

The Democratization Process in Cameroon, Thirty (30) Years after Democratic Transition (1990-2020): Achievements, Challenges, Uncertainties and Prospects

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Abstract: How to apprehend and describe the democratic process in Cameroon three decades after the democratic transitions of the 90s? This is the question at the heart of this contribution, which aims to highlight the achievements, analyze the contingencies of practice and lay the groundwork for a better entrenchment of democratic culture and the rule of law. Based on the analysis of legal texts and the description of the facts, the study shows that the formal gains of the democratic process are shaken, thirty years later, by numerous crises: *institutional crisis; crisis of public freedoms and the rule of law; crisis of electoral democracy*. The relaunch of the democratic process necessarily requires a renewal of political leadership, the grooming of certain 'liberticidal' laws, the establishment of fair rules for electoral competition, the education of the people in democratic culture and the decisive contribution of the diaspora in the peace and development process of Cameroon.

Keywords: Cameroon, Democratization, Democratic Transition, Democratic Practice, Thirty (30) Years.

I. INTRODUCTION

The year 2020 was a pivotal and symbolic year in the march of the African continent on the paths of democracy (Holeindre and Riched, 2010). In fact, it is thirty (30) years ago that almost all African States engaged in the liberal movement in favor of democratic transitions (Gouard, 2010; Conac, 1993; Quantin and Dalloz, 1997) of the 1990s following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet bloc. For its part, Cameroon has experienced the democratic transition (Onana, 1994; Kamto, 1993) and the rise of fever that has accompanied this new political era. In fact, the experience of the multiparty system experienced in the aftermath of independence in 1960 was very brief due to the very early advent of the single party in 1966 (Mahiou, 1969), the political translation of 'unanimity' society (Kamto, 1987) hostile to dissenting thought. Understood in this way, "the priority of development served to legitimize authoritarianism in the form of a single party" (Medard, 2010). In the name of the developmentalist ideology based on the double imperative of building national unity and economic development (Kamto, 1987), Cameroon was ruled by

President Amadou Ahidjo with an "iron fist" that was detrimental to government. expression of fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of expression, to think and to demonstrate. The 1962 ordinance on the repression of subversion seemed like a sword of Damocles ready to cut through and suppress any inclination to protest.

Despite the organization of the electoral ballots, the electoral competition was non-existent, all the political parties having merged to create a single party: the Cameroon National Union (CNU). As for the Constitution, considered as the fundamental law, it was stripped of any binding force (Gonidec, 1988) while the rule of law remains truly unworkable (Chevallier, 2017; Donfack Sokeng, 2016). In any respect, the structural elements of a democracy did not exist. The resignation of President Amadou Ahidjo in 1982 and the advent of President Paul Biya to power will not substantially change the authoritarian face of the state in Cameroon. It was not until the 1990s with the triumph of liberal ideology that Cameroon adopted the principles and demands of pluralist democracy. If it is difficult to "locate the starting point of this political dynamic which, through political indolence and upheavals, slowdowns then sudden accelerations, led Cameroon in the course of the extraordinary democratic revolution" (Kamto, 1993), it must be noted that the context marked by the combined effect of the easterly wind, of the discourse of *La Baule* (Bayard, 1991) and internal social revolts (Mbembe, 2010) served as a detonator. The democratic opening will take place at the end of the 'triparty' from October 30 to November 17, 1991, a pale figure of the famous 'sovereign national conference' (Eboussi Boulaga, 2009; Kamto, 1997), strongly rejected very early by those in political power. From then on, the foundations for a modern democratic state will be gradually laid down by regulation and legislation.

Thirty years later, the democratization process in Cameroon cannot be described in a linear way, because democratization implies an evolutionary dynamic.

The tension towards a projecture (...) because there is always a gap between the theoretical model which furnishes our abstract representations and the concrete experience of democracy with its subtle rules and constraints, the contradictory designs of the actors and the multiple constraints that impose inevitable limits on it (Kamto, 1993).

Therefore, to analyze a floating phenomenon marked by trends that are both evolving and regressive is not an easy task. However, the time that has elapsed (thirty years) is an asset which makes it possible to situate the study both in a retrospective and prospective dynamics, as many doctrinal analyses related to constitutionalism (Breton, 2005) or the electoral process (Jacquemot, 2020) fall within this temporal delimitation. The retrospective sequence seeks the initial benchmarks of the democratization process in order to measure the progress made, the upheavals and the pitfalls overcome. Foresight offers the opportunity to project oneself in order to foresee the blessed or unhappy aftermath of the ongoing democratization process, taking into account the incapacities of the present. In any respect, the interest of such an analysis can only be stimulated. It is structured, from a methodological point of view, on the exegesis of the texts and the narration of the facts which marked this thirty-year period. The formulation of the subject imposes an approach: it will be chronological in the evocation of the facts and dialectic in the discussion of the balance sheet. It is therefore important to note that the study of the democratization process in Cameroon thirty years after democratic transitions is like the facets of a pearl: the visible face reflects democratic gains (II). The reverse of the pearl describes the reality of democratic practice in the terms of the uncertainties and challenges encountered (III). Prospects are to be considered for a better entrenchment of the democratic process in Cameroon (IV) and a conclusion drawn from the analysis (V)

II. THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS IN CAMEROON

It is clear that the democratic gains in Cameroon are inseparable from the 'will' of the head of state, President Paul Biya. This 'will' is appreciated by the particularly libertarian rhetoric which he demonstrated from the moment he took power (Kamto, 1993). In addition to the speeches (Njimeni Njiotang, 2018), the votes-faces¹, we still keep in mind our wish to go down in history as the one who "will have brought prosperity and democracy to his compatriots"² While the role of the Head of State in initiating the democratization process has been variously appreciated by the authors, he should not, however, be underestimated in bad faith, or exalted by courtier dithyramb. Be that as it may, it appears that things

have remained far from being frozen, the lines of authoritarian resistance have moved in the absence of having cracked, and today, we can take stock of what has been achieved. democratic. These achievements are the result of ruptures made at three levels: normative, institutional and electoral. From a normative point of view, the democratic heritage in Cameroon remains crowned by what has come to be called the 'compendium' of rights and freedoms. It designates all the so-called 'freedoms' laws passed by the National Assembly on December 19, 1990 in the wake of the relaxation of the socio-political context extremely tense by the mobilizations of civil society calling for civil disobedience (Pigeaud, 2011). Essentially, these laws enshrine the return to multiparty politics (Moukoko Mbondjo, 1993), freedom of assembly and demonstration³, freedom of association⁴, freedom of social communication⁵ These legislative achievements were ratified by the Constitution of 18 January 1996 (Olinga, 2006; Nguete Abada, 1996). "Impregnated" with the liberal and democratic philosophy (Ardant, 2005), a reflection of the tendencies of renovated constitutionalism (Kofii Ahadzi, 2002), the Cameroonian Constitution appears not only "as a set of legal rules organizing political and social life as well as power imposes on it" (Guastini, 2010) but above all, as the symbol of a profound change in the form of the State which is becoming unitary and decentralized. Following the happy formula of Doyen Favoreu (1990), "the Constitution ceased to be an idea and became a norm, that is to say a binding legal rule" (p.72).

Both in the preamble and in the operative part, the Constitution enshrines rights and freedoms by covering them with the veil of fundamentality (Guimdo 2021; Olinga, 1996; Kamto, 1991). Moreover, it internalizes the main international texts relating to human rights. By its relative stability, the Constitution of January 18, 1996 is the basis of social organization and the ferment of the stability of the institutions registered in the patrimony of the democratic achievements of Cameroon. Reduced in the Constitution of June 2, 1972 to the rank of a simple 'judicial authority,' the judiciary finds in the Constitution of January 18, 1996 all its vitality. From now on, the judicial power asserts itself as a major pillar of the rule of law governed in its relations with the other powers - executive and legislative - by the principle of the separation of powers (Senou, 2019). The unicameralism of the legislative chamber gave way to bicameralism with the establishment of the Senate in 2013 (Teme, 2015; Gatsi, 2015). In the light of the Constitution, institutional renewal will take a new step forward in 2018 with the entry into activity of the Constitutional Council⁶. The establishment of this institution

³ See Law n° 90/055 of December 19, 1990 fixing the modalities of meetings and public demonstrations.

⁴ See Law n° 90/053 of December 19, 1990 on freedom of association, amended and supplemented by Law n° 2020/009 of July 20, 2020.

⁵ See Law n° 90/052 of December 19, 1990 amended and supplemented by law n° 96/04 of January 04, 1996.

⁶ For a long time, the united chambers of the Supreme Court sat in place of the Constitutional Council.

¹ While the members of his political side demonstrated against the "precipitated multiparty system", Paul Biya launched in his general policy speech of the 1st Ordinary Congress of the Cameroonian People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) in 1990: "Our party is strong, of course, but it must now prepare for possible competition. Know how to prepare for it".

² Interview granted to a French journalist Yves Mourousi in 1990.

revives the emergence of a constitutional justice (Holo, 2009) ensured by the Constitutional judge himself (Favoreu, 2014); Kelsen, 1928) enjoying a certain independence (Nguele Abada, 2010). The recent establishment of regional councils⁷ following the adoption of the General Code of Decentralized Territorial Units in December 2019 which completes the architecture of democratic institutions and creates a new pole of electoral competition.

Since the return to multiparty politics, electoral democracy has been experienced by the organization at specific periods of various electoral ballots, whether they be presidential⁸, senatorial⁹ or local¹⁰ elections. The rules of electoral competition have gradually been amended and systematized in an electoral code¹¹. Just like, election management bodies have gradually evolved. From the National Elections Observatory (ONEL)¹², we moved in 2006 to the creation of Elections Cameroon (ELECAM). The electoral system is completed at the top by the role of judicial bodies in electoral disputes (Mandeng, 2017).

All in all, the record of democratic gains in Cameroon is brilliant because the structuring elements, both from a normative and institutional point of view, have for the most part been enshrined. But democracy, as a model of societal organization, cannot be limited to these formal dressings. It must be tested in practice.

III. CHALLENGES AND UNCERTAINTIES OF THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS.

Certainly, the thirty-year record of democratic practice in Cameroon looks like a sine curve. No doubt, it also differs from the political edge of belonging. For those in power, echoing in chorus the declarations of the Head of State, National President of the CPDM, Cameroon is a “great democracy” which has nothing to envy of another. To those who lean on its imperfections, the Head of State says, “*We have only had a few decades to put it in place. The great democratic countries only succeeded in doing so after several centuries.*”¹³ If the argument seems decisive, it is no less implacable because, on the African continent, there are states which have taken up the challenge of raising themselves to democratic standards in the thirty years period under consideration¹⁴.

⁷ The election of Regional Councilors was held on December 6, 2020 and the new regional councilors took office on January 22, 2021

⁸ Since 1990, Cameroon has experienced several presidential elections: 1992, 1997, 2004, 2011 and 2018.

⁹ The first senatorial election took place in 2013 and the second in 2018. Senators are elected for a five-year term.

¹⁰ Combined legislative and municipal elections took place in 1997, 2002, 2007, 2013 and 2020

¹¹ Law n ° 2012/001 of April 19, 2012 on the electoral code amended and supplemented by law n ° 2019/005 of April 25, 2019

¹² ONEL was created on December 19, 2000. It underwent a modification in 2002.

¹³ Head of State’s address to the nation of December 31, 2020

¹⁴ These include countries such as Botswana, Ghana, South Africa, Senegal, Cape Verde etc.

Be that as it may, the results of democratic practice reveal numerous pathologies which crystallize the numerous crises observed at the institutional and constitutional levels of fundamental freedoms and of electoral democracy. At the institutional level, the completion of twenty-four (24) years later of the establishment of the institutions of decentralization - the Regional Councils - certainly contributed to the emergence the bloody crisis in the English-speaking North-West and South-West Regions of the country, calling into question the basis of ‘living together.’ Indeed, what has long appeared under the prism of the English-speaking question / problem (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997) has gradually turned into a crisis (Boubda, 2018), then into an armed conflict (Petrih, 2019). The many solutions implemented by the government, in this case the holding of the Major National Dialogue from November 30 to October 4, 2019, are struggling to silence the crackle of arms while the human and economic¹⁵ damage increases a little more each day¹⁶. On the constitutional level, the relative stability of the Constitution of January 18, 1996 was subject to a revision that violated the principle of democratic alternation (Etekou, 2013) in 2008. Indeed, the lifting of the ‘lock of the limitation’ of the presidential mandate (Tchoupie, 2009) and the consecration of an irrefutable jurisdictional immunity¹⁷ of the President of the Republic are both the translation of a “*crippling*” *constitutionalism* (Owona, 1985) and the sign of the triumph of the “*presidential monarchy*” (Mbata Mangu, 2014) which poorly conceals a desire to perpetuate power. In its new bicameral configuration, parliament still looks like a registration chamber while the judiciary, a true sentinel of the rule of law, withers according to the contingencies of its organization and the venality of certain actors. (Ovono Ondoua, 2019).

The context of ‘authoritarian decompression’ which presided over the adoption of the main laws relating to fundamental freedoms has gradually tightened for several years in Cameroon. It is an understatement to say the expression of the fundamental rights and freedoms of the citizen has experienced a regression which brings to mind the disastrous memory of the authoritarianism of yesteryear (Medard, 2011) under the cover of the 1962 ordinance. Going back in history, the events of February 2008 described as ‘hunger riots’ are still marked by indescribable killings of protesters. The appearance in the Far North of the Boko Haram terrorist movement prompted a response by the defense and security forces to preserve the integrity of the national territory while protecting populations and property. In this context, the violation of the right to life manifests

¹⁵ The North West and South West areas were declared “economically disaster areas” by the government in 2019.

¹⁶ According to various sources, there are more than 3,000 dead, 500,000 displaced and tens of thousands of refugees. For a recent review, see the reports of the NGO Amnesty international (February 2020) and the International crisis group (October 2020).

¹⁷ Article 53 (3) of the Constitution.

itself, on the terrorist side, by repeated explosions of bombs¹⁸; on the side of the defense forces, by extrajudicial executions¹⁹. The explosion of the Anglophone crisis since 2016 has exposed the horrors of blatant human rights violations. At the onset of the crisis, precisely on January 17, 2017, the Cameroonian authorities decided to cut-off internet²⁰ access for three months in the North-West and South-West regions, thus undermining the free right of citizens of access to Internet. If the secessionist forces are particularly put in the index in the hindrance of the right to education²¹ and of the freedom of movements through kidnappings²², the professionalism of the defense and security forces is severely tested by the numerous attacks to the lives of civilians. It is still present in memory of the sad events of Ngarbuh, a locality in the North-West, which occurred on the night of February 13 to 14, 2020, which took the lives of several children and pregnant women. The death in suspicious conditions of journalist Samuel Wazizi,²³ accused of terrorist activities and detained for nearly 10 months is quite illustrative. In this context of war, allegations of arbitrary arrests and detentions, torture, destruction of property and people, extrajudicial executions documented by NGOs overwhelm both the defense forces of the State of Cameroon and the nonstate armed groups²⁴.

Since 2014, a veritable scourge has been erected against the exercise of public freedoms. In fact, the entry into force of the anti-terrorism law on December 23, 2014 mortgaged and marked the shift towards a repressive regime of public freedoms (New Human Rights, 2019). The main freedoms like the freedom of movement²⁵, the freedom of communication²⁶, the freedom of expression²⁷, the freedom of

assembly and demonstration are totally restricted. Regarding the latter, it is particularly hampered by the almost systematic bans by administrative authorities under the pretext of disturbing public order (Makougoum, 2014; Fara Mbodj, 2012). The NGO New Human Rights (2019) indicates that from 2014 to 2019, the trend to ban public meetings is 52% while it is 84% for public demonstrations. These bans are most often made to the detriment of civil society organizations and opposition political parties. The ban on public demonstrations organized by the Cameroon Renaissance Movement (CRM) in the aftermath of the post-election dispute of October 2018 and the violent repressions that followed fully attest to this. In defiance of the law, the police opened fire on demonstrators (Tametong, 2020) and several of them were brought before military courts in violation of international agreements which prohibit these exceptional jurisdictions to judge civilians. These situations, the translation of brazen brutalism (Mbembe, 2020) demonstrate how much electoral democracy still remains precarious in our latitudes.

Indeed, if it were given to tell the story of the electoral processes in Cameroon, we would not finish revealing the unusual ones, some more absurd than the others: between theft of the ballot boxes²⁸, 'purchase of conscience' and excessive fraud. (Tagne, 2019), everything goes. The least that can be said is that the election, defined as the instrument for appointing rulers and the tool for citizen participation in public affairs, has always been marked in Cameroon with ambiguity and disagreements (Quantin, 1998). Disagreement, first, on the rules of electoral competition, in this case the electoral code, rarely consensual, constantly denounced by opposition actors for the subtleties it arranges in favor of the party in power. Disagreement, then, on the modalities of the organization of the elections and the conduct of the polls. The complaints recorded on this aspect relate to the uncertainty of the electoral calendar which can be manipulated at will by the dominant party depending on the issues (Boukongou, 2013), biased electoral registrations notwithstanding the digitization of electoral files, the unsatisfactory distribution of electoral cards, the strategic and opportunistic electoral division (Sindjoun, 1997), the hidden financing of the electoral campaign, the disproportionate occupation of the media in favor of the ruling camp, the stuffing of the ballot boxes, the false election observers, the manipulation of electoral documents, the large-scale electoral fraud (Meledje Djedjro, 2010). All these shortcomings culminate, finally, in a disagreement around the proclaimed electoral results, the

¹⁸ For example, the explosion of a homemade bomb on August 2, 2020 in the village of Nguetchewe in the Department of Mayo Tsanaga left 18 dead and 15 injured. On September 14, 2020, a suicide attack on Koupaye in the Kolofata district killed 8 civilians and injured 14 civilians.

¹⁹ The video of the defense forces coldly executing a mother and baby behind her back moved the world. After an assumed denial, the government ended up acknowledging the facts and the presumed culprits were brought to trial and then sentenced by the military court.

²⁰ Résolution du Conseil des droits de l'homme du 05 juillet 2012 sur la promotion, la protection et l'exercice des droits de l'homme sur internet.

²¹ For example, the repeated attacks on several denominational schools and the recent massacres of October 22, 2020 in Kumba which took the lives of nearly 07 children from the Mother Francisca International Bilingual Academy.

²² Kidnappings of several personalities including Ni John Fru Ndi (Chairman of the SDF), Akere Muna, Cardinal Christian Tumi, Bishop Georges Nkuo (Bishop of kumbo), the Mayor of Babessi, the Fon of Nso in the North-West etc

²³ He was arrested by the police on August 2, 2019 in Buea.

²⁴ Read Alternative report by the NGO Human Rights Watch submitted in March 2020 to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in response to Cameroon's 6th Periodic Report. See also the 2017 and 2018 reports of the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms of Cameroon as well as the various reports of the NGO International Crisis Group, Reddhac and New Human Rights (NDH) on the human rights situation in Cameroon since the advent of the Anglophone crisis.

²⁵ See for example, the "de facto" house arrest of the leader of the Cameroon Renaissance Movement (MRC) from September 21 to December 8, 2020.

²⁶ We remember the threats of closure made by the former Minister of Communication, Issa Tchiroma Bakary, to all media which will give voice to

"terrorists". More recently in March 2020, it was the Minister of Territorial Administration who threatened certain media (Equinoxe TV, STS = V, Radio Balafon, the daily newspaper, etc.) by considering them as "relays of erroneous reports against defense and security forces".

²⁷ See the warning of July 24, 2020 and January 9, 2021 sent by the Senior Divisional Officer (SDO) of the Highlands to His Majesty Sokoundjou Philippe Jean Rameau, King of the Bamougoum.

²⁸ Romeo Dika, ex-member of the CPDM admits in an interview in 2020 having stolen 34 ballot boxes during a legislative election to ensure the victory of his party

bodies of organization and proclamation of the results constantly suspected of partiality. The recent post-election dispute following the 2018 presidential election demonstrated this. It is understandable that the hope aroused by the establishment of the new Cameroonian Constitutional Council as a guarantor of the transparency and sincerity of the electoral competition has turned into great disillusion (Ngango, 2019) both in view of the conduct of the post-election dispute in 2018 and the partisan affiliation of some of its members. In view of this contrasting picture of the practice of democracy, it appears that democratic practice remains deeply affected by numerous attacks. It is therefore necessary to plan on the tracks of a better rooting of democratic culture in Cameroon.

IV. REVITALIZING THE CURRENT DEMOCRATIC PROCESS IN CAMEROON: ANALYSIS AND PROSPECTS.

It is clear from the diagnosis of democratic practice over the past thirty years in Cameroon that the abuses recorded are the result of decadent political leadership. In fact, the democratic prowess celebrated on the African continent is irreducibly attached to figures who have embodied, at one point in history, unquestionable pro-democratic leadership (Tametong, 2021). Of course, democracy in its essence is an ideal that must be reinvented and adapted in the context of its immersion. This necessary adaptation should not however be a pretext to empty it of its content and its structuring principles (Medard, 2010). This is the reason why the normative achievements of the period of democratic transitions in Cameroon must imperatively be consolidated. On the other hand, the institutional crisis which feeds the conflict in the English-speaking regions of the North West and South West deserves to be addressed with delicacy and method. It is undoubtedly linked to the management of the common colonial heritage. To the military option which seems privileged and to the unproductive rhetoric of the laying down of arms by secessionist forces, it is preferable today to oppose a frank and sincere inclusive dialogue between the actors (Tametong and Tazoacha, 2020). This is the irreducible path to tread for a happy exit from the crisis. Resolving this means agreeing to reopen the archives of history, to revisit the past to heal the gaping wounds that hamper the fresco of Cameroon united to its English-speaking regions (Ngando Sandje, 2020). As such, the question of the form of the state must be approached without taboos. While the unitary (decentralized) state is not in itself a fetish, neither should the federal state be the object of obsession, let alone secession. This debate around the form of the state updates the need for a grooming of the Constitution in order to root out the corrosive germs of living together like the fuzzy and controversial notion of "indigenous." Likewise, the advancement of democracy requires the completion of the implementation of the Constitution (Guimdo, 2018), in this case article 66 relating to the declaration of goods and assets. The related law adopted since 2006 remains unenforced due to

the non-existence for the time being of the implementing decree.

It is also certainly the case that the decline in the guarantee of fundamental rights and freedoms is not unrelated to the erosion of those in power for nearly forty years. Indeed, the fear of the loss of power undoubtedly revives authoritarian tendencies. However, some laws passed in the early 1990s deserve to be tidied up. This is the law on public assemblies and demonstrations, which, through its vagueness, offers the administrative authority a discretionary power of prohibition. The role of the judge in monitoring this prerogative deserves to be strengthened. In this sense, would not the decision rendered by the Yaoundé Court of First Instance in the *State of Cameroon v / Jean Marc Bikoko et cie* case be the swallow that heralds the spring of public freedoms? In a very evocative recital, the judge of the case asserts that,

the public demonstration is subject to the compulsory formality of the prior declaration to the administrative authority; that unlike the system of prior authorization where one can exercise freedom of expression only after having requested and obtained permission from the administration, with the system of prior declaration, the authority thus informed cannot in no case refuse to authorize the exercise of the envisaged activity; that this is not a request brought to the attention of the administrative authority, but a simple warning (TPI Yaoundé, 2012).

More critically, failing to be rewritten in accordance with the requirements of the rule of law (Boumakani, 1997), the anti-terrorism law of 2014 simply deserves to be removed from the legal framework because it hangs like a sword of Damocles over the expression public freedoms.

Furthermore, one could argue that the seeds of conflict that are fostered by the failures of a non-consensual electoral system must be the subject of particular attention. Believing that external pressure, even if it is effective, can be sufficient to establish electoral democracy is an illusion. It is to ignore the skill of a tightrope walker and the resilience of a power that yields only to its defenses. Only the combined action of external and internal forces can compel the authorities to make concessions for a transparent and fairer electoral competition. Basically, the vitality of multiparty democracy is strongly dependent on an opposition structured around men of conviction loving tolerance, open to democratic debate, but inflexible in the face of the charms of political transhumance (Kaptchouang, 2016) and the delights of 'Manger' (Bayard, 1989).

It is true that the present structuring of Cameroonian society lends itself with difficulty to the institutionalization of a true constitutional democracy because of ethnic exploitation and tribalism, on the one hand, and the grabbing of State resources through the forces of the politics of *prebendalism* where political offices are merely used as a pathway to self-aggrandizement by high ranking government officials and other elites (Arrey, 2020) on the other hand. This

configuration leads to fierce competition between communities for the capture of the state or the preservation of rentier positions within the state, all under the background of tribalist rhetoric and hatred. The exacerbation of the social divide deepens the identity divides expressed with violence in the social media arena. Good governance, taken in its simplistic conception of the fair distribution of the nation's wealth and the local redistribution of central power, seems to be the antidote capable of curbing community claims and neutralizing tribalism. Against tribalism, however, the only genuine adversary "is the democrat, that is to say the one who accepts pluralism in all its forms, who knows that different socio-cultural formations can coexist without wanting the death of each other, without wanting to break up the nation" (Kamto, 1993).

If the entrenchment of democracy is strongly dependent on the submission of politics to law, on the 'seizure' of politics by law to use the expression of Doyen Favoreu, it is also and above all the result of a collective awareness of a people long *de-substantialized* by official propaganda and Epicurean convulsions. There is therefore the need for a pedagogy of democracy that restores the people in their role of true sovereign. This task falls largely on political parties, civil society organizations and a proactive, positive diaspora action for sustainable peace and development.

V. CONCLUSION

The democratic transitions of the 1990s ushered in a new era of political production in Africa in general and Cameroon in particular. The analysis of democratic gains recorded since that date confirms the idea according to which Africans have the consummate talent of being, in terms of principles, in tune with the times, of never being withdrawn from the dominant discourses, to 'sing them' if necessary, even if they are convinced that they are absolutely incapable of operationalizing them (Olinga, 2010). If we stick to the principles of liberal democracy formally internalized in the Constitution, to the laws on freedoms and to the institutions put in place, we would be full of praise for Cameroon in view of the progress they constitute for the democratic process. However, this formal improvement is withering away from the test of practice which as we have seen, supports the idea of an authoritarian democracy (Jaume, 2021). Should we be upset? Certainly! Should we be worried about this for the future? The deviant tendency of the current political leadership inclines every observer and analyst of Cameroonian politics and society in particular and Africa at large, to be concerned about the ambition carried by the African Union to make Africa a continent where the values of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, peace, justice and the rule of law will be on the agenda by 2063 (African Union Agenda 2063). Nevertheless, we can share the idea that,

it is unrealistic to think that such countries can suddenly reverse course and institutionalize stable democratic

government simply by changing leaders, constitutions and / or public mentalities. If progress is made toward developing democratic government, it is likely to be gradual, messy, fitful and slow, with many imperfections along the way (Larry Diamond (2010),

In the end, companies only know processes, said Regis Debray.

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