CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Among the issues addressed at the global level, the environment occupies a unique place. The literature on the environment has grown considerably since the 1990s, even though it was not originally a central theme in international relations (IR) theory. In particular, the environment was absent from the main theoretical debates of the 1960s-1970s and was only recognised as legitimate by IR scholars in the late 1980s (Mitchell, 2009), despite some early work (Young, 1982). Yet the literature of interest here is firmly rooted in the discipline through regime theory (Kimball, 1996), which it helped to deepen in the 1980s and 1990s, at a time when many others were turning away from it. In the face of the looming ecological crisis, internationalists have sought to understand the conditions for international co-operation in managing global environmental change (Vogler & Imber, 1996). It is also environmental issues that provide one of the most convincing illustrations of the post-nationalist turn initiated by global studies (Barnett & Sikkink, 2009), through reflections on global environmental governance and the action of transnational networks.

Since the 1970s, the environment has become a major issue in international relations. This entry into the international arena has been made possible by two concomitant elements according to Gemenne (2014). Firstly, environmental crises have profoundly affected relations between states: competition for increasingly scarce natural resources, human migrations, environment-related conflicts, etc. Secondly, environmental issues have become a major issue in international relations. Today, environmental issues have become a priority area of intervention for many international organisations: one only has to look at the number of UN agencies present at international climate summits, for example.

Moreover, many environmental problems know no borders and therefore go far beyond the state framework: this is of course the case for climate change, but also for the destruction of the ozone layer, the erosion of biodiversity, etc. Many environmental problems have their source in externalities, such as the unpaid consequences of economic activities (Mitchell, 2009). Biodiversity losses are and important environmental challenge that capture the attention of the international community. Indeed, beside the UNFCCC, the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) was also signed by the party in 1992 to commit for the protection of species worldwide. This

includes several actors; governments, local populations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who sometimes are involve in environmental dispute (Meyer and Sangar, 2014; Nicholson 2009). This was the case in Cameroon where on the 4th February 2020, the Government announced its decision to place about 68 385 hectares, covering the proposed Ebo National Park area for timber exploitation (Greenpeace, 2020).

The Ebo forest is the most important tract of intact forest in the Gulf of Guinea Biodiversity Hotspot (Mfossa, Abwe, & Morgan, 2017). It is as well a refuge for several wildlife and plant species that have been extirpated in other parts of the ecological region (Morgan et al., 2013). Deugoue and Fabrice (2020) reported that many animal and plant species found in the area are listed as Vulnerable, Endangered or Critically Endangered in the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List. It is also an important carbon sink, containing over 35 million tonnes of carbon (Global Forest Watch, 2020), equivalent to the cumulative carbon emissions of about 7.5 million cars driven for an entire year (Kakouei, Vatani, & Idris, 2012). By keeping this important amount of carbon, Ebo forest would highly contribute to global climate change mitigation actions.

On the socio-cultural setting, Ebo forest is surrounded by more than 40 communities from the Banen and Bassa ethnic groups, some of which were initially living in the forest and were forced to leave during civil strife around the independence of Cameroon (Greenpeace Africa, 2020; Mfossa et al., 2017). As such, the forest is a cultural and ancestral abode, and source of livelihood and health to these communities along its edge. According to Abwe and Morgan (2020), the forest is full of archaeological history, including ruins of colonial roads, stone-built missionary buildings and ancient village sites. The graves of patriarchs and matriarchs along with other cultural relics symbolising the culture and tradition of the Banen tribe are situated in these village sites (Abwe and Morgan, 2020).

The biodiversity richness of the Ebo forest coupled with the conservation status of most of the species it harbours and it high cultural value likely justify the initial decision of the Cameroonian government to upgrade part of that forest into a National Park in 2006 (Abwe & Morgan, 2020). It was thus reiterated that logging activities would likely lead to the destruction of the forest by reducing its ecosystem functions with a significant negative social and economic impacts on the lifestyle of the surrounding human populations (Deugoue & Fabrice, 2020). National and

international NGOs then raised up through a series of actions involving multi-stakeholders to change the Cameroonian government plans. That was the beginning of the so-called environmental disputes by Nicholson (2009) who reported that management of natural resources are usually embedded with disagreement.

The resolution of this type of disputes have been theorised by Felstiner et al. (1981) and typically includes the naming of the problem, blaming the people responsible for that problem and claim for reparation. The process of resolution is developed such a way to construct a public problem. For that purpose, the mobilisation of key actors and media is capital to spread the information and reach out to as many stakeholders as possible, including diplomatic partners (Meyer & Sangar, 2014; Sharma, 2010) and make the issue to be registered into the political agenda (Mccombs, 2015). This process have been widely used by NGOs to solve environmental issues and save the nature as reported by several studies (Ariti, van Vliet, & Verburg, 2018; Clapp, 1994; Gaudreau & Cao, 2015; Kim Dung, Bush, & Mol, 2016; Nicholson, 2009; van Welie & Romijn, 2018). However, the strategy used in solving the Ebo forest environmental problem remains unexplored.

Combined with other factors such as security challenges, the destruction of forests with climate change as consequences is affecting vulnerable population worldwide and more particularly in the sub-Saharan region (Castanier 2019; Peters et al., 2019). In the Far North Cameroon for example, terrorists (Boko haram) insurgency, compounded by chronic vulnerability, food insecurity and the growing impact of climate change, has left 1.2 million people in need of urgent assistance (OCHA, 2020c). Heungoup (2016) from Crisis Group reported that Cameroon is the second most-affected country by the Boko Haram ferocity in the Lake Chad Basin. About 527,000 displaced persons who are facing significant protection risks (UNHCR, 2020a). Local communities, whose pre-existing vulnerabilities have been aggravated by these arrivals, the rising violence and the disruption of livelihoods and basic social facilities, are also in need of support. This situation creates a humanitarian crisis that have to be handle by the international community though multi-stakeholder partnership. However, the way the multi-stakeholder partnership is organised in this issue remains poorly known.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships also impact the economic aspect of the forestry sector with the rise of new partners. Indeed, since the colonial period, European countries have kept a monopoly

on economic relations with most African countries such as Cameroon (Dubois, 2005; Mwanza & Kabamba, 2002). However, with the rapid industrial growth in Asia and China in particular for the past two decades (Barjot, 2018; Lemoine, 2007), they have gradually been the leader in economic exchanges with Cameroon (Cabestan, 2015; V. Mbajon, Xiaolong, & Hassoumi, 2019; Nguepjouo, 2020). The evolution of trade in timber is proof of this pre-eminence. Indeed, the study by Cerutti et al. (2016) notes that while from 2009 to 2012, exports to the EU were still in the majority, recently the weight of exports to Asia (especially logs) has increased: in 2009, Europe imported around 950,000 m^3 of timber, whereas in 2015 it imported around 1.2 million m^3. On the other hand, Asia imported around 520,000 m^3 of timber in 2009, whereas they imported almost as much as Europe in 2015. Tieguhong (2015) recorded the presence of a variety of Chinese players who are investing in various fields of the forest sector (exploitation, processing, financing, transport, etc.) in Cameroon. Since 2015, the local demand for timber from Chinese companies established on the national territory has increased in view of the new projects entrusted to them, infrastructures in the framework of structuring projects, and the preparation of the African Cup of Nations football tournament (Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon 2018). The increased importance of these new players has surely induced several changes in the Cameroon's forestry sector.

1.2. Research question

Based on the background that already explained above, the research question that will be discussed in this thesis is: "*How multi-stakeholder partnership help in managing forestry sector in Cameroon"*

The influence of multi-stakeholders will be analysed in several aspects of the environment, including advocacy for biodiversity conservation and economic aspect of forestry sector. On this view, the specific questions that will be discussed in this thesis are:

a) How the diversification of partners with the entrance of Sino-Asian investments induced changes in the forest sector in Cameroon?
b) What is the role of multi-stakeholder partnership in advocacy for the protection of environment considering the Case of Ebo forest in Cameroon?
c) How multi-stakeholder partner with Cameroon to address the humanitarian crisis due to climate change in the Far North of the country?

1.3. Literature review

In conducting research based on literature study, the author needs to use previous research that participated in discussing the impact of multi-stakeholder partnership in managing the forestry sector in Cameroon. This is because the data in previous studies can be used to support author's data. Therefore, the author chose several scientific journals to discuss the issue according to the different aspects of multi-stakeholder partnership in the forestry sector.

1.3.1. Ebo Forest in Cameroon

The Ebo forest is of biodiversity and cultural exceptional importance (Abwe and Morgan, 2020). it is also an important carbon sink, containing an estimated 35 million tonnes of carbon (Global Forest Watch, 2020), that is equivalent to the emissions of 7.5 million cars driven for an entire year. By stocking this important amount of carbon, the Ebo forest thus highly contribute to mitigate the phenomenon of climate change.

1.3.1.1. Localisation of Ebo forest

The Ebo forest stretches over 2000km^2 of lowland and submontane rainforest in the Littoral region of Cameroon (4°21´N, 10°25´E). It is located within an area of high biodiversity, between the Sanaga river in Cameroon and the Cross river in Nigeria (Figure 1). The average annual precipitation in the area is 1500-2000 mm in the northern and interior regions. The average annual temperature is 25-28 °C. the landscape is relatively flat although there are some areas of undulating terrain, and a few mountains rising to 1200 m inside the boundaries of the proposed Ebo National Park.

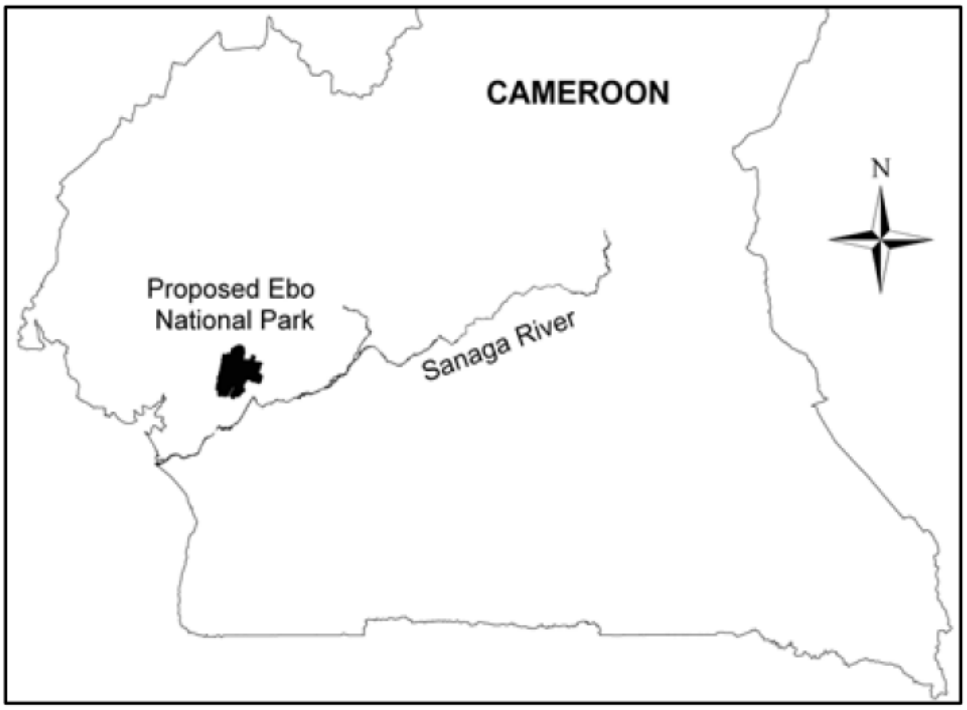

Figure 1. Localisation map of Ebo Forest in South-west Cameroon (Whytock & Morgan, 2010)

1.3.1.2. Socio-cultural importance Biodiversity of Ebo forest

The Ebo forest is surrounded by more than 40 communities from the Banen and Bassa ethnics, some of which were initially living in the forest and were force to leave during the independence war (Greenpeace Africa, 2020; Mfossa et al., 2017). The forest is a cultural and ancestral abode, and source of livelihood and health to these communities along its edge. According to Abwe and Morgan (2020), the forest is full of archaeological history, including colonial roads, stone-built missionary buildings and ancient village sites, the latter abandoned around the time of Cameroon's Independence in 1960. The burial sites of close relatives of patriarchs and matriarchs are situated in these village sites along with other cultural relics that symbolise the culture and tradition of the Banen tribe.

The Ebo forest is located within the region of high biodiversity between the Sanaga river in Cameroon and the Cross river in Nigeria. It is the most important tract of intact forest in the Gulf of Guinea Biodiversity Hotspot (Oates et al., 2004). On this regards, it is a sanctuary for wildlife and plant species that have been exterminated in other parts of this ecological region (B. J. Morgan et al., 2013; Oates, Bergl, & Joshua M. Linder, 2004). Indeed, it is home to at least 160 bird species, most of which are unique to Ebo (Deugoue & Fabrice, 2020). The forest also host

several populations of primates such as the geographically intermediate gorillas (*Gorilla gorilla*) and the main population of Nigeria-Cameroon chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes ellioti*) (Abwe and Morgan, 2008; Morgan et al., 2011). It is also a home for population of drills (*Mandillus leucophaeus*) and Preuss's red colobus (*Piliocolobus preussi*) (Morgan et al., 2013). The forest also harbours forest elephants and a wide range of other large mammals, amphibians and reptiles. Several new and threatened plant species unique to the Ebo forest, including *Ardisia ebo*, *Crateranthus cameroonensis*, *Gilbertiodendron ebo*, *Kupeantha ebo*, *Inversodicraea ebo*, *Palisota ebo*, and *Talbotiella ebo*, have been discovered, described and published by Cheek et al. (2018).

The biodiversity richness of the Ebo forest coupled with the conservation status of most of the species it harbours, justify why the Government of Cameroon decided in 2006 to upgrade part of the forest into a national park. Many of the animal and plant species found in the area are listed as Vulnerable, Endangered or Critically Endangered in the IUCN Red List (Deugoue & Fabrice, 2020).

The significance of the Ebo forest has long been attested by the Government of Cameroon, which has supported and facilitated the conservation of its rich biodiversity as well as research activities on a wide range of species in the forest including chimpanzees, gorillas, drills and plants (Abwe & Morgan, 2020; Deugoue & Fabrice, 2020; Morgan et al., 2011). In addition to granting numerous research permits for projects in Ebo, the Government of Cameroon has also legalised and authorised grassroots associations. This with the aim to conserve the rich wildlife and cultural diversity of the Ebo forest through engaging in monitoring threats to gorillas, promoting alternative sustainable livelihood in communities to mitigate pressure on the gorillas and other wildlife, and sensitising the general public on the importance of the Ebo forest's unique biodiversity (Abwe and Morgan, 2020; Mfossa et al., 2017).

In addition to granting several research permits for projects in Ebo forest, the Cameroonian government has also legalised and authorised some grassroots associations: the *Clubs des Amis des Gorilles* (CAG), and the *Association des Chefs Traditionnels Riverains de La Forêt d'Ebo* (ACTRIFE). The CAGs aim to conserve Ebo gorillas and their habitats through engaging in monitoring threats to gorillas, promoting alternative sustainable livelihood for surrending communities to mitigate pressure on the gorillas and other wildlife, and sensitising the general

public on the importance of the Ebo forest's unique biodiversity. Under the dynamic leadership of Chief Dipita Gaston (Ndokbiakat clan chief), ACTRIFE has as its goal the conservation of the rich wildlife and cultural diversity of the Ebo forest, and the amelioration of livelihoods in communities along the edge of the forest.

The main threats to the rich and unique biodiversity of the Ebo forest to date include habitat loss, poaching and the bushmeat trade (Abwe & Morgan 2008; Mahmoud et al. 2019). The investigation of Fuashi et al., (2019) reveled that a total of 3768 animals with biomass of 26039.5 kg was harvested from the Ebo Forest and associated forests areas by about 461 poachers. The harvest was made up of 30 species from 17 families of wildlife dominated by blue duikers (19.59%), brush- tailed (18.10%) and red duikers (11.36%). Two main weapons, guns and wire snares were identified as the main poaching weapons in the forest. Harvest was more in the wet season than in the dry season and more intense in zones that were very accessible and close to the market centre of Douala. As income gain remained a driving force to poaching, there is need to check poaching activities in the study area against the present weekly off take rate of 2.87 animals per day. Widespread and systematic timber exploitation across the forest would surely exacerbate these threats and potentially damage current conservation and research efforts. The Ebo Forest Research Project has been working with wide range of stakeholders including grassroots communities, civil society organisations and the local government administration to stem these threats (Mfossa et al. 2017).

1.3.2. Environmental dispute management

An environmental dispute can be defined as tensions, disagreements, altercations, debates, competitions, contests, conflicts, or fights over some element of the natural environment (Moore & Mas, 1995). According to Blackburn and Bruce (1995), environmental conflicts arise when one or more parties involved in a decision-making process disagree about an action, with a potential impact upon the environment. For Susskind and Secunda (1998) environmental dispute refers to disagreements among stakeholders in a range of public disputes which involve environmental quality or natural resource management.

Environmental disputes may be further categorized as either private or public interest (Nicholson, 2009). Private interest environmental disputes relate to damage to an individual’s or

group's property or person, resulting from environmentally damaging activity or pollution in a particular location. In contrast, the central issue of public interest environmental disputes is the impact of environmentally damaging or polluting activities on the 'public interest' in environmental preservation. Where severe, such damage may threaten essential environmental functions integral to the continued functioning of the ecosystem. In this chapter, the environmental problem addressed is of public interest since the Ebo forest is for both local, national and international interest.

Steger (1987) categorizes the environmental disputes into six broad categories: land use, natural resource management and use of public lands, water resources, energy, air quality and toxics, which she further subdivides into 'site-specific' and general policy categories. For our purpose, we shall limit to natural resource dispute with the case of Ebo forest. The management of forest resources in Cameroon is regulated by the forest code (Republic of Cameroon, 1994) which specify in its article 11 that the protection of forest, faunal and fishery heritages is ensured by the State.

A commonly adopted categorization in approaches to processing and resolving disputes into three broad categories: power-based, rights-based and interest-based (Nicholson, 2009). In a power-based approach, the disputing parties resolve their conflict through a contest of strength, which may encompass tactics such as lobbying, use of political influence, demonstrations, industrial action or physical force (Menkel-Meadow, 2015). When a power-based approach is taken, the most powerful party typically wins (Boulle, 1996). In a rights-based approach the dispute is adjudicated by an authoritative institution or individual such as an administrator, court, tribunal or arbitrator (McGregor, 2015). Finally, in interest-based approach, such as negotiation or mediation, the conflicting parties negotiate, with or without third party backing, in order to reach a voluntary settlement agreeable to both parties' interests (Carneiro et al., 2013).

In the above literature, the authors have presented principles of environmental disputes. Therefore, this research thesis is expected to expatiate on the practice of environmental disputes resolution with the case of Ebo forest in Cameroon.

1.3.3. Multi-stakeholders in Cameroon forestry sector

1.3.3.1. Forest policy in Cameroon

According to World Data Atlas, the forest area of Cameroon went down by 0.27 % from 203,965 km^2 in 2019 to 203,405 km^2 in 2020. The forest area reduced by 2.68 % since 2010 (Knoema, 2022). Cameroon's forests contain 2,696 million metric tons of carbon in living forest biomass. Biodiversity and Protected Areas: Cameroon has some 1661 known species of amphibians (220+), birds (848), mammals (250) and reptiles (330+) according to figures from the World Conservation Monitoring Centre. About 7.2% of these species are endemic, meaning they exist in no other country, and 6.7% are threatened according to the IUCN red list. Cameroon hosts at least 8260 vascular plants species, of which 1.9% are endemic (Mongabay, 2011).

Cameroon's forestry policy has undergone profound reforms over time, in line with international guidelines on biodiversity conservation and sustainable natural resource management. After the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, these reforms were marked by (i) the creation of a Ministry of the Environment and Forests (MINEF) which was later divided into the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (MINFOF) and the Ministry of the Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED) at the end of 2004, (ii) the elaboration and adoption by the country of a basic instrument essential for the sustainable management of its forest heritage: the Forestry-Environment Sector Programme (PSFE) and (iii) the adoption of the 1994 law on the regime of forests, fauna and fishing.

The general orientation of Cameroon's forestry policy aims at "the perpetuation and development of the economic, ecological and social functions of forests, within the framework of integrated management, ensuring the conservation and use of forest resources and ecosystems in a sustained and sustainable manner".

1.3.3.2. Stakeholders involve in Cameroon forestry sector

Multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSP), -sometimes known as: public private partnerships for development, cross-sector collaboration, collective action- are a vehicle through which interested players can collaborate on specific challenges or exploit opportunities in ways that achieve greater impact than they could achieve alone while enhancing their respective interests (Selsky & Parker, 2005). The MSP involve organisations and institutions from different societal sectors

working together, sharing risks and combining their unique resources and competencies in ways that can generate and maximise value towards shared partnership and individual partner objectives, often through more innovative, more sustainable, more efficient and / or more systemic approaches (Dentoni et al., 2018). The power of MSP comes from the different approaches – public service mandate, people focused or market-based – and the complementary resources – technological, human, social or economic – that partners from different sectors can together bring to the table.

An analysis of the main stakeholder groups in the Cameroon forestry sector must consider both the local and the national level, as two distinct, and partially overlapping groups (Amariei, 2005).

At national level, the most important stakeholder groups are (i) the Government through the Ministry in charge of forests, as the owner of the forest resource base is in charge of the implementation of the national forest policy under the supervision of the Prime Minister, Head of Government and the President of the Republic, Head of State(Alemagi, 2011; Lukumbuzya & Sianga, 2017). (ii) The private sector, represented through three Professional Associations of Forest logging Companies, (representing international, national, and national young entrepreneurs' interests, respectively: *Groupement de la Filière de Bois Camerounaise, Syndicat des Exploitants Forestiers du Cameroun* and *le Syndicat des Jeunes Exploitants forestiers du Cameroun*). Considering that the forest policy recommends and inclusive management of forest resources, (iii) the local communities are represented in the National Assembly. (iv) The civil society, including NGOs and universities are also supporting the implementation of the policy under the supervision of the Ministry in charge of forests.

An additional stakeholder group that has been very active in shaping the policy and legal framework during the last decade is (v) the international donor community, acting through organisations such as UN agencies (the World Bank, FAO, UNDP, UNEP), the European Union, IMF; international NGOs such as IUCN, WWF, Greenpeace and Global Witness, and (vi) national overseas development agencies such as DFID for United Kingdom, GIZ for Germany, AFD for France, CIDA/ACDI for Canada, USAID for United States, JICA for Japan, KOICA for Kore and SNV for Netherlands.

At the local level the most important stakeholder groups recorded by Amariei (2005) are the administrations at regional, divisional and sub-divisional level, while the business sector is

represented through individual processing companies, concessionaires and loggers. Local communities are also active at this level through associations, Local administrations and village chiefs. The civil society organisations, including community-based, national and international NGOs are also playing an important role at this level with the implementation of their projects, independent observation and sensitisation. The international community is present also at local level through individual donor-driven projects and their management teams.

1.3.4. Forestry sector and timber trade Cameroon

1.3.4.1 World market trends and the rules of the timber trade in Cameroon

Literature on forestry sector and timber trade in Cameroon revealed that the international timber market is undergoing changes that are driven by socio-political and economic changes at global, continental, and local levels (European Forest Institute, 2010; ITTO, 2019). Uncertainties are the main factors that regulate the markets (Farber, 2015; Kolk & Mulder, 2011; Rothenberg & Ettlie, 2011). For this reason, players must fight against uncertainty, be aware of strengths and advantages, admit weaknesses and minimise the impact of threats. The uncertainties identified by FAO are: visibility, legality, withdrawal into certain markets, development of auxiliary products and European "local" timber, promotion of "local consumption", development of others (Groutel, 2013). In the framework of this study, we will analyse the two main ones, namely legality and quality.

Discrepancies are noted with respect to the regulatory requirements of the markets (European Forest Institute, 2010; Groutel, 2013). For example, the US (US's Lacey Act), Australia (Australian Illegal Logging Prohibition Bill), Japan (Japan's Goho Wood) and the European Union (EU-FLEGT) have policies in place to combat illegal logging and related trade (European Forest Institute, 2015; Noguerón & Cheung, 2014). Others, such as China and Malaysia, have a particular approach as they require certified wood for re-export to markets that require products of legal origin (NEPCon, 2017). However, it is important to note that China's requirements remain low for wood consumed locally and those exported to other countries (Li & Chen, 2015). It is imperative to note that the FLEGT-VPA of Vietnam, the second-largest destination of Cameroonian timber, entered in force in 2019 (EU FLEGT Facility, 2019; Myers et al., 2020). Finally, there are still new markets to "convince": India, Pakistan, the Middle East and North

Africa (MENA), South Africa and Turkey as examples. But everything also remains to be done for the inter-African market.

In terms of quality of product, the market requirements for timber products, including dimensions, product appearance, dryness or compliance with delivery times are the contractual elements that are taken into account when formulating customer orders (Groutel, 2013; ITTO, 2019). Know-how and the integration of technological advances in terms of manufacturing processes, logistics or packaging must therefore be mobilised.

European markets are less and less demanding for logs from African countries (P. O. Cerutti et al., 2016; European Forest Institute, 2010; Tieguhong, 2015). In fact, following the demand for local processing in several African countries in the 1990s, European foresters have relocated their sawing, drying and cutting units to Africa. The relocation of industrial units observed was a response to the will of African countries to give added value to exported wood, to improve material yields and environmental requirements in the production process (Holland, 2004; Plouvier et al., 2000). European industrialists are looking more and more for increasingly elaborate products, which correspond to laminated or finger-jointed products, for both technical and economic reasons (Moral-Pajares, Martínez-Alcalá, Gallego-Valero, & Caviedes-Conde, 2020). The latter, mainly composed of carpenters, staircase builders, cabinet makers, carpenters, coffin manufacturers etc., are nowadays obliged to focus more and more on their own customers with an offer of tailor-made products, finished products, all with relatively short and above all respected delivery times.

Market demand in Asian countries shows a clear preference for unprocessed timber. These statements have been highlighted in studies by Canby et al. (2008), Huang and Sun (2013), Huang and Wilkes (2011). The main reason for this preference is the recent extensive development of the timber processing sector in their home country (Brack, 2018; Ganegoda, 2020; He & Xu, 2011). It has been unexpectedly noted that for the same volume of wood in China, sawn timber can be sold at a lower price than logs (Ajani, 2011; Han, Wen, & Kant, 2009; Tan, Imamura, Nagasaka, & Inoue, 2020). This contrast seems to be one of the reasons why African producer countries are not really committed to a policy of further wood processing.

In China, this does not motivate companies in producer countries to engage in further wood processing (Ekman, Wenbin, & Langa, 2013). However, the forest legislation in some African

countries is an obstacle to this high demand for unprocessed wood. In Zambia for example, the government has imposed a quota and a gradual increase in tax on non-manufactured wood since 1996 (GRZ, 2013). The same law also prohibits the export of logs. In 1999, Cameroon partially banned the export of logs of certain species, while Mozambique implemented a similar measure in 2007 (Noguerón & Cheung, 2014). Gabon was the last to follow suit in 2010 with a ban on the export of all logs (Terheggen, 2011; World Bank, 2016). States have adopted these policies in part to encourage the development of the timber processing sector in their countries, in the hope of generating more revenue from the extraction and trade of natural resources.

1.3.4.2 Evolution of forest products flows worldwide

Over the last four decades, product flows and trade in timber between the major world markets have undergone profound changes (European Forest Institute, 2010). Initially, Africans did not consume products made from species found in Europe such as Oak, Ash, Merbau, or Tauari, even sub-products from Asian bamboo processing are recent in Africa (FAO, 1962). The flow was oriented in a South-North direction (Guinard, 2004), with history, conventional shipping routes (breakbulk), consumption habits to name but a few being the main factors making the market work.

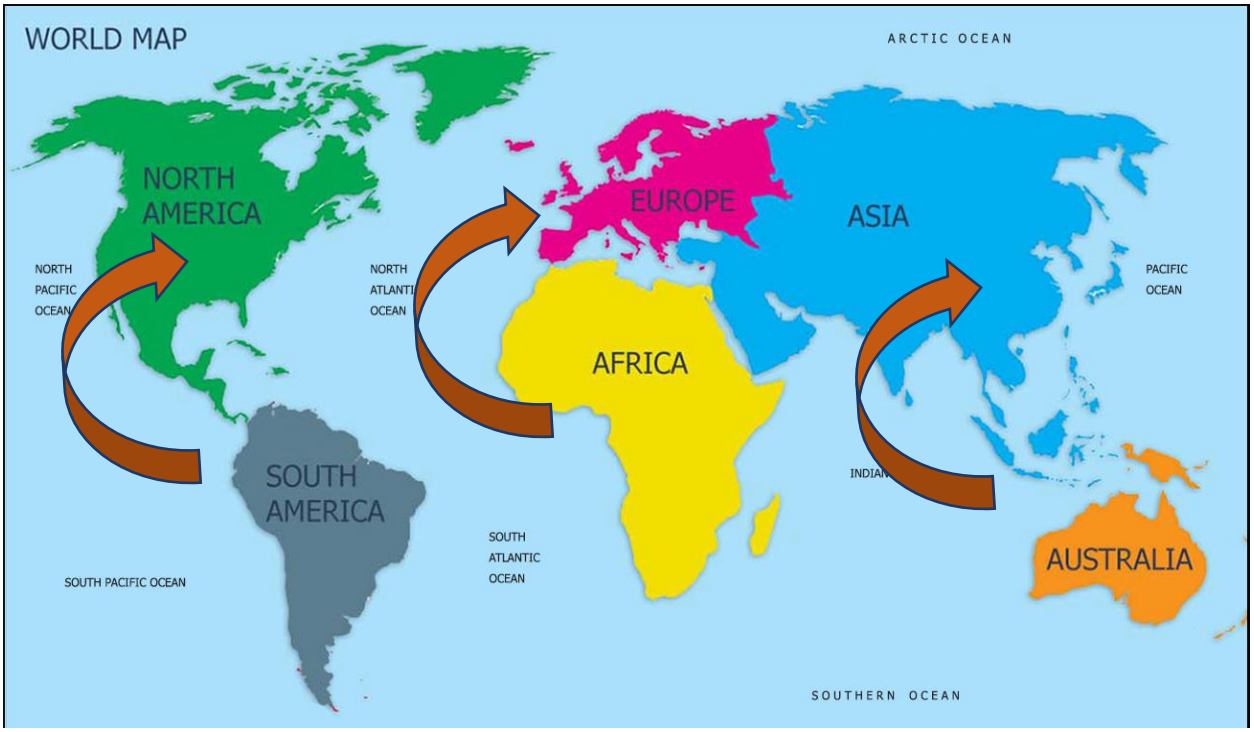

Figure 2. The flow of traditional South-North trade in tropical timber in the 1990s

The international socio-political context, the evolution of processing technology, the ease to communicate and compare prices, the economic development of some countries have greatly contributed to a globalisation of the world wood market after the 1990s (European Forest Institute, 2010; ITTO, 2019). These changes have contributed to the establishment of South-South trade, characterised by the importance of the Chinese, Indian, Malaysian and Vietnamese markets (Chaponnière, 2010; Guinard, 2004). There has also been an increase in trade from the Middle East, South Africa and Turkey (ITTO, 2019; Lukumbuzya & Sianga, 2017). As regards trade in Africa, an increase in trade and self-consumption has been observed for the countries (Erling, Favada, & Simula, 2016).

Figure 3. Current global wood flows

Analyses of African timber flux of COMMODAFRICA (2020) revealed that in 2019, exports of sawn timber from Africa amounted to 463,000 m^3 in 2019, up 50% compared to 2018 and $193.5 million in value, up 32%. Also, Cameroon is the first supplier with 227,391 m^3, a doubling compared to 2018. Then there are: Gabon (76,325 m^3), Angola (47,071 m^3), Nigeria (30,958 m^3), South Africa (21,411 m^3) and Ghana (30,958 m^3). There has also been a drop in imports of tropical logs to China. China imported tropical logs mainly from Papua New Guinea (36%), Solomon Islands (26%), Equatorial Guinea (7.2%) and the Republic of Congo (7.0%). Only 11 countries supplied 95% of China's tropical log requirements in 2019. Towards Europe, there has been an increase in sawn timber but a decrease in logs. Despite a slowdown over the last six months, in 2019, EU imports of tropical wood products were higher than in 2018, about 2.13 million tonnes (Mt), up 2.5%, of tropical wood products worth € 2.32 billion (+3.5%).

1.3.4.3 Trade between China and Cameroon

China is currently Cameroon's first trading partner with an estimated investment of 35.06 million dollars in 2016, bringing the volume of trade between the two countries to 1.96 billion dollars (Presidency of the republic of Cameroon, 2018). According to Ottou (2019), the Middle Kingdom is Cameroon's first partner with 16.6% of trade, its first supplier with 19.4% of purchases, and its 3rd customer (12.5%) behind India (15.6%). China does not only do pure trade

with Cameroon but it also invests in social areas (Dzaka-Kikouta, 2011; Linge, 2019) The Chinese achievements in Cameroon are illustrated, in fact, through much major energy, road, port, sports and health infrastructure projects (Asongne, 2017; Dzaka-Kikouta, 2011).

If investments are made within the framework of bilateral partnerships, it is important to specify that several Chinese private capital companies have also been active for two decades in the field of public works, forestry, mining (Mvondo et al., 2019; Weng et al., 2014). More recently, the Government of Cameroon has created a special division dealing with relations with emerging countries, including relations with Chinese investors, within the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development (MINEPAT, 2019). Cameroon has also been active within the framework of the China-Africa Cooperation Forum since its launch in 2000 (Cabestan, 2015; V. Mbajon et al., 2019), and has participated in the dialogue between the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC) space country and China on improving the sustainability of forest management by Chinese actors (Boone et al., 2019).

The above-mentioned literatures have limited to contribute in explaining the global timber market trend as well as the tendency of the economic cooperation between Cameroon and China. Therefore, this research is expected to expand on the Sino-Asian investment strategies in Cameroon forestry sector. The study also analyses the evolution of timber exportation from Cameroon from 2009 to 2018 with the gradual increase of the amount of exportation to Asian countries.

1.3.4.4. Players in the timber trade in Cameroon

As far as trade is concerned, the Ministry in charge of forests gives companies the opportunity to act as forest operators or timber processors. As it is stated in the national forest law, the prerequisite for the exercise of the activity of forest logger in Cameroon is the holding of approval to the profession of forest logger issued by the Minister of Forests (Republic of Cameroon, 1994). Subsequently, the holder of an authorisation may apply to MINFOF for a permit, or sign a partnership with a permit holder. Depending on the case, the titleholder maybe a forest logger, a council or a community. Timber processors are industrial operators who have obtained a Certificate of Registration as Wood Processors from the Minister of Forestry and Wildlife (Republic of Cameroon, 1994).

Some people are operating outside MINFOF's control, they are traders, forwarding agents, and national intermediaries (Weng et al., 2014). A trader may be defined as the natural or legal person who has the power to act or intends to act, habitually and professionally on behalf of another person, whether a trader or not, in order to conclude a legal act of a commercial nature with a third party (Erling et al., 2016). The commercial intermediary is therefore an expert who has been authorised to act in the name and on behalf of another person (Brousseau, 2002). He, therefore, carries out his professional activity by virtue of a mandate. The intermediary's mandate is a consensual act, which is not subject to any formal requirements and may be written or verbal (Bessy & Chauvin, 2013). Although they have been working in the forest sector for more than 40 years, the profession of trader is not recognised by MINFOF. Some traders are beginning to set up as legal entities and finance certain activities on a small and medium scale.

A professional in the organisation of international goods transport (import and export), the forwarder works for a company providing transport services or for the shipping department of a large company with its own resources (Sarker, 2017). In a company specialising in transport, the forwarder or transit agent works at the crossroads of several activities: administrative, legal, logistical and commercial (Ataoglu, 2015). Administratively, they manage and handle all the documents, required forms and papers inherent in the transport of goods: customs, shipping documents and various certificates (perishable goods, dangerous and fragile materials, etc.). From a technical point of view, he organises the actual transport: routes, modes of transport (train, truck, boat, plane, mixed...), destinations, deadlines, prices. On the commercial side, he draws up quotations according to the requirements of the customer for whom he is the contact person. In the event of a complaint or dispute, he ensures the follow-up of the case until its conclusion.

1.4. Theoretical framework

1.4.1. Sustainable development goal on environmental issues

In 2015, the country leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 goals - the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - that cut across disciplines, sectors and institutional mandates (Ban, 2016). This acknowledged the integrated nature of the many challenges that humanity faces from gender inequality to inadequate infrastructure, from youth

unemployment to environmental degradation (UNEP, 2015). Each of the 17 goals has environment related targets with a total of 30 indicators that UN Environment is taking a lead on.

The preamble of the 2030 Agenda, affirmed the will of world leaders who are: “Determined to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations. UN Environment’s challenge in the 2030 Agenda is to develop and enhance integrated approaches to sustainable development approaches that will demonstrate how improving the health of the environment will bring social and economic benefits. Aiming at reducing environmental risks and increasing the resilience of societies and the environment as a whole, UN Environment action fosters the environmental dimension of sustainable development and leads to socio-economic development.

The environment is central to the growth and transformation of sub-Saharan Africa countries but there seems to be no end in sight to the cycle of poor environmental management and consequent poverty leading to unsustainable development. Omisore (2018) noticed that the attention of governments across sub-Saharan Africa and other stakeholders need to be drawn continually to environmental problems which constitute a serious impediment to development and viable partnerships need to be established to tackle these problems. Significant progress will not be made on the SDGs until environmental issues are given a deserved priority by concerned stakeholders.

1.4.2. Building public problems to solve disputes

Public problems are the result of prior social construction (Burningham, 1996). If it is the starting point for any public policy, it is therefore not automatically the object of a policy (Koren, & Band-Winterstein, 2013). On the one hand, the collective dimension must be sufficiently strong to justify the intervention of public authorities. In addition, public authorities cannot meet all the demands because their resources are limited. For these reasons, some problems are put on the agenda and are the subject of public policies, and others are not (Mccombs, 2015). The agenda setting depends on many factors related to values, novelty or the dramatic intensity of the problem, but also on the political context (Mohd Zain, 2014).

Felstiner et al. (1981) have characterized the emergence and transformational approach to disputes as generally involving three stages: naming, blaming, and claiming. This theory has

been largely used and developed by several authors over the years (Calavita and Jenness, 2013; Harpur, 2014; Hassenteufel, 2011; Loriol, 2012; Nicholson, 2009; Orsini, 2002; Vézinat, 2013; Zhu, 2016). 'Naming' involves the identification of a particular experience as injurious. 'Blaming' involves the attribution of that injury to the fault of another individual, institution or social entity that has caused the injury. Whilst the third stage, 'claiming', occurs when a remedy is claimed from the person or entity believed to be responsible for the injury. Finally, a claim is transformed into a dispute when it is wholly or partly rejected. Thus, it is the specific and particularized nature of a dispute, centring upon a particular claim, which makes it justiciable and more amenable to resolution via methods such as litigation or mediation.

1.4.3. Agenda-setting of the problem

The notion of agenda setting refers to the shift of the problem from the natural or private to the public domain. Garraud (1990) defines the notion of agenda setting as all problems which are dealt with, in any form whatsoever, by public authorities and therefore likely to be the subject of one or more decisions. Agenda setting therefore means that the public authorities take ownership of the problem and consider themselves competent to deal with it. But it is not simply a matter of registering it on the agenda: there is a framing effect linked to the way in which the problem emerged. The way in which the problem has been constructed has an influence on the way in which it is thought about, and therefore on the way in which it is dealt with. It is in this sense that any public problem is first and foremost a social construction and that there are no a priori public problems in nature that are ready to be managed by the public authorities.

Hilgartner and Bosk (1988) point out that public authorities select from among the problems those that are put on the agenda. According to them, public attention is a scarce resource, the allocation of which depends on competition within a public arena system. For this reason, they believe that public problems compete on the political equivalent of markets: "public arenas". In media arenas, those of collective expression (parties and trade unions) or those of institutions (parliament, government), political problems compete to enter or remain on the public agenda.

This competition between public issues leads to a selection effect guided by three main principles. The dramatic intensity of the problem: for example, a strong event staging the problem, particularly in the media, and provoking reactions within society leads to the crystallisation of the problem (Lussier & Chouinard, 2020). Its novelty, this is less related to the

problem itself than to the way in which it is approached for example through an advance in scientific knowledge or the publication of statistics showing the worsening of a phenomenon (Isett & Hicks, 2020). Its appropriateness to the dominant cultural values, which refer to the ideological, cultural and political context of an era, that favours the publicising of a problem. For example, in the case of abortion, it is the post-1968 context that appears to be decisive with the dissemination of values such as sexual liberation or gender equality (Lits, 2020).

Finally, the setting of the agenda depends on the political context and the political situation. King (1985) refers to the 'policy window' as a favourable conjuncture for agenda setting. This window is set up at the political level in the same way as the alignment of the planets in astronomy. King believes that three independent spheres come into harmony: the problem stream which the public authorities have paid attention to; the policy stream that are the set of available policy solutions that depend on technical feasibility or prevailing values; and the political stream: this is composed of four elements (public opinion, organised political forces (parties and trade unions), the executive power, and collective bargaining).

Appling King's modelling to the policies, Surel (1997) adds that certain intrinsic elements of the measure have reinforced its agenda-setting. On the one hand, it is a simple measure to adopt, without financial cost to the State. On the other hand, it has a strong symbolic dimension: it emphasises the rejection of the liberal logic of the market and activates the right/left divide.

1.5. Hypothesis

Based on the theoretical framework described, the author draws the following hypotheses that will be explained:

a) The diversification of partners with the arrival of Sino-Asian investments induced important changes in the forest sector in Cameroon
b) The multi-stakeholder partnerships are powerful tool in the advocacy for the protection of environment.
c) The multi-stakeholder partnership is not enough to address the humanitarian crisis in the Far North Cameroon

1.6. Research methodology

1.6.1. Data collection

This study involves access to a wide range of materials. Relevant data (both primary and secondary) on the topic were collected through document review (official and unofficial documents) and interviews with resource persons. The collection of secondary data focused on the review of related documents; literature on the issue. Official documents include private archives, treaties, declarations, communiqués, speeches, press conferences, parliamentary debates, reports, memoirs, souvenirs, etc. Unofficial documents include the press, periodicals, books, scientific journals, articles, etc.

The acquisition of these documents was done through various sources. Unofficial documents were collected not only through university libraries, public and private libraries, but also through Internet research. Official documents were collected firstly through the Ministry's documentation at the Ministries of External Relations during the internship period but also from the services of the Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development and the Ministry of Forests and Fauna. These documents were also collected through the consultation and compilation of the data banks of relevant organizations such as Central African Forest Observatory (OFAC), Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO) and Forest Trends) and national database of the Cameroon Timber Marketing Database (COMCAM), Computerised Forest Information Management System (SIGIF), Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF), National Institute of Statistics (NIS) United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and Hajj Statistic etc.

In addition, interviews were held with resource persons from relevant institutions for primary data collection. Series of interviews were held with resource persons including: officials: of MINFOF at the level of the central services and regional services (Centre, Littoral, South and East), the central services of the Ministry of Trade, and its decentralised custom services of Douala; two trade-forwarders working with Asian companies; manager logging companies that are partners of Asian holders of financial resources; a European trader in Yaoundé; and logging companies.

In the case of first objective regarding the communication strategy to halt the logging plan in Ebo forest, the research benefits from in situ observation of the NGOs engaging with the Ebo forest Problem. Indeed, from February to August 2020, one of the resource persons was a staff member of one of the conservation NGOs that was involve in conservation activities in Ebo forest. This provided direct access to first-hand information to elaborate on the role of the actors involve in the issue. In addition, Internet-based research was undertaken to obtain publicly available information (reports, press releases, video, social media and web pages) between February to August 2020 on all the main conservation NGOs and all the actors engaged with the Ebo forest problem. This was useful for examining chronologically the problematic starting from the events that preceded the Ebo forest problem to the successive events which occur gradually during the period of the Ebo forest issue.

1.6.2. Data analysis

The data were analysed using a mixed research method including the geopolitical method, the qualitative method and quantitative method.

1.6.2.1 The geopolitical method

The geopolitical method analyses the behaviour of states at the local, regional or international level in order to understand their intentions, their motivations and the alliances that are built between them and those that tend to be deconstructed (Thual, 1996). Geopolitics is also distinguished by its inherently multidisciplinary nature. It uses sociology not only when analysing identities, but also when quantifying certain data (Battistella, Smouts, Petiteville, & Vennesson, 2012). It uses the diachronic method in addition to history. Geopolitics captures the behaviour of state actors in the long term. It analyses the conjunctural, the eventual in the sole perspective of inscribing it in sustainable logics.

1.6.2.2 The qualitative method

The qualitative method is important in the social sciences. It can be used for field studies such as participant observation, individual or group interviews and case studies (Jodelet, 2003). Qualitative analyses are necessary to explain what statistics only record. Rather than focusing on the most apparent aspects of social reality, they bring out the tacit, the unspoken in order to grasp the deeper meaning of phenomena. Qualitative methods 'do not consider social facts as things, but as configurations of meaning, since it is appropriate to consider what makes sense

subjectively for the agents, based on their value system' (Assez, 2014). This method was used when analysing the documents used. For example the political ecology approach introduced by Gautier and Benjaminsen (2012) was used. It is the conjunction of a pattern of interactions made of economic interests (Government logging plans in Ebo forest to bring income), ecological changes (destruction of Ebo forest unique habitat), and political battles (designation of land use and dispossession of local communities from their territories). As such, the study is firmly rooted in an acute conflict over the distribution of land use between conservation NGOs and local people on the one hand, and the government of Cameroon on the other, due to the conversion of the unique Ebo Forest habitat. This forest is of ecological importance for wildlife and cultural value for local people.

1.6.2.3 The quantitative method

According to (Creswell, 2014) quantitative research methods emphasize objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires, and surveys, or by manipulating pre-existing statistical data using computational techniques. The goal in conducting quantitative research study is to determine the relationship between an independent variable on one hand and a dependent or outcome variable on another hand within a population (Strydom, 2014). Quantitative research designs are either experimental (subjects measured before and after a treatment) or descriptive (subjects usually measured once). With a descriptive study establishing only associations between variables; an experimental study establishing causality (Battistoni, Som, & Longman, 2014). This study was focus on descriptive quantitative research, thus establishing the association between variables.

For the analysis of timber exportation form Cameroon, the COMCAM database was typed and analysed using the software MS Excel. This quantitative analysis led to tables and graphs that were then interpreted.

1.7. writing systematics

The writing systematics of this research will include the following aspects:

Chapter I: The opening section of the research which contains the background of the problem, research purpose, research question, literature review, theoretical framework, hypotheses, statements of originality from the author, research contributions, and research methodology.

Chapter II: The initial part of the research discussion analyses the changes induced by the diversification of partners with the entrance of Sino-Asian in terms of investments investment strategy in the forestry sector in Cameroon.

Chapter III: Part of the research discussion presents the impact of multi-stakeholder partnership in advocacy for the conservation of biodiversity, Case of Ebo forest in Cameroon. This includes the capital role of no-governmental organizations, media campaign, general public mobilization and the intervention of foreign partners.

Chapter IV: Part of the research that highlights the multi-stakeholder partnership in far north Cameroon, in response to the humanitarian crisis due to climate change

Chapter V: The closing section of the research, which contains the conclusions of this study as well as the criticisms and suggestions submitted by the author, based on the research results.