

Special Status in Cameroon: Beyond Federalism and Secession as a Constitutional Framework for Resolving the Anglophone Crisis (2016-Present)

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Abstract

The Anglophone Crisis, which escalated in 2016, constitutes one of the most consequential constitutional, political, and security challenges confronting Cameroon since reunification. This study examines the Special Status conferred on the North West and South West Regions by Law No. 2019/024 as a possible constitutional response to the governance dimensions of that conflict. Employing qualitative documentary analysis, constitutional interpretation, and comparative institutional analysis, the study situates the Special Status within debates on constitutional accommodation, asymmetric decentralisation, federalism, and conflict transformation. It advances the qualified argument that the arrangement is best interpreted as an intermediate constitutional form: it recognises historical, legal, educational, linguistic, and cultural particularities within a decentralised unitary state, without reallocating sovereignty through a federal settlement or endorsing territorial separation. Its practical efficacy, however, remains limited by insecurity, incomplete fiscal decentralisation, uneven institutional capacity, and persistent political mistrust. Comparative evidence from South Tyrol, Northern Ireland, Aceh, and Scotland suggests that differentiated autonomy is most likely to be effective where formal recognition is combined with clearly specified competences, material resources, democratic legitimacy, and sustained political dialogue. The article concludes that the Special Status should be regarded as an incomplete and revisable institutional framework rather than as a self-executing settlement.

Keywords

Cameroon, Anglophone Crisis, Special Status, Constitutional

1. Introduction

The study adopts a deliberately non-teleological approach. It does not infer the adequacy of the Special Status from its legal enactment; rather, it treats constitutional viability as an empirical and institutional question concerning whether the arrangement can generate credible authority, participatory channels, and safeguards for the distinctive institutions of the North West and South West Regions. This distinction is analytically important because constitutional provisions derive practical significance from political implementation, institutional performance, and public reception as well as from formal legal text.

The analysis is confined to the governance and constitutional dimensions of the conflict. Although it acknowledges the humanitarian and security consequences of violence, its principal concern is the relationship among constitutional design, decentralisation, and political accommodation. This delimitation permits a disciplined comparison of Cameroon's Special Status with federal and autonomy arrangements elsewhere without presuming that institutions developed in other contexts can be transplanted mechanically.

The governance of linguistic, historical, and territorial diversity remains a central problem of state-building. In plural societies, constitutional arrangements must reconcile national cohesion with meaningful opportunities for communities to preserve institutions that underpin political identity (Elazar, 1987; Lijphart, 1977). Cameroon is a particularly instructive case. Reunification in 1961 brought together territories shaped by British and French colonial administration and established a federal constitutional order intended to combine unity with institutional distinctiveness. The replacement of federalism by a unitary state in 1972 subsequently became an enduring point of reference in Anglophone claims concerning representation, the Common Law tradition, English-language education, and regional autonomy (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 2003).

The Special Status adopted following the 2019 Major National Dialogue is intended to address certain governance dimensions of that crisis within the existing constitutional order (Republic of Cameroon, 2019b). The study accordingly asks: To what extent has the Special Status provided a viable constitutional and political framework for addressing the Anglophone Crisis? It assesses the arrangement neither as a final settlement nor as a merely administrative concession, but as a form of asymmetric accommodation that is constitutionally enabled and statutorily established, and whose legitimacy depends on implementation.

Research objectives

- 1) Examine the constitutional and legal foundations of the Special Status.
- 2) Assess its implementation since 2019.

3) Evaluate its contribution to decentralisation, peacebuilding, and conflict transformation.

4) Identify institutional and political constraints.

5) Recommend reforms that could strengthen the framework as a sustainable constitutional pathway.

The remainder of the article reviews relevant scholarship, explains the methodology and framework, traces the historical evolution of the Anglophone Question, analyses the Special Status and its implementation, compares constitutional alternatives, and concludes with reform proposals and declarations.

2. Literature Review

The literature yields three propositions that inform the analysis. First, territorially concentrated communities are likely to seek institutional recognition where ordinary administrative decentralisation is perceived as insufficient. Second, autonomy arrangements are more likely to endure when legal protections are matched by resources and participatory institutions. Third, constitutional reforms have limited peacebuilding effects when detached from dialogue, confidence-building, and the routine performance of public institutions. These propositions provide the conceptual bridge between general theories of governance and the Cameroonian case.

2.1. Constitutional Accommodation, Autonomy, and Recognition

Constitutional accommodation refers to institutional responses to diversity that enable communities to participate in a shared political order without relinquishing distinctive cultural or territorial identities. Kymlicka (1995) argues that substantive equality may require differentiated institutional protection, while Lijphart (1977) emphasises inclusion and accommodation in divided societies. In the Cameroonian context, this scholarship directs attention to the legal and educational institutions through which Anglophone identity has been articulated, rather than reducing the crisis to a security problem.

As illustrated in **Figure 1**, Special Status provides a framework for constitutional accommodation, autonomy and recognition within Cameroon's national constitutional order.

2.2. Federalism, Decentralisation, and Conflict Transformation

Federalism provides constitutionally protected forms of self-rule and shared rule, but its operation also depends on credible divisions of authority, fiscal arrangements, and mechanisms for resolving intergovernmental disputes (Elazar, 1987; Watts, 1999). Decentralisation research similarly cautions that the transfer of responsibilities without commensurate resources or authority can leave subnational institutions dependent and ineffective (Rondinelli, 1981; Smoke, 2003). Conflict transformation scholarship adds that durable peace requires changes in relationships and institutions, rather than merely the temporary cessation of violence

(Galtung, 1996; Lederach, 1997). These insights justify evaluating the Special Status as a dynamic institutional process rather than against the narrow standard of immediate conflict termination.

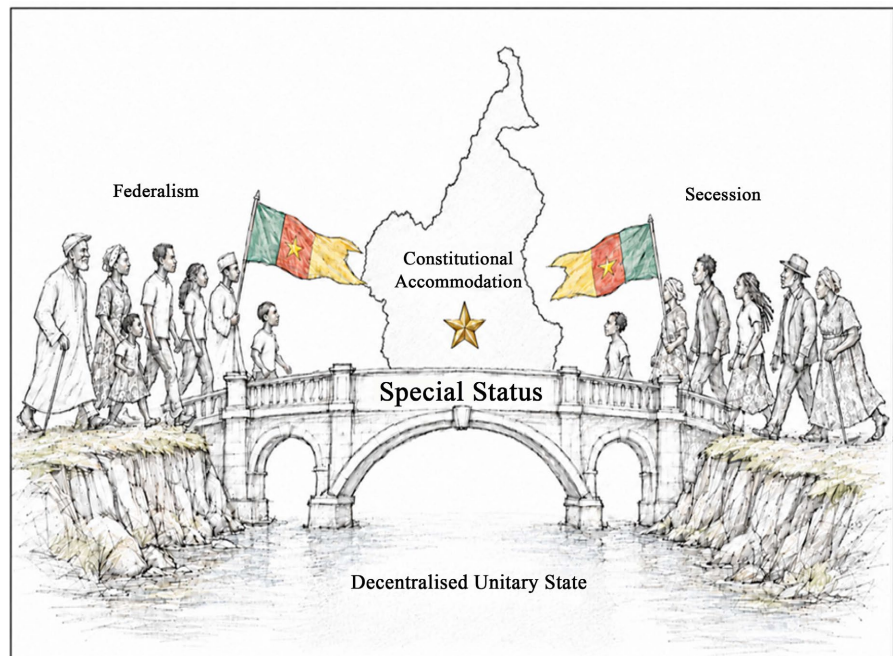


Figure 1. Special Status within Cameroon's constitutional framework. Source: Author's conceptual illustration, based on the Constitution of Cameroon and Law No. 2019/024 of 24 December 2019.

2.3. Cameroon-Specific Literature and Research Gap

Existing scholarship has documented the historical formation of Anglophone identity, the erosion of federal safeguards, and the escalation and social consequences of the post-2016 conflict (Bang et al., 2022; Fonjong & Takougang, 2024; International Crisis Group, 2017; Konings & Nyamnjoh, 2003). A growing Cameroon-specific literature now examines the Special Status directly. It identifies, from different perspectives, statutory ambiguity, continued central control, limited public knowledge, resource constraints, and contested legitimacy, while also recognising the arrangement's potential as a platform for further negotiation (Aime, 2020; Deyeb, 2024; Fombad, 2025; International Crisis Group, 2023; Ndiyun & Mukonza, 2025). The present study builds on that emerging literature by integrating constitutional analysis, decentralisation theory, conflict transformation, and comparative institutional assessment.

3. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The analytical framework does not treat federalism, Special Status, and secession as points on a unidimensional continuum of autonomy. They differ fundamentally in their implications for sovereignty, constitutional amendment, intergovern-

mental relations, and international recognition. Special Status is therefore examined as a form of differentiated decentralisation that can develop through legislation and political agreement while retaining the state's existing constitutional personality. This makes implementation, rather than abstract institutional design alone, the central explanatory variable of the study.

The study integrates four complementary perspectives. Constitutionalism focuses on whether public authority is organised through legally grounded and legitimate institutions. Decentralisation theory examines the transfer of political, administrative, and fiscal authority. Conflict transformation considers whether reforms create non-violent channels through which grievances may be articulated. Asymmetric governance theory explains why particular territories may receive differentiated powers because of historical, linguistic, or political circumstances (Benedikter, 2009; Burgess, 2006; Lederach, 1997; Watts, 1999).

For the purposes of this study, the Special Status is defined as a constitutionally enabled and statutorily established arrangement of differentiated regional governance intended to protect the historical, legal, educational, linguistic, and cultural particularities of the North West and South West Regions within a unified Cameroonian state. Article 62(2) of the Constitution permits legislation to take account of the specificities of certain Regions in their organisation and functioning; the operative regime itself, including its institutions, competences, and procedures, is created by Law No. 2019/024. It is distinguishable from federalism because it does not constitutionally divide sovereignty between federal and constituent governments, and from secession because it does not seek to establish a separate sovereign state (Table 1).

Table 1. Constitutional accommodation model for conflict transformation in Cameroon.

Dimension	Assessment criterion
Constitutional recognition	Formal acknowledgement of regional historical and institutional specificity.
Institutional autonomy	Clear, meaningful powers exercised by regional institutions.
Resource capacity	Predictable fiscal transfers, revenue capacity, and trained administration.
Political legitimacy	Participation, public confidence, and inclusive dialogue.
Conflict transformation	Ability to move grievances into peaceful political processes.

4. Methodology and Research Design

The study adopts an interpretivist orientation on the premise that the meaning of institutions is shaped by historical memory, legal language, and political perception. Documentary materials are therefore read comparatively rather than treated

as neutral accounts of the conflict. Official texts are examined for the formal scope of the arrangement, while scholarly and policy sources are used to identify contested interpretations and implementation constraints. The aim is analytical transparency rather than a purely descriptive account.

Ethical care is particularly important in a conflict-sensitive study. The manuscript does not attribute collective motives to all Anglophone citizens, government officials, or separatist actors. It distinguishes constitutional claims from armed conduct and avoids presenting any political programme as the only legitimate view. Since the research uses public documents and does not collect human-subject data, formal research-participant approval was not required.

The study employs a qualitative documentary case-study design, appropriate for analysing constitutional meaning, institutional design, historical development, and policy implementation in context (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Yin, 2018). The corpus comprised 45 documents published between 1964 and 2025: three primary sources and 42 secondary sources. Primary sources were included where they formally established or recommended the relevant constitutional and statutory arrangements: the Constitution of Cameroon, Law No. 2019/024 (the General Code of Regional and Local Authorities), and the recommendations of the Major National Dialogue. Secondary sources were included where they were peer-reviewed scholarship, scholarly books, or reports by recognised international organisations that addressed at least one of four subjects: the Anglophone conflict and its institutional history; Cameroon-specific decentralisation, regional governance, fiscal capacity, or legitimacy; the design or implementation of Special Status; or one of the selected comparative autonomy arrangements. News commentary, anonymous web material, and sources that merely repeated legal provisions without independent analysis were excluded. The search and selection process closed on 30 June 2025.

Documents were analysed through a structured thematic matrix based on five assessment dimensions: constitutional recognition, institutional powers, resource capacity, political legitimacy, and conflict transformation. Each document was coded for a) the dimension addressed, b) whether the evidence concerned formal design, an observable implementation output, a reported outcome, or a proposal, and c) whether the claim supported, qualified, or contradicted the proposition that Special Status provides meaningful accommodation. Legal texts were coded first to establish the formal baseline; academic and policy sources were then coded against that baseline. Conflicting evidence was retained rather than averaged: greater weight was given to the applicable legal text for questions of legal competence, and to recent empirical or independently triangulated sources for implementation and legitimacy. Divergence was reported explicitly where sources reflected different stakeholder interpretations. South Tyrol, Northern Ireland, Aceh, and Scotland were selected purposively because each combines territorially concentrated identity claims with differentiated governance inside a continuing state, while isolating a distinct institutional feature relevant to Cameroon: language and fiscal guarantees, cross-community power-sharing, autonomy embedded in a peace agreement, and dem-

ocratically accountable devolution, respectively. The comparisons are illustrative and do not support causal claims or direct institutional transplantation (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Lijphart, 1971).

5. Historical Evolution of the Anglophone Question

The constitutional significance of the 1961-1972 period lies not in an assumption that the former federation can be restored without modification, but in the institutional memory it created. For federalist advocates, the period illustrates that national unity previously coexisted with recognised regional structures. For proponents of Special Status, it demonstrates why safeguards for legal and educational particularities are central to political trust. The historical record consequently helps explain why a uniform model of decentralisation may be politically insufficient even when administratively efficient.

The post-2016 period demonstrates how professional grievances may become constitutional grievances where dialogue does not resolve concerns about representation and institutional identity. The escalation of violence did not eliminate the underlying governance questions; it rendered them more difficult to address. A constitutional response is therefore not a substitute for civilian protection and humanitarian recovery, but it remains necessary if political claims are to be channelled through institutions rather than coercion.

5.1. Colonial Dualism and the Federal Settlement

The Anglophone Question is rooted in the post-First World War partition of German Kamerun and the subsequent development of distinct British and French administrative, educational, and legal traditions. The 1961 reunification of Southern Cameroons with the Republic of Cameroon created the Federal Republic of Cameroon, which recognised East and West Cameroon as constituent units (Le Vine, 1964). For many Anglophone citizens, this arrangement came to symbolise constitutional acknowledgement of the Common Law tradition, the Anglo-Saxon educational system, and regional self-government.

5.2. Centralisation, Mobilisation, and the 2016 Crisis

The transition to a unitary state in 1972 altered the constitutional relationship between the former federated entities. Political liberalisation in the 1990s enabled Anglophone organisations and conferences to articulate renewed demands for autonomy or federalism (Takougang & Krieger, 1998). Although the 1996 Constitution recognised decentralisation, its implementation proceeded gradually. The 2016 protests consequently crystallised concerns about the Common Law and educational systems before expanding into a wider conflict involving federalist, separatist, government, civil-society, and diaspora actors (International Crisis Group, 2017).

5.3. Major National Dialogue and the Special Status

The Major National Dialogue of 2019 recommended the adoption of a Special

Status, which was subsequently incorporated into the General Code of Regional and Local Authorities. The reform thus emerged from a longer constitutional trajectory: it was neither an isolated administrative measure nor a restoration of the 1961 federation, but an effort to institutionalise differentiated decentralisation within a unitary state (Republic of Cameroon, 2019b).

6. Constitutional and Legal Foundations of the Special Status

The constitutional significance of the Special Status lies in the use of an express constitutional permission for regional differentiation. Article 1(2) defines Cameroon as a decentralised unitary state; Articles 55(1) - (2) recognise Regional and Local Authorities as public-law entities with administrative and financial autonomy under conditions laid down by statute; and Article 62(2) permits legislation to take account of the specificities of certain Regions in their organisation and functioning (Republic of Cameroon, 1996). These provisions authorise differentiated decentralisation, but they do not themselves confer a Special Status on the North West and South West Regions or enumerate their special competences.

The operative regime is statutory. Sections 3 and 327 - 386 of Law No. 2019/024 identify the North West and South West Regions, describe the basis of their specificity, establish their distinctive organs, and regulate their powers and procedures (Republic of Cameroon, 2019a). Accordingly, the most precise characterisation is that Special Status is constitutionally enabled but statutorily established. Its specific institutions and competences remain amendable through ordinary legislation unless additional constitutional entrenchment is adopted. This statutory location raises questions about durability, clarity of competences, financial guarantees, and safeguards against unilateral alteration (Aime, 2020; Fombad, 2025).

Within that legal hierarchy, the Constitution supplies the general decentralisation framework and the permission for asymmetric regional organisation, while Law No. 2019/024 operationalises the framework for the two Anglophone Regions (Republic of Cameroon, 1996, 2019a). Section 327 links the regime to their historical, social, and cultural specificities and requires respect for the Anglophone educational system and Common Law-based judicial subsystem; Section 328 identifies additional participatory and developmental functions.

The statute establishes a Regional Assembly comprising a House of Divisional Representatives and a House of Chiefs, a Regional Executive Council, and a Public Independent Conciliator. These are documented legal and organisational outputs, not proof by themselves of substantive autonomy or public legitimacy. Their practical significance depends on whether statutory functions translate into decisions, finance, services, accountability, and influence over policies affecting the Anglophone educational and Common Law systems (Aime, 2020; Ndiyun & Mukonza, 2025).

7. Implementation Assessment of the Special Status (2019-Present)

Implementation should be evaluated through both procedural and substantive in-

dicators. Procedurally, relevant questions concern whether regional institutions have been established, whether their members can deliberate, and whether administrative rules are intelligible. Substantively, the assessment concerns whether regional decisions affect development priorities, cultural policy, public services, and citizens' confidence. The existence of councils may satisfy procedural criteria without resolving the substantive question of effectiveness.

The security environment complicates any assessment of implementation. Where public officials, traditional leaders, civil-society organisations, and citizens face insecurity, the conditions for open participation and accountability are weakened. Continuing violence should not automatically be interpreted as evidence that constitutional accommodation is irrelevant; it may instead underscore the need to connect implementation to broader peacebuilding, civilian protection, and renewed political dialogue.

7.1. Documented Institutional Outputs and Limits of Outcome Evidence

The clearest documented implementation output is the establishment, following the 2020 regional elections, of the two Regional Assemblies and their component Houses of Chiefs and Houses of Divisional Representatives. The statutory architecture also provides for Regional Executive Councils and Public Independent Conciliators. These developments demonstrate institutional activation. The documentary corpus, however, does not establish that these bodies have yet produced sustained improvements in service delivery, fiscal discretion, public confidence, or conflict de-escalation. Claims that they could channel regional concerns, protect institutional particularities, or support dialogue are therefore treated here as governance potential rather than observed outcomes (International Crisis Group, 2023; Ndiyun & Mukonza, 2025).

7.2. Constraints on Implementation

The documented implementation record is mixed and remains thin. Official formation of regional institutions is observable, but recent analyses report continued central influence, ambiguity in the scope of devolved authority, limited resources, and weak acceptance among important Anglophone constituencies (Aime, 2020; Fombad, 2025; International Crisis Group, 2023; Ndiyun & Mukonza, 2025). Ongoing armed conflict has restricted public administration and civic participation in parts of both Regions, while displacement and economic disruption have constrained the environment in which decentralisation could become meaningful (Bang et al., 2022; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024). Cameroon-specific fiscal analysis also shows that the effectiveness of decentralisation depends on predictable transfers, own-source revenue, administrative capacity, and transparent intergovernmental relations (World Bank, 2012).

Evidence on legitimacy is similarly contested. Deyeb (2024) reports limited

public knowledge of the statutory regime and argues that fuller use of its provisions could be beneficial, whereas [International Crisis Group \(2023\)](#), [Fombad \(2025\)](#), and [Ndiyun and Mukonza \(2025\)](#) emphasise inadequate consultation, limited acceptance, central control, and dissatisfaction with the powers transferred. The disagreement is analytically important: it does not permit a finding of established legitimacy, but it identifies public information, institutional performance, rights protection, accountability, and credible dialogue as testable conditions for legitimacy.

8. Beyond Federalism and Secession: Comparative Case Studies

The comparative cases were selected by a most-relevant-feature logic rather than by overall similarity to Cameroon. Each concerns a territorially concentrated identity claim accommodated through differentiated governance within a continuing state, but each contributes one bounded comparator: South Tyrol, entrenched language protection and fiscal retention; Northern Ireland, cross-community power-sharing and consent; Aceh, autonomy tied to a negotiated peace and implementation commitments; and Scotland, elected devolution with regular democratic accountability. These features provide institutional questions for Cameroon without implying that the surrounding constitutional histories are interchangeable.

The Special Status may be considered politically pragmatic because it can address objectives commonly associated with federalism—recognition, participation, and regional policy influence—without requiring an immediate wholesale redistribution of sovereignty. Its limitation is equally apparent: if the arrangement remains insufficiently substantive, it is unlikely to persuade actors who distrust the centralised state. The relevant analytical issue is therefore not whether the designation itself is adequate, but whether the underlying powers and protections become credible in practice.

8.1. Federalism and Secession as Alternatives

Federalism could provide constitutionally entrenched regional self-rule, but it would require extensive national consensus on institutional powers, fiscal relations, and dispute settlement. It is not inherently conflict-proof; federal institutions may reinforce territorial competition where political trust is weak ([Erk & Anderson, 2010](#)). Secession, meanwhile, reflects claims to external self-determination but raises substantial questions concerning territorial integrity, recognition, security, and state capacity ([Crawford, 2006](#)). Neither alternative should be treated as costless or inevitable.

8.2. Comparative Lessons

South Tyrol shows how language protection, financial arrangements, and sustained negotiation can transform a territorial conflict within a unified state ([Alcock, 1970](#);

Woelk et al., 2008). Northern Ireland demonstrates the importance of power-sharing, identity recognition, and continuing dialogue after violent conflict (McGarry & O’Leary, 2009). Aceh illustrates the role of meaningful autonomy within a wider peace agreement (Aspinall, 2009). Scotland shows that considerable devolution can coexist with a unitary state while preserving democratic avenues for regional political expression (Mitchell, 2010) (Table 2).

Table 2. Comparative lessons for asymmetric constitutional accommodation.

Case	Specific comparable feature	Question for Cameroon’s special status
South Tyrol	Legally protected language rights and substantial fiscal retention	Are linguistic guarantees and regional resources sufficiently protected and measurable?
Northern Ireland	Cross-community executive power-sharing and consent rules	Can institutional design ensure inclusion across opposed constitutional positions?
Aceh	Autonomy embedded in a negotiated peace settlement with implementation commitments	How can governance reform be connected to security, dialogue, and monitored implementation?
Scotland	Elected devolved legislature and executive within the United Kingdom	Can regional institutions exercise visible policy authority and remain democratically accountable?

These cases do not prescribe a single solution for Cameroon. They nevertheless show why the Special Status is best seen as a constitutional middle path: its viability depends not on copying foreign institutions, but on giving differentiated governance tangible authority, resources, and legitimacy.

9. Challenges and Areas for Reform

The evidence establishes that fiscal capacity is a present implementation constraint; it does not establish that any particular reform will necessarily increase legitimacy or reduce conflict (International Crisis Group, 2023; Ndiyun & Mukonza, 2025; World Bank, 2012). The proposals that follow are therefore conditional design responses. Formula-based transfers, published budgets, public audits, and professional financial management could make regional responsibilities more credible and measurable, but their effects would require subsequent evaluation against actual fiscal flows, services, and public confidence.

The Houses of Chiefs are established institutional outputs, but their contribution to consultation, cultural continuity, or local mediation has not yet been demonstrated systematically in the documentary evidence. The following recommendations therefore concern governance potential: their roles should be clarified, inclusion and accountability safeguards should be specified, and their work should

complement rather than displace elected institutions. Future assessment should examine attendance, decisions, community access, and the treatment of recommendations.

The documented gap is between formal institutional creation and evidence of substantive autonomy. Existing sources identify insecurity, incomplete fiscal decentralisation, capacity constraints, overlap between elected and centrally appointed structures, limited public awareness, and contested legitimacy (Deyeb, 2024; Fombad, 2025; International Crisis Group, 2023; Ndiyun & Mukonza, 2025). Whether stronger powers and safeguards would improve participation, services, or conflict transformation remains a proposition to be tested rather than an observed outcome.

Reform Priorities

- 1) Clarify exclusive, shared, and consultative competences of Regional Councils and national ministries.
- 2) Adopt transparent and predictable intergovernmental fiscal-transfer arrangements and strengthen regional public-finance capacity.
- 3) Establish an inclusive, continuing constitutional dialogue platform with regional institutions, traditional authorities, civil society, professional groups, women, youth, and diaspora representatives.
- 4) Link constitutional reform to civilian protection, humanitarian recovery, reconciliation, and community-level peacebuilding.
- 5) Strengthen civic education so citizens understand the powers, limitations, and participation routes associated with the Special Status.
- 6) Develop periodic independent monitoring of implementation, governance outcomes, and public confidence.

10. Policy Recommendations

Implementation should be sequenced. An initial phase could publish the allocation of competences, establish a public implementation dashboard, and provide targeted training for regional officials. A subsequent phase could deepen fiscal arrangements and consultative structures, followed by evaluation involving independent academic and civil-society participation. Sequencing should not be understood as indefinite postponement; it should ensure that each transfer of responsibility is matched with staff, finance, accountability, and an accessible means of resolving disputes.

The recommendations do not seek to exclude federalist or separatist viewpoints from public debate. Rather, they identify institutional mechanisms through which disagreement may be addressed non-violently within a constitutional process. Inclusive dialogue is necessary precisely because the Special Status will be assessed differently by different constituencies. A durable framework requires procedures for criticism, review, and adaptation rather than a presumption of unanimity.

On the basis of the foregoing analysis, the Special Status should be strengthened

rather than treated as a completed settlement. The Government and Parliament should publish an implementation roadmap that specifies transferred competences, institutional responsibilities, milestones, and public reporting arrangements. Fiscal decentralisation should be aligned with regional responsibilities through formula-based transfers, transparency safeguards, and locally appropriate revenue mechanisms. In addition, Common Law and Anglo-Saxon educational institutions should receive concrete administrative protection, professional support, and structured regional consultation. These measures are advocated not as concessions to division, but as instruments for building a more legitimate and inclusive Cameroonian state.

A permanent constitutional dialogue mechanism should supplement the Major National Dialogue. It should address implementation disputes and enable ordinary citizens, community leaders, and constituencies that remain politically marginalised to contribute to constitutional learning. Peacebuilding should also be explicitly linked to regional governance: security, reconstruction, psychosocial support, women's participation, youth engagement, and local reconciliation are conditions under which institutions can operate. A periodic review mechanism would allow the framework to evolve through legislation, oversight, and consensus rather than violent contestation. The manuscript therefore advocates a strengthened Special Status as the most constructive presently available framework for pursuing unity through recognised diversity.

11. Conclusion and Final Manuscript Statements

The contribution of the manuscript is both conceptual and practical. It identifies the Special Status as a case of asymmetric constitutional accommodation and evaluates it against conditions repeatedly emphasised in comparative research: recognition, authority, resources, legitimacy, and continuing dialogue. The argument is explicitly conditional. In the absence of these conditions, the reform may remain largely symbolic; if they are strengthened, it may provide a more meaningful platform for governance and conflict transformation.

11.1. Conclusion

The Anglophone Crisis is rooted in historical and constitutional disputes over the management of diversity, representation, and regional identity in Cameroon. The Special Status neither resolves these disputes automatically nor has its adoption produced an immediate end to violence. It nevertheless constitutes a notable institutional innovation: a shift from uniform decentralisation towards asymmetric accommodation within a unified state.

The evidence supports a qualified conclusion. It demonstrates that the Special Status has created a differentiated statutory architecture and functioning regional institutions, but it does not yet demonstrate durable gains in fiscal autonomy, service delivery, public legitimacy, or conflict de-escalation. The arrangement can therefore be described as a viable platform for further constitutional accommoda-

tion only in the limited sense that it supplies institutions capable of being strengthened and evaluated. Whether it becomes an effective framework depends on future evidence of genuine authority, financial capacity, accountability, and inclusive dialogue. Deepening the Special Status is presented as a reform proposition, not as an empirically proven route to peaceful coexistence.

11.2. Limitations of the Study

This study relies on documentary and comparative analysis; it does not include interviews, surveys, or ethnographic research with affected communities. The ongoing conflict also limits direct access and makes implementation outcomes difficult to assess conclusively. Comparative cases are illustrative rather than directly transferable. Future research should examine public perceptions of Special Status, Regional Council performance, fiscal flows, service delivery, and peacebuilding outcomes over time.

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Data Availability

The study did not generate a new dataset. It relies on publicly available legal instruments, institutional documents, academic publications, and policy reports cited in the reference list.

Ethical Considerations

The research relies on publicly available documentary materials and did not involve

interviews, surveys, or other direct participation by human subjects. The author has sought to represent competing constitutional positions fairly and to avoid language that could heighten risks for conflict-affected communities.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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