

JANUARY/FEBRUARY TRENDS

The state apparatus is increasingly facing divisions. Rival factions are jockeying for power and questions abound over succession planning for President Biya, who has held power for over 40 years. Public anger is increasing over the cost of living. The Anglophone conflict, now in its eighth year, is showing no end in sight.

WHAT TO WATCH IN THE COMING WEEKS AND MONTHS

1 The political system is at a turning point

If Biya, 91, loses his grip on power, struggles among ruling party factions could turn violent or hamper the state's capacity to function.

Political factions could leverage their influence over different elements of the security services and whip up existing ethnic tensions, especially via social media.

Any protests over the high cost of living, following the removal of fuel subsidies in February for example, could prompt calls for a political transition.

Biya may yet hang on and run in the **2025 presidential election**, or pass the baton to a handpicked heir, but either could still trigger resistance from sections of the ruling party or a revamped opposition.

TO WATCH Perceptions of Biya's physical stamina; cost of living or new economic measures fuelling protests; political campaign in lead-up to 2025 election; inflammatory discourse on social media.

Potential Consequences

If the looming crisis over Biya's succession escalates to an all-out struggle for political and economic power, it could drive conflict from the periphery to the centre of the country. Existing ethnic tensions could breed violence.

Armed forces, currently fighting separatist militias in the Anglophone regions, battling Boko Haram insurgents in the Far North and policing several communities on the brink of community violence or facing kidnappings, could be pushed to step in to help stabilise the central institutions.

2 Violence will likely escalate in the Anglophone regions

Anglophone separatists could launch more deadly attacks once they obtain expected larger volumes of weapons from various locations.

Biafra separatists in neighbouring Nigeria (known as IPOB), now allied to Ambazonia Governing Council (AGovC), one of Cameroon's Anglophone factions, could step up attacks on Cameroonian soil, especially in oil- and gas-rich Bakassi peninsula.

The military will likely continue counter-insurgency operations in the absence of a meaningful dialogue.

Vigilantes groups/militias will likely continue violent attacks, with a heavy toll on civilians.

TO WATCH Bakassi as a safe haven for armed groups; potential restart of mediation initiatives; deteriorated humanitarian conditions following the separatists' rejection of international aid support; AU involvement in Cameroon to facilitate a settlement; reallocation of troops to Yaoundé in case of a national crisis.

Potential Consequences

The military deal between separatists could lead to increased insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea, an area notorious for piracy, as well as renewed tensions in the Bakassi peninsula, where Cameroon and Nigeria settled a long-standing border dispute in the 2000s.

As the conflict drags on with no resolution in sight, and hampered humanitarian assistance, the toll on civilians will likely grow. Lack of access to education (almost half the area's schools have stopped functioning) in particular exacerbates the already serious issues plaguing Cameroon's Anglophone communities and places an additional care burden on women.



Flashpoint

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On the Horizon offers a snapshot into emergent conflicts and crises in the next three to six months in a clear, accessible format, identifying triggers, key dates to watch and potential behaviour of conflict actors, to support global conflict prevention efforts.

