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Electoral Democracy and Poverty Reduction in Cameroon and Burkina Faso

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Introduction

One of the major issues in the scholarly and policy debates on African development is not whether democratic governance is actually under way, but if it constitutes a necessary condition for the continent to develop. Even though the majority of the governments of African countries have established political institutions like a parliament, political parties, periodic elections, and have liberalized the polity by embracing multi-party systems, democratic governance is still far from really being entrenched. For instance, in the 1990s Cameroon and Burkina Faso embarked on political democratization at a time when they were experiencing significant and chronic public finance deficits.

However, African countries which complied with the prescriptions of the creditor nations and the Bretton Woods Institutions were yet to witness any significant social and economic progress a decade after. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report on human development, the number of persons surviving in sub-Saharan Africa on less than US$1 per day increased, but income per head declined in 20 countries, or stagnated in many other countries during the period under review (UNDP 2003). All this reinforces the concern for ascertaining the actual linkage between democracy and economic and human development in the continent.

Therefore, this chapter provides an empirical framework to examine the linkage between electoral democracy and poverty reduction in Cameroon and Burkina Faso. In doing so, it constructs the electoral democracy-poverty reduction model and undertakes an empirical analysis of the democratic experiences of the two

countries. It compares and contrasts the electoral processes in the two countries. Finally, it concludes with a major prescription that all national and international stakeholders participating in elections should use the ballot box to promote accountability and to enhance the material well-being of the marginalized segment of the population in Africa.

Contrary to the misconception of some African and Africanist scholars that Africa is a monolith, Africa merits deep and special comparative studies of its countries and their governments. In spite of the common colonial histories of Cameroon and Burkina Faso, their development experiences varied, as the former, with its huge natural resources and the steady growth recorded within the first decade of its political independence in the 1960s, had the potential for sustaining economic growth and, possibly, transforming it into development, but for its inept and corrupt political leadership. The latter was resource poor and a land-locked country, with very little or no prospects of promoting any meaningful economic development coupled with its fragile and corrupt political leadership. The contrasting roles of the political elites and political parties in tackling poverty reduction in Cameroon and Burkina Faso have helped to deepen the understanding of the nature of political decay in both countries. France, their former colonizer, had equally had dire consequences for their economies and politics. All this has had severe implications for the rise of a democratic and reformist state in Cameroon and Burkina Faso in particular and, Africa generally.

Electoral Democracy in Africa

Across Africa, the majority of the countries subjected to structural adjustment programmes established political institutions like parliament and political parties, but the political elites and leadership of the parties remained largely indifferent to the electoral process.

This explained why elections have not fostered the democratization project of the African state, nor really established any critical linkage between electoral democracy and good governance and poverty in the continent. Scholars like Becker, Alson, Downs, Alesina &Tabellin and Alesina & Drazen have interrogated these contentious issues. This chapter departs from the extant literature by formulating an empirical and quantitative approach to deepen the understanding of the African state and its politics (Alson 1965, 1982; Downs 1957; Alesina & Tabellin 1992; Alesina & Drazen 1992).

Mueller explained public choice theory either as 'the economic analysis of non-market decision processes; or the application of economic analysis to political issues' (Mueller 1989). Public choice theory was pioneered by Downs, but it was popularized in the developing countries by Buchanan and Tullock, who paid attention to four major fields: voting theory and the analysis of the linkage between the forms of political institutions; the theory of interest groups and the search for

unearned or private income; domestic causes of foreign indebtedness and the behaviour of international suppliers of capital, and the theory of bureaucracy and the study of links between structural adjustment and political and economic interactions (Downs 1957; Buchanan and Tullock 1962). The strengths and limitations of public choice theory have been adequately interrogated in Chapters One and Three. Let me first examine parliamentary elections and the electoral strategies and the electoral attitudes of voters before the application of the conceptual framework in the study.

Parliamentary Elections

Electoral Strategies of Candidates
According to Niskanen, candidates' strategies for victory in election are linked to their positions in the political parties and the capacity of the parties to win over public opinion. In the parliamentary elections held in Cameroon in July 1995 and Burkina Faso in May 1997, the results showed that the ruling parties won 119 out 180 votes cast in Cameroon, and 100 out 111 of the votes cast in Burkina Faso. Three factors explained the victories of these parties: the organization of the ruling parties; the endowment in human and material resources, and their innovative capacity (Niskanen 1971). I elaborate on these issues.

Organization of Ruling Parties
Following the parliamentary elections held in 1995 and 1997 in Cameroon and Burkina Faso, the parties in power showed that they were better organized than those in opposition. Both political parties, the Rassemblement Democratique du People Camerounais (RDPC) in Cameroon, and the Congrès pour la Démocratie et le Progrès (CDP) in Burkina Faso, had an organized national political and administrative structure. While the cohesion of the RDCP was partly rooted in the former one-party system in Cameroon, the CDP relied on the popular structures created by the revolutionary government in Burkina Faso. However, the opposition parties were further weakened by internal divisions orchestrated by the ruling parties.

Human and Material Resources
With respect to human and material resources that are required to for the democratization process to get underway, it can be argued that democracy is an instrumentality for producing the public good, since a significant share of its financing is usually ensured by the state in Africa (Bernard 1985; Percebois 1991; Picard 1995).

However, the membership of the incumbent party in Cameroon and Burkina Faso included most of the administrative, economic and social elites of the countries, especially the young political elites who had just been recruited into the

political scene following the rotation of elites in 1983 with the advent of the revolution in Burkina Faso and their admission into the party after the transfer of power in Cameroon in 1982.

Therefore, the party in power had no problem in acquiring the material resources necessary to carry out its electoral campaign, and to use its power over the electoral process. For instance, some of the candidates who belonged to the party in power and had all the information provided by the state significantly influenced the spatial allocation of the state's capital expenditures. They claimed the credit for them, and distributed handouts and multiplied the number of official inaugurations of public works just before the day of the election.

Innovative Capacity

With regard to the innovative capacity of the political parties, Zerbo argued that to nominate candidates for the legislative elections held in July 1995 in Cameroon, and in May 1997 in Burkina Faso, the parties in power had, contrary to the expectations of the opposition, organized primaries. The primaries were aimed at weeding out certain politicians who had a strong base in their electoral constituencies in order to select the most representative candidates for the elections, as the strategy enhanced their chances of winning the elections (Zerbo 2005).

Drawing on the experiences of the Cameroon and Burkina Faso, it was demonstrated that the ruling parties appropriated the state's machinery and power of incumbency to further weaken the opposition. In response, the opposition parties adopted defensive attitudes by merely criticizing the activities of the ruling parties and the poor performance of the democratic institutions in the electoral process.

In Cameroon, the opposition parties scored a decreasing percentage of the total parliamentary seats: 48 per cent and 16 per cent, respectively, during the 1997 and 2002 parliamentary elections, while the ruling party in Burkina Faso won by a landslide. To redress the poor performance of the opposition in Burkina Faso, the parties adopted structures that allowed them to obtain 48 per cent of the seats during the 2002 parliamentary elections. This was a significant success for the opposition parties and this could be explained by the qualitative change of the political environment in Burkina Faso between 1998 and 2002. It was characterized by the proportional technique used for the allocation of seats and a greater involvement of the opposition during the last elections. The situation was quite different in Cameroon where political parties were less involved in the elections. Contrary to the 1997 elections, which were boycotted by the opposition parties, the parliamentary elections of 2002 in Burkina Faso did not only record wider participation by opposition parties in the electoral process, but emphasized their collaboration with the electoral regulatory organizations and the media.

The opposition parties did not adopt a common strategy during legislative elections in Cameroon, which was in contrast with Burkina Faso's opposition parties that used the ballot box to advance the democratization process at the institutional level. Rather, they adopted public campaign methods to increase the awareness of voters and to mobilize them for elections. The strategy partly accounted for the relative massive participation of the political parties in the parliamentary elections held in 2004. Also, the political parties sent their representatives to the Commission Electorale Nationale Independante (CENI) and collaborated with the Conseil Superieur de l'Information (CSI), which is the state agency that ensures that equal time is respected by the state-sponsored media programmes.

With their agreement to participate in the 2002 parliamentary elections, coupled with relative increased finances and modest human resources, the opposition parties in Cameroon had a better outing at the polls than in previous elections. For instance, certain opposition parties with less representation at the national level formed alliances to overcome such a weakness. It allowed the rank-and-file of the parties to choose their representatives, as opposed to the traditional methods whereby top party leaders handpicked the candidates.

The opposition candidates also mobilized the voters by mounting a door to door campaign, rather than use the usual populist strategies of giving limited financial assistance and handouts. They did not only organize meetings with voters in the larger urban centres, but deepened their knowledge about the power of the ballot box in the democratic process. The opposition candidates whose parties were represented in the legislature did not hesitate to deploy the ministers during electoral campaigns in Cameroon and Burkina Faso.

Notwithstanding the material and organizational problems, the opposition parties in Africa are participating more as regulatory electoral institutions, and collaborating more with private information agencies, all in the hope of deepening the democratization process.

Electoral Attitudes of Voters

In electoral competition, the voter constitutes the most precious element to win over. For the voter faces a list of candidates from which a choice is made in casting the vote. The choice of candidate to vote for depends on many considerations such as the membership of an ethnic group and region as in Cameroon (Menthong 1998). Other factors include the advice of a spiritual chief like the Mourides in Senegal (Monjib 1998), populist relationships, material well-being and political ideologies of the candidates. Let me examine these factors in detail.

Ethnic, Regional and Religious Membership

The majority of voters are inclined to choose candidates who belong to their ethnic, regional and religious groups. For instance, during the presidential elections of 1992, 1998 and 2004 in Cameroon, Paul Biya obtained about 97 per cent of the total votes cast in the South Province, his ethnic home, and 40 per cent of the votes cast at the national level. His arch rival during the election, John Fru Ndi, secured his own ethnic base, North-West Province with 87 per cent of the total votes cast and 36 per cent of the votes at the national level. In Senegal, as in Northern Cameroon, the Mouride spiritual leader's opinion significantly influenced the choice of the voter. A study conducted by the Department of Political Science, University of Saint-Louis, Senegal in 1998, showed that 42 per cent of the Mourides cast their ballots according to their affiliation with religious brotherhood or ethnic group (Monjib 1998).

However, ethnic and regional influence on voting is becoming less significant in African countries like Mali, Benin, and Burkina Faso, where the parliamentary elections of 1997 and 2002 showed that candidates were increasingly finding it difficult to impose themselves on their loyal constituencies due largely to political awareness and elections campaign mounted by the non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Populism or the Convictions of Candidates

According to Banegas, the responsibility of the elected representative is conceived in terms of populist redistribution as a matter of priority. The responsible elected representative is the one who redistributes, but the best candidates are those who redistribute financial, material resources or foodstuffs to the voters. Populist redistribution does not suffice for the legitimacy of the candidate, or to win the confidence of the voters in the pluralistic context that favours 'free riding' (Banegas 1998). It is crucial to note that the voters may benefit from the generous gifts of candidates during elections but it should not be construed as reflecting profound convictions regarding the candidates' capacity. Thus, the populist pronouncements and practices of the candidates do not solely determine the votes that they secure in elections (Zerbo 2005). In fact, voters' choice of candidates should be tied to the future well-being of the people, particularly as the African economy has been faced with protracted political, economic and social decline since the 1980s.

From the foregoing, three types of voters can be discerned: the voters whose vote is a function of the expectation of their future well-being; the voter whose votes are based on populism; and the voters who cast their votes on the basis of either membership of a group, or an ideology. Thus, the economic analysis of democracy leads to the construction of a model which considers the votes of electorates not only as a function of their future welfare relative to outgoing candidates but more importantly, the progress or regression of the level of economic, social, and human development.

Conceptual and Methodological Framework of the Study

This section conceptualizes the theoretical framework for analyzing the linkage between democracy and the fight against poverty using points raised in the preceding discussion to build a general model and to specify and to adapt its application for Cameroon and Burkina Faso.

The General Model of Electoral Democracy and the Fight against Poverty

The 'Electoral Democracy and the Fight against Poverty Model' is based on a function called 'the function of democratic sanction of the government by the people'. It depends on the level of welfare represented here by the incidence and the depth of multi-dimensional poverty, and the factors highlighted in the preceding analyses like the vote as a function of the future welfare of the voter. In this context, two types of votes can be distinguished: the votes cast in favour of the political party in power, and the votes for the opposition.

Further, three types of voters can be considered: (a) the poor voters, who vote against governments owing to their deplorable living conditions, as opposed to the poor who vote for the government because of populism or ethnic, regional or religious membership; (b) middle-class voters who vote against the governments in solidarity with the most disadvantaged, and the rich voters who vote for the governments for personal interest and the interests of their social class, and (c) the general voters, who vote against governments on account of differences in ideologies, religions and ethnic considerations.

The Function of Democratic Sanction of the Government

There is the need to clarify the variables in the context they are used in the framework.

Let N = the number of voters in a given population;

P_0 and P_1 = the incidence and depth of multidimensional poverty, respectively;

γ = the proportion of the poor who vote against governments because of their living conditions;

β = the proportion of the non poor who vote against governments in the cause of the poor and,

w = the proportion of voters who decide to sanction governments for ideological reasons or ethnic, regional or religious membership.

(Parameters, and w vary between 0 and 1).

The hypothesis is that the more living conditions deteriorate, the higher the percentage of the votes of the poor penalizing the party in power. An increase in poverty is perceived by the population as proof of the incapacity of the government to deliver the public good and enhance the material conditions of the people.

For this reason, parameters g and ß are increasing functions of the incidence index P_0, and of P_1, the index of multidimensional poverty.

Let $g = g(P_0 ; P_1)$ and $\beta = \beta(P_0 ; P_1)$;

It is assumed that these two parameters are functions of P_0 and P_1, and, they take on the value 0 in $P_0 ; P_{1 =} (0 ; 0)$, which means that when nobody is poor in the society, the share of sanction votes for poverty reasons is equal to 0. According to these notations, the number of the poor voters who vote against governments because their living conditions are poor is given by the following relation (1):

$$m_{esp} = N^* . P_0^* \, g(P_0 ; P_1) \tag{1}$$

The number of the middle-class voters who vote against governments because of the poor conditions under which certain strata of the population live is given by the following relation (2):

$$m_{vsr} = N^* (1 - P_0)^* \beta(P_0, P_1) \tag{2}$$

The number of voters who vote against governments for ideological, populist, and social considerations is simply equal to their proportion w multiplied by the rest of voters after subtracting the preceding two categories of voters.

$$m_{vsi} = x^* (N - N^* P_0^* g(P_0, P_1) - N^* (1 - P_0)^* \beta(P_0 ; P_1)) \tag{3}$$

Therefore, the cumulative number of sanction votes against governments is given by relation (4).

$$N_{vs} = N^* \left[P_0 g(P_0 ; P_1) + (1 - P_0)^* \beta(P_0 ; P_1) + w^* \left[1 - P_0^* g(P_0 ; P_1) - (1 - P_0)^* \beta(P_0 ; P_1) \right] \right] \tag{4}$$

By dividing relation (4) by the total number of voters N, the sanction function (F_{sg}) is obtained and it gives the percent of sanction votes against governments as expressed in relation (5) below:

$$F_{sg}(P_0, P_1) = P_0^* {}_0 g(P_0, P) + (1 - P_0)^* \beta(P_0, P_1) + \\ w^* (1 - P_0^* g(P_0, P_1) - (1 - P_0)^* \beta(P_0, P_1)) \tag{5}$$

In simplifying the second member of relation (5) the simplified expression of the sanction function against the government given by relation (6) below is obtained. It highlights a partition of voters into two groups. The first part of the second member of relation (6) corresponds with the voters' sanction votes against

governments linked to the living conditions of the poor, while the second term corresponds with sanction votes linked to the political weight of the opposition.

$$F_{sg}(P_0, P_1) = (1 - w)^* (P_0^* g(P_0, P_1) + (1 - P_0)^* \beta(P_0, P_1)) + w \qquad (6)$$

The forms or characteristics of the functions $g = g(P_0; P_1)$ and $\beta(P_0; P_1)$ are specific to each community, or each country.

The function $g(P_0, P_1)$, which measures the proportion of the poor who vote against the government is characterized by the level of education and the mastery of the democratic game by the poor on the one hand; and by the degree of tolerance, patience, and the demands of the poor for the improvement in their welfare on the other. However, the lower the level of schooling and awareness of the poor voters are, the easier it is to convince them through populist electoral strategies, and through arguments related to their membership in some group they identify with, despite the fact that they are poor.

The function $\beta(P_0, P_1)$ gives the proportion of sanction votes by the non-poor against the government due to the existence of poverty, which is characterized by the degree of solidarity or conflicts of interest between social classes within the population and the level of patience, or the demands of the most well-off relative to the improvement expected in the standard of living of the poor.

The parameter w of the sanction function captures the influence of ideological, religious or ethnic, and populist weight of all opposition parties in a country. The weaker the opposition, the lower w will be. At this juncture, let me look into the framework that explains the variable that will enable the government to retain power.

Programme of the Incumbents to Stay in Power

For the incumbents to stay in power, they have to minimize sanction votes against them by the opposition. Let me analyze the characteristics of the functions $g(P_0; P_1)$ and $\beta(P_0; P_1)$; the parameter w as short and medium-term exogenous data; and the government programme to minimize sanction votes against its party, as expressed below:

$$Min \;_{P_0, P} F_{sg}(P_0, P_1) \qquad (7)$$

By using the expression of the sanction function in programme (7), the next programme (8) is obtained.

$$Min \;_{P_0 P_1} \left[(1 - w)(P_0 g(P_0, P_1) + (1 - P_0)\beta(P_0, P_1)) + w \right] \qquad (8)$$

Under the hypotheses formulated above on functions $g(P_0, P_1)$ and $\beta(P_0, P_1)$, it appears that the solution of program (8) would be $(P_0; P_1) = (0; 0)$, with $F_{sg}(0; 0) = w$. This implies that, to reduce the percentage of sanction votes against the government party to the lowest level possible, the exogenous factors being fixed, governments must eradicate poverty. In this case, the percentage of sanction votes is reduced to the ideological, populist or ethno-regional weight of the opposition.

However, according to the principles of electoral democracy, to have the majority is not equivalent to having the support of all the voters or even 70 per cent of the voters. But it amounts to having a little more than half of the voters that is, 50.5, 51, 51.5, or 52 etc. In this context, it can be deduced that the solution of programme (8) is such that, if the weight w of the opposition is close to 50 per cent, that is, in an equilibrium situation in terms of weight or legitimacy between the party in power and the opposition, the elected representatives are obliged to continue combating poverty until it is eradicated, otherwise they will lose power.

Likewise, when the functioning of democratic institutions and the characteristics of the voters are such that the values of the functions of the parameters g and $ß$ are close to 1, even for low poverty indicators, governments are forced to adopt policies likely to enlarge the economic and social opportunities in favour of the most disadvantaged.

Should the weight of the opposition be low or negligible; that is, well below 50 per cent or even close to 0 per cent; or if the voter's social characteristics and the functioning of democratic institutions are such that the parameters g and $ß$ remain close to 0, even for high-valued poverty indicators, elections will not constitute a powerful means for the people to put pressure on political leaders to eradicate poverty when they are not interested in such a programme.

Let it be given that, $w = 20$ per cent. Therefore, $F_{sg} = (0, 0) = 20$ per cent of the votes. It means that if poverty is eliminated, the percentage of the voters for the ruling party is 80 per cent. Yet, the eradication of poverty requires, among others, more effort, material, financial and human resources. Rationally, taking into account the huge costs involved and the scarce resources, governments may set their electoral objective at, say, 60 per cent of the votes. That is, at less than the 80 per cent representing the score they would receive when they would eradicate poverty. To the electoral objective of 60 per cent set by governments, it corresponds with a value of 40 per cent for the sanction function. But from the fact that this function reaches its minimal value at (0,0), it follows that the governments' electoral objective at 60 per cent of the votes would correspond to a couple of values (P_{0g}, P_{1g}) of the incidence and depth of poverty, which is different from (0,0). In this case, the electoral objective of those in power does not converge with the aim of the poverty eradication programme. Looking at the exogenous factors characterizing the function g (.) and $ß$ (.); the indicators (P_{og}, P_{1g}) correspond with the electoral objective of those elected and this is far from (0, 0), which represents a situation without poverty. In a dictatorial regime, the parameters g and $ß$ are equal to zero.

The sanction function of the general model is a function yielding the probability of overthrowing the regime. Given the fact that the people cannot express themselves in a dictatorial regime, the probability depends on the relative weight of the members of the opposition, who are usually forced to work outside of

the law or in secret. Thus, the main concern of dictatorial regimes is to annihilate the opposition. Even in regimes that claim to be democratic, but condone malfunctioning of democratic institutions and restrict civil liberties and political freedom, the parameters g and ß are totally nullified. There is nothing that guarantees that the improvement of the living conditions of the people will constitute one of the concerns of those in power. As a result, the reduction of the coefficient *w* of the sanction function to its lowest level turns out to be the principal objective of such a regime. Under such circumstances, the opposition is permanently destabilized as its leaders are either locked up in detention or are forced into exile by the government.

Based on the principles of the general model as explained above, democracy is a necessary condition for those in power to promote human development. As can be expected, democracy as a process should evolve slowly but not be imposed on the people. However, the question is when will democracy really get underway in Africa? The specific model that helps to redress the question is examined in the next section.

Specified Model of Electoral Democracy and the Fight against Poverty

The specification of functions with parameters g and β is sufficient for the general model that is applied for African countries. This means that, by using the results of the preceding analyses, specifications of relations (9) and (10) are proposed, respectively for parameters $g\ (P_0 ; P_1)\ and\ \beta\ (P_0 ; P_1)$ of the sanction function

$$g\ (P_0, P_{1)}) =\ k_1 P_0^{\ a}\ P_1^{\ b}$$

With $a \geq 0$, b ≥ 0 and $0 \leq k_1 \leq 1$

where a = coefficient of naivety or inexperience of the poor voters in the electoral process. For a given level of poverty, the higher means that it is easier to convince poor voters through populist methods, vote buying and ethnic or regional membership manipulations. Thus, the percentage of sanction votes among the poor is linked with their declining material conditions.

When the coefficient a tends toward infinity, the percentage of the sanction votes of the poor tends toward 0 owing to their living conditions.

The b is the coefficient of tolerance, patience or demands of poor voters put to those in power relative to their living conditions.

For a given depth of poverty**,** the higher b implies that, more poor voters are patient or less demanding of an improvement in their living conditions.

When b tends toward infinity, the percentage of these sanction votes tends toward 0**.**

The k_1 is a constant which takes into account the other factors not explicitly taken into account in the model, such as the independence of the regulatory

institutions of the voters and their capacity to limit electoral fraud. A value of k_1 close to 0 indicates a weak independence and a low capacity for democratic institutions to ensure the transparency and regularity of elections. But a value of k_1 close to 1 indicates that democratic institutions are both strongly independent and capable of ensuring that elections will be transparent and free in the areas where the poor reside. It must be recognized, however, that when the incidence and intensity of poverty increase, the proportion of sanction votes linked to living conditions increases among the poor.

Relation (10) gives a specified form of the proportion of the middle class, who would vote against the ruling party for reasons linked to the populations' living conditions.

$$\beta(P_0; P_1) = k_2 P_0^c P_1^d \tag{10}$$

with $c \geq 0$, $d \geq 0$ and $0 \leq k_2 \leq 1$

where c is the coefficient of conflicts of interest between the rich and the poor. A value of c close to 0 indicates a strong solidarity between social classes. On the other hand, a value of c tending to infinity indicates serious conflicts of interest between the rich and the poor. The proportion of the middle class voting against the leaders to support the poor becomes a decreasing function of coefficient.

The d is the coefficient of tolerance, or the patience of the middle class voters toward those in power relative to improvement in the living conditions of the poor. For a given level of the depth of poverty, the higher d is, the more the middle class voters are patient in improving the living conditions of the poor, the lower the percentage of their sanction votes will be. When the middle class show unlimited patience; that is, when d tends to infinity, the percentage of their sanction votes tends toward 0, because of the deplorable conditions of the poor.

The k_2 is a constant which takes into account the other factors not explicitly taken into account in the model, such as the independence of regulatory institutions and their capacity to reduce electoral fraud. These factors may be different depending on whether the issue at stake is about the poor voters or the rich voters.

In relations to (9) and (10), the parameters k^1 and k^2 may be assimilated to scores, which account for the efficiency of the country's democratic institutions to function and their capacity to conduct free and fair elections. Thus, the specified sanction function is given by relation (11) below.

$$F_{sg}(P_0; P_1) = (1 - w)k_1 P_0^{1+e} P_1^b + (1 - P_0)k_2 P_0^a P_1^c) + w \tag{11}$$

From relation (11), several types of situations can be analyzed according to the dominant factors that exist in the country or community. Thus, on the basis of the hypotheses posited on the parameters, several situations will be analyzed with the understanding that the factor 'weight of the opposition' was analyzed in the

preceding section to see to what extent the couple of poverty indicators $(P_0; P_1)$ correspond with the electoral objective chosen by the government would converge toward the objective (0;0) which is the objective of poverty eradication in democratic states where the opposition is weak.

When elections are not free and transparent in a country, partly because democratic institutions do not function effectively, the parameters k_1 and k_2 are closer to 0. In this case, the electoral objective $(P_0; P_1)$ of those in power is farther from (0;0). When democratic institutions depend totally on those in power or when these institutions do not exist or malfunction, k_1 and k_2 are equal to 0. Thus, the reduction or the fight against poverty ceases to be a concern for the party in power. The priority of the latter is to destroy the opposition, for if k_1 and k_2 are equal to 0, the sanction function depends only on the weight of the opposition. In part, this explains the behaviour of certain non-democratic regimes that have ruled, or continue to rule in Africa.

In a context where elections are free and transparent, and where the opposition is weak, for the electoral objective $(P_0; P_1)$ of those in power to converge toward the objective (0;0) to improve the welfare of the populations, the parameters *a,b, c* and *d* must tend to 0, respectively. This implies that the poor are experienced or have relative mastery of the mechanisms of the electoral process, that a greater solidarity exists between the social strata, and that voters are demanding or do not reveal to those in power their great patience over the prolonged deplorable conditions of their existence.

Therefore, the elected representatives are obliged to work continuously for an improvement in the welfare of the people, as doing so is the only way to obtain the majority of the votes of the poor voters, who are increasingly becoming cunning and colluding among themselves. As a result, the political objective of the party in power converges with the welfare objective, notably in favour of the poor. The solidarity of the voters constitute a powerful asset, which may serve to put permanent pressure on those in power, who are compelled to reduce poverty in order to benefit from voter patience, and to reduce the weight of poverty on the latter.

However, when the degree of poor voters' naivety is significant or when serious conflicts of interest exist between the rich and the poor, or when the voters show boundless patience and are not demanding relative improvements in their living conditions, the sanction function takes on low values on those close to 0, even when poverty indexes are high. In this case, nothing ensures the convergence of the ruling party's political objective toward the welfare objective (0;0).

According to this model, the factors which determine whether the priority electoral objectives of the party in power will converge toward, or diverge from, the welfare objectives of the poor are the following; mastery of democratic politics by the people, solidarity among the people or low levels of conflicts

between social classes and sustained demands by the populations for improvements in their welfare. Divergence from the welfare objective of the poor simply means that most or some of the above factors do not obtain.

Analysis of the Situation of Electoral Democracies

An analysis of the convergence of the electoral objectives of the elected representatives with the welfare need of the disadvantaged is the task of this section, paying attention to the sanction function, opposition and democratic institutions, conflict of interests, and the mastery of the democratic process.

Estimation of the Sanction Function

Having specified the preceding model in equation (11) above, let me now turn to the data drawn from the report of the *Obsevatoire National des Elections au Cameroun* (ONEL), and those generated from another study conducted by University researchers who carried out a simulation using the results of the 1995 parliamentary elections. The simulation results provide us with the parameters and variables applicable to our model and they permit the estimation of the sanction function so specified. The data were complemented by the synthesis of data obtained from the headquarters of the opposition parties with seats in the National of Assembly of Cameroon, and the data from the works of Fambon on election financing and political parties in Africa (Fambon 2003). The estimate of the sanction function is stated below:

$$F_{sg}(P_0; P_1) = (1 - 20)(0.05 P_{o0}^{1+0.7} P_1^{0.9} + (1 - P_0)0.05 P_0^{0.05} P_1^{0.95}) + 20$$

$$(12)$$

Emerging from this estimation; that is, equation 12, are a number of observations. First, is the proportion g of the poor who voted during the elections against the party in power, which is 60 per cent. Second, the proportion of the middle class voting against the party in power for the cause of the poor is 30 per cent. Third and final, the proportion of the voters which decided to sanction the ruling party because of ideological, ethnic and religious reasons is 70 per cent. The parameters are $e = 0.7$, $b = 0.9$; $b = c = 0.9$; and $a = 0.95$. This implies that the objectives of those in power are far from converging toward the welfare objective (0, 0) of the poor whatever the values of (P_0, P_1).

Further, the parameters $k_1 = k_2 = 0.05$ indicate the quality of democratic institutions and electoral methods. In addition, these parameters show the degree of naivety of the poor, and solidarity or conflicts of interest between the rich and the poor. Given the assumptions made on the parameters and the variables P_0 and P_1, the estimate of the sanction function is equation 12 which allows for a deeper understanding of the situation of electoral democracies relative to the decisive factors that render elections an effective tool to compel elected representatives to pay attention to the needs of the poor.

Weight of the Opposition and Functioning of Democratic Institutions

The model examines the influence of the total votes secured by the opposition or ruling party in Cameroon. A strong opposition implies that the representatives of the opposition parties have a national spread in the presidential and parliamentary elections, well-organized and united.

In Cameroon, as in other African countries like Gabon, Chad, Burkina Faso, Niger and Senegal, the opposition parties are politically weak, largely because of their inability to perform the traditional functions of mobilizing the people and ensuring adequate representation of various interests. For instance, some parties have disappeared between two elections, for example the *Mouvement Populaire pour la Revolution; Le Parti des Fourmis,* while the ruling RDPC still behaves as it did during the period of the one-party system. The parameters $e= 0.7$; $a= 0.95$; and $b =c= 0.9$ tend to 1, thereby indicating that the (P_0, P_1) objective of the leaders of the RDPC do not converge toward the (0;0) welfare objective of the people. As noted, the poor voters are not experienced, and do not grasp the mechanisms of the electoral process very well, or are excluded from the process by various techniques that they ignore. The couple of indicators (P_0, P_1), which is the electoral objective set by those in power, do not converge toward (0;0). This situation does not bode well for alleviating poverty. The elected representatives have never really been compelled to work constantly to improve the welfare of the most underprivileged group in the society.

The divergences between and within the opposition parties and the multitude of existing parties in Cameroon constitute some of the crucial factors weakening the opposition in the country. In the period, 2001 and 2004, the three dominant parties were the SDF, UNDP and UPC. The parties were all afflicted by serious internal crises that resulted in the defection of some of the top leaders of the parties and the majority of the rank and file. The same crisis rocked the political parties in Burkina Faso from 2002 to 2004, and in Chad, between 2006 and 2007. However, whereas in Cameroon, with a population of 20 million, 20 political parties participated in the 2002 parliamentary elections, in Burkina Faso with population of 12 million, 40 parties participated in the legislative election held in the same year.

Worse still, the opposition parties in Cameroon and Burkina Faso, like other African countries, have been victims of destabilization usually deployed by the ruling parties. As noted, past experiences of both countries and indeed Africa, have shown that influential political leaders were often threatened, locked up and forced into exile by the government, which controlled the military. The parameters $k_1 = k_2 = 0.05$ tend to 0, indicating that the elections are neither free nor transparent. The value of 0.05 also indicates that democratic institutions totally depend on those in power. Since the 1992 elections in Cameroon, it has been observed that

a party member figuring in the list of the ruling RDPC will certainly increase to 98 per cent of the vote. But once elected, the representative will not be accountable to the people who voted him into office. All this is an indication that poverty reduction ceases to be a concern for those in power and this, in turn, further weakens the opposition.

Therefore, it can be argued that, these factors indicate and confirm the values taken by the parameters: e, b, a, and c of the sanction function of the representatives elected by the populations in Cameroon. Thus, the present challenge for the Cameroon is for the representatives of both the ruling parties and the opposition and other pressure groups, to defend the interests of the people, especially the poor and for government to enthrone the principle of separation of powers and virile civil society organizations impacting on the public policy process.

Is it Solidarity or Conflicts of Interest between the Rich and the Poor?

The experiences of Cameroon and Burkina Faso with elections and democratization corroborate the fundamental concern that the rich generally pretend to identify with the plight of the poor whereas their real interest is to exploit the latter. For instance, in the Littoral Province of Cameroon, with a population of 3 million, 15 political parties participated in the parliamentary elections of 2002, compared with the 40 parties that took part in parliamentary elections of Burkina Faso in May 2002. Yet, the annual agricultural deficits in Cameroon and Burkina Faso were characterized by appeals from salaried employees, employers, and self-employed workers of the urban sector on behalf of their families or rural sector communities, asking for assistance to purchase foodstuffs (FAO 2006).

Generally, when the population is very vulnerable, and work opportunities and other activities are increasingly scarce, coupled with formal education and health facilities becoming increasingly inaccessible, the rich are expected to help redress the crisis. This is because if poverty is monetary or non-monetary, it has negative direct and indirect impacts on the welfare of the middle class and the rich. The middle class would want to support the poor by pressurizing government to adopt pro-poor policies in order to ensure better living condition for the poor.

Naturally, the middle class would be disposed to vote against the political leaders and parties that neglect the plight of the poor. In the estimation of the sanction function for Cameroon, the coefficient $a = 0.95$, measures the boundless patience of the voters. That is the fact that voters are not demanding enough on the issue of improvements in their living conditions and the fact that there are less conflicts of interest between the rich and the poor. This is very a significant issue for the Northern part of Cameroon, where begging for charity prevails.

Given the solidarity between the rich and the poor, the electoral effects outweigh those of eventual conflict of interest over the years. The elite in power have often

amplified the social divide between the rich and poor, and other social strata. The elites have regularly used ethnic sentiment as an instrument to keep and legitimize themselves in power (Otayek 1999). This has questioned the rationale of citizenship, the exercise of civil and political rights, and the political capacity of the voters during election (Bayart 2001). These various identity claims cannot be considered as the perverse effects of pluralism, rather, they stem mainly from the *real politik* of the politicians as they manipulate ethnic or religions differences to remain in power.

Mastery of the Democratic Game and Access to Information by Voters

Generally, the majority of the voters in Africa lack the mastery of the game of politics, particularly the democratization process. This stems, in part, from the high level of illiteracy, limited access to information and the fragility of the multi-party system. According to the PNUD, for instance, 40 per cent of the adult populations in Africa are illiterate as against none for developed countries, and 27 per cent for other developing countries. In Cameroon in particular, 49.2 per cent of the population is still illiterate with about 65.3 per cent of the population concentrated in the rural areas compared with 76 per cent in Burkina Faso, where the bulk of the rural populace had no access to radio and television (PNUD 2004).

The preceding estimates of sanction function are quite significant. The coefficients $k_1 = k_2 = 0.05$ indicates that the democratic game engages populations which do not grasp the concepts, content and mechanisms of politics. There are many voters in Cameroon who are unable to carry out a critical analysis of the programmes and speeches of the political candidates or distinguish between the populist actions of the latter and those actions that are aimed at improving the welfare of the people in the long run. The naivety coefficient $e = 0.7$ of the sanction function is relatively high in Cameroon. Also illiteracy and limited access to information contribute to render populations less demanding of improvement in their living conditions. This helps to increase the coefficients $b = 0.9$ and $d = 0.9$ of tolerance vis-à-vis those in power as regards living conditions. Consequently, the power of the populations to compel those in power to be attentive to the underprivileged is reduced.

It can be gleaned from the foregoing that information plays an important role in understanding the practice of the democratization process, especially the mobilization, education and training of the voters for elections. Other factors impeding the democratic game include but are not limited to poor communication, lack of the independence of the media, restrictions on the freedom of expression and association.

That said, the proliferation of local and rural radio stations in Cameroon, Burkina Faso and the majority of African countries, the popularization of new

information technologies (NIT), which are difficult to control by those in power and tend to adopt actions to heighten the awareness of the public through broadcasting in local languages, and the rise of non-governmental organizations, have increased access to information. However, elections, on average, do not really constitute a powerful tool for the poor to compel the parties in power to pay attention to their votes and their needs.

Concluding Remarks

his Chapter has constructed an empirical framework based on the contention that good governance contributes to the improvement of the welfare of the African people. Within this context, it demonstrated from the experience of Cameroon and Burkina Faso that the ruling parties or their elected local representatives did not redress the needs of the poor; nor formulated and implemented policies that broadened social and economic opportunities of the poor. Other misgivings were the inability of the parties and their elected members, indeed, the government, to guarantee free and fair elections, to protect the civil and political rights of the people, and to open up political spaces. In fact, elections were not powerful means for the people to compel the governments either to enhance the deplorable material condition of the poor or to compel the elected representatives to account to the people in both countries.

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