local clashes in Cameroon. These disputes reflect the struggle for leadership of the Muslim community as the new currents reduce the religious “market share” of the traditional marabouts (*modibbe*).¹⁹¹ Another facet of these conflicts is the generation gap, with young people mainly Sunnis and Wahhabis and older people mainly Tijanis. The growth of the Wahhabi presence and the increasing number of Islamic currents are potential factors of conflict in the South (departments of Noun and Mbam, the cities of Douala, Yaoundé and Mbalmayo), Adamawa and the Far North.

B. Organise a Coherent Response

1. Understand the radicalisation process

The Cameroonian authorities do not seem to understand very much about the radicalisation taking place in the country. This lack of understanding should be remedied by the creation of research programs on this issue, with the help of donors. Ngaoundéré University and the Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS) in Maroua already have the human resources that would allow them to conduct research programs of this nature.

¹⁸⁸ Crisis Group interviews, administrative authorities, Ngaoundéré and Garoua, September 2014.

¹⁸⁹ The Kotoko are Tidjanis, but they mix the Tidjaniyya with cultural practices from their pre-Islamic religion. Crisis Group telephone interview, academic, Maroua, 5 June 2015. Although intercommunal clashes overlap with religious divisions in the North, they also often result in conflicts between ethnic groups sharing the same religion. For example, the conflict between Choa and Kotoko Arabs in Logone and Chari. See Antoine Socpa, “Le problème Arabes Choa – Kotoko au Cameroun: essai d’analyse rétrospective à partir des affrontements de janvier 1992”, Research report, ENA, August 2012; “Kousseri: un affrontement entre Musgum, Massa and Kotoko fait 18 blessés”, *Mutations*, 6 July 2015.

¹⁹⁰ The crisis in the Central African Republic (CAR) since 2013 has led to an influx of close to 250,000 mainly Fulani and Gbaya refugees into eastern Cameroon and Adamawa. This political crisis degenerated into ethno-religious conflicts involving the Fulani and the Gbaya of the CAR. In Cameroon, there are conflicts between the Fulani and the Gbaya in Mandjoum in the East and Adamawa, where communities of CAR refugees are located. There is a risk that the respective communities of these two ethnic groups in the two states will find common cause. In fact, a number of Fulani and Gbaya refugees live in Fulani and Gbaya Cameroonian communities close to the refugee camps run by the High Commissioner rather than in the camps themselves. In addition, since the start of the conflict in the CAR, Seleka rebels, anti-Balaka and unidentified groups have spread into the East and Adamaoua, causing a certain level of insecurity. See Crisis Group Africa Briefing, *Cameroon: Prevention is Better than Cure*, op. cit.; “16 voyageurs enlevés à Garoua-Boulai”, *Cameroon Tribune*, 23 March 2015; “Cameroun: trois soldats abattus à Kette”, *Le Jour*, 3 January 2014; “100 combattants de la Seleka assiègent un village camerounais”, *L’œil du Sahel*, 17 September 2014; “Cameroun: les anti-balaka font 11 morts à l’Est”, *Le Jour*, 18 February 2014.

¹⁹¹ Crisis Group interviews, academics, Yaoundé, September 2014. See Onomo Etaba, op. cit.

2. Create representative Islamic and Pentecostal church bodies

One of the problems within Islam is the absence of a body that represents all Muslim communities. There are a dozen Muslim associations but they each represent only some of the country's imams and Muslims. The government should discuss the creation of such a body with Muslim leaders. It could be formed from an alliance of associations like the ACIC, the CIDIMUC and the CSIC. Its board of directors could include the imams at the central mosques, representatives of Islamic currents, the leaders of Islamic associations and a government representative. Such a structure should take care to represent the ethnic diversity of Muslims and remedy the generation gap by including young Muslims.

One of the essential tasks of this representative body would be to encourage its members to take into account the diversity of Muslims and of their associations. It should also monitor the geographical distribution of projects funded by the Gulf foundations. The new body should go on to organise a forum for dialogue between Muslims. It should also organise the election, for a non-extendable one-year term, of a doctrinal authority (*moufti*), and take decisions (*fatwa*) on questions of Muslim law.

The government should discuss a similar initiative with pastors of the revivalist churches and put an end to administrative tolerance by giving revivalist churches one year in which to register. Following the example of the CEPCA, this body would facilitate dialogue between the revivalist churches. The CEPCA only represents a minority of revivalist churches.¹⁹² For the moment, several unauthorised churches prefer the legal "cover" afforded by legal Pentecostal churches. This does not mean that the latter control the former. They pay an annual fee to the churches under whose legal status they shelter.¹⁹³ The representative bodies of each religious current should prepare and adopt a Religious Tolerance Charter, which all religious currents in the country should be asked to endorse.

3. Boost the development of vulnerable regions

The weakness of the state, combined with poverty, illiteracy and proximity to countries in conflict, make some parts of the country especially vulnerable. The Far North and the East of Cameroon give greatest cause for concern. The fight against radicalisation requires social and economic development and an increase in school attendance. The government should invest more in the social services of these regions so as not to allow Wahhabi solidarity systems to have a free hand in the field of social action. The emergency plan to build social services in the Far North has not yet been implemented and the amount allocated to this project (FCFA 5 billion) is not enough to enable genuine development of the region.¹⁹⁴ The land use program for Adamawa, the North and Far North is not yet operational because of a lack of funding.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² The Council of Protestant Churches of Cameroon is formed of eleven churches, some of which represent revivalist currents. The Reverend Robert Goyek of the Fraternal Lutheran Church of Cameroon (EFLC) is the president of the CEPCA.

¹⁹³ "Les églises de réveil en Afrique centrale ...", op. cit.

¹⁹⁴ "Plan d'urgence du grand Nord: les fausses promesses du gouvernement", *L'œil du Sahel*, 20 December 2014.

¹⁹⁵ The Cameroon government is asking foreign donors to fund this project. See "Cameroon: 80 milliards de FCFA recherchés pour les investissements dans les régions septentrionales", Xinhua, 10 May 2015.

The government should allocate a third of the Triennial Emergency Programme For the Acceleration of Growth budget (FCFA 925 billion for the period 2014-2017) to the north of the country, and mainly to the Far North, all the more so as North Cameroon accounts for close to one third of the country's population (7 million out of the country's 23 million population) and the Far North is one of the least developed regions in the country. This program should be coordinated with subregional initiatives, notably those taken by the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), if these materialise.¹⁹⁶ In fact, in addition to the Strategic Action Programme adopted in 2008,¹⁹⁷ an emergency development program for areas affected by Boko Haram was announced in June 2015 at the LCBC summit in Abuja.¹⁹⁸ The Cameroon government should work with Nigeria, Niger and Chad to promote such development initiatives and ensure that the countries bordering the lake work together when applying for funds from donors.

4. Increase surveillance of proselytising websites and adopt a policy of non-stigmatisation

In addition to the madrasas, the mosques, the itinerant preachers, the prisons, the refugee camps and the internet are also vectors of radicalisation. The security services must address this situation by monitoring the activities of foreign preachers (especially Egyptians and Hausa), the sensitive prisons (Maroua, Yaoundé and Fombot), as well as the Minawao refugee camp in the Far North. The government must ensure that the Muslim associations do not receive funding from fundamentalist NGOs. This will mean introducing controls over how religious associations are funded.¹⁹⁹

The fight against radicalisation requires avoiding the stigmatisation of communities that have already had the finger pointed at them, such as the Kanuri and Muslim minorities that have no links with Boko Haram and encouraging them to join public education initiatives. As part of the fight against Boko Haram, the security forces should ensure the security of local chiefs in order to encourage them to cooperate more with public education and prevention campaigns.²⁰⁰ The security forces must learn to work with the populations of the Far North and civil society, which means an end to arbitrary arrests, detentions, torture and other human rights violations.

5. Support associations promoting interreligious dialogue

In order to remedy their dispersion and lack of resources, associations that promote interreligious dialogue should coordinate their activity programs and include the revivalist churches, Muslim and Christian women's associations, young Muslims

¹⁹⁶ The Lake Chad Commission is a sub-regional institution founded in 1964, initially to regulate and plan the use of water and other resources in the Lake Chad Basin. Its sphere of action gradually expanded to include cross-border security issues and, more recently, the fight against Boko Haram. It includes Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria, Niger and Benin. See Michel Luntumbue, "La CBLT et les défis sécuritaires du bassin du lac Tchad", Groupe de recherche et d'information sur la paix et la sécurité (GRIP), note no. 14, 2 December 2014.

¹⁹⁷ Among the flagship projects of the Strategic Action Programme for the Lake Chad Basin are the Sustainable Development Programme for the Lake Chad Basin and the Lake Chad Preservation Project. See www.cbllt.org/fr/projets.

¹⁹⁸ "Nigeria, neighbours forge anti-Boko Haram force", Reuters, 11 June 2015.

¹⁹⁹ Since the 11 September attacks, some associations, such as CAMSU have been funding themselves independently. Crisis Group interview, member of CAMSU, Yaoundé, January 2015.

²⁰⁰ Crisis Group interview, academic, Nairobi, 12 May 2015.

and minority currents of Islam. They should also improve their communications policies and extend their public education activities to the grassroots. Traditional donors to Cameroon should assess the work of the associations and fund the most effective ones.

V. Conclusion

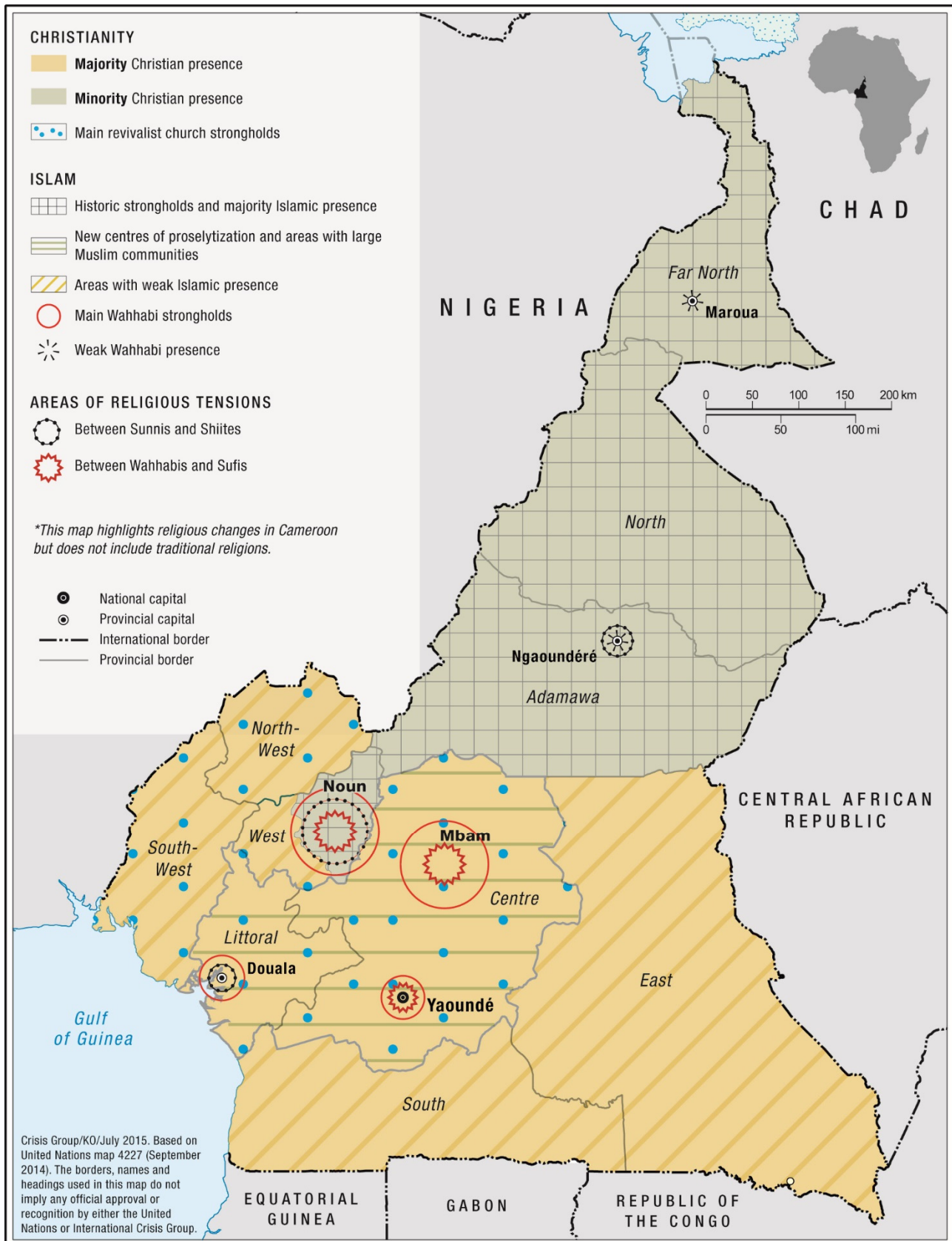
The changes to the religious landscape under way in Cameroon are also occurring elsewhere. In other African countries, they have already resulted in violent conflicts.²⁰¹ The uniqueness of Cameroon lies in the fact that these internal religious changes are taking place in a regional environment where, rightly or wrongly, conflict has a religious dimension (the fight against Boko Haram's jihadism in the Lake Chad Basin and intercommunal strife with a strong religious dimension in CAR).²⁰² In the absence of a coherent strategy to contain the emerging religious radicalism, and by relying on an approach based entirely on security considerations with their possible excesses, Cameroon is exposing itself to religious tensions that will easily find a regional echo.

Nairobi/Brussels, 3 September 2015

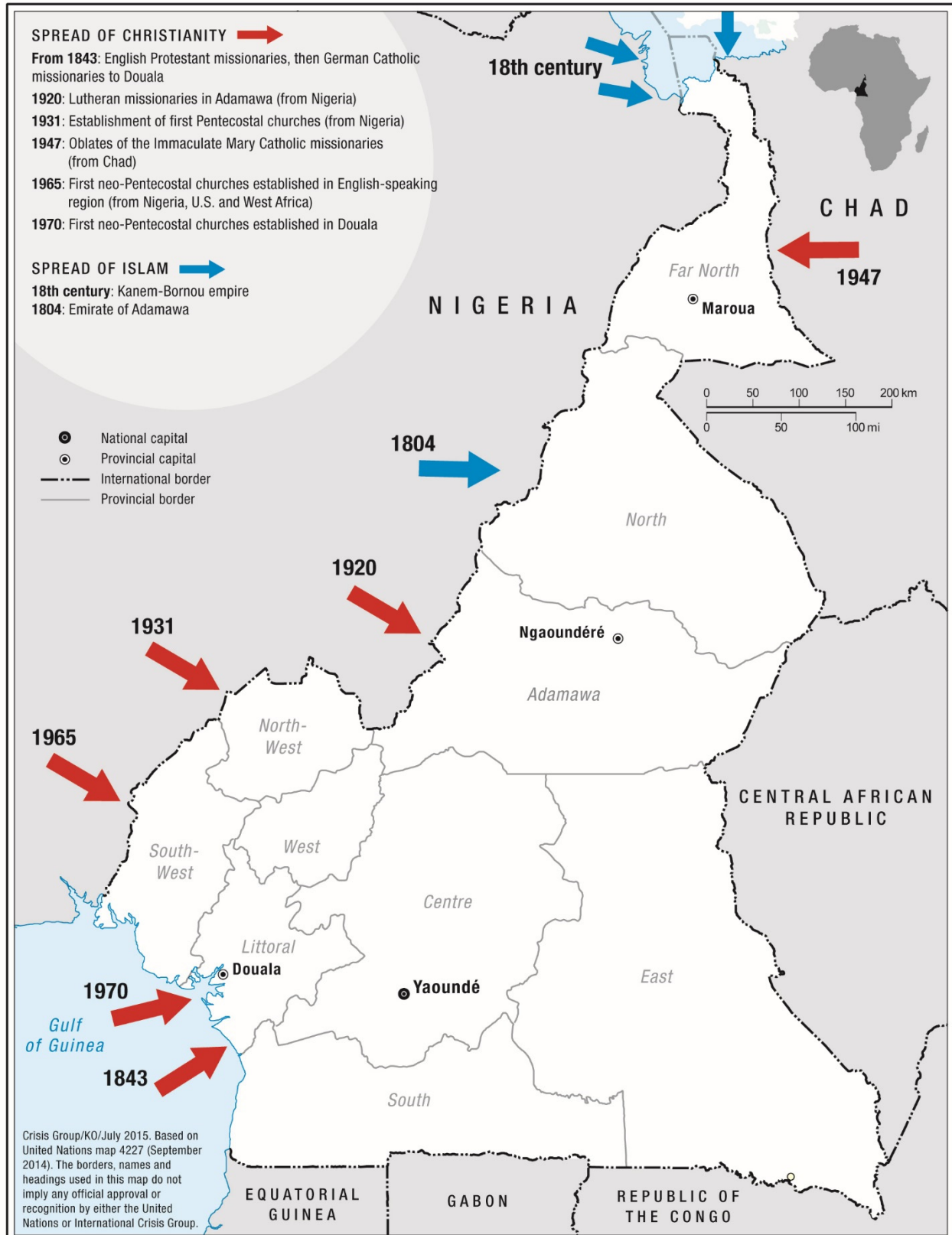
²⁰¹ See Crisis Group Report, *Northern Nigeria: Background to Conflict*, op. cit.; and Crisis Group Briefing, *Kenyan Somali Islamist Radicalisation*, op. cit.

²⁰² See Crisis Group Africa Report N°227, *The Central Sahel: A Perfect Sandstorm*, 25 June 2015.

Appendix A: Map of the Religious Landscape of Cameroon



Appendix B: History of How Religions Spread in Cameroon



Appendix C: Glossary

ADF	African Development Foundation
ACADIR	Cameroon Association for Interreligious Dialogue
ACAMAS	Cameroon Association for Aid and Solidarity
ACEC	Cameroon Association for Education and Culture
ACIC	Islamic Cultural Association of Cameroon
AGEH	Association for Development Cooperation
LCBC	Lake Chad Basin Commission
CAMSU	Cameroon Muslim Students' Union
CAMWA	Cameroonian Muslim Women's Association
CENC	National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon
CEPCA	Council of Protestant Churches in Cameroon
CIC	Conference of Cameroon Imams
CIDIMUC	Cameroon Council of Muslim Imams and Dignitaries
CNC	National Communication Council
CSIC	Higher Islamic Council of Cameroon
DMJ	World Dynamics of Young People
EDD	Development Services of the German Evangelical Churches
EFLC	Fraternal Lutheran Church of Cameroon
ENA	National School of Administration
ENS	High education training institute
EPCC	Christian Pentecostal Church of Cameroon
FCFA	Francs CFA
FM	Cameroon Forum
GRIP	Information on Peace and Security Research Group
JIC	Islamic Youth League of Cameroon
LCC	Cameroon Consumers' League
LMPDS	Muslim League for Peace, Dialogue and Solidarity
MDR	Movement for the Defence of the Republic
MINATD	Ministry of Local Administration and Decentralisation
NMCC	New Muslim Center for Charity
PRICA	Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa
RDPC	Cameroon People's Democratic Movement
REDICOS	Strengthening Interreligious dialogue and Social Cohesion
SCP	Civil Service for Peace
SNJP	Justice and Peace National Service
UDC	Democratic Union of Cameroon
UFP	Union for Fraternity and Prosperity
UIC	Islamic Union of Cameroon
UNDP	National Union for Democracy and Progress
WAMY	World Assembly of Muslim Youth