

WHEN A VOTE IS NOT ENOUGH

UN Plebiscites, Missing Legal Instruments, and the
Fragility of Post-Colonial State Formation

A Comparative Structural Analysis for Southern Cameroons

For Civic Education, Institutional Clarity, and Lawful Public Action

GUIDING PRINCIPLE

We pray like everything depends on God. But we work like everything depends on us. God bless you. And God bless Southern Cameroons.

FRAMING QUESTION

What kind of system produces a situation where a people vote in a UN-supervised plebiscite, but the legal foundation that should follow is either incomplete, unclear, or replaced by unilateral instruments?

01

Speed Over Legal Completeness

External actors promise stability
over properly completed instruments

02

Power Without Legitimacy

Local elites inherit power without
being forced to build genuine consent

03

Imposed, Not Negotiated

Institutions are improvised rather
than built through agreed arrangement

CONSEQUENCE: When these incentives exist, the outcome is predictable. People adapt by surviving inside the system, not trusting it.

Over time the state becomes dependent on force, ambiguity, and inertia instead of legitimacy.

CONTENTS AT A GLANCE:

- Executive Summary
- Sec 1: Introduction
- Sec 2: Core Structural Thesis
- Sec 3: Comparative Cases
- Sec 4: Southern Cameroons
- Sec 5: Silence, Force & Ambiguity
- Sec 6: Questions to Ask
- Sec 7: What 1,000 People Can Do
- Sec 8: Strategic Language
- Sec 9: Internal Development
- Sec 10: Conclusion
- Key Questions | Checklist | Framework

Statesman Roland Fru · Southern Cameroons Legal Clarity Framework

Developed within the Southern Cameroons Legal Clarity Framework | For Civic Education and Institutional Development

Civic Education | Institutional Clarity | Lawful Public Action

SOUTHERN CAMEROONS LEGAL CLARITY FRAMEWORK

This document is a product of the Southern Cameroons Legal Clarity Framework, an initiative dedicated to civic education, institutional analysis, and lawful public engagement. It is prepared for the benefit of all people who seek clarity, justice, and peaceful resolution through documented fact rather than emotion.

We pray like everything depends on God. But we work like everything depends on us. God bless you. And God bless Southern Cameroons.

**Developed within the Southern Cameroons Legal Clarity Framework
For Civic Education and Institutional Development
Statesman Roland Fru · Southern Cameroons Legal Clarity Framework**

Statesman Roland Fru · Southern Cameroons Legal Clarity Framework
Developed within the Southern Cameroons Legal Clarity Framework | For Civic Education and Institutional Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper addresses a single, precise institutional question: what legal instrument transformed the political will expressed in the 1961 UN-supervised plebiscite of Southern Cameroons into a binding, verifiable, and mutually ratified constitutional relationship under international law? It does not proceed from grievance, outrage, or partisan advocacy. It proceeds from a structural observation that applies equally across post-colonial transitions worldwide.

The paper identifies three recurring features of systems that produce incomplete legal transitions: first, external actors prioritise speed and geopolitical stability over legal completeness; second, local elites inherit power without being compelled to build legitimacy through negotiated consent; and third, institutions are imposed or improvised rather than constructed through agreed, documented arrangements. When these incentives are present, the outcome is predictable: populations adapt by surviving inside a system rather than trusting it, and the state becomes dependent on force, administrative inertia, and political maneuvering in place of genuine constitutional legitimacy.

Four comparative cases are examined in detail: the Eritrea-Ethiopia federation (1952), which was dismantled unilaterally, producing decades of armed conflict; West Papua (1969), where a deeply flawed self-determination process produced persistent conflict and unresolved sovereignty claims; Namibia (1990), where structured sequencing of process, documentation, and ratification produced a durable and legitimate state; and South Sudan (2011), which demonstrates that formal legal recognition without institutional depth leads to fragility regardless of the clarity of the underlying vote.

CENTRAL FINDING

The strongest and most institutionally credible question available to the people of Southern Cameroons is not whether the plebiscite was legitimate, but whether the legal instrument required to complete the post-plebiscite relationship can be independently identified, located, and verified.

The paper concludes with practical civic guidance: what 1,000 disciplined people can accomplish through documentation, lawful repetition of precise questions, archival construction, and strategic international communication. It closes, as it opens, with the conviction that grounds all serious civic work: we pray like everything depends on God, but we work like everything depends on us.

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

This paper is not built on grievance, anger, or rhetorical outrage. It is built on one institutional problem: a plebiscite expresses political intent, but it does not by itself create a complete legal order. The act of voting, even under international supervision, is a declaration of preference. It is not a treaty. It is not a constitution. It is not a binding compact. Something must come after it, and what comes after it is either documented and verifiable or it is not.

The core question this paper asks is: what legal instrument transformed the will expressed in the 1961 plebiscite into a binding constitutional or treaty-based relationship under international law? That question is narrow. It is verifiable. It does not require appeals to emotion, historical romanticism, or accusations of conspiracy. It requires only that a document be produced, located, and examined. Either the instrument exists and can be independently verified, or it cannot.

This paper uses comparative cases from other territories with structurally similar features to show what happens when the legal transition after a UN-supervised or internationally backed self-determination process is either completed properly or left incomplete. The lessons are not abstract. They are written in the histories of Eritrea, West Papua, Namibia, and South Sudan. Each case teaches something specific about what follows when the legal architecture of statehood or integration is clear versus when it remains ambiguous.

PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER

The goal is not simply to relive history. The goal is to identify what kind of claim the world can hear, what institutions can process, and what disciplined people can do now. History is the evidence. The question is what to do with it.

Three features characterise systems that produce incomplete legal transitions. Understanding them helps explain why the Southern Cameroons situation looks the way it does and why similar situations have appeared in other post-colonial settings across the twentieth century.

Feature One: External Actors Prioritise Speed Over Legal Completeness

In the post-war period of accelerated decolonisation, the United Nations and the administering powers managing trust territories were often more concerned with the pace of transfer than with the precision of the legal architecture left behind. The pressure to decolonise quickly, to avoid the geopolitical complications of prolonged administration, and to satisfy Cold War alignment interests frequently meant that the fine print of legal transition was treated as a secondary matter. Votes were supervised. Declarations were made. But the instruments that should have followed were sometimes absent, unclear, or left deliberately vague.

Feature Two: Local Elites Inherit Power Without Being Forced to Build Legitimacy

When the legal framework of transition is weak, those who inherit power do not face the same pressure to demonstrate consent, negotiate terms, or create mutually accepted institutions. Power arrives with the departing colonial authority's blessing, sometimes with international recognition, and sometimes with military advantage. The elite that inherits the state can consolidate without negotiating, and consolidation without

negotiation tends to produce arrangements that benefit the consolidating party at the expense of institutional legitimacy.

Feature Three: Institutions Are Imposed or Improvised Rather Than Negotiated

Where the legal foundation is weak, institutions tend to be either imposed by the stronger party or improvised in response to events. Neither produces the kind of constitutional settlement that populations internalise as legitimate and binding on all sides. The result is a state that functions through administrative inertia and coercive power rather than through widely shared acceptance of the rules as fair, mutually derived, and publicly documented.

The consequence of these three features is predictable. People adapt by surviving inside the system rather than trusting it. Over time, the state becomes dependent on force, ambiguity, political maneuvering, and administrative inertia instead of legitimacy. The gap between what the state claims and what citizens actually believe widens, and the institutional trust that productive societies require never fully forms.

SECTION 2

THE CORE STRUCTURAL THESIS

Three propositions form the analytical backbone of this paper. They are stated plainly here and developed in detail throughout the sections that follow.

Proposition One: A Vote Is Not a State

A plebiscite or referendum may reveal preference. It demonstrates what a population, at a given moment and under given conditions, chooses regarding its political future. But a vote does not by itself establish the final legal architecture of sovereignty, federation, integration, free association, or independence. Those arrangements require a subsequent legal act: a treaty, a constitutional compact, an act of union, or a similarly documented and verifiable instrument. The vote is the declaration. The legal instrument is the building.

PROPOSITION ONE

The vote is the declaration. The legal instrument is the building. Without the instrument, the declaration floats in political space, available for reinterpretation by whoever holds administrative power.

Proposition Two: The Missing Step in Unstable Cases Is Usually the Same

Across post-colonial transitions that have ended in conflict, fragility, or disputed legitimacy, the structural failure at the centre of the problem is rarely exotic or unusual. It is almost always the same: a binding, negotiated, documented legal instrument was never completed, was completed poorly, was never ratified by the relevant parties, or was substituted by a unilateral act of the stronger power. The missing instrument might have taken any of several forms:

- a bilateral treaty of union, deposited with an international registry
- an act of union formally adopted by both parties through their representative institutions
- a ratified constitutional settlement negotiated between the merging political entities
- a clearly documented and externally verifiable legal arrangement consistent with the requirements of the relevant international process

When this step is missing, ambiguous, or replaced by a unilateral act, the legitimacy of whatever follows remains permanently contestable. A state may function for decades on ambiguous foundations, but ambiguity is not legality, and legality without genuine legitimacy produces societies in which institutional trust never fully develops.

Proposition Three: When the Legal Step Is Weak or Missing, the Stronger Party Fills the Vacuum

In weakly structured post-colonial settings, ambiguity becomes a tool of domination. The stronger party gradually imposes administration, symbols, law, and force. Over time, what began as contested or unclear becomes entrenched through sheer administrative practice. Effectivity, the fact of actually governing, begins to overshadow legitimacy, the right to govern derived from a mutually accepted and legally sound foundation.

The two are not the same, and conflating them is one of the central intellectual errors in discussions of post-colonial sovereignty.

CRITICAL DISTINCTION

Effectivity is the fact of governing. Legitimacy is the right to govern, derived from a mutually accepted legal foundation. A state may possess one without the other. When that is the case, the deficit does not disappear; it accumulates.

Sociological Analysis: What Weak Institutions Produce in Populations

When legitimacy is unclear, populations fall back on identity and survival networks. Ethnic affiliation, religious community, regional loyalty, and personal patronage connections become more reliable guides to navigating daily life than formal institutional rules. Trust in the state drops. Investment in civic participation declines. People manage rather than develop.

When institutions are untrusted, people bypass them. They solve disputes through networks rather than courts, through payment rather than rights, through connections rather than merit. Each act of institutional bypass is individually rational but collectively corrosive. The institution that nobody uses cannot improve, cannot demonstrate its value, and cannot earn the trust it was never given.

When constitutional order is not mutually grounded, coercion rises to fill the legitimacy deficit. The state that cannot persuade must compel. This is not a moral observation about particular governments; it is a structural observation about what happens when the foundation of authority is contested rather than shared.

Anthropological Analysis: Survival Cultures and Institutional Adaptation

Societies shaped by administrative instability develop coping cultures. When the rules change arbitrarily, when institutions cannot be trusted to apply consistent standards, when the connection between effort and outcome is mediated by political favour rather than law, people learn to adapt. Shortcuts become common. Patron-client relationships replace meritocratic pathways. Caution replaces initiative. Silence replaces public accountability.

These are not moral defects in the populations that exhibit them. They are rational social adaptations to uncertain institutions. A person who invests in building a business in a context where property rights are unclear and courts are unreliable is taking a risk that their counterpart in a more institutionally stable environment does not face. Populations learn the games that the systems they inhabit teach them to play. The problem is the system, not the people.

Economic Analysis: Why Incomplete Legal Foundations Suppress Development

Long-term prosperity requires stable rules, credible institutions, specialisation, investment confidence, and the kind of voluntary cooperation that only emerges when people trust that the rules apply equally to all parties. These conditions cannot develop in environments of sustained legitimacy uncertainty.

Ambiguous sovereignty and incomplete legal foundations suppress productive development by raising the cost of contracts, deterring long-term investment, pushing economic activity toward rent-seeking and political access rather than productive enterprise, and rewarding the well-connected at the expense of the competent. The economic cost of an unresolved legitimacy question is not a side effect; it is the central structural

consequence of every incomplete post-colonial legal transition.

SECTION 3

COMPARATIVE CASES

The following four cases are examined not to produce analogies that map perfectly onto the Southern Cameroons situation, but to extract structural lessons about what happens at the intersection of international processes, legal instruments, and long-term outcomes. Each case is evaluated across the same dimensions: historical background, what the international process was designed to accomplish, what legal or constitutional structure followed, whether that structure was negotiated or unilateral, the long-term outcome, and the specific lesson for Southern Cameroons.

Case One: Eritrea and Ethiopia (1952-1993)

Historical Background

Eritrea was an Italian colony until World War II, after which it came under British administration as a trust territory. In 1950, United Nations General Assembly Resolution 390A(V) provided that Eritrea would be constituted as an autonomous unit federated with Ethiopia under the Ethiopian Crown. The federation was formally established in 1952, with Eritrea retaining its own parliament, flag, and administrative structures within a broader Ethiopian federal framework.

What the International Process Was Supposed to Do

The UN framework was designed to provide Eritrea with meaningful autonomy while linking it to Ethiopia in a way that satisfied Ethiopian territorial claims and Western strategic interests in the region. The federal structure was supposed to protect Eritrean distinctiveness while integrating the territory within a larger political unit. Crucially, however, the arrangement contained no enforceable guaranty mechanism.

What Legal Structure Followed and Its Quality

The Federal Act established the framework but depended entirely on Ethiopian goodwill. There was no international body charged with monitoring compliance or enforcing the autonomy provisions. The guarantees embedded in the Federal Act were procedural rather than substantive. Ethiopia, as the stronger party, was in a position to interpret the arrangement progressively in its own favour.

Long-Term Outcome and Lesson for Southern Cameroons

Ethiopia systematically dismantled the federal structure through the 1950s, suppressing Eritrean political parties and imposing Amharic as the language of administration. In 1962, Emperor Haile Selassie formally annexed Eritrea, dissolving the federation entirely. A thirty-year armed struggle followed, culminating in Eritrean independence in 1993. The independent state that emerged was heavily militarised and governed by a regime shaped by the habits of armed resistance rather than civic institution-building.

CASE 1 LESSON

The Eritrea case demonstrates with precision what happens when an international framework creates autonomy arrangements without enforceable guarantees. The stronger party absorbs the weaker one gradually, using administrative and political tools, until formal annexation becomes a de facto fait accompli. The quality of the legal instrument matters as much as its existence.

Case Two: West Papua (1969)

Historical Background

West Papua was a Dutch colonial possession that Indonesia claimed following its independence in 1945. After prolonged dispute, the 1962 New York Agreement between the Netherlands and Indonesia, brokered by the United States, provided for a temporary UN administration followed by a self-determination exercise in which the Papuan people would freely choose their political future. The agreement specified that the act would be conducted in accordance with international practice.

What the Process Produced

Rather than a universal vote, Indonesian authorities selected 1,025 representatives from the Papuan population and arranged for them to vote unanimously in favour of integration. No secret ballot was held. No broad population consultation occurred. The UN Secretariat observed the process and took note, but the General Assembly accepted the outcome without endorsing the legitimacy of the procedure. The constitutional integration that followed was effectively unilateral.

Long-Term Outcome and Lesson

Persistent armed conflict, internationally contested status, credible reports of human rights abuses, and ongoing sovereignty disputes have characterised West Papua's situation for more than five decades. Formal constitutional integration has not produced peace, acceptance, or institutional legitimacy.

CASE 2 LESSON

West Papua shows that procedural fraud in the self-determination process itself invalidates legitimacy regardless of subsequent formal ratification. International silence at the time of an irregular process does not resolve the underlying legitimacy question; it only defers it.

Case Three: Namibia (1990) — The Contrast Case

Historical Background

Namibia, formerly South West Africa, was a German colony administered under League of Nations mandate by South Africa after World War I. South Africa refused to place the territory under the UN trusteeship system and eventually extended apartheid to the territory. A decades-long independence struggle followed, supported by SWAPO and eventually backed by UN Security Council Resolution 435 of 1978.

What the Process Accomplished

Resolution 435 established a framework for Namibian independence that included a UN Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) to supervise the transition. The process was carefully sequenced: ceasefire, demobilisation, return of refugees, voter registration, supervised elections, constitutional convention, and then independence. Each step was documented, monitored, and internationally verified. The Namibian Constitution of 1990 was drafted by a democratically elected constituent assembly and ratified through that assembly.

Long-Term Outcome and Lesson

Namibia has maintained a stable constitutional democracy since independence, with peaceful transfers of power and functioning institutions. The foundational legal architecture is not disputed because it was completed properly, documented thoroughly, and ratified through legitimate processes.

CASE 3 LESSON

Namibia demonstrates that when the legal and political process is properly sequenced, documented, and completed, the resulting state has a more durable legitimacy foundation. The lesson is not that perfection is required, but that the legal chain must be traceable, complete, and independently verifiable.

Case Four: South Sudan (2011)

Historical Background

South Sudan's path to independence ran through the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and the Khartoum government, and a January 2011 referendum in which 98.8 percent of southern Sudanese voters chose independence. The result was internationally recognised without meaningful dispute, and South Sudan became the world's newest state in July 2011.

What the Legal Structure Provided

The CPA was a negotiated document between two parties with international guarantors. The referendum was supervised and its result was not contested. Legal recognition came swiftly from the African Union, the United Nations, and the major powers. In formal legal terms, South Sudan's independence was among the clearest self-determination outcomes of the post-Cold War period.

Long-Term Outcome and Lesson

South Sudan descended into civil war in December 2013, less than three years after independence. The war killed hundreds of thousands, displaced millions, and produced one of the world's worst humanitarian catastrophes. The state did not collapse because its legal foundation was weak; it collapsed because its institutional foundations, its norms of elite accountability, its mechanisms for managing internal disputes, its civil service capacity, were far too shallow to sustain a functioning state over time.

CASE 4 LESSON

South Sudan teaches that legal recognition and a successful vote are necessary but not sufficient. A state also needs institutional depth, elite discipline, merit-based structures, and internal legitimacy. Sovereignty without these foundations produces disappointment. Any future arrangement for Southern Cameroons must be accompanied by serious institution-building.

What These Cases Reveal: Comparative Synthesis

Across four significantly different cases, spanning different regions, eras, and geopolitical contexts, several structural patterns are consistent:

- No strong and stable state has been built on a UN-backed vote followed by permanently unclear legal arrangements and unilateral constitutional improvisation.
- Cases with missing or weak legal closure tend toward conflict, fragility, militarisation, elite domination, or eventual renegotiation.
- The presence of a proper legal instrument, ratified by the relevant parties and verifiable by international observers, substantially increases the probability of durable legitimacy.
- Institutional depth matters as much as legal recognition; a state built on a clear legal foundation but without civic institutions is still fragile.

Comparative Case Overview Table

Territory	Int'l Process	Legal Instrument	Negotiated?	Long-Term Outcome	Lesson
Eritrea / Ethiopia (1952-93)	UN Res 390A(V); Eritrea granted federal autonomy within Ethiopian crown	Federal Act 1952; no enforceable external guaranty mechanism	Partially; Eritrea had limited bargaining power; guarantees procedural only	Federation abolished 1962; 30-year war; independence 1993; heavily militarised state	Legal quality matters as much as legal existence; weak guarantees = absorption
West Papua (1969)	New York Agreement 1962; Act of Free Choice; broad vote mandated but not held	1,025 selected reps voted under pressure; NY Agreement only; no independent verification	No; coerced selected delegates; broad population excluded; no secret ballot	Persistent armed conflict; internationally contested status; ongoing sovereignty dispute	Procedural fraud invalidates legitimacy regardless of subsequent formal ratification
Namibia (1990)	UNSCR 435; UNTAG transition supervision; elections, constitution, independence sequenced	Namibian Constitution 1990; ratified by elected assembly; solid treaty and UN basis	Yes; broad participation; independent supervision; internationally verified at each step	Stable constitutional democracy; peaceful power transfers; sound legal foundation	Clear legal chains and proper sequencing produce durable, internationally accepted legitimacy
South Sudan (2011)	CPA 2005; UN-supervised referendum; 98.8% voted for independence	CPA + Declaration of Independence; UN/AU recognition; post-independence institutions weak	Partially; CPA negotiated; post-independence constitutional framework undeveloped	Civil war 2013; state collapse; humanitarian catastrophe; ongoing fragility	Recognition alone is insufficient; institutional depth and internal legitimacy are essential

SECTION 4

APPLYING THE LESSONS TO SOUTHERN CAMEROONS

The analysis now turns to Southern Cameroons. The framing here is deliberate and careful. This paper does not argue that participation in the 1961 plebiscite should be denied or erased. The people of Southern Cameroons voted. The vote occurred under international supervision. Those facts are part of the historical record and are not in dispute.

What is at issue is what came after the vote. The plebiscite expressed the will of the people regarding a political direction. But the vote alone did not complete the legal architecture of the resulting relationship. Something had to follow: a treaty, an act of union, a negotiated and ratified constitutional settlement, a clearly deposited and verifiable legal arrangement. The central institutional question is whether that something exists in a form that can be independently examined and verified.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

If such an instrument is missing, unclear, unratified, unilateral, or not properly documented, then the legitimacy question remains open. Not as a matter of sentiment, but as a matter of institutional logic and international law.

Ranking the Available Claims by Legal Credibility

Those who raise the Southern Cameroons question have available to them several lines of argument. They are not equally credible in international institutional contexts, and the choice of which claim to advance has significant consequences for how the issue is received.

Claim One: 'The UN Failed to Prepare Southern Cameroons for Independence'

This argument has moral force. The United Nations Trusteeship Council was responsible for preparing trust territories for self-government or independence, and there is credible historical basis for arguing that Southern Cameroons was not adequately prepared for either independent statehood or for the institutional demands of a federal arrangement. However, this claim is institutionally broad. It is difficult to operationalise in a legal forum. It invites a range of defences about the complexity of decolonisation and the constraints of the period. It is morally compelling but procedurally imprecise.

Claim Two: 'The Plebiscite Was Illegal'

This is the weakest of the principal claims and the most legally risky. The plebiscite was internationally supervised, and the population participated. A claim that the plebiscite itself was illegal invites the response that the people chose, that the process was observed, and that the result was accepted at the time. Even where there are legitimate criticisms of how the choice was structured, arguing that the entire plebiscite was illegal puts the claimant in the position of denying an outcome that the population itself participated in.

Claim Three: 'The Legal Instrument Required to Complete the Relationship Remains Unclear, Missing, or Undocumented'

This is the strongest and most institutionally credible formulation available. It focuses on a narrow, verifiable procedural issue rather than a total denunciation of the historical process. It does not require the claimant to

argue that the vote was wrong or illegal. It argues only that whatever the vote expressed, the legal architecture required to implement that expression was never properly completed, documented, and made verifiable.

THE LEGALLY STRONGEST FORMULATION

The strongest internationally legible question is this: What legal instrument, consistent with the post-plebiscite arrangements required under the relevant UN resolution, formally defined and validated the status of Southern Cameroons under international law, and where is it documented for independent verification?

The Constitution Question

A recurring response to questions about the legal foundation of the Southern Cameroons arrangement is to point to constitutional texts. This response deserves careful examination.

A unilateral constitution is not the same thing as a negotiated act of union. A constitutional text can express the intentions of the drafting authority, but if it was not produced through a genuine negotiation between the parties to the arrangement, it represents one side's account of what the arrangement should be, not a mutually accepted compact.

An unratified constitution is weaker still. If the constitutional text was not submitted to the population of Southern Cameroons for ratification through a valid process with adequate representation and consent, the claim that it represents the completed implementation of the plebiscite result is difficult to sustain. Constitutional texts can serve as evidence of administrative intent or political posture, but they do not automatically substitute for a bilateral or internationally valid legal instrument if one was required by the terms of the international process that preceded them.

SECTION 5

THE SYSTEM OF SILENCE, FORCE, AND AMBIGUITY

Systems with weak legitimacy do not typically announce their weakness. They survive, sometimes for very long periods, through a set of mechanisms that are recognisable across different historical and geographical contexts.

How Weakly Legitimate Systems Maintain Themselves

- **Silence rather than explanation:** The legal foundation is not discussed, displayed, or explained. Citizens who ask difficult questions find their questions ignored, deflected, or treated as subversive. The assumption is that the passage of time will gradually bury the question.
- **Force rather than persuasion:** When silence fails, coercion is applied. Armed force, administrative harassment, detention, and economic pressure are used to suppress the expression of the legitimacy question rather than to answer it.
- **Procedural confusion rather than legal clarity:** Multiple overlapping constitutional frameworks, administrative reorganisations, and institutional complexities accumulate, making it genuinely difficult for ordinary citizens to trace the legal foundation of their own governance.
- **Elite brokerage rather than broad consent:** Political elites from the contested territory are brought into the national framework through material incentives, positional rewards, and network integration, creating a buffer against broader civic questioning.
- **Fatigue rather than legitimacy:** Over time, populations become exhausted by the cost of contestation. The daily demands of economic survival, the risks associated with political expression, and the sheer length of unresolved disputes produce a form of practical acquiescence that is not the same as genuine acceptance.

STRUCTURAL OBSERVATION

Where a valid, clear, and accessible legal foundation exists, states usually display it proudly. They teach it in schools. They reference it in public ceremonies. They make it available in their archives. They do not hide behind ambiguity for decades. The pattern of concealment is itself informative.

Effectivity Is Not Legitimacy

If a state has effectively administered a territory for many years, that fact may carry political and some legal weight in certain frameworks. International law does recognise effectivity as a relevant factor in some contexts. But effective control is still not the same thing as an originally clear legal foundation, and the distinction remains practically and legally significant.

A state that has administered a territory for sixty years on an ambiguous legal foundation has sixty years of administration and an ambiguous legal foundation. The administration does not resolve the ambiguity retroactively. It may complicate the remedies available, but it does not answer the original institutional question.

The Burden of Explanation Remains

The burden of explanation does not disappear with the passage of time. A state that claims legitimate authority over a territory on the basis of an international process can be asked to demonstrate the legal architecture of that process. The question is simple: on what legal foundation was this territory administered for decades, and where can that foundation be independently verified? That question is not inflammatory. It is the question that any serious legal institution, international court, or human rights body would reasonably ask.

SECTION 6

QUESTIONS THE SYSTEM SHOULD BE ASKED REPEATEDLY, CALMLY, LAWFULLY, AND PUBLICLY

The purpose of this section is not harassment, insult, threats, or emotional confrontation. The purpose is to make evasion costly and clarity unavoidable through repetition, discipline, and public documentation. Questions that cannot be answered should be asked again and again, in different forums and by different people, until the inability to answer them becomes part of the public record.

Morning Questions: Foundation

These questions focus on the basic legal foundation and should be asked consistently in every available public and institutional forum.

- What legal instrument completed the relationship between Southern Cameroons and La Republique du Cameroun after the February 1961 plebiscite?
- Where is that instrument officially documented for public verification?
- Was there a treaty, act of union, ratified constitutional settlement, or another binding instrument?
- If a constitution is cited, was it mutually negotiated and validly ratified by the parties concerned?
- If no treaty exists, what exact legal act is being relied upon as the foundation of administration?
- Did any UN body certify that the post-plebiscite legal arrangements satisfied the requirements of General Assembly Resolution 1608 (XV)?

Afternoon Questions: Process

These questions focus on procedure and traceability. They concern the institutional steps that should have been taken and the documentation that should have been created.

- What arrangements were finalised before independence day, as contemplated by the relevant UN process?
- Which institutions approved those arrangements, and on what specific dates?
- Where are the records of ratification, deposit, registration, or mutual acceptance?
- If the relationship was lawful from the beginning, why is the implementing instrument so difficult to identify clearly?
- Can the government publish the complete documentary chain from plebiscite result to constitutional implementation?
- Was the Foumban Conference of 1961 a genuine constitutional negotiation or a consultation? What is the formal legal difference in practice?
- Were the outcomes of the Foumban Conference formally ratified by the Southern Cameroons legislature through a constitutionally valid process?

Evening Questions: Legitimacy and Conduct

These questions connect current administrative conduct to the foundational legitimacy question. They are appropriate for public forums, media interviews, diaspora discussions, and written submissions.

- If the legal foundation is clear and unambiguous, why has force so often replaced explanation?
- Why does a state with a legitimate constitutional foundation resist public legal scrutiny?
- On what legal basis has military force been deployed against civilian populations in the Anglophone regions since 2016?
- If the union was validly and completely established, why is transparency not the simplest and most natural response to public questioning?
- Is effective administrative control being used as a substitute for original legal clarity?
- At what point in the documentary record did the legal architecture of the arrangement become clear, and where can that clarity be verified?

ON REPETITION AND DISCIPLINE

The power of these questions is not in volume but in repetition, consistency, documentation, and the refusal to be distracted by peripheral arguments. An institution or government that cannot answer a narrow, precise, document-based question has provided, through its non-answer, a form of evidence. Non-answers should be documented as carefully as answers.

SECTION 7

WHAT 1,000 DISCIPLINED PEOPLE CAN DO WITHOUT VIOLENCE, CHAOS, OR NOISE

Large, reactive crowds rarely produce durable institutional change. What produces durable institutional change is disciplined, organised, patient work carried out by people who understand what they are building and why. One thousand disciplined people, operating lawfully and strategically, can accomplish more than one hundred thousand reactive people generating noise without direction.

1. Create a Documentation Grid

The first task is to know what exists and what does not. One thousand people can divide documentation roles across a systematic grid covering:

- Official government statements about the legal basis of the arrangement
- Contradictions between different official statements over time
- Constitutional claims and their historical antecedents
- Archived speeches, parliamentary records, and official correspondence
- Legal assertions made in international forums
- Historical records from the British administration and the UN Trusteeship period
- Documents that exist but are not publicly accessible
- Documents that should exist but cannot be located
- Chronological timelines of key events, decisions, and legal acts

2. Repeat One Narrow Question

Serious movements gain power when they stop changing the subject. The temptation to address every grievance, to respond to every provocation, to expand the list of complaints, is strategically costly. One thousand people repeating one disciplined question across letters, videos, community meetings, public comments, churches, town halls, diaspora forums, and academic settings can force that question into institutional space in a way that scattered, multi-directional advocacy cannot.

3. Build a Public Record of Evasion

Each non-answer, contradiction, or vague reply from official sources should be logged, dated, and published. When a government official is asked the foundational legal question and responds with a deflection, that deflection is data. When a constitutional scholar is unable to identify the specific implementing instrument, that inability is data. Accumulated over time, this data transforms scattered frustration into a documented evidentiary record.

4. Train Civic Messengers

Not everyone in the network needs to be a legal theorist. The network is strengthened by diversity of function. Some people will be:

- document gatherers who locate, scan, and archive primary sources

- question repeaters who memorise and apply the core question consistently
- writers who produce clear explanatory materials for different audiences
- translators who render the institutional argument in French, Pidgin, and community languages
- moderators who maintain focus and discipline in community discussions
- archivists who maintain the integrity and accessibility of the documentary record
- diaspora coordinators who connect international communities to the core effort
- legal researchers who track international law developments and relevant cases
- media monitors who document coverage and identify opportunities for engagement

5. Build an Archive That Outlives Personalities

Movements that depend on individual leaders are vulnerable. When the leader is targeted, distracted, compromised, or simply exhausted, the movement loses its thread. The antidote is institutional memory that exists independently of any individual. Create PDFs, audio explainers, timelines, short doctrine notes, frequently asked questions, and a permanent website repository so that the question does not disappear when individual people become tired, attacked, or distracted.

6. Normalise Lawful Public Questioning

Calm repetition in lawful spaces is the most durable form of advocacy. Encourage the institutional question to be raised in:

- media interviews and press releases
- written submissions to international human rights bodies
- letters to UN mechanisms and Special Rapporteurs
- petitions addressed to governmental and intergovernmental institutions
- academic conferences and published research
- diaspora community meetings and civic events
- community education sessions in churches, schools, and associations

7. Refuse Distraction

Weak movements are always pulled into personality fights, gossip, factional loyalty, and endless arguments about secondary matters. Every hour spent on a personality dispute is an hour not spent on the institutional question. Disciplined people return to the institutional question. They do not take the bait of provocations designed to fragment, distract, and exhaust them.

8. Make Clarity More Prestigious Than Noise

Communities reward what they celebrate. A community that celebrates emotional outbursts, rumour, ego performance, and confrontation will produce more of those things. A community that celebrates evidence, patience, discipline, traceability, and institutional thinking will produce more of those things. Reward, publicly and consistently: careful evidence, patient sustained engagement, disciplined adherence to the core question, traceable reasoning, and institutional thinking over emotional performance.

9. Support a Legal Credibility Stack

One thousand people can help build a legal credibility stack that prepares the question for reception by international bodies. The stack includes scanned and indexed archives of all available primary documents, verified quotations from official sources with full citations, legal chronologies that trace the sequence of events and decisions, correspondence records with institutions and officials, research summaries that present the institutional argument clearly, and comparative case notes linking the Southern Cameroons situation to analogous cases.

10. Shift From Protest Culture to Builder Culture

THE BUILDER IMPERATIVE

One thousand disciplined people functioning as builders, archivists, educators, writers, legal researchers, and civic organisers can do more than one hundred thousand reactive people functioning as spectators. The goal is not the largest crowd. The goal is the deepest institutional footprint. We pray like everything depends on God. But we work like everything depends on us.

SECTION 8

STRATEGIC LANGUAGE FOR INTERNATIONAL HEARING

How something is said determines whether it can be heard. International institutions, legal bodies, and informed global publics operate according to specific conventions of discourse. Understanding those conventions is not a form of capitulation; it is a form of competence.

Language That Closes Doors

The following formulations consistently produce institutional resistance:

- 'The UN betrayed us' -- emotionally resonant but institutionally unactionable
- 'Everything was illegal from the beginning' -- too broad to operationalise and invites comprehensive rebuttal
- 'The whole world conspired against us' -- positions the claimant as a victim of cosmic injustice rather than a party with a precise legal claim
- Any formulation that leads with anger, grievance, or accusation rather than evidence and procedure

Language That Opens Doors

The following formulations are careful, document-based, procedurally framed, verifiable, and non-hysterical. They are designed to be heard by institutions that process legal and procedural claims:

- 'We seek clarification regarding the legal instrument that implemented the post-plebiscite arrangement between Southern Cameroons and La Republique du Cameroun.'
- 'Our concern is not rhetorical but documentary and procedural. We are asking where the legal instrument can be independently verified.'
- 'The central issue is whether the legal architecture required to validate the constitutional relationship can be identified and examined.'
- 'We are asking a narrow question of law, process, and documentation, not making a broad accusation of conspiracy or bad faith.'
- 'We respectfully request that the government identify and make publicly available the legal instrument that completed the post-plebiscite arrangement as contemplated by the relevant UN resolution.'

Why Precision Works

ON STRATEGIC PRECISION

Institutions resist accusation, but they are vulnerable to precise unanswered questions. A question that cannot be answered by producing a document is a question that any competent legal institution can evaluate. The power lies not in the volume of the demand but in the precision of the question and the inability of the responding party to satisfy it.

SECTION 9

LESSONS FOR INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT

No international case can succeed if the people making it remain institutionally weak. This is a structural observation, not a criticism. The same dynamics that weaken post-colonial states operate within communities shaped by those states. Building an effective international case requires simultaneously building internal institutional capacity.

Disunity Is a System Product, Not a Character Defect

Communities that exhibit high levels of factional behaviour, internal conflict, and distrust of shared leadership are not communities of uniquely difficult people. They are communities shaped by systems that rewarded factional behaviour. When the state distributes resources through patron-client networks rather than universal institutions, factionalism is rational. When shared institutions are unreliable, people build private networks. These habits are learned, and they can be unlearned when the incentives change.

Discipline Is Also Learned

People learn discipline when systems reward discipline. They learn to invest in shared institutions when those institutions reliably serve them. They learn to trust merit when merit reliably produces outcomes. The task for any community seeking to build long-term institutional capacity is to create, within its own internal organisation, the systems that reward the behaviours it wants to see. This is builder culture in practice.

Economic and Civilisational Thinking

No serious state has been built by outrage alone. Outrage can catalyse action, but it cannot sustain institution-building, which requires patience, specialisation, accumulated competence, and the willingness to do unglamorous work consistently over long periods of time. Long-term viability comes from productive culture, specialisation, institutional trust, and the kind of voluntary cooperation that emerges when people believe that the rules are fair and the institutions are reliable. Sovereignty without these foundations leads to disappointment, as South Sudan painfully demonstrates.

THE LONG-TERM ANSWER

The long-term answer is builder culture: institutional literacy, merit-based systems, structured cooperation, and the patient development of the internal capacity that any serious state or serious civic movement requires.

SECTION 10

CONCLUSION

The Southern Cameroons question should not be reduced to emotional slogans, random politics, or nostalgia for a past that cannot be restored unchanged. The real issue is whether a people were moved through a historic international process without the final legal architecture of that process being clearly completed, verifiably documented, or lawfully ratified by the relevant parties.

History shows a consistent pattern across post-colonial transitions. When votes are not followed by proper legal closure, stronger actors fill the vacuum, legitimacy deteriorates, and conflict or fragility follows. The cases of Eritrea, West Papua, Namibia, and South Sudan each illustrate a different dimension of this pattern. None of them is a perfect analogy. All of them are instructive.

The institutional question that remains at the centre of the Southern Cameroons situation is narrow, verifiable, and precise: what legal instrument, consistent with the requirements of the post-plebiscite process, formally and completely defined the status of Southern Cameroons under international law, and where is it documented for independent verification? That question has not been answered with the kind of clarity that a legitimate constitutional arrangement should make easy to provide.

The people who carry this question forward do themselves the greatest service when they carry it carefully, precisely, and patiently. They are not well served by outrage, by vague accusation, or by the comfort of shared grievance. They are served by evidence, documentation, disciplined repetition, and the kind of institutional thinking that international bodies, legal scholars, and serious publics can engage with and cannot easily dismiss.

CLOSING PRINCIPLE

The struggle for clarity is not a distraction from liberation. It is the foundation of legitimate liberation. Where the legal instrument is missing, the question remains alive. Where the question remains alive, disciplined people still have work to do.

We pray like everything depends on God. But we work like everything depends on us. God bless you. And God bless Southern Cameroons.

**Developed within the Southern Cameroons Legal Clarity Framework
For Civic Education and Institutional Development
Statesman Roland Fru · Southern Cameroons Legal Clarity Framework**

Statesman Roland Fru · Southern Cameroons Legal Clarity Framework

Developed within the Southern Cameroons Legal Clarity Framework | For Civic Education and Institutional Development

KEY QUESTIONS FOR PUBLIC USE

The following twenty-five questions are designed for consistent use across public forums, written submissions, media engagements, community education sessions, and diaspora discussions. They are narrow, verifiable, and procedurally grounded. They should be asked calmly, repeatedly, and with careful documentation of every response received.

#	Question for Public Use
1	What legal instrument completed the relationship between Southern Cameroons and La Republique du Cameroun after the February 1961 plebiscite?
2	Where is that instrument officially documented and available for public verification?
3	Was there a treaty, act of union, ratified constitutional settlement, or another binding legal instrument?
4	If a constitution is cited, was it mutually negotiated and validly ratified by both parties?
5	If no treaty exists, what exact legal act is being relied upon as the foundation of administration?
6	What arrangements were finalised before independence day, as contemplated by the relevant UN resolution?
7	Which institutions approved those arrangements, and on what specific dates?
8	Where are the records of ratification, deposit, registration, or mutual acceptance?
9	Was the 1961 Fouban Conference a constitutional negotiation or a consultation? What is the legal difference in practice?
10	Did Southern Cameroons legislators ratify the outcome of Fouban through a valid constitutional process?
11	Was the Federal Constitution of 1961 submitted to the people of Southern Cameroons for ratification?
12	On what legal basis was the federal structure dissolved in 1972 without a clear bilateral process?
13	Can the government publish the complete documentary chain from plebiscite result to constitutional implementation?
14	If the legal foundation is clear, why has that foundation not been made readily accessible for public review?
15	Why does a state with a legitimate constitutional foundation resist transparent legal scrutiny?
16	On what legal basis has military force been deployed in the Anglophone regions since 2016?
17	Is effective administrative control being used as a substitute for original legal clarity?
18	What UN body certified that post-plebiscite arrangements satisfied General Assembly Resolution 1608 (XV)?
19	Was there ever a formally negotiated Act of Union between Southern Cameroons and La Republique du Cameroun? If so, where is it deposited?
20	How does the government formally distinguish between administrative effectivity and original legal legitimacy?
21	What independent legal opinion has the government commissioned on the completeness of the post-plebiscite legal architecture?
22	If no such opinion exists, why not, and what does its absence suggest about institutional confidence in the legal foundation?
23	Has the question of the implementing legal instrument ever been submitted to an international legal body for formal opinion?

#	Question for Public Use
24	What is the government's formal legal response to the argument that the plebiscite expressed preference but did not complete the legal architecture of union?
25	Where can citizens and international observers access a verified, annotated documentary archive of the full legal transition from British trusteeship to present constitutional arrangement?

BUILDER CHECKLIST

The following checklist is designed for individuals and groups who wish to contribute to the institutional effort in a disciplined and organised way. Each item represents a concrete, actionable task. No item requires violence, illegality, or institutional chaos.

AREA	ACTION ITEMS
DOCUMENTATION	• Compile a complete timeline of the plebiscite, Fouban, and constitutional texts
	• Scan and index all available primary source documents
	• Identify every gap, contradiction, or missing instrument in the documentary record
	• Log all official statements and compare them against documented facts
QUESTION STRATEGY	• Select one narrow, verifiable legal question and repeat it consistently
	• Record every non-answer, evasion, or contradiction from official responses
	• Build a public log of responses and non-responses, dated and sourced
	• Translate key questions into French, Pidgin, and other community languages
PEOPLE AND ROLES	• Assign roles: researchers, writers, translators, archivists, moderators
	• Train civic messengers who can explain the institutional issue simply and clearly
	• Connect diaspora networks to document-sharing and question-repetition campaigns
	• Establish a legal research group to track international law developments
ARCHIVE	• Build a permanent website repository with searchable, indexed documents
	• Create PDF explainers, audio summaries, and short doctrine notes
	• Produce an FAQ that answers the most common objections clearly and calmly
	• Ensure the archive is backed up and accessible independently of any individual
DISCIPLINE	• Refuse distraction by personality conflicts, gossip, or factional rivalries
	• Return every debate to the narrow institutional question
	• Reward evidence, patience, and traceability over emotion and noise
	• Measure progress by documentation quality, not by volume of activity
INTERNATIONAL REACH	• Frame all communications in procedural, document-based language
	• Identify which international institutions can receive formal submissions
	• Prepare materials that meet the evidentiary standards of legal forums

AREA	ACTION ITEMS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build relationships with legal scholars, human rights monitors, and journalists

SHORT DOCTRINE: TWO-PAGE SUMMARY FOR WIDER CIRCULATION

The Institutional Problem in Plain Terms

In February 1961, the people of Southern Cameroons voted in a UN-supervised plebiscite to join La Republique du Cameroun in a proposed federation. The vote expressed a political preference. It did not, by itself, create the legal architecture of the resulting relationship.

For any such relationship to be complete under international law, a legal instrument must follow: a treaty, an act of union, a ratified constitutional settlement, or another documented and verifiable arrangement. The question that has never been adequately answered is: what was that instrument, and where can it be independently verified?

Three Things a Vote Does and Does Not Do

- **What a vote DOES:** A vote reveals the preference of a population at a given moment on a given question. It provides democratic legitimacy for a direction.
- **What a vote DOES NOT DO:** A vote does not create a treaty, establish a constitutional compact, define the terms of federation or integration, or produce an enforceable legal arrangement.
- **What must come after:** A legal instrument, negotiated between the parties, ratified through valid processes, and documented for public verification. Without this, the vote floats in political space.

The Four Cases in Brief

- **Eritrea:** UN framework without enforceable guarantees. Stronger party absorbed weaker. Thirty-year war. Lesson: legal quality matters as much as legal existence.
- **West Papua:** Flawed process, selected representatives, no genuine consent. Persistent conflict. Lesson: procedural fraud in the vote itself does not heal with time.
- **Namibia:** Properly sequenced process, documented, ratified, internationally verified. Stable state. Lesson: clear legal chains produce durable legitimacy.
- **South Sudan:** Clear vote, international recognition, institutional collapse. Lesson: recognition is necessary but not sufficient; institutional depth is required.

The One Question to Ask

THE SINGLE QUESTION

What legal instrument, consistent with the requirements of the relevant UN resolution, formally completed the constitutional relationship between Southern Cameroons and La Republique du Cameroun, and where is that instrument documented for independent public verification?

What 1,000 People Can Do

- Document everything: timelines, statements, contradictions, gaps in the record
- Repeat one narrow question consistently across all available forums

- Log every non-answer, contradiction, and evasion as dated evidence
- Build a permanent archive that outlives individual leaders and campaigns
- Use precise, procedural language that international institutions can engage with
- Reward discipline, evidence, and clarity over emotional performance and noise
- Build internally: institutional literacy, merit, cooperation, and builder culture

We pray like everything depends on God. But we work like everything depends on us. God bless you. And God bless Southern Cameroons.

**Developed within the Southern Cameroons Legal Clarity Framework
For Civic Education and Institutional Development
Statesman Roland Fru · Southern Cameroons Legal Clarity Framework**

HOW 1,000 PEOPLE BUILD PRESSURE WITHOUT CHAOS

ONE-PAGE ACTION FRAMEWORK

PHASE	FOCUS	ACTIVITIES	MEASURE OF PROGRESS
Phase 1 Foundation (Months 1-3)	Know what exists	Compile timeline Scan documents Identify gaps Assign roles	Complete documentary inventory Roles assigned to 100+ people
Phase 2 Question (Months 3-6)	Ask one narrow question	Select core question Train civic messengers Begin public repetition Log all responses	Question posed in 10+ distinct forums All responses documented with dates
Phase 3 Archive (Months 6-12)	Build institutional memory	Create website repository Publish explainers Produce FAQ Translate materials	Accessible public archive live Multilingual materials available
Phase 4 Reach (Ongoing)	International engagement	Prepare formal submissions Engage legal scholars Contact UN mechanisms Diaspora coordination	Formal submissions filed International attention documented

This framework is not a protest plan. It is a builder plan. Its goal is not to generate the most noise in the shortest time. Its goal is to create the deepest, most durable, most internationally legible institutional footprint possible. A state that cannot answer a narrow legal question, repeatedly posed, calmly documented, and consistently presented, has revealed something important about the foundation on which it stands.

FINAL WORD

Where the legal instrument is missing, the question remains alive. Where the question remains alive, disciplined people still have work to do. We pray like everything depends on God. But we work like everything depends on us. God bless you. And God bless Southern Cameroons.

Statesman Roland Fru · Southern Cameroons Legal Clarity Framework
Developed within the Southern Cameroons Legal Clarity Framework
For Civic Education and Institutional Development