

# The Politico-Economic Reformation of Political Parties and its Effects on the Democratic Process in Cameroon: Challenges and Opportunities

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**Abstract:** The leading controversial idea that instigated us to study and research on the existing interaction between social mobilisations and politico-economic reforms that gave birth to political parties in Cameroon is as a result of its promotion and recommendation as a solution to politico-economic crisis by neoliberals. The logic here being an ushering of a double cornice into the Cameroonian political scene, obliging them to follow the same path in what Michel DOBRY calls “democratic and capitalist transition” or what Jennifer WIDNER calls “economic change and political liberalisation” into a case at hand like the Cameroonian political landscape confronted with managerial crisis and having proceeded with a centralised governing policy since her independence in the 1960s. Political parties are the life wire on which democracy thrives. Whether dictators or communist political systems, all political leaders want to identify with the democratic system of government in this 21st century. This article seeks to find answers to the question on the usefulness of political parties in Cameroon and whether after more than two decades of democratic politics in Cameroon, parties have fulfilled the goals for which they were created? What has been the different political and economic reform that has helped political parties have an impact on the democratic process of the Country? The use of a dualistic research model reveals that the relationship between social mobilisation and economic reforms (liberalisation) in Cameroon’s politics is characterised by what Arnold WOLFERS calls in his analytic and conceptual model “discord and collaboration”/ “antagonism and harmony”. The revelation concluding our findings settles on both compatibility and tensions between political and economic reforms of political parties. Hence, the expected political transformation and social relief is compromised and cannot be entirely guaranteed.

**Résumé:** Le fait polémique majeur ayant conduit à l’étude de l’interaction entre les mobilisations sociales et les réformes économiques dans le domaine de la politique au Cameroun, est le constat de la préconisation, voire de la recommandation de leur jumelage comme solutions par les néolibéraux. Il s’agit d’inciter ou de contraindre l’Etat Camerounais à entreprendre ce que Michel DOBRY appelle «démocratie et transition capitaliste» ou encore ce que Jennifer WIDNER désigne comme étant «le changement économique et la libéralisation politique» dans un cas comme le secteur des partis politiques au Cameroun confronté à la crise managériale et ayant procédé depuis l’indépendance en 1960 avec une politique de centralisation et de planification au niveau politique et économiques. Les parties politiques représentaient l’énergie électrique à travers laquelle une démocratie prend vie. Qu’importe le système politique établi

dans un pays (dictature ou communiste), tous les leaders politiques voudraient s’identifier avec le système démocratique du 21<sup>e</sup> siècle. Cette recherche cherche des réponses à la question de savoir l’utilité même des parties politiques au Cameroun et aussi de savoir si après plus de deux décennies que le Cameroun a pratiqué une politique démocratique, les parties politiques ont pu accomplir les buts pour lesquels elles ont été créées? Quelles sont les différentes réformes politiques et économiques sur les parties politiques qui ont eu un impact sur le processus démocratique du pays? Le recours au modèle dualiste révèle que les relations entre les mobilisations sociales et les réformes (libéralisation) économiques au Cameroun sont marquées par ce qu’Arnold WOLFERS appelle dans son modèle analytique et conceptuel «discord et collaboration». Mieux, la discordance et la concorde sont les deux facettes majeures de l’interaction entre les réformes économiques et mobilisations sociales au Cameroun. Il s’agit d’un couple ou alors d’un duo dont l’interaction est marquée également par le duel. Le changement politique et le bien-être social recherché s’en trouvent alors compromis et relativisés.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The cleavage that has been established between political science and economic sciences and which continues at the social level between politics and economy is certainly artificial<sup>1</sup>. This distinction seems not to take into account the fluidity of interaction that exists between these two spheres. In fact, the frontier that divides the different disciplines in social sciences is porous, especially between politics and economy<sup>2</sup>. Still, one cannot deny the fact that social, political and economic phenomena<sup>3</sup> are inter-mingled taking into account

<sup>1</sup> François CUSIN and Daniel BENAMAMOUZIG: *Economy and Society*; Paris PUF, 2004 on the artificiality of the distinction State/Civil society.

<sup>2</sup> The model of analysis proposed here does not in any way contest with the classical clear-cut distinction that exists between these two disciplines. Our goal here is purely scientific; it is an intellectual demonstration of how knowledge interacts in the society because though its spheres differ, social reality remains one and the same. Generally, we perceive and explain the world thanks to the different categories and views related to reality which are either common (ordinary) or scientific (proven knowledge) and are proper to each sphere, domain or field of reality. However, the notion of field of study, though scientifically pertinent, is linked to a fragmented approach of reality. Therefore, what is important here is to develop a trans-frontier approach or a face to face epistemology which can help in analyzing phenomena which are situated in different fields of study.

<sup>3</sup> Karl POLANYI; “The great transformation” Boston, Massachusetts, Beacon press 1957, p46.

their converging point, which is the amelioration of Man's condition in the society. In consideration of the inter-related influence and communication that exist between the social and the economy, it will be convenient to apprehend them in an interactive<sup>4</sup> and not in a dichotomy<sup>5</sup>, in autonomy and not in a disparity perspective; taking into account the fact that when a social reality is singled out<sup>6</sup>, it is always relative and rational. This is the scientific set-up that lays the legitimate foundation of bringing together the political and the economical in analysing the existence of political parties in Cameroon. Resorting to precise research techniques<sup>7</sup> for data collection, for the accumulation of facts<sup>8</sup> for a critical analysis, is of paramount necessity. To this end, a documentary analysis has been privileged, coupled with open and free interviews from resource actors, following the nature of our research object<sup>9</sup> (between a State policy and social phenomenon) by reason of an existing disparity to reality. It is against this backdrop that we have decided to proceed with a dualistic model in analysing the interrelated effects of the political and the economical on political parties in Cameroon.

Democracy has been part of political process in Cameroon since the early 1990s. During this length of time, several elections: presidential, parliamentary and municipal have been held in the country. A lot has been said about the manner in which democracy was conceived and operated in the country. Some consider it a "cosmetic" (Nyamnjoh. 2002: 5-8) process, others think it has been an effective process (Edie, 2003: 167) and still others think we have a long way to go before attaining what they called "near perfect democracy. Near perfect democracy is what all countries need even though it is almost certain that democracy is on a downward spiral in the 21st century. Democracy has become a phenomenon that all countries have an interest to identify with, for the sake of pleasing international friends and keeping the advantages of

that relationship flowing<sup>10</sup>. This apparently explains why some countries in Africa have been able to abate international pressure by privileging institutional arrangements (Edie, 2003:146) over democratic practices. Whatever the argument one may have with regard to the meaning and dynamics of this concept, the bottom line about it is that "democracy has remained a good thing so much so that every country claims to have it" (Macpherson 1966: 2). Given that the "third wave" of democracy came about through factors that differ from those that propelled the first and second waves of democracy, it is useful to worry about the usefulness of some of the institutions that drive democracy. Huntington claims that "external influences often were significant causes of the third wave democratizations, the processes themselves were overwhelmingly indigenous", (Huntington, 2000: 81-118). Opposition groups along this line of thinking played a major role in bringing about the third wave democratization not only in Africa but all over the world particularly in countries that experienced this wave.

Against this backdrop, this article further considers how political parties have evolved in the democratic process in Cameroon and whether they are necessary in the political process? It looks at how Cameroon political parties contributed to the democratization process and whether they have been instrumental in ending authoritarian leadership in the country? In other words, it seeks to answer the question on whether political and economic reforms affecting political parties matter in the democratization process of the Country? For them to be effective, political participation has to be extensive. Political participation is what gives credibility to the process, and this is only possible if political parties exist and are able to take part effectively in the decision making process. Notwithstanding the model of democracy concerned (illiberal, multiparty, electoral etc.). Political parties in many ways structure the political process (Lijphart. 1999: 13). A political party is an organization that seeks to influence public policy by electing its members in positions of governmental authority (Stephenson, 2005: 210). This process requires a higher rate of social mobilization. They make voting possible, they enable people in large numbers to take part in political decision making in an orderly fashion. In fact, it is not an exaggeration to suggest that voting is less likely without them because winning elections necessitates the acquisition of votes, and parties are the vehicle through which voting takes place. Even though no-party systems are known to have existed in Africa and elsewhere, it is unthinkable to think of such systems today. Although some countries succeeded in keeping the development of democratic structures under

<sup>4</sup> There are many authors in social science who have written on this wise regarding the inter-connection between politics and economy: Susan Strange, "State and Markets", Max Webber, "Economic and society", Karl MAX and the Capitalist system (1976). Immanuel Wallenstein in his book "The modern world system; New-York academic Press, 1974" presents economic structures as determinants of the different political regimes and structures.

<sup>5</sup> It is important to note in respect to some ongoing debates, that there is no significant difference between the political and the economic at the level of principles governing each sphere. Concretely, when they are based on a liberal logic, the politic and the economy are governed by principles of freedom, competition and emulation.

<sup>6</sup> Robert DAHL, "A preface to economic democracy" Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985.

<sup>7</sup> Regarding techniques of research, read P. JOHNSON, PH. SCHRODT: "Analytic theory and methodology" in X.C ROHY: "Political science looking to the future", Evanston, Northwestern University press, 1991, Vol. 1, P.99. Raymond BOUDON: "*Les methodes en sociologie*", Paris, PUF, 1986.

<sup>8</sup> Only factual researches can actually guarantee the empiricism of a research work; as for methods, they all represent a framework of explanation and analysis of the studied phenomena.

<sup>9</sup> On the reflection of methodology, read Hugues EVERETT C.: "*Le regard sociologique, essais choisis*", Paris, Edition L'EHESS, 1996, p. 344. Peter and Patricia ADLER: "Membership poles in research fields, Sage university paper", Series on quantitative research methods, Vol.6, Newberry park, Sage publication, 1987, p. 95.

<sup>10</sup> I hold this point of view because the more seriously I look at what is happening around the world today, the more it is evident that democracy is bound to disappear eventually. Parties run and win elections but are not recognized because some countries do not like their ideology of the friends they keep. How should that matter if one of the basic concepts behind democracy is organizing transparent elections. The cases of HAMAS and the FICS

check, they were obliged to compensate for that by developing minimum democratic standards<sup>11</sup> such as the constitution and some level of the applicability of the rule of law. Political pluralism that comes with democracy requires some prerequisites such as: the existence of political parties, individuals and groups acting collectively to achieve social goals, competing interests bargain and attain compromises, the acquisition and exercise of power is possible, collective action and the expansion and management of conflict is doable. (Bibby, 1996: 4).

## II. THE CAMEROONIAN POLITICAL PARTY SYSTEM

Basically, the best and most effective manner of deciphering the number of parties a system has is to count them numerically and tell by the number of parties that the country has. Sometimes, one has to go beyond just counting them to make sure the parties do not just exist by name but are formally registered structures. It is common in incipient democracies to see parties that exist by name only and that are not known as party formations in an official fashion. Such parties do not fulfill enough criteria to be called political parties and so do not have any connection with the discussion we are pursuing in this research paper. Where will Cameroon fall given the number of party systems that exist? These systems include the one-party system, the zero-party system, the two-plus party system, the multiparty system and of course the messy or fluid party system. (Roskin et al, 2006: 204-207).

Based on this categorization, Cameroon has evolved through several party systems. Before independence, there existed several parties in the country. British Cameroon had its own political parties. In the same fashion, French Cameroon had a good number of political parties as well that animated political life in that part of the country. Cameroon has experience three basic party systems: multiparty systems, the single party system, dominant party system, and the messy party system. The best way to analyze which party systems have in Cameroon is to do so contextually.

### A- Prior to the Democratization Process.

Political conditionality for economic assistance refers to the stating of a number of political or democratic opening measures whose application by countries facing economic difficulties is considered by international donors as the essential pre-condition for economic<sup>12</sup> assistance to be obtained. In other words, international donors consider the

support for economic reforms by political<sup>13</sup> transition measures as the condition for an access to financial assistance. This is a multilateral or intergovernmental imposition of a liberal twin reform formula in the political and economic set-up. The imposition of a material constraint of democratisation designated by the term "*political conditionality for economic assistance*" to some extent is in line with the triumph of the neoliberal ideology or the confirmation of her hegemony: it is an important variable that is related to the formulation of an international conjuncture requiring the redefinition of the role of liberal and socialist ideologies in the world. The policy of political conditionality for economic assistance<sup>14</sup> is an international mechanism of imposing democratisation to African States simultaneously with the liberalisation of their economies whose taking into consideration does not constitute a reconsideration of the local dimension of change or veneration of the international factor. Nevertheless, the claim by the World Bank<sup>15</sup> and the International Monetary Fund in 1989 about "*measures of Good governance*<sup>16</sup> and the *moralisation of public life*" in countries undergoing structural adjustment is a key dimension in the understanding of political change in Africa in general and Cameroon in particular.

Cameroon lived under democracy immediately after independence. Foncha, Endelley, Mbida and many others are household names in the post independence multiparty experience of Cameroon. Cameroon like most African countries started up with the multiparty system that it inherited from the British and the French colonial powers. But like most African countries, Cameroon overflowed from pre independence multipartism into a unique party system. Independent African leaders including Ahidjo claimed democracy was dangerous for the progress and development of Africa. In between the multiparty period at independence and mono-partism, exist a transition period when a dominant party system existed in Cameroon. Immediately after independence, the Ahidjo regime made sure he kept control of the political. He did everything to conserve extensive powers and perpetual victory for his dominant and ruling Cameroon National Union (CNU) party. This continued until the period of the referendum in 1972 when the two Cameroons (Federal Republic) merged into the United Republic of Cameroon (Ngoh, 1987). African leaders after independence that inherited multiparty systems believed that political control

<sup>13</sup> Yoran Arifin, «*développement et démocratie : ajustements macro-économiques et transformations micro-politiques*», le trimestre du monde, 1, 1992.

<sup>14</sup> It has to do with a certain number of political conditions as prerequisites in obtaining economic assistance.

<sup>15</sup> World Bank, "governance and development", Washington DC, November 1994. World Bank, "Sub-Saharan Africa from crisis to sustainable growth", Washington DC, 1989.

<sup>16</sup> Y. ASSOGBA, "*Problématique de la gouvernance en Afrique du Sud du Sahara*", revue canadienne d'études du développement numéro spécial pages 57-63 à titre théorique, Jean Pierre Gaudin, «*Pourquoi la gouvernance?*» *Démocratie et gouvernance mondiale: quelles régulations pour le XXIème Siècle ?* sous la direction C. Milani, C. Arturi et German Solinis, édition Unesco, Karthala, Paris, 2001.

<sup>11</sup> Collier and Levitsky (1997) categorize democracy based on the manner in which the system is organized from the upper ladder to the lowest level of democracy that to him will be illiberal democracy.

<sup>12</sup> Mohamed B. Hamid, "The African debate ; democratisation and conditionality", report presented during the congress of the African association of Political Science, dar-es-Salam (Tanzanie) 18-21 January 1993, p. 17b. François Constantin : «*l'Afrique : ajustement et conditionnalité* » in Zaki Llaïdi (dir) *l'ordre national relâché : sens et puissance après la guerre froide*, Op.cit. p. 250.

must be based on the repression of the opposition, suppression of political participation and the monopolization of all forms of economic and political power. State power under this form of organization can only be contended by one political party. Indivisibility is not an option for political organization. Ahidjo's mobilizing ideology in many ways was similar to Lenin's "democratic centralism" (Ball and Dagger, 2006: 152). The single party system that developed in Cameroon was more populist-nationalist than communist, albeit its closeness with communist party characteristics. The party African leaders believed in is the only structure that represented the real and true interests of the people. Free discussions were only allowed as long as they took place within the framework of the single party. Elections could take place as they did in Cameroon, but had to be done within the framework of the single party. This over concentration of power could not be possible in the absence of Ahidjo's institutionalization of the "noncommunist single-party system" (Edie, 2003, 95-08). The CNU party had complete monopoly of power, controlled all the resources of the country, had a complete monopoly of the rule of law, and in most cases used implicit terror whenever necessary to take care of recalcitrant nationals; that is those that thought they were born free and should be capable of contradicting the status quo.

Although the single party existed in Cameroon until the late 1980s when the "third wave" of democracy blew across the world, most elites of the regime and religious leaders did not think Cameroon was ripe for democracy. Archbishops (Jean Zoa of Yaounde for instance) held services in protest against the demand for political liberalization. Members of government marched the streets of Yaounde, calling on the President to give a deaf ear to Cameroonians calling for democracy. Whether by design, domestic or international pressure, Cameroon again embraced democracy in the 1990s, a process that changed its party system hopefully for good.

#### *B: The Genesis of democratisation process and the rebirth of political parties*

The idea of multipartism in Cameroon takes its shape and develops from the famous **YONDO BLACK** case. To justify its importance, **Andréa Mahler** affirms that "a circular chock, an undeniable ceasure of the Cameroonian political process intervened in the beginning of 1990"<sup>17</sup> following the convocation of the former president of Cameroon barristers **YONDO Black** and nine other persons for an attempt to form a political party. This situation gave birth to an effervescence and agitation context.

The convocation of the former president of the Cameroonian Bar Council is followed by important popular mobilisations calling for the contestation of the monolithical order and mono-partisan values. It is a period marked by the degradation of the consensus built on, after the independence of 1960,

around the myth of a single party as a factor of unity and social cohesion. Considerations such as ideal for the construction of national unity, the imperativeness of economic development, that made legitimate the mono-partisan order, were put aside. In the 1990s context, we could observe a disqualification of the single party. From this time, there is rapture or a break with the past during which all political, economic and even social life was organised and functioning according to this myth.

In a systemic option of the relation between the black box and its environment under the form of a closed cyber circus, these claims in favour of multipartism could be perceived as "inputs" of the environment directed to the black box. Multipartism which will be granted can on her part be considered as an "output", that is, an answer from this black box directed to the environment. This context can also be analysed as amounting to a snatched institutionalisation.

Subject to pressing vindications, the authoritarian order was forced to grant multipartism. The official instauration of this one intervened after a threat launched by the Social Democratic Front (SDF) on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March to consider herself as being legal and authorised to function in case of an absence of reaction on the part of authorities.<sup>18</sup> On the 19<sup>th</sup> of November 1991, Laws on liberties are adopted. It suppressed the legislation of exception that has prevailed until then, all by acknowledging the right to form associations and political parties. The way to multipartism was then opened.

From January and February 1992, the first political parties were legalised. New political actors emerged and are principally illustrated by a sharp criticism of the former single party, Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), accused of being at the origin of all the difficulties in which the country is plunged into. The newborn opposition is enthusiastic as it is especially characterised by dynamisms of proliferation.

#### *C-Post Democratization Party System.*

Competitive party systems were rare in Africa prior to 1990, in fact they were the exception in Africa until the 1990s when close to sixty percent of African countries joined the trend of moving away from authoritarian/military regimes to civilian rule. With the introduction of political freedoms, democratic constitutions and the writing of new laws to protect and guarantee the democratic climate, the party system was bound to change from single to multiparty politics. President Paul Biya who took over leadership of Cameroon in 1982 from Ahidjo, paid instead a deaf ear to his party militants and religious supporters by calling on them to get ready for political competition. This call, the activities of the opposition coupled with the work of civil society (students and NGOs) ushered in Cameroon another era of multiparty politics. For sure, Cameroon abandoned the single party model but created a party system that defies theory with regard to the true

<sup>17</sup> Andreas Mehler: «Cameroun: une transition qui n'a pas eu lieu»; in JP Dalloz and Patrick Quantin; Transitions démocratiques Africaines, Karthala 1997.p126.

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem, p74.



meaning of multipartism. Multiparty systems have several parties competing for seats and control of government. They span from the left to the right of the ideological spectrum and defend divergent interests and vision. Parties win seats in parliament based on the proportion of votes it gets in the election; however some scholars have criticized them for their instability and eventual immobilism (Ware, 1996: 123). The good thing about the multiparty system is that if well managed as in Sweden, the Netherlands, and Norway where effective coalition government have been constructed, the result is a better and healthier democratic society. The ethnic differentiation in Cameroon augurs well for the multiparty system, but our party system is everything but multiparty in character.

Literally speaking, it is a multiparty system in the sense that Cameroon is not a two party system; the country has more than two hundred political parties. Theoretically speaking, Cameroon has what Roskin (2006:207) calls a "messy party system". Parties are created for the sake of it with no real ambition of affecting the political process, parties develop and crumble overnight. It is at a minimum, a mockery of a multiparty system. As of March 6, 2007<sup>19</sup> Cameroon had two hundred and seven registered political parties. With a population of the country estimated at about Twenty five million people, the ratio is one to seven hundred and eighty three (1-783). The party system is a total mess given that most of the parties exist only on paper, some of them hardly have addresses to which they can be found. They carry some kind of fake ID, some kind of address and indicate members that make up the group, with no proper identity card of theirs. Basically they can hardly be of any impact to the political process. It is more for this reason that they help mess up or muddle the political process. If countries with one hundred and seventy million or more citizens have five political parties at the maximum, there can hardly be any justification why a country with a population of about twenty five million or less people should have two hundred and seven political parties; except perhaps to create an untidy democratic process, one that can be tailored to fit some people to the disadvantage of others. How useful are these structures anyhow to Cameroonian democracy and what are the challenges and opportunities involved?

### III. THE CONTRIBUTION AND IMPACT OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS IN CAMEROON

Encouraging the orientation of some countries to the path of democratisation or political transition through an increased economic aid reflects to some extent the institution of a "prize

<sup>19</sup> The party entitled "Parti De L'Esprit D'Avril 48" or Party of the April 48 Spirit (my translation) was created by decision no 00037/D/MINATD/DAP/SDE/SPP of March 06, 2007 with head quarter in Douala. The source of this information is the Ministry of Territorial Administration of Cameroon.

for democratisation"<sup>20</sup>. It was raised for the first time by the Senegalese president **Abdou DIOUF** following the speech at the "La Baule summit". According to President **Diouf**, "We must give some incentives to countries that are engage in political pluralism"<sup>21</sup>. Moreover, in the interview given to the *le Monde* newspaper on June 23, 1990, President **Mitterrand**, while stating that French aid will be "look warm to regimes that behave in an authoritarian manner (...) and enthusiastic"<sup>22</sup> to those who make efforts in favour of democratisation, already has stated here the principle of economic support for democratic initiatives. The rallying of the international community of donors to the principle of an increased economic aid for countries engaged in political transition or opening is particularly illustrated by the example of Germany<sup>23</sup>.

Notwithstanding the messy nature of party politics in Cameroon, it will be doing injustice to the system by not recognizing the purpose they serve. Although definitely not doing well to the political process, they are changing a great deal and with time should serve the goals for which political parties are created.

#### A- Challenges of Measuring the Progress of Democracy.

When the democratization process went into motion, it was almost impossible to imagine the ruling CPDM party having problems with choosing candidates for lay elections. The experience today is very different and unlike the ruling party with many of its incumbents being thrown out of office by an electorate that was hitherto taken too much for granted. The recently held parliamentary/municipal elections illustrates this succinctly. There are so many cases that were unsolvable without the intervention of the court. In many ways, this is progress. The incumbency status that reigned has vanished into thin air. Everyone (incumbents like freshmen) has to prove to the people, members of the party why they should be voted as representatives. Cameroon is still to get close to the paradise of democracy (wherever that is). However, it is advancing and making significant progress in the right direction. Democratic parameters are gradually being enshrined. Accountability, a major function of the political party (Bibby, 1996:12) is increasingly being embraced albeit at snail speed. Corruption (with the help unfortunately of

<sup>20</sup> Peter Waller, "l'aide à la démocratie et aux droits de l'homme" ENTWICKLUNG and ZUSAMMEN arbeit, N° 8, 1992, p. 4-5.

<sup>21</sup> *Le monde*, 22 Juin 1990, p. 3. Also, the Congolaise president at the time Mr LISSOUBA decreed in *JEUNE AFRIQUE* N° 1694 of 30 June 1993 : «Nous sommes les enfants de la baule» p. 7, democratic children who need financial means. Compensation here is understood as the reward granted to countries that make a difference in matters of democratisation. In has been generally implemented in the framework of Africa by the reduction of debts.

<sup>22</sup> *Le Monde*, 23 Juin 1990, Op.cit.

<sup>23</sup> In a symbolic point of view, the German support to countries who have undertaken a transition towards democracy was also made possible through a double diplomatic trip done in April and october 1991 by Mr Schafer, State secretary of foreign affairs, in Benin, in Niger, in Central African Republic, in Swaziland, in Malawi, in Mozambic, in Ethiopia and in Chad. In December 1991, Carl Dieter Spranger made a diplomatic trip with the same impact in Cotonou.

diplomatic missions) is progressively being talked about with a lot more of momentum than the case has ever been. Human rights issues although not up to standard are gaining momentum in the right direction. It is common today to read about police officers losing their job because of abuse of power, it is common to read about judges losing their jobs because of poor execution of their duties, it is common to read about administrators losing their job, some summarily dismissed from the public service for not doing what is expected of them. These are practices that are indirectly linked to the presence of political parties in Cameroon.

In like manner, political parties in Cameroon, at least those that matter (like the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), the Social Democratic Front (SDF), The Union for Democracy and Progress (UNDP), the UPC "Kodock version") serve as linkage mechanism between the people and the rest of the people. They matter because they are not as dormant as most other political parties in Cameroon happen to be. It makes no sense creating a political party and never taking part in any electoral exercise as the case normally should be for all political parties. They serve aggregative functions, by bringing together the interest of the people in a coherent fashion, they recruit and co-opt leaders, they bring compromise competing demands, and they facilitate and structure electoral competition and help to organize the government- (the coalition government to be more precise). Scholars have claimed that parties are distinctive institutions of the modern state whose functions "are to organize participation, to aggregate interests, to serve as the link between social forces and the government" (Huntington, 1980: 91). Although this might be an overstated role of party in Cameroon given their messy nature, they permeate most aspects of the national and local government and politics. In spite of their fluid nature, political parties at the end "make the major decisions regarding who pays and who receives" (McCally, 1981: 29).

#### *B- Required Political will of the time as a Democratic Opportunity*

Multipartism is considered by many authors as one of the major components of democracy. Thus, in their book entitled: *African Democratic Experiments*,<sup>24</sup> **Michael Bratton** and **Nicolas Van De Valle** confirm the fact that democratisation is a change of rule of the game that defines the conquest and exercise of power and marks the transition towards a political system dominated by multipartism, the state of law, recognises and protects individual and collective liberties. This definition repeated by Professor **Luc SINDJOUN** in the comparative political systems course, thus insist on the fact that democratisation is translated by the movement of "the principle of one and arbitrary" to "the principle of multiple".

<sup>24</sup> Michael Bratton and Nicolas De Valle: *African democratic experiments*, Cambridge University Press.1997, repeated by Professor SINDJOUN in the course entitle Comparative Political System (DEA, Political Science of the University of Yaounde II Soa.

The evolution of political parties and the changes most of them evince, at least the CPDM show signs of the political will the party hierarchy to change. There is every indication today within that rank that things can never be the same with regard to the way party politics operates. This explains why they are having so many problems with regard to picking candidates for the different elections now organized in the country (parliamentary "both the lower and the upper house", municipal "with the phenomena of now a super Mayor", regional council representatives). The party hierarchy does not make decisions for the party as the case has always been. Instead, the people are allowed to choose their own candidates based on how viable they are and on how well they run their primary campaigns. It is true, there are a few situations that require special attention such as the Parliamentary candidate for the Nkoketunjia South Constituency in Balikumbat just to name this one before the advent of the "Anglophone crisis". It is time for the party to transcend such trivialities as imposing candidates on the people. The good thing too is that the people themselves are not longer willing to be sleepers in the party. They now want accountability from their representatives. They want people that actually represent them and not individuals that believe they have been elected to feed fat from the system and protect no one, but the political party to which they belong. Even though party discipline in Cameroon is not as strong as it is in Great Britain and elsewhere, it is important that representatives realize that they have some level of accountability vis-à-vis their electorates. They should be able to come back to those that got them elected, look at them straight in the eyes and tell them how much they have achieved during their term of office and why they should be reelected. This is the level of accountability that is still missing, but that is progressively becoming part of the political culture of the electorate in Cameroon.

#### *C- Making Votes Count: Liberalization of Elections*

After discussing on the birth of multipartism with the effort of dismantling the monolithic dispositions constituted by the authoritarian order, an effort which went without success, it is now time for us to appreciate the liberalisation of electoral practice in Cameroon. It will be interesting to first analyse competitive elections before projecting on the type of elections deriving from a passive democracy, with a limited scope.

Two important points merit our attention here: the outbreak through the ways of democratisation, of competitive elections in Cameroon and the limited (relative) character of this competition:

-The outbreak of competitive elections in the Cameroonian political field: A reading of the Cameroonian electoral reality help us to note that there is a discontinuity between the period before and after 1990. A type of single elections, taking place within a single party (L'Union Nationale du Cameroun (UNC), which became CPDM in 1985 at the Bamenda congress hall), marks the first period. The fact that these

elections opposed members of the same party limits their importance and contradicts the principle according to which “election is a strong moment of political life”<sup>25</sup> for all countries.

The break with what we can consider the second period is situated in 1992 with the eruption of competitive elections into the Cameroonian political field opposing many political parties. The month of March 1992 saw for the first time the holding of a competitive and pluralistic legislative election while October of the same year gave room for the organisation of presidential elections of the same nature. The former single party, CPDM that was not given to competition and contestation would in an incomparable manner find itself contesting with rival political parties such as UNDP, UPC, MDR and SDF and even more during presidential elections.

The new character of these elections reside on the fact that for the very first time, the former single party saw herself contesting her exclusive and monopolistic position in the production and offering of political goods to a population that had for custom, uniformity. This fact can lead us to talk of competition and rivalry but cannot equally stop us talk of a limited and less loyal competition in respect to a number of reasons as outlined beneath:

-Two conditions inspired us to talk about a limited or less loyal competition. The consideration according to which the political field suffers from an enclosure and a drainage caused by great political parties, this one leads to the second consideration, which is that of exclusion of other political parties. In addition to this, repeated accusation of massive fraud comes to compromise the competitive character of elections held in Cameroon since 1992.

-Concerning the privileged position of some political parties in the political field, we should note the deep-rootedness of the former single party not only within the national territory but also in the people’s mentalities. To this subject, **Jean François Bayart** talks of the history of authoritarianism as a fact to be considered seriously. In effect, many Cameroonian, especially in regions of the periphery still have some difficulties of realising the mutation that came with the new democratisation tendency. This vision has as well, consequences on elections in terms of a strong attachment of a great number of people especially aged persons to the single party system.

As for those parties who enjoy a great audience from the population, they owe this favour to the attempt made (at the early hours of the Cameroonian democratisation) to stand as trustworthy alternative to the former single party. SDF and UPC benefited from the assimilation of members of these parties to their Leaders, who considered themselves as Cameroonian ethnic groups to whom power has always been denied since the access to independence. UNDP which is in

majority supported by northerners, want to lunch a revenge on the change that happened in the history of this country with **AHIDJO** giving up power at the profit of a beti southerner, president **Paul Biya**<sup>26</sup>.

Democracy in Cameroon appears to be a passion rather than an action as experienced by ordinary Cameroonians on daily basis. Types of elections held in Cameroon reflect a passive type of democracy. Two facts can be underlined to this effect: the one of a constant boy cutting and the disastrous effect of fragmentation within the opposition:

-The constant problem of boy cutting: **TESSY Bakary**<sup>27</sup> demonstrated the fact that boy-cutting proceeds from a dissimulation of the weakness of the opposition. The recourse to boy cutting is just a way of avoiding confrontation when we feel depressed of our means, when we are conscious of our vulnerability. From this viewpoint, radicalism or getting to see the end is far from constituting a prove of being powerful. In Cameroon since 1992, the opposition wind considered radical and led by the SDF has been illustrated by a repeated call to boy-cut. This is how this party withdrew herself from a number of elections and coalitions organised since 1992, with the reason that elections as organised in Cameroon are just a masquerade. Furthermore, that the former single party in power is manipulating all these electoral games at the top at her own advantage. This is what leads to the questioning as to what concerns the absence of impartiality of official authorities such as the Senior Divisional Officer, the Divisional officer, the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation, NEO and latter ELECAM who are those organising elections and are being accused of militating in favour of the ruling party. The October 1997 Presidential election is a good example. Boycotting or abstention as well as division within the opposition has a negative electoral effects.

-Negative electoral effects caused by the fragmentation of the Opposition: To boy-cut is no different from narrowing the political field. In effect, “everywhere, boy-cut of election is just a prove of the opposition’s failure to unite, a misleading and purely circumstantial foretaste of her internal division”<sup>28</sup>. It is a fact, that the opposition is incapable of building a single front and it is difficult for the call to boy-cut to be unanimously respected by all opposition parties. Boy-cut is therefore a proof of the existence of discord within a fragmented and dispersed opposition, which is filled with internal divisions.

In terms of electoral performance, the fragmentation of the opposition has damaging effects. A look on the legislative election of 1992 gives an impression that a union between opposition parties could have overcome the adversary party. Meanwhile the example in the table below can illustrate the

<sup>25</sup> Jean Pierre Cot et Jean Pierre Mounier: «Pour une Sociologie politique», Paris, seuil 1974. p 162.

<sup>26</sup> Interview conducted with a top party member (16/22/2015).

<sup>27</sup> TESSY Bakary, Op. cit.

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem, p. 33.



negative results obtained when the opposition goes in for elections in a dispersed manner.

The most important duty of a political party is to get people out to vote, ensuring that political participation soars as the system evolves (Wattenberg. 20 167). It is through voting that leaders get legitimacy par excellence. One thing no one can be neutral about is that political participation is necessary for democracy to develop and flourish. In other words, there can be no democracy without meaningful political participation. If for instance, polling stations in which members of the opposition are represented can declare a one hundred percent vote for one party, does it mean that representatives of the opposition party voted against their own party as well? Even if one did, can it be ascertained that all the representatives of the opposition parties voted for the same party? These are the contradictions that emanate from pooling stations around the society; this is not the kind of political participation this paper is talking about. Political participation has to be transparent, free, (Edwards II 2007: 157) educated, informed and done in respect of the rules that govern the exercise.

Political parties in Cameroon are able to help in the process of political participation. They are able to get their people out to register and cast their votes, but whether the votes are counted correctly is not part of what this paper concerns itself with. What matters is that parties are essential in getting the people out to vote. To do this, they are instrumental in educating the people, they take part in campaigns, they help the people with directions on how to register to vote and sometimes party elites take the electors to have them register for the voting process. Although votes may not count as they do elsewhere, given vote rigging complains from around the country, there is evidence to indicate that political parties are contributing immensely to making votes count in Cameroon.

#### D- Reinforcing Civil Society.

If the identification of a “*citizen*” has no major problem in constitutional set-ups of different political regimes in World politics, that of a “*civil society*” needs some precisions. The concept of civil society appears to be in a constant mutation. Her definition has been changing throughout the history of humanity before settling around the reality of her meaning at the contemporary era.<sup>29</sup> Thus, “*at first, identified to the state, to the business society and then to the bourgeoisie society, the civil society is perceived since the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the sphere of private institutions*”.<sup>30</sup> This one stands as an assembly of organised forces in the likeness of the State and which is susceptible of challenging this latter. For a better apprehension of this phenomenon in Cameroon, it is good to proceed with an attempt of definition of the civil society before analysing her manifestation.

<sup>29</sup> Programme national de gouvernance du Cameroun “*diagnostics et propositions*”, Yaounde August 1999. P.2001.

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem. Also see Paul NTUNGWE NDUE (2007); *Civil society, A conceptual framework*; in Revue Africaine D’Etude Politiques et Strategiques NO. 4, University of Yaounde II, p. 3-4.

In the definition of the notion of civil society, many approaches do compete, but there emerge some regularity that can help in the understanding of a civil society.

Civil societies as an assembly of para-political organisations disinterested with the taking over and exercise of institutional power:

For **Moise Albert NJAMBE**, who calls himself the national coordinator of the civil society in Cameroon, it is good to see into the civil society “*the assembly of organisations that do not belong to the public sector. They are comprised of CIGS, Corporations, Associations, NGOs and all forms of formal and informal groups which do not have as ambition the taking over of power*”.<sup>31</sup> Following this vision, all groups organised with the objective of taking over and exercising power at the peak of the State should be excluded from the scope of the civil society. This one may have to do with the definition of a political party, but remains incorrect when talking of a civil society. For **Paul NDUE**, the civil society remains the arena outside of the family, State, and the market where people associate to advance common interests. This means the sphere of a civil society is strictly distinguished from that of politics. This distinction can be observed at the level of actors and the activities of one and the other in their respective spheres.

In politics, there are fights and conflicts over the mastery of power and the direction of the society, organisations operating in the civil sphere do not have such ambitions. By separating herself from politics and her action, the civil society is characterised by her autonomy and freedom. Social autonomy as an essential characteristic of the civil society:

**Gaston MEKA**,<sup>32</sup> legal counsellor of NGOs in Cameroon places the civil society as an autonomous social force in the mist of two spheres of activities (the political and economic sphere). According to him, the civil society is identified to a social group of individuals; associations who freely under take their social actions and are save from economic and political pressures. What differentiate her from other social spheres is that actors of the civil society are not seeking for profit; neither do they seek for power like those belonging to the economic and political domains respectively. Her activity is essentially disinterested.

**Mathias Eric OWONA NGUINI**, Socio-political scientist at the University of Yaounde II equally insists on autonomy as a fundamental character trait of a civil society. According to him, a civil society will mean “*vast field of social organisation which put in efforts in obtaining autonomy of action and manoeuvre in relation to the State sphere. She endows herself with sufficient means to be politically, financially and economically autonomous vis-à-vis political power*”<sup>33</sup>. Even though an opposite of politics, this assembly

<sup>31</sup> Cameroon tribune of Thursday 10 October 2002, p. 17. Paul Ndue, Op.Cit, p5.

<sup>32</sup> Cameroon tribune of Thursday 10 October 2002, p. 18.

<sup>33</sup> Eric Mathias Owona Nguini: “Sociogenèse de l’ordre politique Camerounais: entre autoritarisme et démocratie (1978-1996): les logiques



of organisations weighs on the action of political power, exert pressure or influences on political decision that have to do with the collective interest. If organisations of the civil society generally evolve out of the political sphere, they however operate in the field of economic activities. In reality, **OWONA NGUINI** sees the civil society following two options which are not necessarily contradictory: in a restrictive option, the civil society excludes all organisations that follow after political interest and economic objectives. In a larger option, she inserts these organisations into both spheres.

The objectives of a civil society are more exactly the defence of the interests of social groups or professional corporations (syndicates), the protection, promotion and affirmation of non recognised or battled rights (it is the case of the rights of some social categories like children and woman), the protection and spread of moral and ethnic values, human rights, matters touching health, education, the protection and preservation of the environment.

It is within these frameworks that humanitarian, environmental and human rights NGOs are constituted. However, the problem of the neutrality of the civil society vis-à-vis political power remains delicate. How can some interests be defended without mixing up with politics? How can some battled rights of some social categories be protected or their violation denounced by strictly remaining on the field of the civil society? The civil society cannot remain indifferent when faced with some crucial social problems like HIV/AIDS, degradation of the environment, the preservation and management of natural catastrophes. How can the attention of public power be attracted towards these social facts all by avoiding a transformation into a power contester or again playing into the game of the opposition? These are some of the challenges faced by the civil society in Cameroon in her concrete manifestation.

Civil society remains the life wire on which democracies thrive. The more energized the civil society, the healthier the democracy. However, the caveat to this principle is that civil society should not get too strong for the government; otherwise it could pose problems of governability for the state. Civil society organizations work generally in close association with political parties, actually African scholars contend themselves with energizing political parties as they complement each other in their duties and responsibilities (Mansbach, 2000: 167; Levi, 1997:99).

Pressure for democracy in African countries was followed by the establishment of conditions necessary for the creation of political parties. Without a strong and active civil society, there is no way democracy could have been introduced in some countries of the continent (Nwokedi, 1995: 29). Even in Cameroon, (notwithstanding the will of the President) it is difficult to dissociate the manifestations of the late 1980s in

the North West Province of Bamenda from the liberalization process that was launched several years later. Broad sections of the civil society staged manifestations all over the continent, student riots in Cameroon, street protests in Côte D'Ivoire, Guinea-Conakry, Gabon, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar and many others cannot be minimized in the democratization process that took place in these countries (Wiseman, 1996: 89). In a similar fashion, trade union activists also played significantly in this process, and these structures are only effective if they lead to the creation of political parties. They cannot take part directly in the political process but are useful in structuring the process. Their actions and activities are what give the democratic process its strength. The freedoms they champion are the freedoms political parties need to organize. The number of civil society organizations the country has today exemplifies the political rights and freedoms we enjoy in Cameroon. Furthermore, the more one digs into the relationship between civil society organizations and political parties, the more it is evident that the most effective political party leaders started as leaders of civil society organizations. Frederick Chiluba, one time leader of the Zambian Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) is a typical example. He defeated incumbent President Kenneth Kuanda in the 1991 presidential elections in Zambia (Edie, 2003: 120).

#### IV. LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE: FLOPPY OR ASTUTE POLITICAL PARTIES?

Given the role political parties play in the democratic process in Cameroon, can it be said with certainty that they are effective? Political parties have a very long way to go in Cameroon, and of course the political system too has a lot of changes to make to render the political process reasonable, acceptable and equitable. Sure it is a good thing that Cameroon has political parties in spite of the messy nature of the party system. They have been instrumental in generating change, the kind that the country needs to move forward toward its quest for true democracy. Whether the country can achieve democratic consolidation or not depends a great deal on how well political parties strategize and take part in the overall decision making process. The extent to which this is possible depends on their organization and their interaction with the society and the government in control. For this country to evolve from the floppy or limping party structures, there have to be more astute and effective party formations, it has to be ready to adjust and embrace new attitudes. Responsibility for making these changes is not that of opposition parties alone, politicians, particularly the ruling elites have a lot more to do in this regard.

##### A- *Combat Political Party Immaturity.*

Political parties of all status, ruling party or not have to grow up and start acting in a more mature and responsible manner. Political parties are to be sure thriving on idealism. They apparently are not aware, or pretend not to be aware of the fact that they (political parties) are all part of the same system and are all working to make the society in which they operate

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politiques et économique de l'Etat au gré des conjonctures et des configurations socio-historiques". Thesis. p. 68.

better than they met it at creation. It is appalling to find that most political parties in Africa, not just in Cameroon spend time and money writing letters to foreign governments and embassies for help, oblivious of the fact that national sovereignty limits to what extent foreign powers and diplomatic missions can and should intervene in the internal affairs of independent countries. It is time for us to realize that in as much as political parties are designed among other things to manage conflicts (Bibby, 1996; 13), they have to be flexible enough to transcend the politics of exclusive compromise and develop an attitude of resolving disputes within party ranks. They should be open to uneasy alliances whenever or wherever necessary. Parties do not exist for themselves, party elites do not exist to serve the leaders of their parties, (party hierarchy) they exist for the general welfare of the society and to serve the people and nothing but the people under the umbrella of the party to which they belong. Without doubt, no political party is fighting for the collapse of Cameroon or has as interest to make Cameroonians suffer. They are all fighting to make Cameroon a better place, this can and should be done in respect of the existing legality. Of course Cameroonians want change, but change can take place inside of the party that is in power. No party should claim to have the monopoly of change. This is immature thinking and the kind of attitude that parties in democracies should avoid.

Also, the elites of the ruling party have to realize that the country has moved from the single party system to multiparty/messy party system. In this regard therefore, they are bound to change the authoritarian way of doing things. They have to learn to live more responsibly; they must treat each party structure in the country with respect and dignity. Without the opposition, without this democratic context in Cameroon and Africa today, some African countries will not have the dignity and respect they have in the world today, it has been a precondition for the disbursing of aid to most African countries (Sanbrook, 1997: 482-516). So, why not develop a healthier relationship with each other given that as political parties of the same country, they are tied to the same destiny? Brothers and sisters of the same family fight but at the end they are bound together, what more of political parties that are born out of differing circumstances? To be nationalistic does not mean that differences should not exist; of course arguments are indispensable in order not to destroy the foundation of evolution, for it is generally in this context that progress is possible, that people find new ways of doing things.

Elites of both ruling and opposition parties have to realize that Cameroon cannot change except the people want change, Cameroonian political parties and their elites have to grow up with regard to the manner in which they act and expect things to work. Africans have to realize that nowhere in the world have elections ever been repeated because it was rigged. There have been some exceptions in the world but these are rare. Once results are published, Africans have to move

forward, forget about the results and start working toward the next elections. Glaring cases of electoral fraud have taken place in bastions of democracy but those elections were not repeated. It is unfortunate that opposition parties waste time and energy trying to paralyze a system that is struggling to overcome the twin pressures of democratization and neoliberal economic reform. The 2007 Presidential election results in Nigeria are a case in point. Africans have to quit thinking that anyone is better placed to change their country than they are. Neither the international community nor diplomatic missions are better disposed to change their host countries; they can only help them help themselves. All that has to be present is the readiness to change attitudes. The golden rule is clear and simple: no diplomatic mission can love Cameroon more than Cameroonians do. This is not an apology for election rigging and political malpractices; however it is an avoidable mistake everyone is exposed to, and that should be discarded. It is paradoxical that we want change, yet we are ready to do everything to make life for the poor more difficult by trying to destabilize the political system with strikes and a politico-economic boycott.

#### *B- Leveling the Playing Field.*

A football field has to be plain for competition parties to have the same chances of winning. This principle should apply in the same fashion in the game of politics. All political parties should enjoy the same facilities, at least those that are necessary to make them compete for the same privileges. Opposition parties should be given enough airtime to cover their events and activities all over the national territory. Elites of the government should endeavor to reduce the use of government resources for party activities as much as possible. They can be asked to pay some amount of money for their use that way reducing the inequality between them and members of opposition parties. Furthermore, the creation of an independent electoral commission will reduce the number of complains that comes out of elections exercise in the country. It is difficult to be a judge and party to a case and not be biased in the decisions one makes. Elections have to be managed by structures that have no bearing with the government in power. There is no doubt that the government has the responsibility to ensure that parliament makes the rules of the game, but they have to: stay out of the electoral process for it to be starkly legitimate. Today, in Cameroon, general opinion holds it that the setting up of ELECAM and the Constitutional Council fall below average as autonomous and independent politico-electoral and judicial institutions respectively.

In the same vein, there has to be a delinking of financial resources between the party in power and the treasury of the state. As long as this does not happen, there is very little hope for democracy to take root in Cameroon. It is okay for financial resources to be taken out of the public treasury for campaigns, but there is a problem when the money is used for the political campaign of the ruling party only. A reform that African countries should be looking forward to is the public

financing of all elections. Even though there is no system in the world where the playing field is equal, there are some minimum requirements that must be met for effective political competition to take place in Cameroon. Equal airtime, some level of financial support, some provision of facilities during campaign time, (administrative vehicles to enable opposition parties represented in parliament to move around) and many others. The media is very expensive to use, access to it can easily be regulated by government given the heavy control the government has on them.

### *C- Political Socialization.*

Democracy is a system of government that cannot be imposed on a group of people. It has to be internalized progressively. The people have to be able to accept it for it to exist and be respected. The experiences of Iraq and Afghanistan clearly justify this way of thinking. Whether it is introduced with external or internal pressure does not matter, what matters is whether the people want it. Its existence does not depend on elites alone; it can only work if the people believe in it. Believing in it is equal to having or developing a culture that is consistent with democracy. There is the need for cultural autonomy to facilitate African political and economic development (Akindés 1995: 67). "Putnam insists education, is one of the most powerful influences on political behavior almost everywhere" (1993:119). Even though there is no direct correlation between education and political participation, the people have to develop and acquire a political culture that is congruent with the practice of democracy. The more political education the people have the more they are likely to be part of the political process in Cameroon. Rustow claims, "to promote democracy you must first foster democrats" (1970: 345). This process that takes place through several structures including schools, the family, the church, political parties, (Kolbe, 1985: 106) and via peer groups amongst others has to start in the family and go through the school system. All levels of education have to adopt aggressive political socialization strategies. Attitudes of transparency, accountability, fairness, justice, tolerance, nationalism, gender free attitudes, and many more can be developed and reinforced through this media. If this is done at the primary school level or if it is introduced to kids at home, they will grow up knowing that stealing is not good, they will know that cheating is not good and that doing things in respect of each other is good and the right thing to do. Political socialization will not only provide Cameroonians with the values needed to sustain democracy, it could eventually also energize and foster the much needed civil society.

### *D- Matching Words with Action.*

Political elites have to be able to match their declarations by taking the appropriate action whenever the need arises. In consonance with Thucydides and Machiavelli, Mansbach regards power as the key determinant of national interest and national interest as the source of a leader's goals and actions (2000: 60). Matching words with action requires that the

leader be resolute, strong and take action whenever necessary as long as general interest is safeguarded. Political elites should distinguish between public duty and private obligations. The prince must not "flinch from being blamed for vices which are necessary for safeguarding the state" (Machiavelli, 1961: 92). This is the attitude that is needed to fight corruption, to combat nepotism, to stage warfare against tribalism and most other vices that are eating deep into the fabric of the Cameroonian society.

Inaction, sloppiness, tardiness, and greed have never been solutions to any problem anywhere in the world. They are pardonable and unpardonable mistakes. Once an unpardonable mistake is made, such as fraud and the siphoning of public funds sanctions should follow without delay. Our leaders must not wait for diplomatic missions to tell them that something has to be done about corruption in Cameroon, they do not have to wait to be told by the international community that two hundred and seven political parties do not speak well of our democracy, they do not have to wait to be told by anyone that the long lines in our ministries can be reduced. The call was made by the President of the Republic addressing youth<sup>34</sup> of Cameroon to the effect that there has to be a "radical change of behavior". Well said, the ball is in the court of political elites, because as the saying goes, charity begins at home.

## V. CONCLUSION

We started our work with a flowing interrogation regarding the outcome of the existence of political parties in Cameroon. We also looked into the different political and economic reforms that contributed to the effect of political parties on the democratic process in the Country. It is possible after looking at their structures and duties to agree with African scholars that assert that "democratization was not supposed to happen in Africa" (Joseph, 1997, 363-382). Cameroonians like all Africans have to transcend the trap of considering democracy as a "form of competition among communities rather than individuals, parties, and administrative subunits" (Parekh, 1993: 157). It is a process that creates the opportunity for everyone to agree to disagree without breaking anything or destroying each other. In spite of the daunting problems political parties have in Cameroon, there is little reason for pessimism about their future. They may waiver, they may fade and limp, but there is hope that they will regain consciousness and catch up with the democratic process. Cameroon like much of Africa might have gone into the process of democracy too early but impossible is not part of the Cameroonian vocabulary. The political attitude speaks towards progress, the speed might be a problem, but there is hope that this attitude will eventually be match by the will to move things faster and more responsibly. Cameroonians have

<sup>34</sup> President Paul Biya made this statement while addressing the youth of Cameroon on the occasion of the National Youth Day Speech to the nation on CRTV, 10/21/2020, at 8:00pm.

to realize that Cameroon belongs to them and that they are better disposed to tackle the problems of their country.

The following items can further illustrate the dualistic model used to understand the interaction between politico-economic liberalisation effects in Cameroon:

- Inter-influence or mutual influence: political change and economic change in Cameroon are made possible through an interactive logic where the dual sense belies the monistic<sup>35</sup> and the Marxist thesis of the determination of politics by economics, as well as the neoliberal thesis of harmonious interdependence. They are rather interactive and interdependent processes, but the interaction and interdependence in question is not one-dimensional. The simultaneously political and economic liberalisation as a process of political and economic change is also a producer of a "*minimum State*" and a "*large market*". This is because the State structure is re-shaped in the direction of its reduction. It sets the State and the society in line with the neoliberal organisational standards. What characterises liberalisation is the "*phobia of the State*".<sup>36</sup>

- A restrictive liberalisation of the State and an extensive liberalisation for the market following the formula of **Richard JEFFRIES**.<sup>37</sup> These include diversity of measures and economic privatisation procedures, which are constituted in the dynamics of institutionalisation of norms of market economy that would help in the transition from Statism to liberalism.<sup>38</sup> This is the case with the privatisation of public Companies and Para-statals, the deregulation of markets, price liberalisation, the suppression of subsidies etc... The multiplicity of terms in implementing a market economy in Cameroon does not necessarily lead to the loosening of the grip of the State on the economy; the market does not increase in density.

- A politico-economic liberalisation, creator of a new regulatory and institutional<sup>39</sup> environment. The institutionalisation of neoliberal standards and principles is a system that uses in a combine manner legal and constitutional set-ups to move from a formal context (and empirical), pre-Liberal, characterised by the predominance of authoritarian policies and State economy to a neoliberal context marked by pluralistic political and economic action formulas in which the State is no longer the main actor.

- Liberalisation is paradoxically accompanied by the need of the State: the need for the State as a supervisory body of market dynamics that are not necessarily going in the direction of preserving social cohesion, equality and political inclusion of all citizens as witnessed by popular mobilisations in Cameroon in the 1990s/2004 involving teachers, students, and the strikes of 1993, conducted by magistrates, doctors etc... is understood as an overcoming of the antagonist approach of the State and the market. The State suppression of its subventions from the social sphere of health, education, agriculture (the stop in the distribution of agricultural inputs fertilizers) with the purpose of liberalising economic life or reducing the State volume, affects sections of the populations, necessitating a State intervention in the form of regulation, protection, etc. In fact, the State and the market make-up a whole, a couple made of both tumultuous and harmonious relations.

- A socially explosive liberalisation; this case refers to the weakening of social cohesion through drastic economic measures and political disarticulation of the Cameroonian society by creating conditions of confrontation between leaders of the regime and new actors in search of political professionalization and between the State and the society. Politico-economic liberalisation then appears as a disintegration model of the Cameroonian nation and a distension of social consensus around standards in managing the society. Hence, the formula of a problematical politico-economic liberalisation that implies the difficulty of institutionalising rules of political and economic game<sup>40</sup> in line with liberal precepts. Problematical liberalisation also refers to the elements of contradiction existing between the politico-economic authoritarian and interventionist (or Planned) culture or the encrusted State mentality and the neoliberal and democratic culture.<sup>41</sup> Problematical liberalisation is confronted with a monolithic political tradition, with a State planned<sup>42</sup> economic culture, with the anchoring of a single party system transformed into a preponderant party and a multiparty system of formality and appearance.

- A depoliticised liberalisation, it is an economic liberalisation which is defended through the presentation of the intervention of its promoters as being limited to the promotion of good governance, as a condition for economic development, that is, a liberalisation that defends<sup>43</sup> itself against accusations of political interference. The technocratic

<sup>35</sup> On the topic of the distinction of monist/pluralist thesis, Philippe Braud, *Sociologie politique*, p. 571.

<sup>36</sup> On the issue of State phobia, Michel Foucault, «la phobie de l'Etat», extract of the course of the 31 January 1979 published in *Libération* on 30 June 1984.

<sup>37</sup> Richard JEFFRIES, «Moins d'Etats et plus de marchés», *politique africaine* N° 14, June 1984, p. 6-12.

<sup>38</sup> Ibrahima Thioub, Momar Diop and Catherine Boone, "Firm to liberalization in Senegal", a paper prepared for presentation at "business associations and the state in Africa old partners new directions" a writers conference at American university school of international service, Washington DC. February 1997.

<sup>39</sup> On an illustrative title, R. Wade, "Governing the market: economic theory and the role of government in East Asian industrialization", Princeton, Princeton university press, 1990.

<sup>40</sup> Frederick Georges Baily, «les règles du jeu politique», Trad. Paris, PUF, 1971.

<sup>41</sup> B.F Hoselitz, "Level of economic performance and bureaucratic structure" in la Palombara (eds) *Bureaucratic and political development*, Princeton, Princeton university press, 1963.

<sup>42</sup> On the elements of planification, A. Waterson, "la planification du développement", Paris, Dunod, 1969. Also read Arthur Lewis, "The principles of economic planning", London, Allen and Unwin, 1949.

<sup>43</sup> Stéphane Romane, «La bonne gouvernance, pierre philosophale du développement économique ? » in *l'économie politique* N°6, 2000, p. 39-51. World Bank, «Governance and development», Washington DC. November 1994.



depoliticisation of economic<sup>44</sup> liberalisation is understood as referring to the logics of tactical reconsideration of the compulsory matching requirement of democratisation and liberal economic reforms. This is the disjunction or dissociation of economic requirements from democratisation requirements, or the distinction between economic missions of international financial institutions and political matters; it is the limitation of the intervention of international financial institutions to economic and development factors.

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