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Colonial Dis/Continuities in Cameroon and the Postcolonial Dilemma in the Archive

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Despite how significantly processes of decolonization have shaped contemporary political and social realities, their study remains marginal in the peace and security fields. Understanding historical legacies and how embedded they are in today's peace and conflict structures is essential to the analysis of current conflicts. This article argues that by tracing dis/continuities in colonial relations, we can gain a better understanding of these contentious processes and of the marginalized positionalities they create. In doing so, much needed research on the ambiguities of these legacies and on who had a say in shaping historical events can be done without reiterating colonial power relations. Alongside its analysis of the Cameroonian internationalized decolonization process under a UN Trusteeship and of how it developed into the current Anglophone conflict, this article uncovers and explores the existing dilemmas in, and potential new avenues for security studies research on colonial dis/continuities using post- and decolonial theories. Its findings and discussion contribute widely to debates within post- and decolonial research, peace, security, and conflict studies.

A pesar de que los procesos de descolonización han influido de manera importante sobre las realidades políticas y sociales contemporáneas, su estudio sigue siendo marginal en los ámbitos de la paz y la seguridad. Comprender los legados históricos y en qué medida estos están arraigados en las estructuras actuales de paz y conflicto resulta esencial para el análisis de los conflictos actuales. Este artículo argumenta que, al analizar las continuidades y las discontinuidades en las relaciones coloniales, podemos obtener una mejor comprensión de estos procesos contenciosos y de las posiciones marginadas que crean. Al hacer esto, se puede realizar una investigación muy necesaria con respecto a las ambigüedades de estos legados y con relación a quién tuvo voz en la configuración de los acontecimientos históricos, sin reiterar las relaciones de poder coloniales. Además del análisis del proceso de descolonización internacionalizada de Camerún, que tuvo lugar bajo la tutela de la ONU, y de cómo este se transformó en el actual conflicto anglófono, este artículo descubre y estudia los dilemas existentes y las posibles nuevas vías de investigación en materia de estudios de seguridad con respecto a las continuidades y discontinuidades coloniales utilizando tanto teorías poscoloniales como decoloniales. Las conclusiones y reflexiones de este artículo contribuyen ampliamente a los debates dentro de la investigación poscolonial y decolonial, la paz, la seguridad y los estudios de conflictos.

Malgré l'importance du façonnement opéré par les processus de décolonisation sur les réalités politiques et sociales contemporaines, leur étude reste marginale dans les domaines de la paix et de la sécurité. Il est essentiel de comprendre les héritages historiques et leur degré d'intégration dans les structures de paix et de conflit d'aujourd'hui pour analyser les conflits actuels. Cet article affirme qu'en retraçant les (dis)continuités des relations coloniales, nous pouvons acquérir une meilleure compréhension de ces processus polémiques et des positionnalités marginalisées qu'ils créent. Ce faisant, quantité de recherches nécessaires sur les ambiguïtés de ces héritages et sur les auteurs de ces événements historiques sont possibles sans réitérer les relations de pouvoir coloniales. Aux côtés de son analyse du processus de décolonisation internationalisé camerounais dans le cadre d'une tutelle des Nations Unies et de sa transformation en conflit anglophone, cet article découvre et explore les dilemmes existants ainsi que les nouvelles pistes de recherches en études de sécurité sur les (dis)continuités coloniales à l'aide des théories postcoloniales et décoloniales. Ses conclusions et sa discussion contribuent largement aux débats au sein de la recherche postcoloniale et décoloniale et des études de paix, de sécurité et de conflits.

Introduction: Tracing Colonial Dis/Continuities

This article proposes a framework embedded in critical security studies (CSS) and based on archival data for analyzing how empirical issues and actors became a security problem during the historical decolonization processes, and how they unfolded continuity. As I argue, the study of postcolonial security narratives is a beneficial way to research these dis/continuities because it allows us to consider different experiences and positionalities. By this, the article contributes to exploring options for an analytical expansion of critical security scholarship aimed at making transnational entanglements, colonial legacies, and long-term insecurity and violence visible and informing current debates on the lessons to be learned for today's conflicts and on (African) statehood. Cameroon's partitioned and internationalized decolonization under UN supervision (1960/1961) and the Anglophone war along the former colonial boundaries that erupted in 2017 make it an especially fitting case for this analysis. By tracing three security narratives over time, the paper reveals the distinctly colonial narratives that prevailed and persisted in the postcolonial state—especially evident in the problematization of the anti-colonial "Union of the Peoples of Cameroon" (UPC) party as a security threat.

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While historical international relations and archival research have regained importance in the International Relations (IR) field in recent years (Buzan and Lawson 2015; Reus-Smit 2016; Subotić 2021; Carvalho, Lopez, and Leira 2023; Lemke et al. 2023), post- and decolonial critiques have become influential in peace, security, and conflict studies (Barkawi and Laffey 2006; Sabaratnam 2017; Bertrand 2018; Ketzmerick 2019). Growing from its early critiques of syllabi and research foci, post- and decolonial research has since endeavored to show how archival research and post- and decolonial methodologies can be used in tandem to study concrete problems in global peace and security (Barkawi 2016; Bhambra and Holmwood 2021). This article proposes precisely the use of this tandem to the study of colonial dis/continuities in peace and security as a way of avoiding the *postcolonial dilemma* (Breckenridge and Veer 1993) in the archive by reemphasizing colonial power relations (Adamson 2020). I draw on the concept of the *postcolonial dilemma* and develop it further to show that, whereas Spivak (1988) once famously claimed that the subaltern cannot speak, marginalized positionalities indeed have a voice in colonial archives, but only in highly circumscribed ways.

There are, however, many challenges to the study of colonial dis/continuities. On the one hand, the long periods of analysis invite grand arguments, even though transitory situations of political change are not without contradictions and contingencies. Therefore, these grand arguments lack the nuance that a more precise and fine-grained analysis offers. On the other hand, there is a chronic lack of data on marginalized voices. Subaltern and marginalized actors are those whose influence in shaping political history was treated as peripheral, or silenced and, therefore, are rarely *heard* by traditional approaches to security (Hansen 2000; Abboud et al. 2018; Bertrand 2018). Since these marginalized actors do not act as a unified body, the article proposes a combination of interpretative strategies from Stoler (2010), Azoulay (2019), and Said (1994) to do archival research to grasp their role as *postcolonial standpoint* in these ambiguous and contingent transitory processes and their respective continuities. *Continuities* are understood here as those political structures, security logics and problems, and economic relations that remain in place from one government, or regime change to the next. These historical continuities are evident in the steady transition trajectories of socio-political structures, economies, and agencies expressed in the narratives of the *threatened state*, the *Cameroonian–French friendship*, and the *unity of all Cameroonians*. Attention is also paid to *discontinuities*, meaning clear ruptures in these trajectories evident in discursive or political practices or change of the distribution of power among actors; for example, furthermore, as part of the *coloniality of power*, how and to what extend these historical continuities were politicized as memory politics (Mälksoo 2015; Subotic and Steele 2021; Rausch 2023). This is where the benefits of having a de/postcolonial security approach are most visible: While securitization uncovers the small moments, transgressions, and changes in discourse and practices, postcolonial theory renders the colonial context, postcolonial agencies, and frustrations visible. Even though securitization silences certain actors in acute situations (Hansen 2000; Bertrand 2018), it also preserves problematizations, conflicts, and identify positions, and thus builds a sediment on which historical memories can be politicized.

To first theoretically situate this study, I begin by highlighting and discussing different disciplinary rationales, which then serve as the presentation and justification of the research framework in the "A De/Postcolonial Approach to Dis/Continuities: Security Is Not Ahistorical" section. Section "Empirical Realities and Colonial Archives: The Cameroonian Decolonization and Dis/Continuities of Peace and Security" empirically examines the Cameroon case study to trace dis/continuities in Cameroonian security narratives crafted in its decolonization process. Lastly, the conclusion includes a reflection on the avenues for further research that it opens up.

Studying Dis/Continuities with Diverging Disciplinary Rationales

During roughly the past two decades, research on colonial legacies has uncovered the lasting nature of colonial domination (Quijano 2000; Mbembe 2001; Go 2016; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2020), and scholars have argued for the *Longue durée* (Braudel and Wallerstein 2009) in fields and practices of international interventions (Charbonneau 2014; Sabaratnam 2017). Only a few studies have sought to understand decolonization's transitions (Müller and Hochmüller 2017; Taylor 2019; Orock and Geschiere 2021), for example, by exploring long-term effects of history by the politicization of historical events and memories (Donnelly and Steele 2019; Getachew 2020).[1] In contrast, peace, security, and conflict studies received criticism for having Eurocentric (Bilgin 2011), colonial (Barkawi and Laffey 2006), racist (Howell and Richter-Montpetit 2020; Eriksson Baaz and Parashar 2021; Gani 2021), traditionalist (Bonacker 2021), and ahistorical (Donnelly and Steele 2019) underpinnings. CSS approaches in particular were critiqued for failing to consider postcolonial realities and agencies (Barkawi and Laffey 2006; Hönke and Müller 2012). Furthermore, as Adamson (2020b) argues, while colonial power relations are still present in current formal structures, such as in states and international organizations, they remain invisible to security studies.

Supporting these critiques while highlighting the theoretical potential, I perceive security as embedded in a historically evolved moment (Aradau et al. 2014, 159–88). Security is, thus, not ahistorical. This article investigates security problematizations, in other words, how empirical issues become a security problem within societies, including why they get politicized at particular moments in history with postcolonial and decolonial arguments. Both approaches help to demystify colonialism and amplify the voices of marginalized voices, especially in the field of security. While postcolonial approaches focus on the aftermath of colonialism, decolonial approaches aim to undo the ongoing neocolonial ambitions and create new trajectories for decolonial thinking and methodological change. Three concepts are crucial to the detection of colonial dis/continuities: *colonialism* is understood as a power and belief system situated in a complex system of management and control; historical *decolonization* as a distinct historical process that changed the political system in a given time frame (Cooper 2002); and *decoloniality* as the continuing state of colonial power relations and authority in politics, economics, and military relations, spanning to epistemic and cultural dimensions (Quijano 2000; Gross 2012; Mignolo and Escobar 2013). The term decoloniality highlights the enduring nature of colonial

[1] Like other scholars, Collier and Hoeffler (2004) pinpoint colonialism as an essential factor in their greed vs. grievances argument. They assert that specific colonizers, namely France, were less likely to experience civil war due to their willingness to intervene in the former colonies and their longstanding security cooperation. Although arguable, their findings are an example of how, although contemporary research consistently finds colonial continuities, they remain somewhat unidentified as such and thus under-researched.

relations within current authority systems, even though it might be more the product of epistemic dynamics than of legal relations of domination (Mignolo and Walsh 2018), and which is expressed here as dis/continuities. Meera Sabaratnam (2017) has already shown the effects of the coloniality of power admirably in the field of peace and conflict research.

Several debates have emerged on the dynamics, repercussions, and effects of decolonization processes in Africa (Mazrui 1993; M'Bokolo 2004): on labor and land ownership (Eckert 1999; Cooper 2008), on different accounts of colonial authorities (Smith 1978), and on African statehood and political figurations (Mamdani 1996; Terretta 2014). Regarding Cameroon's internationalized decolonization specifically, several authors highlight aspects of nationalism (Joseph 1977; Terretta 2014), feminism (Terretta 2007; Mougoué 2019), diplomacy (Torrent 2012), and memory politics (Fonkoué 2019). However, there is a tendency in the literature to stick to disciplinary boundaries and to not consider social theory and historical research as a fruitful tandem for understanding decolonization.

As previously mentioned, several difficulties are involved in tracing dis/continuities from a global perspective, namely, access to archival data on marginalized voices, the need to combine various collection methods, and ethical considerations. Social sciences scholars have contributed to this debate with reflections on specific methods and methodologies, such as interviews (Fujii 2010) and field research (de Guevara and Bøås 2020), and provide brilliant advice on how to navigate power encounters in the field (Krystalli et al. 2021). Fewer articles, however, look at the relationship between historical events and social theory (Sewell 2005), or answer grander questions on transformations, transitions, and revolutions in the Global South (Skocpol 2015). Azoulay (2019, 337) points out the tendency for the artificial separation between politics and history in research. Therefore, researching dis/continuities requires engaging with different disciplines, especially history, since the work in archives requires essential background knowledge to contexts, experts, situations, and the everyday knowledge (Mälksoo 2015).

Several authors highlight and reflect on the ethical challenges involved in archival research. Subotić (2020, 342) argues that archives are complex fields of meaning where documents are often used "as authoritative sources to describe a past that we can no longer empirically observe" (Subotić 2020). The ethical issues involved in the use of conflict archives specifically (Balcells and Sullivan 2018), the selection of data (Davenport and Ball 2002), and representations of violence (Macías 2016) are some of the challenges authors touch upon. The subjective interpretation of violence, the potential harming of personal rights, the archive's politics, and the importance of marginalized histories (Jules 2016) are other issues considered. Post- and decolonial critiques also point out the archive's coloniality itself (El-Malik and Kamola 2017) and the need to reflect on what gets stored in the archive, for instance, on whose stories are told, and who has access to the archives.

A De/Postcolonial Approach to Dis/Continuities: Security Is Not Ahistorical

This article investigates security *problematizations,* in other words, how empirical issues and actors become a security problem within societies, including why they get politicized at particular historical moments. It looks specifically at how these problematizations were shaped during the historical decolonization and how they unfolded its dynamics and long-lasting effects. This means that to look at how the understanding of the term *security* has changed over time, understanding also the dis/continuities in its meaning itself. Unlike in the early years of the CSS, texts or a descriptive global narration are not used here to perceive security, nor to prove a theory to the detriment of the political. Rather, the aim is to analytically grasp the concept of security and to detect processual changes in its meaning over time and for different actors. This way highlights how issues became security threats and how this affected actors' political space to act. Therefore, the understanding that security changes are experienced and expressed differently by the various actors and their positionality is essential here. This understanding of the complex diversity of security experiences will help uncover dis/continuities of peace and conflict since Cameroonian decolonization to this day.

Two CSS articles are essential to understanding the foundations of the powerful interplay between speech acts and audience in the long-term perspective: Hansen's (2000) *Little Mermaid* and Bertrand's (2018) critique of the theory's very own coloniality. Both scholars highlight that the Copenhagen securitization theory ignores actors' positionalities and is, itself, colonial, as Bertrand proves through their analysis of the 2015 New Year's Eve sexual assault incidents supposedly by migrantized cis-men in Cologne, Germany. As both and many other scholars criticize, due to its internal elitism, dynamics of securitization left those without the power to generate discourse disenfranchised, unable to join the securitization dynamic. It also ignored the frustrations generated by this silencing. To overcome this limitation, I rely on Bertrand's (2018) reorientation of analytical focus from the, allegedly mute, speaker to the audience's power to silence and exclude. Bertrand's concept of *illocutionary frustration*, suffered by those who cannot get a sufficiently powerful audience to listen to their concerns and are excluded from determining what security and representation are, displays securitization theory's marginalizing effects. Bertrand also shows that even if marginalized actors wanted to, they could not simply participate in the securitization dynamic, but only in highly circumscribed ways.

However, by suggesting a long-term perspective, I argue that securitization approaches can help make the politicization of historical dynamics visible, even if the securitization act can initially silence marginalized actors in the specific historical situation. I draw on both contributions but highlight dis/continuities and temporality, how diverse marginalized voices were, and the unstatic nature of being marginalized. Without timing and temporality, we cannot explain why some political imaginaries are preserved or resurface in political discourse at certain moments in time.[2] It does also not explain why stories of the past experience new (scholarly) interest at critical junctures in time. This is where the benefits of having a de/postcolonial security approach are most visible: While securitization uncovers the small moments, transgressions, and changes in discourse and practices, postcolonial theory renders the context, agencies, and frustrations visible. Securitization in the long-term perspective, nonetheless, can vividly show when and how power is at play and how certain

[2]Thus, to trace the moments in which discourses resurface means according to Stoler: "Navigating the archives is to map the multiple imaginaries that made breastfeeding benign at one moment and politically charged at another; that made nurseries a tense racial question; that elevated something to the status of an "event"; that animated public concern or clandestine scrutiny, turning it into what the French call an "affaire." (Stoler 2010, 9)".

problematizations become rooted in society and are preserved overtime, which, as we will see, is essential to understanding the anticolonial UPC's claims. How security speech acts are preserved in political ideas is particularly important since they are the basis upon which future understandings of security are built on, and thus determine which security, political, and economic narratives prevail and, consequently, the room for maneuver political actors have. Securitization not only silences certain actors in acute situations, but also preserves problematizations, conflicts, and identify positions, and thus builds a sediment on which historical memories can be politicized. This argument reflects my understanding of processual change as an uneven wave-like long-term process, with progressive moments, but also severe backlashes (Reus-Smit 2016). To follow continuity and change empirically, I traced narratives established during decolonization over time to understand the security and insecurity as deriving from society's ruptures, communalities, and cleavages.

There are, however, two related challenges to the approach regarding how to historicize security and how to know if a past security act had the same meaning as today. As other scholars advise, it is important to avoid reemphasizing colonial power relations when navigating colonial sources (Mbembe 2002). To this end, Azoulay (2019) engages critically with Derrida's theory of the archive. She resists the assumption that archives are neutral state institutions, or a threshold between the past, the present, history, and politics, and calls for the "unlearning of the archive" (2019, 41) since colonialism also informed what documents are stored and how they are classified in the archive. She rather sees archives as a "synergetic machine of imperial violence through which this very violence is abstracted and then extracted from the passage of time" (2019, 43). *Potential history* is put forward as a way of escaping these influences while historicizing by "being with others, both living and dead, across time, against the separation of the past from the present, colonized peoples from their worlds and possessions, and history from politics" (2019, 43).

Similarly, Stoler (2010) analyzes how today's social categories have their roots in the massive production of data in colonial empires by showing how certain powerful categorizations and their politicization took place in the everyday life of empires while others were downplayed (2010, 4). Stoler emphasizes the importance of empirical research in shedding light on these moments of change and, in a Foucauldian sense, is interested in the *unwritten* and the common sense that often eludes researchers. Acknowledging the debates within critical archival research on bottom-up perspectives, Stoler suggests a reading "along the archival grain" (2002, 99) strategy to uncover the marginalized histories and non-events, one based on focusing on the axes of colonial power and authority to highlight the gaps, omissions, and cancellations in the colonial narration. Thus, Stoler explicitly investigates the colonial narrative and the common sense, exploring and exposing it entirely to understand the execution of political power.

Lastly, the postcolonial theorist Said (1979, 51) uses "contrapuntal reading" to describe the relationship between the narratives of the colonizer and the colonized as structurally connected and interdependent. Even though the approach was developed to analyze literature, it is helpful in tracing the intertwined nature of histories, narratives, and perspectives in an archival representation. This research process seeks to reveal the exact contra-narratives, contra-stories, and contra-imaginaries to the colonial narration and practices. In the framework proposed, I use Azoulay's, Stoler's, and Said's approaches as interpretative strategy's to inform an understanding of the complicities and the ethics of working with colonial sources in tracing dis/continuities in political transition processes through marginalized voices.

Security Narratives and Subaltern Voices as Dis/Continuities: The Postcolonial Standpoint

While traditional security narratives provided (nation) states' perspectives without acknowledging ordinary people as agents of security, CSS built an understanding of security that moves beyond the state as the referent of security. These scholars highlighted the context where security is made, enabled debates on the politics of securitization (Wibben 2010), and questioned who is entitled to frame security issues, who can do so legitimately, and who can be heard (Bertrand 2018). Narrative theory provided the toolbox for the endeavor of understanding, situating, and interpreting how differently positioned actors understand certain events. In doing so, security narrative analysis helps understand how interpretation actualizes and under what conditions, thus uncovering value judgments and the politics of telling stories (Mehta and Wibben 2018). Narrative events methodologically situate the empirical object between events, marginalized subjectivities, and agencies by revealing the structure of their shared experiences in society. The analysis of Cameroon's security narratives traces moments of (dis)continuity in Cameroonian society's perception and definition of threats and externalized (in)security concerns. Narrative analysis allows us to examine how meanings and policies are produced, which is vital to research on security dis/continuities over long research periods. As the paper empirically shows, security narratives more specifically, highlight the insidious and hardly perceptible transgressions that create a situation that is secure for some actors and volatile for others and a shift from a peaceful trajectory to a conflict escalation, and thus provide information on exclusion and marginalization.

The case study shows how security problematizations and insecurities intersected during Cameroonian decolonization and propelled dis/continuities in the postcolonial state. Important questions are posed from a *postcolonial standpoint* in the analysis: What kind of dis/continuities gained empirical significance at critical junctures?; which actors were marginalized in the process?; and how was change expressed within these continuities? Many post/decolonial and critical race theory authors have highlighted the experience of being considered a security problem by hegemonic actors, in fact, as early as by the sociologist DuBois, who stated in 1903: "How does it feel to be a problem?" (DuBois 2007). His work reflects on group experiences of being *problematized* and on how its structural consequences generate insecurity for DuBois as a person. To him, one actor's experience was representative of other equally positioned actors' broader social experience. Feminist approaches to security furthermore highlight marginalized groups and their intersecting categories (such as LGBTIQ women∗ of color, working-class women∗, trans persons, etc.) (Mehta and Wibben 2018). Having the, what Go calls the *postcolonial standpoint* (Go 2016)), extends the security perspectives considered, avoids that security narratives sanitizing hegemonic forms of security and violence by including the specific context of postcolonial relations without unifying actors to one meta-position. By considering the specific context, they ward off individualizing and reducing actors' experiences, and playing them off as uncontradicted on uncontested by emphasizing just one aspect of their identity. Instead, postcolo-

nial approaches evenly explore how the structure of different groups' experiences resembles each other. Taking this *postcolonial standpoint*, I see marginalization not as a static category, but one that is subject to change depending on changes within the society. Following the classic Gramscian understanding (Gramsci and Nowell-Smith 1972), I also find marginalization to apply to intersections of the categories of race, class, and gender, but consider the specific social, historical, and geographical context to be decisive.

I take the *postcolonial standpoint* as relevant for the security narratives of marginalized actors in three ways. First, they are relevant to understanding the historical context where security evolves, its social fabric, and how decolonization processes shaped it. Second, they are relevant analytically while looking at interactions between the global, transnational, and local levels and between past and present and in thinking of the *postcolonial* as contingent. Since history is an open process, research also needs to be open for deferrals of power, which relates to bringing in marginalized voices and identifying security problematizations from actors of varying positionalities. In short, an actor may be marginalized in one historical situation and be the actor who marginalizes in another. Third, a post- and decolonial methodology requires a self-reflection by the researcher on their own positionality and standing in the field. This involves reflecting on one's own socialization and social standpoint and transcending inner disciplinary binaries as much as possible. The purpose is to avoid reproducing colonial knowledge and, more importantly, to consider what happens to the knowledge produced. It is especially important for security researchers to consider who can use the knowledge created and for what purposes, what could be the political consequences of this knowledge and, of course, that archives are neither sources of objective nor neutral data. It is only by doing so that security research can fully grasp the complexity and contested nature of the plurality of voices expressing and sensing (in)security.

Operationalization: Navigating the Postcolonial Dilemma and the Coloniality of the Archive

The benefits of researching the dis/continuities in security narratives from a postcolonial standpoint are primarily that the tandem invites the understanding and highlighting of marginalized voices, their narrations, and their experiences. According to my question of how actors became security problematizations, including why they get politicized at particular moments in history, I triangulated data from archival sources, interviews, and group discussions to develop security narratives. Over 14,972 archival documents (including petitions, letters, telegrams, reports, and protocols) and articles from ten newspapers were collected from a total of eight archives located in Cameroon, France, the United States, and the United Kingdom between 2014 and 2016, by also searching for private collections. The "Délégation du Cameroun et du Togo 1947–1959" (DPCT) collection from the *Archives Nationales d'Outre Mer* in Aix-en-Provence (France) was especially important, as it contained all the French administration's documents on Cameroon's (and Togo's) trusteeship between 1947 and 1959, compiled by the French authorities. The collection contains exchanges between the administration in Cameroon, the colonial office in the metropolis, and individual administrative bodies, such as the security service and the UN Trusteeship Council, and reveals all the bureaucracy that the UN trusteeship supervision system involved. The collection of petitions from Cameroon contained in the UN archives is also extensive (over 10,000 petitions, protocols, and minutes), and many are petitions and leaflets issued by the UPC. In addition to the petitions, the archives of the French Communist Party in St. Denis were also of great importance for the UPC's perspective on the historical process.

Many documents, however, were destroyed during the conflict, or not preserved in the archives, especially during the period that the UPC was banned. Researchers using colonial archives know they are faced with the *postcolonial dilemma* created by the need to use these sources while knowing that archives are products of imperialism and are thus colonial archives. This dilemma of criticizing colonial sources, but also needing them, is particularly evident when it comes to colonial erasure and secrecy. While investigating these erasures is essential to understanding small plot lines, phrases, or pervasive euphemisms, they present a research problem for discursive theories: When does the "unsaid" end?; how can gaps in the archive be reconstructed?; and how to approach the *potential history*? (Azoulay 2019). Many sources on the UPC were destroyed, and others are still under security restrictions put in place by the French administration. How to then reconstruct practices of self-representation without putting words in their mouth? To address this issue, Azoulay (2019) highlights the need to consider the difference between *what happened* and *what was said to have happened*, a dilemma previously described by Trouillot (1995). Under the imperial condition, the "drama of meanings" (Azoulay 2019) is not that they are totally "served from a referent" (Azoulay 2019), but that history-writing constructs a well-fitting narrative without contingencies, wholes, and unsaid parts. Therefore, history-writing has resembled a Möbius ribbon where the imperial condition regularizes the production of meanings, at the same time as it shapes the phenomenological field out of which meanings are generated (Trouillot 1995).[3] For this reason, as proposed by Azoulay, narratives should not be approached as a yes/no or pro/con binary in historical knowledge production. In the *potential history* approach, security narratives are not the objectively experienced truth, but a narrative of what security is for a specific positionality. While there can be different narratives that intertwine, blur, or overlap over time, what they always show is not what happened but what was told. The assumption that narratives are objective truths is, in fact, at the center of conflicts over different experiences of security and makes positionality in the conflict structure so meaningful.

For this reason, using Azoulays's, Stoler's, and Said's interpretative strategies, I asked *how* the French administration constructed security, *how* the anti-colonial party UPC perceived themselves, and *why* these differing narratives conflicted. By using narratives, I correlated security constructions between agencies, levels, and temporalities and, thus, was able to constate a *longue durée* perspective. In this sense, the interpretative strategies suggested help to follow marginalized narratives and thus escape (at least partly) the pitfalls of the colonial archive and the *postcolonial dilemma*.

Furthermore, these interpretive strategies enabled me to grasp violence not only in the knowledge production of experts or academics, but also in the *everyday* (Distler and Salehi 2024 forthcoming). To capture the unsaid within the atmosphere of violence, I expanded the data selection to include myths, rumors, and gossip contained in books and memoirs of German and French governors, such as Puttkamer (1912) and Messmer (1998), and the politician Aujoulat (1960). I also consulted with postcolonial authors, such as Mongo Beti (2001, 2010), who published abundantly

[3] Trouillot (1995, 13; see also 24–5).

during the decolonization period. Although fiction was not included in the data analysis per se, it was helpful in understanding the everyday violence and get an idea of Stoler's "common sense" (2010, 3), and to fill the blank spaces stemming from archival erasure.

To develop security narratives, I traced expressions of security in the data. Sentences related to security, or that problematized actors and their practices were considered in the narrative development. These security speech acts were then clustered according to the actor's positionality; this meant assigning each speech act to a distinct speaker and identifying the actor's location within the conflict setting. This ordering facilitated an analysis that considered positionality, as well as how categories intersected. In this way, it was possible to determine whether the actor spoke from a hierarchically superior position or from a marginalized one. By this interpretation, I was able to overcome the invisibility of marginalized voices and incorporated Stoler's (follow the colonial authorities), Said's (follow anti-colonial actors), and Azoulay's (consider the unsaid or erased) strategies and allowed for a context-sensitive evaluation of the actors' marginalization and problematization.

In a third step, using MAXQDA, these speech acts were coded according to the function they played in the context using Juha Vuori's (2008). These functions reveal which topics and actors were considered as threatening and which strategic interest motivated the securitizing language.[4] The functional dimension reveals *how* actors constructed security, *which* topics were defended, and *what kind* of threats were constructed over time. Using these functions as categories allows us to understand how actors assess their situation, as well as to study temporality, shifts, and changes in the conceptions of threat and insecurity—while the latter helps understand the processual escalation of violence through the communication of security.

In a fourth, and last, step, the speech acts were clustered into three narratives that revolved around political, economic, and security issues, namely: the threatened state, the Cameroonian–French friendship, and the unity of all Cameroonians. These narratives evolved around contestations between the French UN administration, the anti-colonial UPC, and international actors. All conflict actors referred to these narratives in one way or another and, during the decolonization period, all were conflictual. As I argue, these narratives are the junctures between different actors' positionalities, the functions of their security speech acts, practices, and temporality and, thus, showed what topics were paradigmatic in their conflicts. To analyze whether these narratives stayed relevant or were sidelined, the narratives themselves were used to code the data. To follow on dis/continuities as the paper does, the narratives help to uncover how actors arrange new information according to the activated narrative to confirm their perception and act accordingly, which explains their practices in a given constellation or within the conflict. By looking at these narratives, it is possible to observe rising tensions or pacifying moments over an extended period, as well as to understand at what moments narratives were adopted, preserved, or lost, and then in a larger sense how memory's is being politicized. This is how narratives build security foundations and, therefore, evidence how discourses and practices evolve over time. Furthermore, because they exhibit the actors' perceptions and narrations, the study of narratives allows a better understanding of actors' agency(s).

Empirical Realities and Colonial Archives: The Cameroonian Decolonization and Dis/Continuities of Peace and Security

Background

Scholars and activists alike pinpoint the 1961 reunification after decolonization as the root for the outbreak of violence in Cameroon and the marginalization of the two Anglophone regions by the majoritarian francophone state as the trigger (Agwanda and Asal 2021; Amin 2021). After years of peaceful protest by the Anglophone populations, tensions escalated violently in 2017. Over 6,000 people have since died and more than a thousand Anglophones have had to flee due to clashes between state forces and separatist fighters. Despite international peace efforts and national dialogues, a resolution to the conflict has remained elusive.

Cameroon became a German Reich colony in 1984, and, with the start of its decolonization after World War I, the territory was placed under a League of Nations mandate system. With the creation of the United Nations, the administration of the territory was then transferred to a UN-Trusteeship mandate in 1948, administered by France and Britain. Conflict broke out along the French and Anglophone provinces' borders after reunification in 1961 due to the failed integration of English-speaking Cameroonians in the postcolonial state. Moreover, exasperated by the conditions of the Trusteeship, the anti-colonial party *Union des populations du Cameroun* (UPC) was established in the Francophone territory and began to fight for independence. The party was founded early in the trusteeship period and quickly developed into a radical nationalist anti-colonial platform (LeVine 1964; Joseph 1977; Terretta 2012), mobilizing support against the French administration's colonial exploitation. The UPC then grew to become part of a broader decolonization network that included decolonization activists in Algeria, for example, such as Frantz Fanon, and in Russia and China.[5]

It is in July 1955, when the party is banned and marginalized by the French administration that the relationship between the two is clearly drawn as the main conflict line (Atangana 2010; Ngoh 2019). Nonetheless, since demands for the future state had to be directed at and decided by the Trusteeship Council, the international community played a decisive role in the conflict. Although the country was technically a UN-supervised territory under which its inhabitants were granted (limited) deliberative capacity, for example, by submitting petitions to the UN administration (Lüdert, Ketzmerick, and Heise 2022), Cameroonians today refer to the UN-Trusteeship period as one of colonialism. Even though the UN Trusteeship system was innovative in its handling of the colonies, it still had imperial and racist underpinnings, hence why Cameroonians perceive it as a colonial system. The violent decolonization conflict in Cameroon then spilled over into the postcolonial state, and the UPC was only rehabilitated in 1992 (Krieger 1994).

Since 2017, when Anglo-Cameroonian activists proclaimed independence from the Cameroonian state, the country has been on the verge of a civil war (Kamé

[4]Namely, security speech acts can (i) place issues on the political agenda, (ii) legitimize future security action, (iii) serve deterrence, (iv) legitimize past actions, and (v) be used for authoritarian control.

[5]Félix Moumié, one of UPC's leading figures, met Frantz Fanon for instance at the All-African People's Congress in Accra, Ghana, in December 1958, where he also met Congolese Patrice Lumumba, Ghanaian Kwame Nkrumah, Angolan Holden Roberto, and Tom Mboya from the Kenyan independence movement. The Congress brought together Panafrican visions of anti-colonial struggle.

2018; Machikou 2018; Okereke 2018). Anglophone protests against their discrimination and marginalization by the state have been framed by the Cameroonian government as "terrorist" acts and attempts to break Cameroon's unity. Both in media and in academic literature, the current conflict is explained by its colonial past (Ketzmerick 2023), with analysts and scholars seeing the Anglophone minority's lack of integration after independence as the cause of the current conflict (Pommerolle and Heungoup 2017; Okereke 2018). Cameroon's internationalized decolonization and its aftermaths present a unique constellation for researching colonial dis/continuities: The violence that occurred and its lasting legacies enable an understanding of practices of internationalized governance (Sabaratnam 2013; Charbonneau 2014), secessionism (Distler and Heise 2021), transnational security governance (Hönke and Müller 2012), and comparative accounts of French and British imperialism (Cooper 2008).

Three Security Narratives to Follow Dis/Continuities: From Threat to Marginalization

Three security narratives can be introduced with the framework presented: the threatened state, the Cameroonian–French friendship, and national unity. These narratives structure the following empirical illustration. While not all were directly about security issues, they contained elements of an alternative *securitization* based on the *potential history* and show how the UPC became a political subject after being marginalized and silenced by not only the French authorities in Cameroon, but also at the UN. The party was early on *problematized* as a security threat due to its links to communist parties in Europe and China, and its contacts with other anti-colonial movements in Africa.

UPC's supporters were mainly Cameroonians who suffered with the social and economic changes and cuts made by the French administration starting in 1945. The UPC also found support among the *évolués* (social climbers), namely Cameroonian students in Paris, employees of the administration, and entrepreneurs in the private sector whose social and economic advancement was stalled. Thus, the UPC is not unambivalent in itself: The party's supporters were, therefore, often fluent in several languages, well educated, and able to travel. Consequently, in a Spivakian understanding of the subaltern (Spivak 1988), the UPC is not purely subaltern but marginalized. At the same time, many of the UPC's political documents were destroyed from the moment the party was banned in 1955 and onward, which means that their political claims were seen as peripheral and were sidelined. Thus, in order to understand the UPC's marginalization in this specific historical situation, it is necessary to consider the erasures and limitations of the texts available and to reread them from the colonial gaze.

The Narrative of the Threatened State

The framing of the UPC as a *problem* for the threatened state evidences the first continuity: According to the Trusteeship Agreement of 1946 between France and the United Nations, the trusteeship should promote the "economic and social progress of the native population" (Art. 7 Trusteeship Agreement, ANOM FM DPCT//3). In order to administer Cameroon, the French administration established a profound administrative structure. In many documents, the French administration showed confidence that it is taking over the legitimate representation of Cameroonian society and leading it to a sovereign state (High Commissioner Xavier Torré Communiqué 9.7.1958, ANOM DPCT//43). From an early stage, the French administration influenced security in the territory heavily by constructing the anticolonial party UPC as a threat to Cameroon's transition to a sovereign state, Cameroonian society, and public order. Furthermore, opponents of political measures, nationalists, as well as trade unions were constructed as dangerous for the successful development of the territory. This was evidenced by the fact that oppositional actors were comprehensively monitored and observed at a very early stage and that discursive demarcations were made between legitimate political action and unjustified demands that narrowed the political room for maneuver. The UPC was synonymously linked to violent events such as strikes or destruction of property. In addition, there were early reports about upécist fighters, which implied that violent acts were committed or might be possible in the immediate future. Words such as propaganda, provocation, or agitation related to the UPC were used, showing that any action by the UPC was considered oppositional, communist, or resistant, since the proximity of the party to communist ideas was seen as problematic. This danger required urgent intervention from the French administration. Substantial analysis of the danger of ideological bias has been outlined in lengthy analysis and reports by the security services that address UPC's goals and aspirations. These formed the sediment for the strategic delegitimization of the UPC.

Against this backdrop, around 1954, the UPC began to discuss using violent means against the French UN administration, aware of the delegitimization other actors in the Global South experienced when they used violence against government authorities. Another quote from Um Nyobé shows how difficult the decision to use violence in the fight for self-determination was

> Violence or non-violence? This is the false dilemma in which the imperialists and their ideologues would like to drown the liberation struggle of the African peoples today. Fortunately, the struggle itself, and especially that of the Kamerunese people, has already taught us a lesson: we do not have to choose between violence and non-violence but to combine several forms of legal and illegal, peaceful and violent struggle, according to the internal and external balance of power at each given phase. It is under the veil of these puppets that the imperialists have taken systematic military action on a large scale: our country is today occupied by 60,000 soldiers of the French Community with absolutely modern equipment.[6]

At the time, Cameroon was already experiencing an atmosphere of violence and repression, as evidenced by letters (Letter, 14.4.1955 Abel Kingué to Odru, ADSS Bte 31). The security of the leader, Um Nyobé, seemed particularly vulnerable: "As for Ruben Um Nyobé, he is still living in the maquis. Roland Pré wants him dead" (Letter, 7.5.1955, Moumié to Odru, ADSS Bte 31). According to the UPC, Cameroon was a "theater of vast military operations initiated by the French colonial governor, Roland Pré" (Joseph 1977, 274).

The conflict intensified in 1955, when heavy demonstrations broke out notably in May. For the French administration, "the events in May 1955" were the key moment, to which they repeatedly referred in the course of the conflict in order to legitimize their actions. For the UPC,

[6] La Voix du Kamerun Octobre 1961, ADSS Bte 31. Translated from French by the author.

however, the demonstrations were initially a moment of liberation from colonial repression: "Remaining loyal to the people—The year 1955 was the year of the liberation of the colonial peoples" (La Voix Du Cameroon November 1965, p. 3, ADSS Bte 31). During the years, it was faced with the French administration's repression, the party was split into two wings: While one continued to lobby for the UPC cause internationally, the other went underground to continue to fight for their political goals in the underground (*maquis)*. This undermined the party's political leverage. The underground wing ended up executing the very violence that the administration had accused them of long before the UPC even considered using it. Even though French diplomacy knew the party enjoyed considerable support and expected it to be elected into government after independence, over the years, it successfully framed the party as a threat to a peaceful state-to-be Cameroon. The moderate candidate Ahidjo instead became president in 1958 and governed the country after independence. The postcolonial standpoint within the illustrated security narratives is particularly evident in the moments when the UPC navigated between international demands and communist ideals and tried to anchor their own Cameroonian ideas. The UPC adapted quickly to the security language, which helped attract global attention. In this sense, the UPC was able to use the UN body frequently to advance a powerful shift in discourse, which the French administration desperately wanted to avoid. Although the French discourse about the dangerousness of the UPC never changed, the party itself shaped the discourse that was decisive in internationalized decolonization: the reunification with the British part. The UPC continually sought to dissolve the subject positions assigned to them by denying, resisting, and not recognizing French interpretations, notably the communist label. In close cooperation with France, the postcolonial state of Cameroonian state continued to fight the UPC after independence. The death sentence given to UPC member Ernest Ouandié in 1970 is evidence of this. The UPC warned that neocolonial structures would remain in place and that a more profound decolonization process was needed to change these structures and the political system.

The narrative of threatened state became a continuity in the postcolonial state, especially against oppositional and government-critical Cameroonians. With regard to the Anglophone marginalization, at the beginning of Biyas' presidency in 1982, the Anglophones still had high hopes of redistribution as part of the New Deal, which was disappointing because of the dominance of Francophone structures was maintained and in some cases even intensified. As a result of dissatisfaction, massive demonstrations occurred and led to a violent confrontation between the state and the opposition (Cameroon Tribune 16.3.1990). After a wide mobilization, 20,000 people gathered for a founding ceremony of the Social Democratic Front (Takougang and Krieger 2000, 5). During these demonstrations, the demands for a democratic multiparty system were widely expressed. Subsequently, the events of May 26, 1990 were construed medially as the violence of a few people, which was directed against a democratically legitimated state and would therefore be rejected by a large part of the Cameroonians (Cameroon Tribune 31.05.1990). The protests were thus constructed as synonymous with oppositional danger and a threat to the strong state. The opposition was solely held responsible for violence and disorder, which made intervention of military security forces necessary to pacify the situation and restore the political order. In it, political protests were delegitimized and declared anti-state and anti-government; the actions of President Biya were always linked with the infallibility of state control and basic democratic direction (Cameroon Tribune 01.06.1990). In the wake of the crisis, however, there was a change in the public perception of Cameroon's independence and former President Ahidjo, who had been delegitimized since the attempted coup d'etat in 1983. Although banned since 1955, the leading heads of the UPC and Ahidjo were rehabilitated in December 1991 (Cameroon Tribune 05.12.1991) and presented as heroes of the state.

The Narrative of the Cameroonian–French Friendship

As another continuity, I traced the narrative of the Cameroonian–French friendship. The quote below from a telegram sent by Um Nyobé, a member of the UPC, to the UN Trusteeship Council illustrates the party's positionality and narrative. In it, Um Nyobé warns the Council about the atmosphere of violence and insecurity in Cameroon created by the French administration and requests the international community's immediate intervention:

> We must draw the United Nations' attention to the military measures taken by French authorities aimed at supressing Kamerunaises aspirations during the December elections. Armored cars barred military contingents, and Provence French colonies paratroopers' engines with modern militaries any territory with orders to shoot people on election day. If the General Assembly does not take adequate measures, Oriental Kamerun is at risk of having a more violent future than in the previous year, against unarmed people accordingly ask for an energetic intervention of the United Nations to maintain peace and security.[7]

This quote was coded as embedded in the *Cameroonian–French friendship* narrative because, from the UPC's point of view, the French administration's actions were those of a colonial actor rather than of a benevolent trustee. The UPC challenged the French narrative and sought to make their violent practices visible to the international public. It also requested a change of representation and robust intervention by the international community. With petitions, publications, statements, and press articles, the UPC created a picture more like a colonial administration than a UN Trusteeship territory and presented the French administration as violating many of the freedoms contained in the Trusteeship Agreement and UN Human Rights. Its prominent leader, Um Nyobé placed the fight of the UPC in the series of other independence struggles and in the context of the Pan-African movement (ADSS Bte 31). The main imagined political idea, an independent and united Cameroon, was thus linked to the higher goal—the liberation and unity of all African countries, since "the struggle for the unity of Kamerun is also the struggle for the unity of Africa" (La Voix du Cameroun Octobre 1961, page 6, ADSS Bte 31). To illustrate the colonial threat, all acts of violence by the administration, similar to the security reports of the French administration, were listed and published (La Voix du Kamerun 1958, ADSS Bte 31). In this way, the parallel, actual representation of the monopoly of force was reclaimed, and the violence of the French administration was repeatedly put on the agenda. In this sense, the UPC's security speech acts intended to draw attention to the ambivalence of the situation: Cameroon, although a UN trust territory in which democratic structures should be built, was actually a colony in

[7]Messmer, confidential note, 22.1.1957, DPCT//14. Translated from French by the author.

terms of the experiences of its citizens. The image picturing the French administration as a colonial apparatus breaking with democratic processes was repeated at various levels.

From the very moment, Ahmadou Adhijo was appointed prime minister in 1958 and more so after independence, he expressed his sympathy for the historical link between France and Cameroon:

> In a world in which seclusion is harmful to individuals and nations, we cannot remain isolated and, in these conditions, how can we conceive of having any other partner than this country we know and love? […] It is with France that Cameroon, once emancipated, wishes to bind its destiny and in together sail freely through the turbulent seas of today's world. (Takougang, Krieger, and Takougang 1998, 38)

This speech was repeatedly activated in public discourse to justify political decisions (e.g., in the preparation and announcement of the Franco–Cameroonian agreements). Ahidjo attempted to promote a conciliatory approach to dealing with the legacies of the colonial period; this is evident in his speech at the 4th Congress of the Union Camerounaise, which took place in Ebolowa from July 4 to 8, 1962:

> At present, Cameroon's economy bears the stigmas of colonialism. However, the achievements of colonialism have not always been negative. We have an infrastructure, an economic groundwork, which we intend to exploit skillfully […] The work to be undertaken is that of reconversion, of adaptation, and not of systematic destruction. (Aseh 2016, 52)

Economically, the country remained tied to France. Between 1946 and 1960, France spent 358,872,526 US dollars in Cameroon; in 1960 alone, Cameroon received 50,000,000 US dollars from France, and this amount increased in 1961 and 1962 (LeVine 1964, 230). French experts and administrative personnel stayed in the country, and, by November 1961, 576 administrative officials were still on duty in Cameroon. The Franco–Cameroonian agreements reached on December 16, 1960 further established close cooperation between Cameroon and France in the economic, education, tourism, and military sectors. Instead of the friendship (*amitié*) between the two countries of the colonial times, cooperation (*coopération*), and association (*association*) were now stressed instead. The agreement included arrangements for stable prices for natural resources and for Cameroon to remain in the French currency zone (Koddenbrock and Sylla 2019).

French nationals financed by the French state continued to work in leading positions in many ministries, institutions, and universities. Along with French entrepreneurs, they formed the largest group of non-Cameroonians in the country. Even though French economic investment gradually declined, it continued to be the country' largest share of foreign direct investment, greatly due to Cameroon's liberal investment laws (Takougang, Krieger, and Takougang 1998, 57). France's continued influence was, however, most evident in the military sector, in its support for the establishment, equipment, and training of the Cameroonian army. Consequently, it also remained militarily present—9 months after independence, 2,000 French officers were still positioned in the country. Especially in the first period after independence, violence and repression against the UPC intensified, targeted with bombings, napalm, and systematic torture (Takougang, Krieger, and Takougang 1998, 57).

The Narrative of Cameroonian Unity

Lastly, another dis/continuity was present in the unity narrative. It was UPC's primary political goal to create a unified Cameroonian nation along the former German colonial borders that brings together all the different ethnic and linguistic groups in Cameroon. Thus, UPC lobbied intensively for the reunification with the British provinces and the unity of francophone and anglophone Cameroonians. This undermined the French administration's policy of using particularity to explicitly prevent the spread of a nationalist policy in Cameroon (Joseph 1977, 174). Conversely, in the postcolonial state, the narrative of unity became the central motif in both President Ahidjo's and Biyas' speeches because the country was facing societal problems exacerbated by the challenges of integrating the Anglophone peoples. Due to these tensions, President Ahidjo emphasized the need for nation-building by constantly reiterating the unity theme: "without unity, nothing will be achieved."[8] In doing so, he provided national state-building with the catchwords of "national unity" and "regional balance," while communicating his recognition of Cameroon's diversity (Takougang, Krieger, and Takougang 1998, 36). However, as Ahidjo continued to trot the unity narrative—"There is no Ewondo, no Douala, no Bassa, no Bamileke, no Boulou, no Foulbe, but Cameroonians who see themselves everywhere as first of all being Cameroonians as long as they respected the rights of others" (Aseh 2016, 56)—the opposition continued to be repressed. Unity later became a token used against any government criticism, such as the Anglophone protests, which were portrayed as hostile to Cameroon's unity and cohesion.

Following Ahidjo in 1982, President Biya strongly emphasized the unity of the Cameroonian nation against the particularistic interests of individual ethnic groups or parties. The following quote from President Biyas's speech in September 2019 regarding the Anglophone conflict is another example of this continuity in the narrative on unity: "For close to three years now, the North-West and South-West Regions of our country [the Anglophone regions] have been going through a crisis that not only jeopardizes the safety and well-being of the population living there, but also has far-reaching consequences for the national community as a whole."[9] Narrations of the insecurity created by separatists are reemphasized in other speeches without acknowledging the violence used by state forces.

However, another continuity of security practices performed by non-state actors against the economy of the state is the Cameroonian phenomenon of the "villes mortes" (Ghost Towns). The "villes mortes" only worked since they created unity from below, and were also used during the Anglophone protests in 2017. This form of protest began when in 1986, Mboua Massock called for a taxi driver strike (Cameroon Tribune 20.12.1991): The demonstrations initially were meant as a boycott of urban economic activities, but eventually brought the public life in the urban centers within 9 months to a halt with complete general strikes and led to enormous economic trouble. The aim was to get President Biya to political and democratic opening. Initially an unpolitical, undirected, frustrated protest, these protests were politicized by the state and labeled as illegal and oppositionist. The *villes mortes* threatened the state order due to the economy damaging orientation enormously (Cameroon Tribune 20.12.1991), and still unfold continuity until today's crises.

[8] Cameroons Champion, June 1, 1962.

[9] Paul Biya, "The Head of State's Message to the Nation" (Speech, September 10, 2019).

These examples provide a glimpse into how security narratives by different actors help unpack the security structures and their dis/continuities as the politicization of memory. The narratives, thus, reveal the extent to which these discursive artifacts point to moments of exclusions, shifts, or marginalization, which provides the foundations for political rule and justification.

Conclusion: Transgressions of Security and the Temporality of Conflict

This article analyzed how the anticolonial party UPC became a security problem during Cameroon's decolonization and traced the dis/continuities of their problematization. As the article highlighted, considering the diverse nature of security experiences allowed an exploration of their role and function within the security construction and their dis/continuities, as well as an expanded understanding of why and how conflicts arise, especially in systematic processes of change, such as decolonization. In doing so, the article argued that we need to uncover the historical foundations of security relations and, thus, the historical coming about of social conditions at critical junctures if we are to have more fruitful debates about security and conflict. Studying peace and conflict involves developing an understanding of transition processes, which are often shaped by contradictions, contestations, and marginalization, and, in extension, how historical memory is getting politicized. This understanding is especially relevant to the study of historical decolonization processes, during which societies are torn between local aspirations of self-determination and global macro-narratives and power relations.

The framework presented in the paper makes a case for the added value of studying postcolonial security research and archival data in tandem. It follows scholars that emphasize the power of the audience to silence actors, but the article highlights strategies to listen to the voice of the marginalized actors in history. In particular, the article's contribution lies in the differentiation of temporality within security constructions and traces dis/continuities of the Cameroonian internationalized decolonization. The proposed framework enables an understanding of the moments of permanence and rupture, the dis/continuities of power hierarchies, and the violence/s of colonial rule as the context where the actor's agencies and construction of reality occur. The tandem of postcolonial security and archival data informs international relations of a more nuanced understanding of the dynamic structures and agencies that shape history-making.

The empirical illustration shows, in particular, how discourses and practices as dis/continuities inscribe and preserve themselves, thus forming a sediment for later moments in contemporary history as three security narratives. The notion of the postcolonial standpoint used here helps to reflect and understand more about historical processes of marginalization and which actors are included, excluded, or made peripheral at nodal points of history-writing and world-making (Lee 2010; Getachew 2020; Milford 2023). To address the knowledge production in the archive, the article developed the idea of the *postcolonial dilemma* further by providing three interpretative strategies for using archival sources that help to avoid emphasizing colonial knowledge. In using Azoulay's, Stoler's, and Said's interpretative strategies, the article showed that marginalized positionalities can indeed speak in colonial archives, but only in highly circumscribed ways. The approach to the study of dis/continuities proposed was applied to Cameroonian decolonization and its legacies, and proved useful in explaining why violence resurged and why scholars and analysts connect current security constellations to the past in the recent Anglophone conflict. Even though recent violence only broke out in 2017, dissatisfaction and protests among Anglophones and oppositional actors existed long before. This is where security narratives were crucial to uncovering instances of exclusion, frustration, and marginalization. They revealed the insidious and hardly perceptible transgressions underneath dominant explanations of what creates secure situations for some actors and volatile for others, as well as how they shift a peaceful trajectory into one of conflict escalation. The approach allowed research of the shared and entangled history and of its repercussions on today's structures. It further addressed concrete problems in international relations by understanding how historical events were politicized in Cameroon's internationalized decolonization and how these experiences might affect the state-building process (Mamdani 1996, 2001; Englebert 2009; De Juan and Pierskalla 2017). This contributes to an emerging body of work in the peace, security, and conflict field on how to apply post- and decolonial approaches to the historicization of conflict situations.

Methodologically, the article highlights the power of the archive and directs attention away from dominant voices toward the consideration of the role played by marginalized positionalities. This followed the idea that research needs to acknowledge the politics of history and the real consequences they have for marginalized people since who is remembered and how they are remembered is not detached from today's processes of marginalization.[10] The historical foundations of these marginalizations remain essential to understanding today's violence and authoritarian state practices. This does not only speak to African experiences but also to Asian (Stolte and Lewis 2022) and post-socialist experiences (Aradau 2024), which also came up, for example, after the opening of former Soviet archives to Western audiences (Fitzpatrick 2015). Thus, to understand peace in its essence, it is necessary to look back at the conflict situation and how it was solved by engaging critically with the sources used. The temporality of conflicts remains essential to the study of the past and to understanding the future because it enables scholars to better situate current debates and provide a more nuanced understanding of today's violence.

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[10]The German Digital Women's Archives and the Kreuzberg Museum in Berlin are two examples of social movements archives, containing antiracist collections and many sources on queer history, also available online at https://www.digitales-deutsches-frauenarchiv.de/start and https://versammeln-antirassismus.org/.

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