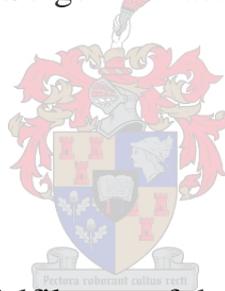


# **Rebellion as a Lifestyle: Representations of Youth Revolt in Cameroon**

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## **Abstract**

This research has used a critical discourse analysis approach encompassing postcolonial theory and theory of media effects in order to investigate the influence of political discourse in the media upon youth's violence in Cameroon. As a result it has been found that the use of private violence by young people in urban cities has become ordinary. Such an attitude reflects among other some aspects of youth's lifestyle designed to cope with the hardship of their social status and to resist the elite's dominance. While no counter-narrative has been found in the independent publications about the portrayal of youth's violence as criminal by the state-owned press, the young people nevertheless have produced through a street culture a narrative deconstructing the political discourse in the media and highlighting their grievances in a more or less violent tone. Thus the use of private violence during the riot in February 2008, is far from an isolated (re)action of angry young people, it obeys the very practicality of their existence and the political turmoil it might cause is incidental to the way of life in which it is embedded.

## Opsomming

Die navorsing het 'n kritiese diskoers analise-benadering gebruik wat 'n post-koloniale teorie en 'n teorie van media-effekte insluit om sodoende die invloed van politieke diskoers in die media op jeuggeweld in Kameroen, te ondersoek. Daar is gevolglik gevind dat die gebruik van private geweld deur jongmense in stedelike gebiede normaal geword het. So 'n houding reflekteer onder andere sommige aspekte van die jeug se leefstyl wat ontwerp is om die ontbering van hul sosiale status te hanteer en ook die elite se dominasie te weerstaan. Ofskoon geen teen-narratief sover gevind is in die onafhanklike publikasies oor die uitbeelding van jeuggeweld as krimineel en die publikasies van die staatsbeheerde pers wat die jeug uitbeeld met min agentskap nie, het jongmense wel 'n teen-narratief geskep deur 'n straat-kultuur. Hierdie teen-narratief dekonstruktueer die politieke diskoers in die media en onderstreep hul griewe in 'n geweldadige toon. Dus die gebruik van private geweld gedurende die onluste in Februarie 2008, wat nie as 'n geïsoleerde (re)aksie van woedende jongmense gesien kan word nie, is getrou aan die wese van hulle bestaan en die politieke onrus wat dit moontlik mag veroorsaak, is bykomstig tot die leefstyl waarin dit vasgelê is.”

## Acknowledgments

- To those who lend me *His* strength to express my ideas
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## INTRODUCTION

During the first half of 2010, International Crisis Group published two reports concerning the current political situation in Cameroon. The first report titled *Cameroon: Fragile State?* in Africa Report No 160, uncovers some points of political instability and suggests how to tackle them. In the light of this report it appears that the country shows a pattern of apparent stability followed by violent crisis. In this regard International Crisis Group (2010) argues that:

For long periods, problems have been masked but not dealt with, and consequent frustrations have led to explosions of violence. Today, the nation-building project has become frayed, as the economy has stagnated, and unemployment and inequality have risen. While potential organising forces are weak and dissipated, popular anger is high (Africa Report, 2010: 1).

The second report titled *Cameroon: The Dangers of A fracturing Regime* in Africa Report No 161, puts the emphasis on political transition and the risks of conflict which could emerge from internal rivalries among the ruling elite. In this respect the report opines that:

With the country afflicted by high levels of corruption, a clientelist political system and a heavy security presence in all areas of life, many citizens feel excluded from the system. Fully half of the population is younger than twenty, so the high level of youth unemployment is a considerable source of social tension. Given such a fissures, were Biya to die in office a serious crisis could unfold, aggravated by the unclear constitutional provisions for a transition. Such an event may not occur for some time, but with democracy at an impasse, the immediate post-Biya period is already a significant factor in intra-regime politics, and acknowledged as a major potential cause of instability (Africa Report, 2010: 1).

The current study is concerned with the way some agents (private and public) use and give a meaning to violent acts prior to state failure – I mean the state internal conflict. Reno (2002: 838-839) suggests that organized interest and political networks of state collapse survive corruption and the destruction of the state agencies to shape the character and aims of insurgencies. In the case of Nigeria he distinguishes two sides of opposition. At times young rebels behave like social bandits struggling to overturn a deeply corrupt political order. Yet, many work for corrupt politicians and strongmen whom they criticize, sometimes clandestinely, but often in public. These opposition groups signal the emergence of social

category associated with collapsing states and crises of patronage politics rather than a broader notion of “civil society” distinct from collapsing state. Though many see themselves as marginalized critics of corrupt rulers, they often end up serving elite interests. Rebellion on these terms does not represent a collective action found among social bandits and others usually associated with marginalized or excluded groups since its aim is not to destroy the existing social structures.

Inspired by Reno’s insight, this thesis investigates how youth in Cameroon use violence. What is the meaning attached to such a use of violence by them and by the political discourse in the media? In order to grasp some answers, this study focuses on the February 2008 protests through an analysis divided into five chapters. All these chapters are pervaded by the assumption that the use of violence during the February 2008 protests is an expression of the practice of rebellion as a lifestyle in Cameroon. Such a practice tends to obey more to its own logic than to the insurrectional character of the orthodox rebellion. The first chapter provides a discussion of a critical discourse analysis theory approach encompassing postcolonial and media theories but also the role of media in framing violence. The second chapter locates the February protest within the historical, political and socio-economic context of Cameroon. The third chapter will explore how the rebellion as a lifestyle has emerged within the structures of the postcolonial state. The fourth chapter highlights how the February 2008 protests were portrayed in the political discourse in the media and explores the meta-texts underlying those portrayals. Finally, chapter five concludes by giving a broad picture of the core assumption of this thesis namely the practice of rebellion as a lifestyle.

## CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 1.1 CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS THEORY

‘Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context’ (van Dijk,1993:1).The field of CDA it is not an homogeneous one, it subsumes a variety of approaches towards the social analysis of discourse which differ in theory, methodology, and the type of research issues they emphasise (Fairclough,2004:1). Wodak (2007:3) notes that

‘critical means not taking things for granted, opening up complexity, challenging reductionism, dogmatism and dichotomies, being self-reflective in my research, and through these processes making opaque structures of power manifest.’

She adds that ‘critical’ is not to be understood in the common sense of the word i.e. criticizing or being negative. Wodak corroborates the view of Norman Fairclough, when she adds that ‘there is no one critical discourse analysis approach. All critical discourse analysis have their own theoretical position combined with specific methodology and methods’. According to her, every theoretical approach in CDA is inherently inter- or trans-disciplinary and certainly not to be studied by linguists alone (Wodak, 2007:4). Both Fairclough and Wodak (1997:271-80) recapitulate the main tenets of CDA as follows:

1. CDA addresses social problems
2. Power relations are discursive
3. Discourse constitutes society and culture
4. Discourse does ideological work
5. Discourse is historical
6. The link between text and society is mediated
7. Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory
8. Discourse is a form of social action

Wetherell (2001:391) says that critical discourse analysts prefer keeping theoretical and analytical distinctions between different extra-discursive practices. This difference reflects the influence of Marxism in the development of CDA. According to her [Wetherell], for instance Fairclough (2001) while arguing that every social practice has linguistic or discursive elements, he tries to make distinctions between the various elements making up a practice such as manufacturing for example or child rearing. Such practice he argues might divide into the productive activity, the means of production, social relations, social identities, cultural values, forms of consciousness involved and meaning making. Critical discourse analysts tend to take a more materialist position indicating that they have an interest in the real material world independent of talk and discourse (Wetherell,2001:392). If ontological separations are made between different kinds of social practices (discursive and non discursive), then it is also possible to ask about the determination by one another.

Although, there are many perspectives in the study and critique of social inequality, the way CDA approaches these questions and dimensions is by focusing on the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance<sup>1</sup>. This reproduction process may involve such different ‘modes’ of discourse<sup>2</sup>. CDA wants to understand ‘what structures strategies or other properties of text, talk verbal interaction or communicative events play a role in these modes of reproduction’. Therefore assuming the bias of its approach, CDA pays more attention to top-down relations of dominance than to bottom –up relations of resistance, compliance and acceptance. This does not mean that critical discourse analysts see power as unilaterally imposed on others. On the contrary in many situations , and sometimes paradoxically ,power and even power abuse may seem ‘jointly produced’ ,e.g. when dominated groups are persuaded by whatever means that dominance is ‘natural’ or otherwise legitimate. Thus, although an analysis of strategies of resistance and challenge is crucial for our understanding of actual power and dominance relations in society, and although such analysis needs to be included in a broader theory of power, counter and discourse. Our critical approach here prefers to focus on the elites and their discursive strategies for the maintenance of inequality (van Dijk, 1993:301).

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<sup>1</sup> Dominance is defined here as the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups that results in social inequality including political , cultural, class, ethnic, racial, and gender inequality (van Dijk,1993:301)

<sup>2</sup> Power relations as the more or less direct or overt support, enactment, representation, legitimation, denial, mitigation or concealment of dominance among others (van Dijk, 1993:301).

In effect a central notion in most critical work on discourse is that of power, and more specifically the social power of groups and institutions. Social power in this context is defined in term of control. Thus, groups have (more or less) power if they are able to control (more or less) the acts and minds of (members of) other group .This ability presupposes a power base of privileges access to scarce social resources, such as force, money, status, fame, knowledge, information, ‘culture’ or indeed various forms of public discourse and communication of the vast literature of power. There are different types of power depending on the various resources employed to exercise such power: The coercive power of the military and violent means is based on force. The rich man’s power, rather than being based on force, will have power because of their money whereas the more or less persuasive power of parents, professors, or journalist may be based on knowledge, information, and authority. Also power is seldom absolute. Groups may more or less control other groups, or only control them in specific situations or social domains. Moreover, dominated groups may more or less resist, accept, condone, comply with, or legitimate such power and even find it ‘natural’. The power of the dominant group is integrated in law , rules, norms, habits, and even a quite general consensus, in this sense it is similar with the Gramscian notion of hegemony (van Dick,2001:354:355).

CDA operates with both micro and macro level of analysis. Language use, discourse, verbal interaction and communication belong to the micro level of social order. Power, dominance and inequality between social groups are typically terms that belong to a macro level of analysis. This means that CDA has to theoretically bridge the well-known ‘gap’ between micro and macro approaches. A CDA analysis of the relations between discourse and power therefore find firstly, access to specific forms of discourses, i.e. politics, mediaand secondly examines the way discourse impacts on minds knowing that action is controlled by our minds. Finally this is to say that those groups who are most influential also have more chances to control the minds and the actions of others. In other words van Dick (2001) splits the issue of discursive power into two basic questions for CDA:

1. How do (more) powerful groups control public discourse?
2. How does such discourse control mind and action of (less) powerful groups, and what are the social consequences of such control, such as social inequality?

## 1.2 POSTCOLONIAL THEORY

Grovogui (2007:231) argues that postcolonialism provides new way for thinking about techniques of power that constraint self determination, whether they emanate from within or from without. According to him, firstly postcolonialism contests the views of Western rationalists, humanists, and other universalists that their modes of significations (or way of making sense of the world) were superior and that ‘ Europe’ possessed the finer forms of reason, morals, and law. Secondly, postcolonialism intends to participate in the creations of ‘truths’, based on distinct modes of signification and forms of knowledge (or the manners of representations) that advance justice, peace, and political pluralism. It applies in so-called local memories, arts, and timeless features. Thirdly, postcolonialism rejects ‘native essentialism’, or the idea of the primordial and timeless features of the ‘natives’. Such ideas have been used and abused by the western powers and their counterpart postcolonial elites for different purposes, both connected to the acquisition and retention of power. Finally postcolonialism enlightens the precarious relations between ‘freedom and politics’. In this respect, postcolonialism elucidates the persistence of the colonial intellectual legacy in the supposedly neutral and universal settings of knowledge production and policy-making. By doing this postcolonialism provides the possibility of alternative conceptions and imaginaries of society, law and morals.

The approach of postcolonialism adopted for the purposes of this thesis is drawn from the so called ‘postcolony’s thought’.

The notion ‘postcolony’ identifies specifically a given historical trajectory that of societies recently emerging from experience of colonisation and the violence which colonial relationship, *par excellence*, involves. To be sure, the postcolony is chaotically pluralistic, yet it has nonetheless an internal coherence. It is a specific system of signs, a particular way of fabricating simulacra or reforming-forming stereotypes. It is not however, just an economy of signs in which power is mirrored and *imagined* self reflectively. The postcolony is characterised by a distinctive style of political improvisation, by a tendency to excess and a lack of proportion as well as by distinctive ways in which identities are multiplied, transformed and put into circulation. But the postcolony is also made up of a series of corporate institutions and political machinery which, once they are in place, constitute a distinctive regime of violence (Mbembe 1992:3).

According to Mbembe (1992, 1-10) the peculiar features of the postcolony come from the fact that, contrary to other regimes of violence and domination, the postcolony 'is not only luxuriousness of style and down-to-earth realism that characterise its power, or even the fact that it is particularly raw power that it prefers to exercise. Peculiar also is the way the relationship between rulers and ruled is forged by means of a specific practice simulacrum (le simulacre)'. Furthermore he argues that in order to account for both the mind-set and the effectiveness of postcolonial relations of power, we need to go beyond the binary categories used in standard explanations of dominations, such as resistance /passivity, autonomy/subjection, state/civil society, hegemony/counter-hegemony, totalisation/de-totalisation. As he notes in the postcolony the *commandement*<sup>3</sup> tends to institutionalise itself, in order to achieve legitimation and hegemony, in the form of *fetish*<sup>4</sup>. Thus in relation to conflict in the postcolony, he *notes* that:

Confrontation occurs at the moment the commandement with vacuous indifference to any sense of truth, seeks to compel submission and force people into dissimulation. The problem here is not that they do not obey nor even pretend to obey. Conflict arises from the fact that the postcolony is chaotically pluralistic and that it is in practice impossible to create a single, permanently stable system out of all signs, images and markers current in the postcolony; and that is why they are constantly being shaped and reshaped as much by the rulers as by the ruled, in attempts to rewrite the mythologies of power.

Moreover he [Mbembe] argues that by taking over the signs and the official language of officialdom, people have been able to remythologise the commandement into a form of zombie. Strictly speaking, such processes do not increase either the depth of people subordination or their level of resistance; it simply produces a situation of disempowerment for both ruled and rulers. In fact the postcolony is made up not only of a single 'public space' but of several each having its own separate logic yet nonetheless liable to be entangled with other logics when operating within certain specific contexts: Hence the postcolonial subject

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<sup>3</sup> 'I use the term commandement in the way it was used to denote colonial authority, that is so far as it embraces the images and structures of power and coercion, the instruments and agents of their enactment and degree of rapport between those who give orders and those who are supposed to obey them, without, of course discussing them (Mbembe, 1992:30)'

<sup>4</sup> 'Understood as the institutionalised forms adopted by a regime of domination in seeking to legitimise violent practice (Mbembe, 1992:30).'

has had to learn to bargain in this conceptual market place. Also the subjects in the postcolony have a marked ability to manage many identities for themselves, which are flexible enough to negotiate when required. In addition Mbembe (1992:5) suggests that:

If there is, then such a 'postcolonial subject', he is publicly visible only at the point where the two activities overlap- on one hand in the common daily rituals that ratify the commandment's own institutionalisation in its capacity as a fetish to which the subject is bound; and on the other, the subject's deployment of a talent for play and a sense of fun which makes him *homo ludens par excellence*. It is in this practice as *homo ludens* that enables subjects to split their identities and to represent themselves as always changing their persona; there are constantly undergoing mitosis, whether it be in 'official' space or not.

In conclusion Mbembe (2008:12) argues that the postcolony's thought, is a thought of life and responsibility through the prism of what denies the both. It is the continuum of some aspects of the black thought (Fanon, Senghor, Césaire and others). It is a thought of responsibility, responsibility understood as an obligation to respond on his behalf, to be accountable of his own action. The ethic of which lies behind this thought of responsibility is the future of the self in relation to the remembrance of what we have been when subjected to someone else's will, to the remembrance we have undergone during the time of captivity and when the law and the subject were divided

### **1.3 FRAMING AS A THEORY OF MEDIA EFFECTS**

Touri (2009:5) argues that there is a plethora of definitions of framing which illustrates the difficulty in creating a single definition for this concept .She notes that while Todd Gitlin (1980) describes news frames as:

Persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, presentation, selection, emphasis and exclusion by which symbol-handlers routinely organise discourse; for William Gamson and Andre Modigliani (1989), frame is 'a set of packages that give meaning to an issue. A package has an internal structure; at its core is a central organising idea, or frame, for making sense of relevant events, suggesting what is at issue.

Touri suggests that a more detailed definition is provided by Enteman (1993) when pointing out that 'frames define problems-determine what a causal agent is doing with cost and benefits...; diagnose causes-identify the forces creating the problem; make moral judgments-

evaluate causal agents and their effects; and suggest remedies-offer and justify treatments for the problem.’ Reviewing the literature on framing, Camaj (2008) corroborates the view point of D’angelo (2002) stressing that framing scholarship has been divided into three main programs or paradigm: Cognitive, constructionist, and critical. While the cognitive program of framing has its roots in psychological conceptions and is interested more in framing effects, the constructionists and critical programs are rooted in sociological conceptions on the impact of the large culture and hegemony on frames. Therefore, the literature on framing has been divided into approaches examining media frames and audience frames (van Grop, 2005). Gamson and Modigliani (1987) defined a media frame as ‘central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events’. Entman’s view of media frame emphasises the selection and the salience when he says that :’ To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text, in such a way as promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation’(Scheufele, 1999:107). In contrast individual frames are defined as ‘mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individual processing informations’ (Entman, 1993:53).

Sheufele (1999:103) raises the problematic of conceptualization of framing. He notes that partly because of the vagueness of its conceptualization, the term framing has been used repeatedly to label similar but distinctly different approaches. He notes that Wicks (1992) for example identified subtle but distinct differences between various concepts of cognitive categorization. Hamill and Lodge (1986) and Lodge and Hamill (1986) saw only a terminological difference between concept like frame, script or schema. Also some studies have operationalized framing in combination with other concept such as agenda setting, or priming (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987). Sheufele (1999:1007) notes that in addition to classifying studies with respect to their focus on media or audience frames, framing research can be distinguished into research examining frames as independent or dependent variables. The analysis of frame as dependent variables has examined the role of various factors in influencing the creation or modification of frames. At the media level, journalist framing of an issue may be influenced by several socio-structural or organizational variables and by ideological variables. At the audience level, frames as independent variables are analysed mostly as direct results of the way mass media frame an issue. Thus Sheufele (1999:109) constructs a four cells typology based on these two facets by arguing that:

With respect to *media frames as dependent variable*, we should ask:

RQ1: What factors influence the way journalists or other societal groups frame certain issues?

RQ2: How do these process work and, as a result, what are the frames that journalist use?

With respect to *media frames as independent variable*, we should ask:

RQ3: What kinds of media frames influence the audience's perception of certain issues, and how does this process work?

With respect to *individual frames as dependent variable*, we should ask:

RQ4: Which factors influence the establishment of individual frames, of reference, or are individual frames simply replications of media frames?

RQ5: How can audience member play an active role in constructing meaning or resisting media frames?

With respect to *individual frames as independent variable*, we should ask:

RQ6: How do individual frames influence perception of issues?

Inspired from this four cells typology, Sheufoele developed a framing model as a theory of media effects. The process model of framing of Sheufoele breaks important links down into inputs, processes, and outcomes (figure 1). The four cell typology conceptualizes framing as a continuous process where outcomes serves as inputs for the subsequent processes. A process model of framing examines four processes: frame building, frame setting, individual setting; individual-level effects of framing; and a link between individual frames and media frames (Sheufoele, 1999:114-115).The term *frame building* raises the questions how media frame are formed or what kinds of organizational and structural factors of the media system, or which individual characteristics of journalists, can impact the framing of news content.

## Framing as Media Effects

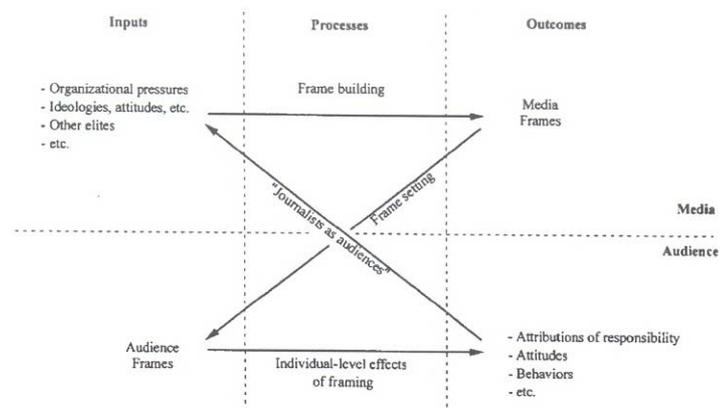


Figure 1. A process model of framing research.

Figure 1

The second process of interest for framing as a theory of media effects is inspired by the idea of agenda setting of McCombs and Shaw's (1972). The *frame setting* and the agenda setting are based on the similar processes. Whereas agenda setting is concerned with the salience of the issues, frame setting is concerned with the salience of its attributes. In contrast to McCombs et al. (1997) who believe that 'the first level of agenda setting is the transmission of object salience. The second level of agenda setting is the transmission of attributes'; the empirical work of Nelson, Clawson and Oxley (1997) and Nelson and Kinder (1996) point out that 'frames influence opinions by stressing specific values, and other considerations, endowing them with greater apparent relevance to the issue than they might appear to have under an alternative frame' (Nelson et al:1997:569). Scheufele notes that this contrast between perceived importance of salience of frames seems to be an operational one, with salience and perceived importance reflecting different ways of measuring essentially the same construct. Beyond the operational issues however, there are conceptual differences between salience of frame and perceived importance of frame. The salience of frame in this sense refers to accessibility, or to the 'ease in which instances or associations could be brought to mind' (Tversky and Kahneman quoted in Scheufele, 1999:116). In other words the accessibility of a frame influence the way people think about an issue. Based on the evidences collected by Nelson et al (1997) which demonstrate the discriminant validity of both the perceived importance of frames and the accessibility of frames; they argue that causal modelling revealed that various dimensions of perceived importance accounted for major propositions

of the variance of framing effects. Therefore salience or accessibility played a minor effect (Scheufele, 1999:117)

*Individual-level effects of framing.* Individual level of influences of audience frames on several behavioural, attitudinal and cognitive variables have been examined by focusing on input and outputs. For instance Iyengar (1991) explored the impact of episodic and thematic media framing of issues on attribution of personal or societal responsibility. However is this relationship mediated by audience framing? This question of whether audiences adopt media frames or the degree, to which they use frames in their own information processing, has not been answered (Sheufele, 1999:117).

*Journalists as audiences.* Touri (2009:5) notes that ‘Journalistic framing of event is not shaped in the vacuum but through the frame sponsored by different social actors’. A process model of framing stresses that the link between individual level and media frames deserves more attention. Journalists are viewed in this picture similarly as their audiences as cognitive misers. Thus they are equally susceptible to the very frames that they use to describe events and issues. The subjectivity of the framing phenomenon acknowledges that the actual frame ‘is controlled partly by the formulation of the problem and partly by the norms, habits and personal characteristics of the decision maker’ (Tversky and Kahneman quoted in Touri, 2009:4).

To summarize, a process model of framing as a theory of media effects captures the dynamic of framing by stressing the aspects which are overlooked by the dichotomy inputs and outcomes, that is why of Scheufele (1999:1008) argues that:

Beyond classifying research, framing as a theory of media effects needs to be conceptualized as a process model. Rather focusing on input and outcomes, therefore future research should address the four key links indicated in the figure 1: frame building, frame setting, individual-level framing processes and feedback from individual-level framing to media framing

## **1.4 THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN FRAMING PUBLIC/PRIVATE VIOLENCE AS NEWS**

Following the viewpoint of Sartorial (1987), Callaghan and Schnell (2001:183) argue that: 'In a democratic society, the exchange of information and ideas through free press as well as free and open public debate is a crucial element of mass participation and a requirement for democratic responsiveness to public preferences'. In an ideal democratic world, media are expected to serve as political watchdogs or guardians of the public interests, defending truth, pluralism, objectivity, balance and accuracy (Janowitz,1975;Shudson,1998; Sparrow, 1999 and Bennett, 1999).While some researchers see the news output as a function of 'official' view on a given issue , others maintain that journalists do keep their agency. Given the rating driven environment in which news is framed and conveyed, journalists frequently exploit the personality, sensationalism, drama and conflict of stories, thereby downplaying the larger social economic, or political picture (Callaghan and Schnell,2001:186).

For Diamond and McDonald (1996:124) "Conflict and violence make news and peace doesn't. News is perceived as what's exciting and different. People living happily together are of no interest to the public. Violence is reportable; non violence is boring". Discussing the salience of violence and conflict coverage, Galtung (1998, 2002) distinguished between 'war/violence journalism' and 'peace/conflict journalism' (Gilboa,2005: 4). According to Galtung (1998, 2002) media usually follow 'the low road' of war journalism in reporting conflict; chasing wars, the elites that run them, and a 'win-lose' outcome. In contrast the alternative approach, the 'high road' of peace journalism focuses on conflict formation, the victims of violence and the win-win solution. War journalism points out who advances and who capitulates at what human and material cost . Gilboa (2005) notes that such kind of coverage polarizes and escalates war because it calls for hatred and violence to avenge or stop 'them'. It sees 'them' as the problem and dehumanizes 'them'. War journalism is fuelled by propaganda and manipulation and is therefore biased and distorted. On the other hand, peace journalism examines the causes of violence and provides a voice to all parties, as well as empathy and understanding. It focuses on suffering all over and humanizes all sides. 'Peace journalism is more truthful and attempts to de-escalate violence by highlighting peace and conflict resolution as much as violence. While war journalism attaches itself only on 'our side', peace journalism is a journalism of attachment to all actual and potential victims'. In the same fashion Howard (2003) says that 'traditional journalism only bring the bare facts' while 'conflict sensitive journalism' goes beyond these facts and explores solutions, new

ideas, and new voices. He notes that traditional journalism is concerned only with bad news, does not seek other sides or points of view, assigns blame, and uses emotional language such as terrorism or massacre and takes sides. In contrast, conflict sensitive journalism presents balanced reports and only what is known, it is very careful about the words it uses and avoids emotional terms, it seeks explanations and comments from all sides and looks for solutions (Gilboa, 2005:5-6).

Further, despite the fact that two organizations (TRANSCEND and Conflict and Peace Forum) attempted to translate Galtung's ideas into a specific manual, very little empirical research has been conducted on this approach. Hanitzsch (Hanitzsch quoted in Gilboa, 2005) provides an interesting critique of peace journalism and related approaches for being at odds with mass communication theory. According to him, peace journalism is based on the assumption of powerful causal and linear media effects while communication theory has produced very little empirical support for this approach. Peace journalism understands the audience as a single aggregate of dispersed individuals, but communication theory has identified pluralistic audiences with different features. Peace journalism admits that publishers and journalists, especially at the local level, can disregard the interest of their specific audiences, but for communication theory this assumption is going against the nature of the journalistic field and it is not economically feasible. For peace journalism, media have the responsibility to prevent, manage, resolve, and transform conflicts, but communication theory eludes this role when sociological system theory places responsibility for these functions on political institutions and leaders.

## **CHAPTER 2: CAPTURING SOME LOGICS OF POSTCOLONIAL CAMEROON**

### **2.1 COLONIAL TRAJECTORY OF CAMEROON**

The name 'Cameroon' is said to originate with the Portuguese sailors who discovered a countless number of prawns (camaroes) as they sailed into the estuary of the River Wouri circa 1472. Although it turned out that the alleged prawns were in fact crayfish the name Cameroon has been maintained. In fact for Nyamnjoh (2005:100-101) the political history of Cameroon is often treated as if it has come about with the German occupation in the nineteenth century. He notes that sufficient significance is not given to the fact that before it became a German protectorate in 1884, 'Cameroon consisted of organised states and kingdoms ruled by monarchs who had as much right to their crowns or positions as did their European counterparts'. For the purpose of this study we will not pay a lot of attention to the pre-colonial Cameroon rather than insisting in some features of the colonial rule relevant for this specific research.

In the course World War I Cameroon ceased to be a German protectorate and became occupied by the French and British who ruled the country under the League of Nations Mandate. After the World War II the country was ruled as a United Nation Trusteeship Territory. In British Cameroon the effects of the indirect rule was the same as in Nigeria. For example, the politics of amalgamation and the Richards constitution created antithetical forces, struggles and conflicts through the ethno-regional institutional structure that divided the elite (Garba and Garba, 2005:93-95). In contrast the system of direct rule of the French colonist in the francophone areas eroded the local socio-political organizations in the francophone areas through its cultural assimilation and administrative centralization. Assimilation was different across the territory and certain ethnic groups within the colony gained disproportionate access to French education and therefore high status in the French colonial administration (Blanton et al, 2005:479). The result was a transition from a non competitive form of ethnicity to a competitive form of ethnicity or "political tribalism" (Lonsdale quoted in Turton,1997:79).

In the 1950s, the Union of the Peoples of the Cameroon (UPC) formed and articulated the twin goals of immediate independence and union with the British Cameroon (Fearon and Laitin, 2005:1). Their rebellion against the mandated authority reached civil war proportions. UPC was the leading national party. By 1949 it had become better organized and more organized than any other political party in the territory. Stark (1980:8) notes that it was clearly the party with the best claim on leadership of an independent Cameroonian nation; although other parties attempted to use its slogans and goal of independence and reunification. The UPC's majority of supporters were primarily localized in the urban areas, in Bassa and Bamileke areas of the country and little in the north or around the capital, Yaoundé.

On January 1, 1960 the French Cameroon became independent under the presidency of Amado Ahidjo, a Muslim from the North of the Country, and opponent of the radical UPC. The British-administered mandated territory (administered as part of Nigeria) had been divided into two zones. The outcome of the plebiscite in 1961, led to the union of the Northern zone with Nigeria, while Southern zone was incorporated into Cameroon. The enlarged Cameroon was reconstituted as a federal republic with two prime ministers and legislatures, a single president and a range of potential political cleavages (region, religion, ethnicity, language, and colonial heritage). Cameroon has approximately 259 ethnic groups. With an ethnic fractionalization score of 0.89 it is more diverse than the sub-Saharan average 0.64 (Fearon and Laitin, 2005:2).

<b>Ethnic Group (see Map at end)</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Size</b>
Western Highlanders/Grassfielders (Bamileke, Bamoun)	Northwest	38%
Coastal Tropical Forest Peoples (Bassa, Douala, etc.)	Southwest	12%
Southern Tropical Forest Peoples [Ewondo, Beti (Bulu and Fang subgroups) Maka and Pygmies/Bakas]	South	18%
Fulani (Islamic Northerners)	Sahel/N. Desert	14%
Kirdi (non-Islamic Northerners).	N. Desert/ C. Highlands	18%

Table 1 , source: Fearon and Laitin (2005)

## 2.2 AHIDJO'S LEGACY

### 2.2.1 ON POLITICS

Ahidjo owed his position as Cameroon's first president to the French who preferred him to his predecessor Prime Minister Andre Marie Mbida (southerner) because he was a northerner and because they believed that he could be easily manipulated (Fearon and Laitin, 2005:18). Some facets of his profile can be captured by this assertion of Englebert (2000:11) about the first generation of postcolonial leaders in Africa:

From colonialism, they inherited the instruments of statehood but not the power that came with it in the colonial days. These leaders were indeed often the product of the colonial system and had limited power foundations in pre-colonial societies. Even when they originated from traditional chiefly families as Houphouet Boigny in Cote d'Ivoire, Modibo Keita in Mali and several others, the customary foundations of their authority were mostly communal and failed to extend to the country as a whole.

Ahidjo was a leader without a mass following; he had to accept the UPC values and slogans while at the same time fighting against the UPC insurgency with the French assistance (Stark, 1980:278; Fearon and Laitin, 2005:9). His struggle against the UPC was therefore an attempt to consolidate his authority within the country, from the poorer North region where he belonged to the relatively rich and Christian South. However, according to Fearon and Laitin (2005:10) if it were a civil war in Cameroon, it would be that of Bamileke rebellion, since the Bassa leadership had been co-opted peacefully by Ahidjo. However, these scholars note that there is little agreement to the point when the war ended and it is therefore difficult to assess whether this civil war spilled over into a war against independent Cameroon. Bayart dated the end of civil war from 1955 to 1964. Levine (1971, 120-182) dates the end of domestic insurgency at 1962. Delancey and Delancey (2000, 169-269) suggest that the rebellion ended in 1971 when the prominent UPC figures were arrested and executed.

According to Fearon and Laitin (2005) the UPC rebellion and the way it was suppressed decreased the likelihood that Cameroon would have another insurgency in two ways. It created firstly strong military completely loyal to Ahidjo. The French trained the Cameroonian army and helped to construct the service des Etudes de la Documentation (SEDOC) which according to Krieger and Takougang (1998:39) was 'one of the most

effective intelligence services in sub-Saharan Africa'. Secondly, the insurgency allowed Ahidjo to assume emergency powers in 1959 which he used to postpone elections due in 1960. This situation allowed him to draft the constitution of independent Cameroon and to create an extremely powerful presidency and electoral rules designed to assure the dominance of his party Union Camerounaise (UC). These measures led to the defection of several opposition parties members and Ahidjo's UC was effectively the only political party in East Cameroon well before Cameroon officially became a single-party state in 1966. Leaders of political parties in West Cameroon soon realized that cooperation with Ahidjo was their only option. Also the support of France gave the new president resource and political space to develop a strong state.

In effect , from the beginning Ahidjo's regime was autocratic but soon developed the three central features of neopatrimonialism as mentioned by Bretton and van de Walle : presidentialism, clientelism and the massive redistribution of state resources (Gabriel, 1999:4). The centralization of power around one person and one institution was defining the presidentialism under Ahidjo. The Pulaka code, the traditional code of his ethnic group, stressing the conservatives values of shyness, strict religious observance, patience, and forethought among others based on Islam, influenced also his leadership style (Stark, 1980:277). Gabriel (1999:5) argues that Ahidjo built up a large clientelistic network reaching into practically every segment of the country. People got their jobs their licences, contracts or other administrative facilities through him and were expected to show in return gratitude. In such context loyalty to the president was more important than performance on the job; therefore the private good had priority over the public good. To a large extent clientelistic politics were financed from non Cameroonian sources. France was an important provider of funds, as were many other European countries, the United States, and some international organizations concerned with development. Ahidjo was a master in pressuring the French by courting the Germans, the British or the Americans. Nevertheless clientelism went hand in hand with the formation of a multi-ethnic ruling class which include the representative from practically all part of the country (Gabriel, 1999:6-7). The emphasis put on national unity by introducing a regime intolerant of the discussion of ethnicity, could justify the fact that an important theme in the country literature for why the Cameroon was so stable is the distinctive personal style of Ahidjo (Stark,1980;Fearon and Laitin:,2005:11).

### **2.2.2 ON ECONOMICS**

The political skills of Ahidjo supersede his ability to drive a real economic development. Starks (1980:278) argues that with reference to economic development and all important issues about the economic relations with the former colonial power, Ahidjo's view was 'at the liberal and *laissez-faire* end of the African policy continuum'. He was in agreement with the colonial legacy as strenuously as some. According to Koning (1996) early at the beginning, the federal state of Cameroon faced the problem of dependence and underdevelopment. The economy was largely dependent on the export of a few agricultural products (cocoa, coffee, bananas and palm oil). The tiny industrial sectors, dominated by French capital were mainly involved in the transformation of agricultural produce for exports. As a member of zone CFA franc zone, Cameroon was tied monetarily to France, while it has the advantage of promoting economic stability and allowing an open trade regime, it established a tendency of overvaluation of the currency and encouraged the development of imported consumer tastes (Vallee,1989; Koning, 1996:246). Despite the fact that Ahidjo constantly emphasized the need for ethnic balance and national unity, there is nevertheless sufficient evidence that two ethnic groups enjoyed a privileged position in opportunities for capital accumulation. There was first of all Muslim Fulbe elite, especially those originating from Garoua, Ahidjo's home town. The second group was the Bamileké. It is widely believed that Ahidjo was ready to grant the Bamileke elite ample room for capital accumulation on condition that they would not meddle in politics (Koning, 1996:249).

Ahidjo's regime attends gradually a degree of autonomy from the French by trading with other partners. The regime's apparent political stability, lack of ideological posturing and liberal investment code was attractive to Western donors and business milieu. Considering its annual growth rate of 8 per cent from 1970 to 1985 Cameroonian economy was long considered one of the success stories in sub-Saharan Africa. Koning (1996:249-250) notes that while not without foundation this view of the country's economy has proved to be excessively optimistic as it failed to take several disturbing trends by the end of Ahidjo's regime. In effect the country alleged economic success was based on its rich resources base, yet the agricultural sector was stagnating: the growth register was the result of increased acreage under cultivation brought about by expensive government programmes and it disguised the absence of sustained productivity growth. Furthermore, infrastructural problems

were daunting, and the rapid growth of a costly and inefficient public sector was becoming difficult to manage. Cameroon's seemingly impressive growth rate until 1986 was inflated by the discovery of oil in 1977. The revenues from oil have been placed in foreign banks as extra budgetary accounts, to avoid the boom mentality that undermine agricultural production in other African countries. Nevertheless in the line of the regime's patrimonial logic oil revenues primary function became covering parastatal deficit.

## **2.3 FROM AHIDJO TO BIYA: DISCONTINUITY AND CONTINUITY OF THE NEOPATRIMONIAL REGIME**

### ***2.3.1 LEADERSHIP TRANSITION***

Ahidjo surprised the Cameroonian population on 4 November 1982 by announcing that he was resigning as President of the country and turning his office to his constitutionally designate successor, the Prime Minister Paul Biya; the transfer to take effect on 6 November 1982. Biya was a Christian from the Southern francophone Cameroon, he belonged to the Beti ethnic group and he was widely regarded as weak and inexperienced (Fearon and Laitin, 2005:12). Ahidjo remained the head of the governing party (UC) after the transition. Right at the beginning of his leadership, Biya attempted to maintain Ahidjo's ethno-regional coalition. Acknowledging the constraints he [Biya] encountered, Bayart (1993:57-58) notes that Biya toured his home region explaining that they should not expect too much from him. A leadership conflict between Ahidjo and Biya over the official status of the governing party and a Cabinet reshuffle led to an attempted coup by two of Ahidjo's close aides (both northern military men) changed drastically the nature of Biya's regime and its appearance by the creation of CPDM (Cameroon People's Democratic Movement) and the abolition of UC. Koning (1996:251) argues that:

Given that his hold on power had become even more precarious after this failed *coup d'état*, Biya was compelled to raised the costs of maintaining the loose ruling alliance. He needed to please the state apparatus, notably those parts of the army which had supported him during the *coup d'état* attempt, and he wanted to meet the heightened expectations of his fellow Beti. The Beti elite saw the transfer of power from Ahidjo to Biya simply as an opportunity to promote ethno-fascism in

Bayart's words (1989). By implication, therefore, the fact that the president hailed from a specific ethnic group, should automatically give his fellowmen the right to monopolize the power.

Such a shift was illustrated by Biya's co-optation of Beti elite in the ruling alliance. Thus the northern and Bamileke businessmen who enjoyed a privileged position during Ahidjo's administration were increasingly replaced by Beti businessmen. Also the Biya regime increased the number of civil servants from 80 000 in 1982 to about 180, 000 in 1988; the majority of the new employees being among the Beti. The Beti also started to monopolize the pivotal positions in the government and security organ. Takougang (1993:95-6) reports that as of August 1991, thirty-seven of the forty-seven senior prefects ( head of administrative divisions), three- quarters of the directors and general managers of the parastatal companies in the country and twenty-two of the thirty eight high-ranking bureaucrats who had been appointed in the newly created office of the prime minister , where from the president ethnic group. Van de Walle ( 1994:144) argues that Biya 's precarious position during and after his power struggle with Ahidjo, led him to expand the use of state resources for political ends, to please the army, to undermine Ahidjo's base of support and to meet the great expectation of his fellow southerners. For Koning (1996: 252), the new ruling elite, appeared to be much bolder in staking out claims on the state resources than Ahidjo's supporters had been. As he notes, if corruption and rent-seeking had always been fundamentals characteristic of the Cameroonian regime, after 1984 they increased to the point of becoming dysfunctional.

### ***2.3.2 ECONOMIC REFORMS***

In the 1980s the clientelist model of governance was in crisis, especially owing to the fact that state resources had become scarcer- there was less to share around. African countries exported cheaply and bought at expensive rates. Furthermore, they reinvested in ineffective import substitutions, in an oversized public sector and in sumptuary expenses while neglecting agricultural production. By not diversifying agricultural production, the opportunities for widening domestic markets and local consumption were limited. At the same time, the state sector overexploited farmers to produce more: they were paid low rates while the produce was sold at higher prices on the market and profits were pocketed by officials. Corruption was a widespread practice at all levels of society and government (Sogge, 2006:8). The postcolonial state has inherited from its colonial predecessor a situation

where the power of ‘ traditional chiefs’ is weakened by the central authorities while that of ‘warrant chief’ has to constantly get propped up by demonstration of force against local population (Rowlands and Warnier 1998:120). In this respect the Cameroonian postcolonial state is hardly in gear with the village communities representing some of 70-80 per cent of the population. Rowland and Warnier (1998) suggest that the state retain an interest to discipline the rural population because of the foreign exchange resulting from the agricultural independence of rural areas. Thus as they note a check is needed on rural-urban migrations that deplete the country side of the young and crowd the cities with an increasing number of unemployed. A huge number of rural development projects have been launched in the last thirty years and para-statal organizations have operated without the success expected.

Considering the failures of agriculture projects in rural areas it is therefore interesting to mention the intra national migration flux of this period in view of its influence on the political geography and the identity politics of the political liberalization (allogenes /autochtones and Anglophone/ Bamileke issues) of the 1990s. Besides, according to the country census in 1987, the intra national mobility index was 32,5 % of the total of population of 9,3 million. About 90% of the migrants were younger than 35 years. The inter-province migration was primarily fuelled by a large inter-provincial socio-economic cleavage and demand for education. The extreme North, the West and the Northwest provinces were supplying about four times more inter-province migrant labour than they received. They are major labour exporters, contributing 53 % of all migrants. The central and littoral provinces with their major urban cities Yaoundé and Douala were net receiver of intra-national migrants, providing 26% of all inter- province out –migrants. In the extreme North, west and northwest provinces, the high population density with respect to the available resources flow caused the large migration flow. Almost 50 % of the migrants from the west and north west provinces move to the other provinces most of them (60 %) go to Douala , the economic centre , to the plantations in littoral province or to the national province. Yaoundé and Douala alone received 33,8 of all inter-provincial migrants (Schrieder and Knerr,2000:226).

However the economic crisis was aggravated by massive capital flight estimated at FCFA 150 billion a year which was almost a quarter of the annual national budget. The free flow of currency between the CFA franc Zone and France encouraged the Cameroonian elite to transfer their capital to French banks which moreover supplied higher interest rates than the

Cameroonian banks. Also as a form of protestation for their ‘marginalization’ by the new regime the Bamileke elite withdrew their savings from the banks and transferred them to informal circuits the so called *tontines*. This aggravated the problem of liquidity of Cameroonian banks. Consequently, several new government projects which started with Biya’s New Deal, were suspended or abandoned because of the financial constraint. In this deteriorating economic climate many foreign companies that had invested in Cameroon left the country creating behind them a huge segment of unemployed population (Koning, 1996, 251-252).

The government’s initial response to the trade shock of the mid- 1980s was to rely on external financing in the hope of favourable commodity prices or exchange rate changes. Consequently the external debt rose from US dollar 2.7 billion in 1984 to US\$ 4.7 billion in 1989. The IMF and the World Bank had been negotiating with the government on and off since mid-1986, without reaching an agreement. At that time Biya justified his refusal of an agreement with IMF, claiming that the austerity of the programme of those institutions could affect negatively the national prestige. Through 1987 and 1989, he pointed out that Cameroon would take only non conditional capital from bilateral donors and the private banks. But when the debt started to cripple, Biya and the IMF reached an agreement on a stabilization plan in September 1988 and with the World Bank on a structural adjustment loan in May 1989. In return for refinancing debt, adjustment measures had to be imposed that included cutbacks in state spending, reductions in subventions for social spending, devaluation of national currencies in order to attract foreign investment and market liberalisation. At the same time, international credit organizations insisted that African states should devote more resources and attention to the agricultural sector, which had been neglected in favour of urban growth.

Cameroon’s IMF agreement programmes signed in September 1988 and December 1991 expired without having fully disbursed authorized funds and without a follow –on programme in place, due to the Biya government failures to meet the conditionality. In September 1992, IMF programming, World Bank project assistance and Paris club debt relief was suspended because of accumulating debt arrears. Koning (1996:253) stresses the pivotal role of France in Cameroon’s structural adjustment programme motivated by the suspicion of Washington intrusion in its “*pré-carré*”. For Koning, France saved the Biya regime of failing in the status

of non accrual, which would destroyed the country's financial credibility, by proposing to pay Cameroon's accumulated debt arrears with the World Bank amounting to FCFA 60 billion and by supporting Cameroon regime through financial aid especially during the period 1990-1992: this totalled 181 billion representing 36 per cent of all aid. If Biya's regime was reluctant to give in to the World Bank's demand to lay off about 40,000 civil servants and states agents knowing that most of them were Beti, he accepted at least to reduce the personnel costs of the public service with the exception of the army<sup>5</sup> (Bidima, 2001:239). In 1991 it announced further cuts in the salaries and benefits of government employees. The government however experienced difficulties in paying its civil servants. Rather than laying off a certain proportion of the overdeveloped civil services, it decided to implement a draconian salary reductions of respectively 30 per cent in November 1993. In October 1993 France agreed to allocate a loan of FCFA 15 billion to Cameroon to help the government in coming to terms with the salary arrears owed to civil servants. France and Cameroon used to resist any pressures of the IMF and the World Bank to agree upon a devaluation of the currency in the CFA Franc Zone. In January 1994, however, they consented to a 50 per cent devaluation of the CFA Franc. In return the IMF ratified a standby credit of US dollar 114 millions to Cameroon on 15 May 1994 and the disbursement of this loan was made conditional upon the government's termination of 20 000 civil servants (Page, 1999:44). In July 1997 the Cameroonian government successfully implemented a medium-term recovery program covering 1997/98/2002 (July-June). By October 2000, the Board of Executive directors of International Development Association and the IMF agreed that Cameroon had met the requirements for reaching the decision point under the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. The amount of debt relief committed at the decision point was US\$ 1, 6260 million in net present value (NPV) terms, calculated to bring the NPV of debt to the equivalent of 150 percent on the basis of end – June 1999 data (IMF Country Report, 2006:5). In May 2006 Cameroon reached the completion point under the enhanced HIPC after undergoing some genuine and incremental transformations.

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<sup>5</sup> According to Bidima (2001, 238-247) , the regime of privileges of the army concerning their salaries, the budget of the Ministry of Defence and the involvement of the army in the criminal activities such as the illegal exploitation of Cameroonian Forest and other activities alike justify the fact that the army still support the regimes against all odds.

### ***2.3.3 NEW ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE***

If the implementation of structural adjustment was marked by the procrastination of the Biya's regime, its societal impact is better seen through the condition of ordinary citizens as the following assertion of Page (1999:44) suggests:

From the perspective of a civil servant, the period from 1985-94 was one of the gradual retrenchment of privileges. Job losses were common in para-statal (44 of the 148 para-statal were liquidated) but rare for those working in central bureaucracy. Rather than make civil servant redundant the government lowered the retirement age and halted recruitment.

In fact the implementation of structural adjustment led to several changes in the state apparatus as well as in society. Hugon and Pages (1998: 36 – 41) point out the effect of the programme of structural adjustment in health system, education system, social services among others. According to those scholars, the devaluation of CFA Franc reduces the income of households and others economic agent (paysans, companies etc), increase the consummation of imported products as well as the increase of public debt and the dependence on foreign capital for public expenses. The SAP also contributes to the unemployment of youth by worsening the gap between the educated youth and the potentialities of job market. Also the privatisation of education and the suppression of scholarships excluded a huge number of rural and urban youth from poor families from educational opportunities . The SAP weakened health public services and fuelled private initiatives while at the same time a reduction of health expenses was observed because of the expensive prices of medications and equipments and the destabilization of private circuits of distributions. Beninguissé and Koné (n.d:108-109) argues that in 1976 a working person supported on average less than one non working person, whereas in 1987 one person was supported. Between 1991 and 1998 the weight of the working population and the economic dependency stabilized. The potential economic burden of the working population at that time was mainly due to the under 15 years.

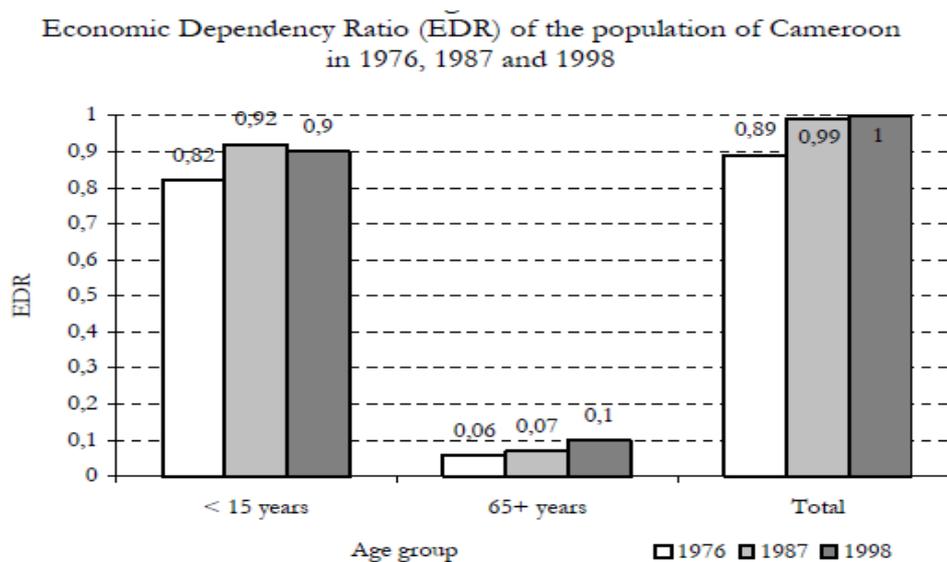


Figure 2

In 1991, the World Bank notes that Cameroon's overall rate of food self sufficiency reached 96%; food security prevailed in North West and North West (Shrieder and Knerr, 2000:227). In Cameroon as elsewhere, the aim of structural adjustment have been to encourage the production of cash crops for export, to generate more foreign exchange and improve the capacity of the state to service its external debt payment (Fonchinong,1999:3). Page (1999: 42) notes that agriculture absorbed the dissatisfaction of citizens whose standard of living fell drastically during the implementation of SAP. According to him rather than confront the government in the sphere of formal politics, many household preferred to make up for their failing purchasing power by increasing domestic agriculture. The government which never planned to diffuse the anger brought by the SAP maximises this initiative by changing the length of the working day, repealing the law that bared civil servant from private initiative and not enforcing existing by laws that forbids farming in towns.

For Fonchinong ( 1999: 73-76 ) rural and urban women have been the most affected by the SAP, first by being the category which loses the most jobs and second by carrying a double even a triple burden of work as they cope with housework, child care and subsistence agriculture. Comparing to the period before the SAP, women felt that there is now hardly any dividing line between men's and women's work in farming. The traditional division of labour, concentrating the men on cash crops and women on crops which existed before the crisis has changed. The distinction between cash crop and food crops has become blurred in

some cases. In both urban and rural areas, women have been putting more time on food crop cultivation since the implementation of SAP to compensate for the diminishing amount of available land and the lack of inputs. During 1998-99 land productivity in urban areas has gone from an average of about 40 per cent, and in rural areas land productivity has raised from 70 per cent to 85 per cent (Fonchinong, 1999:77). There have been an increased numbers of women engaged in food-crop production in urban areas and those crops which are for sale have become an extra source of income designed to supply in some extent health care or child education etc. The Cameroonian economy which once has been driven by the oil revenues can no longer count on this asset. Despite the new exploration contracts signed by the government and stimulated by the rise of oil price no major oil field have been found yet (Alemagi, 2007:136). Therefore while we can rely on the prediction of Cosse (2006) announcing the continuity of the decline of Cameroonian oil production over the medium to long term and the argument of Crisis group (2010:15) saying that despite a significant reduction of the external debt –from 98 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product in 2000 to 13 percent in 2008- any improvement of the Cameroonian economy depends on the technical challenge and the eradication of pervasive corruption, we can also point out the relevancy of this statement of Gabriel (1997:10), especially due to the negative impact of the global financial crisis on its export economy :

Cameroon's economy has been in deep crisis, and although there are some efforts at reforms, it is simply inconceivable that the country will soon begin to industrialize and produce advanced commodities for the world market. In the decades to come, technology-oriented management is not likely to appear in Cameroon. One of the main reasons for this is the deplorable administrative environment. The country is suffering from poor governance in almost all realms of public administration.

#### ***2.3.4 POLITICAL REFORMS***

The appeal for change in Cameroon as in most Sub-Saharan countries, should be understood in the context of economic breakdown, rather than the genuine will of the people to democratize, because behind this democratic effervescence lies their aspiration for economic improvement (Mbuagbo and Akoko, 2004:8). But not only economic aspiration of the people, more importantly those of international financial institutions. The liberalization of political

arena in Cameroon has been the outcome of endogenous and exogenous factors: The reform governance as a conditionality to obtain funds from International organizations and trade partners (world Bank); the demise of the communism; the spread of the third democratic wave in Eastern Europe and the protestation of Cameroonians fuelled by the crisis and the disappointment over Biya's empty promise of political reforms (Gabriel, 1999; Koning, 1996). Ngwa (2009: 7) notes that within Cameroon, the decision by France and Britain to advocate for political liberalization was significant for two reasons. First, these moves were historic because both countries were ex-colonial powers that had provided significant support to Biya regime until that point. Second by linking aid to political reforms, France as Cameroon's primary trading partner, was sending a strong message to Biya to succumb to its prerogatives or face financial sanctions. Following the view point of Takougang and Krieger (1998), He adds that the stance by the French reinforced the earlier decision by World Bank and the international Monetary Fund to link aid to economic restructurings and political liberalization.

Pro- democratic agitation began with attempts to create new parties in 1990. The most prominent of these was the Social Democratic front (SDF) created *de facto* by John Fru Ndi, an Anglophone. The challenge and the embarrassment caused by SDF led the government to react violently against a rally in May 1990 in Bamenda while contributing at the same time to the prominence of this party (Fearon and Laitin, 2005:15). After many hesitations illustrated with his promise during the CPDM National Congress of 1990 to reform some of the laws that impeded democratization, Biya opted finally for 'genuine democratic transition' in the words of Ngwa (2009) , by abrogating old laws and introducing new laws. On December 1990, the National assembly approved more than 100 'liberty laws' tabled by the president. These laws covered the issues related to a broad segment of Cameroonian society , but more important were those concerning the ability to hold public meeting and processions, the maintenance of law and order, the freedom of press and the creation of political party.

In the first months of 1991 parties received their registration. Koning (1996:257-258) provides a good description of the major party, SDF, UPC and the ' Union Nationale pour la Democratie et le Progres' (UNDP). The SDF was originally largely an Anglophone party but it later spread its membership to the Francophone area, notably to the neighbouring francophone provinces. For example it was supported by the Bamileke in the West Province,

due partly to the cultural affinity of the Grassfield people. The UPC, which early has been suppressed by the French and Ahidjo's regime, was re-founded under a new leadership capable of winning strong support in its areas of operation, Douala and Bamileke and Bassa regions. Its leadership consisted partly of ex CPDM leaders and partly of old UPC leaders who had returned from exile. The UNDP enjoyed most support among the Fulbe of Northern Cameroon, Ahidjo's ethnic group. Its leaders were former high ranking officials in the Ahidjo's regime and early Biya regime who claimed Ahidjo heritage.

Examining some of these new laws Ngwa (2009:11) highlights some interesting limitations acknowledging the incremental character of those reforms. He notes for example that the Law No. 90/55 of 19/12/90 governing the right to hold public meeting, while allowing for the organization of public meetings, that law nevertheless created a strict authorization process and contained a clause that permitted indiscriminate prosecution. Furthermore, Article 6(1) of the same law placed further restrictions on the holding public processions and demonstrations by complicating the application process. Law No. 90/54 of 19/12/90 which governed the maintenance of law and order instituted a preventive detention period of up to fifteen days, a timeframe that was eight days more than the detention period allowed for under a state of emergency. Also concerning freedom of the press, the abrogation of the Ordinance No. 62/OF/18 of March 1962 and the subsequent enactment of Law No.90/46 allowed the establishment of a free press. As it was the case for the other new law, some clauses were inserted in this law to circumscribe the independence of the press. One of such clause can be found in Section 14 of Law No.90/052 which 'required newspapers to submit two signed copies to administrative authorities where the paper was published, two hours before dailies and four hour before weeklies were placed on sale' so that the government official would be able to remove or make illegible 'material considered subversive or politically inappropriate' (Takougang and Krieger quoted in Ngwa, 2009:11)

As it has been showed earlier in this chapter, in Cameroon political debate or struggle is less about a clash between the international economic order and the national economic orientation but about the mode of governance of the ruling elite. Consequently even if the genuine economic aspirations of the people tend to be antithetical to the neo-liberal doctrine of the International financial organizations, such a point is eluded by the political organizations and by the power elite because all their energy is dedicated to fight against each other within the

strictures of the existing systems- mostly neopatrimonial and neo-liberal level. In the same path Konings (1996:258) argues that the legalization of many small parties was suspected in Biya's regime to be intended to split the opposition to the government. He notes that none of the party had worked out a well-defined programme, except maybe the SDF. Most of them did not go beyond the demand for better social justice, cleaning up of public life and end to secretive government and measures to restore the economic situation. In this respect he claims that nearly all of them supported the implementation of the SAP in Cameroon. Therefore a reading of Cameroonian socio-political landscape while privileging the agency of the ruling elite can inform this assertion Gabriel (1997:1):

Cameroon is not in transition to democracy; there has been some liberalization but democracy is not in sight .Cameroon is not rebelling and has practically given up efforts to change the international economic order in league with other marginalized states. Cameroon is just a docile marginal state-like so many in sub-Saharan Africa (Gabriel, 1997:1).

### ***2.3.5 RECONFIGURATION OF RULING ELITE, CONSOLIDATION OF STATUS QOU, AND POPULAR DESENCHANTMENT.***

The liberalization of the political scene in Cameroon through the organization of 'democratic elections' affected the balance of power in Cameroon and led to a reconfiguration of the hegemonic alliance. Gabriel (1997:10) reports that the first contested elections were held in 1992. In March there were parliamentary and in October presidential elections. In the former elections the CPDM failed to obtain a majority, 88 of 180 seats, but Biya managed to form a coalition made up of representatives of minor and divided parties. Ngwa (2009:16) argues that Biya's regime bought off opposition leaders in order to reconfigure the hegemonic alliance. He notes that the CPDM government was able to make use of all the benefits of incumbency, including the extensive patronage reward system that had been in place since independence. After the March parliamentary election, According to him the first party to accept the bribe from Biya's regime was the Movement for Defence of the republic (MDR) led by a Kiridi, Daikole Daisala. The MDR accepted this patronage in exchange for forging an alliance with the CPDM. Thereby providing a CPDM with a tiny majority of 94 out of 180 seats in parliamentary. In return, the MDR was given four cabinet posts (Takougang,

2003:430). Boycotting the 1992 election because of the belief that the CPDM planned to manipulate the outcome, the SDF have not been represented in the National assembly from 1992 to 1997 but Fru Ndi decided to run personally the presidential election against Biya and almost won (Fearon and Laitin, 2005:16, Gabriel, 1997:15). The marginal position of the SDF, allowed the CPDM government with its junior partner, the MDR to promulgate laws that favoured the Biya regime.

Nyamnjoh (2009:2) argues that there has been little dialogue and fair play in Cameroon's multiparty democracy, even in comparison with most African country. According to him while the first multiparty legislative elections took place in 1991 under the one party electoral law, subsequent election have since been governed by the highly controversial September 1992 electoral law. In the light of this new law candidates for presidential elections must be 'Cameroonian citizen by birth and show proof of having resided in Cameroon for an uninterrupted period of at least 12 (twelve) months'. As he notes , broadly one has to prove a continuous stay of at least six months in a given locality to qualify to vote there and to stand for elections in that locality one must be an indigene or a 'long-staying resident'. The same issue is mentioned by Jua (2001:37) when he notes the shift of the official discourse from the emphasis on national integration to the prominence of allogenes /autochthones dichotomy during the liberalization. This rupture disables a national imagining among these allogenes who are often deny the same liberty as the one of autochtones, and promotes' a republic of tribe rather than a republican model' (Jua: 2001:41).Such issue of allogene/autochtones affects particularly the opposition candidate or their supporter. Nyamnjoh notes that it is not uncommon for oppositions supporters to be told in the city that they have to vote in their home area (their village of origin), but once in the village they are informed by the local authority that they have to vote where they live (in the city). In this context it is not surprising that many voters never make it to the polling station on election day.

Some other examples of buying off of opposition leaders have been noticeable after the 1992 elections. For instance the incorporation of prominent UNDP party into the Biya government after the October 1992 election. Ngwa notes that with the UNDP's Vice-President Hamadou Mustapha and Secretary General Issa Thiroma breaking ranks and joining the CPDM government, the Leader of the UNDP had no option but to follow suit. He was appointed Minister of Industrial and Commercial Development in 1997. Also UPC which had splitted

earlier because of inter-cine quarrel of leadership and fostered by the CPDM, have seen one of its faction led by Augustin Kodock abandoning the rank of opposition and joined the Biya government. In the same fashion, the National Party for Progress of Antar Gassagay (MDR) also left the ranks of the opposition and joined the Biya team in return for ministerial positions. Ngwa (2009:17) says that: ‘by the end of 1997 the Biya regime had successfully weakened the opposition and driven it into disarray. Apart from working frantically to co-opt and destroy the opposition, the Biya regime also embarked on building up its support base’.

In agreement with Ngwa (2009), Fearon and Laitin say that since the 1992 elections which Biya won narrowly despite corruption and opposition fragmentation, he has come to consolidate his power through the two other elections in 1997 and 2002. Takougang (2003:424-25) argues that Biya’s political dominance is so pronounced that, surprised and embarrassed by its comprehensive victory in 2002, his party (CPDM) conceded to several run-off elections to make the elections look less rigged. In this context of CPDM dominance, the desertion of political opposition had become fashionable in Cameroon’s political scene, obscuring the need for an alternative political vision but sustaining the visible colours of the quarrel of bellies in the public debate. For instance the 6<sup>th</sup> November 2009 while the Anglophone Prime Minister Yang Philemon was visiting the North West province (his home town), the general secretary Richard Munteh Ndula of SDF announced his desertion from SDF and his new CPDM membership. Munteh Ndula justifies his desertion in these words:

Comment comprendre que le secrétaire particulier de la deuxième personnalité politique du pays n’est pas affilié à la CNPS, n’a pas de salaire? Je suis un responsable de famille avec quatre enfants dont les jumeaux...Ma mère est hospitalisée à l’hôpital Saint Mary Soledad, j’ai fait des pieds et des mains pour payer ses factures d’hospitalisation. Mon épouse et les enfants étaient aussi internés dans le même centre de sante, il fallait racoler auprès des amis pour qu’il m’aident à les libérer (Suffo,2009 :1)

How to understand that the particular secretary of the second political personality of the country is not affiliated to CNPS, does not have wage? I am responsible for my family with four children by whom the twins... My mother is hospitalized at Saint Mary Soledad hospital, I did my best to pay her bills of hospitalization. My spouse and the children were also hospitalized in the same hospital, it was necessary to solicit to the friends so that they help me to pay their bills of hospitalization (Suffo, 2009 :1, my translation).

This assertion of Munteh Ndulah contain everything about the precariiusness of his social condition as a SDF's employee but nothing about the SDF's ideology *per se*. In fact the raison d'être of Munteh Ndula's desertion appears more clearly when he states in the first lines of his declaration that :

'Je vous écris humblement pour vous informer qu'une multitude d'incompréhensions au sein du Sdf, couplées de l'arrivée du Premier ministre chef du gouvernement Philémon Yang dans la région, m'ont permis de me faire une idée claire'.

I hereby write to inform you that the numerous misunderstandings occuring in the SDF since the arrival of the Prime minister Philémon Yang in the region helped to clear my mind ( my translation ).

In fact the Ndulah seems to portray himself as someone who discovered just recently that the political game in Cameroon is nothing more than a simulacra of political opposition and a 'politics of the belly'. However his apparently new discovery do not deter him to do the same but legitimate his hidden but now opened expectations of politics (feeding the belly) designing his new political affiliation. In the light of this example, we can therefore agree with Lindberg (2003 :123) who argues that ' the neopatrimonial rule has not diminished with the introduction of democracy. Rather there are some indications that it has actually regained strength and intensity with the establishment of multiparty system'.

In addition if we consider the hypothesis that Munteh Ndulah was really interested by the SDF ideology when he became a SDF's member, it is therefore quite strange to see a quasi absence of reference to the integrity of this ideology as a motivation for his new political choice. Therefore we may understand his reaction, through his historical and sociological path. In fact Munteh Ndula is a Cameroonian of 29 who graduated at University of Yaounde II and was appointed as SDF generally secretary in September 2006 (Suffo, 2009). The reference of the precarity of employment in his social condition illustrate the situation of huge number of young people in the Cameroonian job market. Therefore his relative early membership as SDF member could be undestood as a disillusion brought by the Biya regime

but also as an outcome of identity politics. Such reasons for his involvement in politics and latter his justification to quit the SDF pictures Cameroonian politics as roughly physical, economical, social and cultural survival. But after all his desertion lies in the patron client-relationship typical of neo-patrimonial system, where vertical accountability is a matter of ensuring favours and benefits, often at the expense of public concerns and resources (Lindberg, 2003 :123). Thus in the dawn of the presidential election of 2011 , it is therefore quite easy to understand the shift of political membership illustrated by collective desertion of 2000 UNDP's supporters in Mayo Danay (Northern Cameroon) in November 2009 joining the the ranks of CPDM (Kankili, 2009). In this context it is a real challenge to find a public figure in Cameroon who is not a member of the CPDM or a secret client of the regime, those who might deserve such features are usually not on the spotlight or far from the national political arena. Therefore the great dominance of the Biya regime had seriously impacted on the quality of leadership in all spheres of the society but less on its architecture. In this regard Nyamnjoh(2009 :4) argues that :

The ambition of dominance have only resulted in power without responsibility, and in arrogant insensitivity to the predicaments of ordinary Cameroonians by those who claim to lead. With even a critical elite increasingly opting for shortcuts to power, privilege and comfort, ordinary Cameroonians are left at the mercy of poverty and an insensitive state.

Drawing the schemata of the traditional structure of the leadership in postcolonial Cameroon, Gabriel (1999 :6) in reference to the earlier work of Pierre Flambeau Ngayap ( 1983) opines that there are two levels of elite integration: a ' macroequilibre geopolitique' and a ' microdosage regional'. At the macro-level the 'presidence', the cabinet and especially the 'ministre d'etats' have at all times been composed of representatives of all major regions and ethnic groups. The appointments of both speakers of English and French to important posts definitively bridges the francophone-anglophone gap. Ahidjo and Biya , both francophone, have often chosen English-speaking prime ministers or vice presidents. 'Microdosage' is effective at the provincial level, where the more important positions are deliberately assigned to representatives of all 'department'. Moreover, and in order to promote integration, regional provincial offices are often headed by non local. That structure has been modified by the Biya regime when encountering the political turmoil of the Biya- Ahidjo transition and the advent of political liberalization in 1990s. For instance, Nyamnjoh (1999 :6) notes that the policy and politics of ethnic balance instituted by Ahidjo have been perfected by Biya. He

notes that in effect the policy is less about diverting attention from real to imagined problem and causes. Either a civil servant appointed to high office or as are merely aspiring to such office, you are made to understand that the system or more clearly the head of state is of boundless benevolence and that you have the head of state to thank for any appointment, but yourself and those of your ethnic group to blame for the lack of any appointment. This policy relegates the power for struggle to the regions, while the system epitomised by the president play regional or ethnic group against each other. Thus under the the system of regional and ethnic balance presidentials elections are not really concerned about voting for the -president but more a test of the popularity of the party elite in their various regions. Nyamnjoh and Rowlands, (1998:320) argues that the influence elites exert in their home regions depends on the respect they gain in local politics for their knowledge and influence over external affairs. The focus is put on the fact that the extent to which the urban elites will play a significant role in defining a regional identity for their home area depends on the resources they bring with them and the incentives that encourage them mobilise local supporters. Therefore they (Rowlands and Warnier) realized that during the Ahidjo's regime in the 1960s and 1970s, there was much less reason for elite to remain attached to their home area. The search for regional ethnic loyalties was not tolerated by the authoritarian interest of the centralized administration with which elites were encouraged to identify as their source of patronage. In contrast the political liberalization has acknowledged the change of the role of elite associations. Once interested only in promoting local interests through the language of development, the elite associations tend now to reinvent or rework ethnic loyalties as part of political mobilisation of regional support to gain advantage in the national politics arena (Nyamnjoh and Rowlands,1988 :223-224). Considering the resurgence of identity politics in Cameroon, one could expect a greater accountability of the leaders or better concerns about the interests of the people by them, unfortunately it is not the case. Nyamnjoh (2000 :12) claims that :

The power elite in Africa have been contaminated by the haunting rapacity of high office and / or prominence (cf, Russel,1999). Almost everywhere on the continent,people seek power in order to empty public coffers into private pockets. They take refuge under public interest banner to pursue personal goals with capitalist impunity.Thus it is not unusual to find African leaders doing abroad what they consider not feasible in 'our young generation'.Public owernership and control in good in Africa because of limited resources, but some African leaders can afford money not only to buy

personal shares and stocks in foreign companies, but sometimes to own or take over these companies.

In the same path Gabriel notes (1999:23-27) that with its pre-modern elite more interested to consumption rather than production, Cameroon suffers from a ‘triangle of poor governance’ namely: Excessive governance, bad governance and non governance. By excessive governance, the sheer size of Cameroonian bureaucracy is meant and directly related, cumbersome procedures and unnecessary red tape. The bad governance refers to incompetence and corruption while the non-governance means the collapse of some sectors of the public administration due to the unavailability of officials busy with trips in home area or seminar or tourism abroad. In the same way , after a critique of the victimhood of African elite, his love for consumption and hatred for science and technology, Axelle Kabou (Kabou quoted in Delville, 1991 :231) offers a picture of contemporary Africa and Cameroon at the same time , dealing with the potential for change but also with the drivers of conflicts.

### **2.3.6 EXPERIENCING THE SO CALLED ‘CIVIL SOCIETY’ IN CAMEROON**

The civil society-centered approach was the continuum of the liberalization introduced by the World Bank and other donors, who viewed it as one way of disciplining inefficient and corrupt states and forcing through a participatory governance options on the basis of democracy and transparency (Mbuagbo and Akko, 2004:1). The so called ‘civil society’ in Cameroon matches with the neo-patrimonial and local cultural practices rather than its western *alter ego* , from whom it borrows its meaning and significance. Cox (2002:36) notes that:

‘Civil society’, like the state is also in origin a Eurocentric concept. Initially it referred to the bourgeois order. The realm of private interests which the state existed to regulate in the general interest. Now civil society is seen as being distinct from both state and corporate power so far as these two are perceived to be integrated in a comprehensive authority structure. The term civil society is now more commonly reserved for autonomous groups (autonomous in relation to both state and corporate power) capable of expressing and pursuing collective aims of social improvement and emancipation. Some of these groups aim to influence state policy some have humanitarian, ecological or peace concerns at the global level, and some organize protection and welfare at the local level.

In Cameroon Gifford (1997) states that civil society was quickly and speedily expunged from the political scene by Ahidjo's regime that made virtually impossible for forces to emerge beyond those of 'la presidency'. In the light of Ahidjo's model of single party state, Paul Biya has come out with a politically ambitious but degenerative 'majorite presidentielle', equally designed to forestall any divergent political discourse on the future of Cameroon. Stressing the difficulty to adapt the civil society concept in the Cameroonian society, Mbuagbo and Akoko (2004:6) reports that:

Similarly, the uncontrolled and almost anarchic creation of local NGOs, which are meant to serve as agent not only for the distribution of western aid, but also to tunnel such aid in private bank accounts, is indicative of the fact that civil society is a misappropriated model. Most remain narrow in scope and familial in character. A cursory observation of NGO activities in Cameroon reveals that many operate in 'suitcases' and function only on ad hoc basis (that is when funds are made available) because they lack rudimentary administrative structures and personnel to enable them function.

Lieres (1999:141-142), reviewing the book of Mahmood Mamdani titled '*Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and The legacy of Late Colonialism*' provides a useful insight for the understanding of African civil society. He [Lieres] argues that Mamdani's theoretical point of departure lies in a critique of both structuralist and post-structuralist theoretical frameworks. According to Mamdani structuralist approaches such as dependency theory view social reality through a series of binary opposites and understand anomalies as deviations. Post-structuralist theories are important because they offer a critique of structuralist-inspired binary opposites such as the normal and the abnormal, the civilized and the savage. However, in their attempt to de-exoticize Africa and to banalize it, the latter rob African history of any specificity. Therefore the objective of Mamdani is to overcome this impasse by arriving at synthesis of both approaches. Mamdani notes that civil society and 'civic' citizenship under colonialism were first and foremost the realms of the (largely white) colons. He notes that under the colonial state, the rights of free associations, free speech, and political representation, were the right of citizens under direct rule, and not of the subjects indirectly ruled by a customarily organized tribal authority. As a result power came to be crystallized through a series of dual encounters between direct and indirect rule that evolved into complementary ways of controlling the disenfranchised 'subject' majorities. Direct rule was

the form of urban civil power. It was about granting rights-based privileges to citizens. Indirect rule signified a rural tribal authority. It was incorporating natives into a state-enforced customary order. The state was encompassing by two forms of power, one urban, speaking the language of civil society and civil rights and another one rural speaking the language of community and culture. Civil power claimed to protect individual rights; customary power claimed to protect custom, tradition and communal rights. The logic behind the politics of civil rights was the classical Eurocentric assumption of a universal agent with universal civilizing mission. Civil rights and the rule of law were applied to 'citizens' as they were seen to represent a universal agent. Yet, at the same time, there was little evidence that white administrators believed that there would be some point in history at which the civil law would be extended to all. Rather, what existed was a vast array of attempts to institutionalize the relation between both regimes of power. There seemed to be in the minds of colonial administrators no contradiction between both regimes of power. According to Mamdani there has not been a single peasant uprising that has not been ethnic in character and the anti-colonial struggle was first and foremost a struggle against the hierarchy of the colonial state. He argues that the postcolonial states failed to break the distinction between citizen and subject, that they retained a regime of differentiation while de-racializing the colonial state.

In contrast Nyamnjoh (2005:26) call attention to the tendency for African and Cameroonians especially to be both 'citizen' and 'subject' for strategic politico-economic and cultural affairs. He notes that, although critical of simplistic dichotomies and 'history by analogy', Mamdani (1996:12-13) avoided the trap himself and fails to remain consistent to his idea of 'history as a process'. According to Nyamnjoh 'his world is one of neat dichotomies because he relies too much on the structure of the state rather than a sociological reality on the ground'. Thus with a strict distinction between citizen and subject, Mandani's argument might be persuasive as an analytical distinction, but the reality on the ground, the sociology or the anthropology of the living Africans remains something else. Following the view point of Nyamnjoh, Mbembe (1996:148) put emphasis on the cultural 'politics of connivance'. He names a constellation of orthodox, clandestine and often criminal practices (fake documents, secret meetings, simulacra...etc) adopted by the Cameroonians to encounter the precarity of the poscolony and protest against the state violence.

In the light of the moral economy of power in Benin, Richard Banégas (1989:75-87), shows how the citizens of this country manipulate the clientelist networks during the periods of elections. Beninian citizens pretend to 'sell' their vote to the politician who can pay the highest price. The 'market of votes' is a simulacra of honours, where the citizens play the role of the subjects supporting any potential clients (politicians), hoping to get the maximum of benefits from him. After getting money or gifts from politicians, these citizens remain free to vote for the politician they really like. Often the ethnic identity and their perception of the client's morality influence the vote rather than the gifts they received only during the electoral rally. The citizens of Benin consider the period of election as the right time where politicians can reimburse all the money they 'stole' from their constituents. The situation described in Benin is representative of some facets of the Cameroonian reality. Also representative is the situation described by Hansen (2003: 202-224 in the Northern Cameroon, emphasising the indigenisation of the concept democracy as 'obedience to superior' to legitimate the relationship of dominance between the traditional authorities, the official and the Cameroonian subjects and citizens. In such context, rhetoric inspired from the traditional values about generosity and brotherhood is used both by traditional and state officials to reinforce the clientelistic network and sustain the dominance of the ruling party in a context of multi party.

Analyzing the political identity of the Aluund of the upper Kwaango in Kinshasha and Kikwit, Filip de Boeck argues that the Zairean citizens did not identify themselves as passive subjects of the regime in power but do retain their agency through the field of art, press, or spirituality to name but a few (Lieres, 1999:145). Following the same path in an analysis of cartoons in Cameroon, Mbembe (1996,160-165) shows how the artists take over the power of public imagination by representing the autocrat as a 'thing' in order to undermine his reputation. However as he points out in the postcolony there is no lawsuit for such initiative which might reinforce its ability to influence. Therefore because he believes that in such context, artists rather than weakening the standing of the autocrat, intensify its presence with the risk to obscure their own artworks; Mbembe argues that the first effect of the loss of total control by the autocrat (president) would have been to put him out of sight by so arranging things that he ceases to be on the spotlight. On the contrary, for Nyamnjoh (2005:227), the fact that President Biya or the autocrat in the words of Mbembe, dominates the discussions of current public affairs acknowledges how influential he is in the public

affairs. In the question if the cartoons make him less powerful which Mbembe seems to argue that his power would diminish if the public were less preoccupied with him in this way. In contrast Nyamnjoh argues that it is important to pay attention on the very negative terms in which the autocrat is portrayed which obviously has a greater effect than if the artist were simply to ignore him as if he did not exist. Similarly, examining the relationship between musicians and political power in Cameroon, Nyamnjoh and Fokwang (2005:262) notes that if some popular musician has been inclined to adopt the ‘politics of connivance; others remains critical of the regime as he suggests:

Critical music in tune with popular expectations is not limited to the most disfavoured regions of the country. Even among the Beti, whose Bitkusi music has been given greater prominence on state television and radio by the sheer fact of association with President Paul Biya, not all the voices have heaped praise on the regime. Critical bitkutsi songs have arisen among local performers to challenge complacency and support for President Biya, ‘a son of the soil’ who has repeatedly failed to deliver on promise even to his own ethnic kin.

Still the use of the state/society distinction is problematic because the Cameroonian state as well as other state in Africa is rarely the sole holder of power (Mbembe, 1992). For Bayart (1983:110) society and state do not belong to the same episteme in Africa. Each of these social units has its own logic. According to him civil society is plural and heterogeneous, and it is not automatically organized according to one specific structure. Civil society is not only the realm of associations (i.e. syndicate, churches) but also a sphere of what he called ‘les modes populaires d’actions politiques’ (popular mode of political action, *my translation*). Therefore Bayart ( 1983: 100) provides a definitions of civil society more compatible with the Cameroonian experience of civil society when he notes:

Besides, the civil society does not get organized automatically around a particular and unique structure which would allow to represent it and to characterize it; it is by nature plural and - we shall come back there- it recuperates heterogeneous practices in which a possible unification is constructed. Finally, the civil society is not the expression of the only subordinated social groups: popular political modes of action are recovering from it (and it will be them who will keep the bulk of our attention), but in the same capacity as steps of groups which, to be socially predominant (as the dealers, the businessmen, the religious representatives), are nevertheless excluded from the direct management of political power( *my translation* ).

In fact this definition highlights the informal mode of civil actions which the Western understanding of civil society ignores or neglects. Furthermore it points out the agency of the citizens within the historical structures of the post colonial state. For Henry Lefebvre such underground movements (masses of excluded) creates an autonomous space of free expression through the interstices free from state violence (Bayart, 1983:98). This kind of reaction of the masses of excluded is partly explained by the hybridity effect<sup>6</sup> of postcolonial state, understood by Bertrand Badie (1992) as a juxtaposition of different actions and discourses without homogeneity which create diverse reactions often contradictory. In conclusion we agree with Filip de Boeck who argues that contemporary African politics is not so much about contest, resistance and conflict with the state, as about attempts to use the state, to collaborate with it and to invade its space in order to further one's own objectives. Rather than hegemony and resistance the new politics is about adaptation, accommodation and collaboration (Lieres, 1999:46).

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<sup>6</sup> the effect of hybridization can be envisaged only as effect of composition of actions (...) in which neither its homogeneity, nor its conscious character can be postulated': ' If it is clear that certain actors of the receiving societies react to riot caused by the importation of foreign models, it can be argued that-without big risk of making a mistake- their reactions are various, contradictory, and that it would be miraculous that they lead to such functional and so consistent syntheses (Badie, 1992:224).

## **CHAPTER 3: NEGATION OF MARTYRDOM, SEDUCTION OF ILEGALITY<sup>7</sup>, PRESENTATION AND REPRESENTATION OF REBELS' SUBJECTIVITIES<sup>8</sup>**

### **3.1 THE MEANING OF REBELLING**

'Die pour rien' it is one of those myriad of expressions which the urban youth in Cameroon use to express the reality of their life and death through a language called Camfranglais. Camfranglais is the language of the street in the cities of Yaoundé and Douala. According to Kiessling and Mous (2004:306), it is used predominantly by the male youth between the ages of ten and thirty-five in informal context. Its name, a blend of Cameroon, 'Français' and 'Anglais' acknowledges its composition as basically French with many items from Pidgin English and from several Cameroonian languages. They notes that while Cameroonian Pidgin arose because of the need to find a medium of communication among people speaking different languages, the origin of Camfranglais lies on the desire to have a secret code that excludes outsiders and at the same time the desire of the community speech to have some fun. As many of those expressions, 'die pour rien' has a specific meaning in the Cameroonian context, escaping from the literal explanation which any French or English speaking person can relate to. In fact 'die pour rien' means an unnatural death. In Cameroon, young people often say 'Il est 'die pour rien' which means his death has been unnatural or more specifically he has been killed. 'Pourquoi veux tu que je die pour rien?' which means why do you want me to be killed or why do you wish my unnatural death? It is well known that in Cameroon 'personne ne veut die pour rien' (no one wants to be killed or no one wishes for himself an unnatural death). The paradox is that the death in Cameroon is often seen as

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<sup>7</sup> I understand the state of Illegality as mode for establishing and authenticating the exercise of power over economic relations and forms of wealth, giving to political subjects who are one subjected to governmental relations and actives subjects within their realm ( Roitman,2006:264).

<sup>8</sup>My understanding of subjectivity is drawn from Fokwang (2008:158), when he states: 'By subjectivity, I refer to social actors' thoughts, sentiments, and embodied sensibilities, and especially their sense of self and self-world relations (Holland and Leander, 2006 : 127). Subjectivities involves making choices about one's identities as well as resisting those identities that are imposed by others or outsiders (Brettell and Sargent 2006:4)

unnatural, there is always someone who is suspected to be responsible for such a thing. In this respect Rowlands and Warnier (1988:123) gloss Geshiere's (1982) observation based on his study of the relationship between village communities and the post-colonial state among the Maka of south-eastern Cameroon devoting attention on sorcery. According to these scholars:

In a 'subsistence economy' with fairly low productivity and little availability surplus, social life is perceived as zero sum game: what someone possesses must be appropriate at the expense of someone else. Having many wives means taking them away from other men. If someone has many goats or a bountiful harvest of yams or groundnuts, it is believed that he or she has sucked the fertility out of the livestock or field of someone else. This is often expressed as cannibalistic metaphor: someone has 'eaten' the life, the health, the crops, and the wealth of his neighbour. The wealthy will have to take this into consideration and should people experience misfortune or die among his kin and neighbours, such accusations may materialise.

So it is common to hear during the funerals that 'on la vendu' (he has been sold). 'On l'a vendu' means at least three things in the Cameroonian context, literally it means that something has been sold but in Camfranglais it is sarcasm or just an exclamation which means that someone has been 'eaten' through the use of withes by his relatives. It also means that someone has been betrayed. Therefore 'die pour rien' is the unnatural death of someone who has been 'eaten'<sup>9</sup> or betrayed by his relatives<sup>10</sup> (the members of his kinship or a close friends). 'Die pour rien' evokes two dimensions of the causes of death, the visible through the betrayal and the invisible through witchcraft. In this evocation there is a dialectical relationship between the visible cause of death and the invisible. The betrayal keeps its literal

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<sup>9</sup> Nocturnal 'bad' sorcery, expressed as cannibalistic metaphor, is found everywhere in this area (East of Cameroon). Most African languages, and all the Bantu ones, make a lexical distinction between eating-swallowing soft and ground food on the one hand and eating that involves cutting and chewing on the other (Rowlands and Warnier, 1988:122)

<sup>10</sup> In general, witchcraft is supposed to thrive in relations that are marked by a mixture of intimacy and inequality. Witchcraft is often closely related to kinship or in any case to intimacy: elsewhere we characterized it as 'the dark side of kinship' (Geshiere, 1997). In many societies, the 'witchcraft of the house' is seen as the most deadly form of occult aggression; the origin of occult attacks is sought primarily within the victim's intimacy, and curing the victim mostly requires a meeting or at least the collaboration of the members of the family (see de Rosny, 1987). Yet witchcraft is also generally related to inequality: on the one hand, to the envy of the poor who try to remind their richer 'brothers' or 'sisters' of their family obligation; but, on the other hand, to the efforts of the rich and the powerful to protect their superiority (Geshiere and Nyamnjoh, 1998:72)

meaning, navigating therefore between the invisible cause of death and the visible. In this context ‘die pour rien’ reveals a violence leading to death but stresses also the power hidden behind it. For instance between 1950-2000, Beninguissé and Koné (n.d: 104) notes a spectacular decrease in mortality, causing a life expectancy to increase from 36 years to 50 years. However the age structure in 1976, 1987, and 1998 points out that young people remain the larger proportion of the population and consequently with a higher mortality rate (see figure 3). This demographic trend highlights the fact that the few people who enjoy the greater life expectancy (elders and parents) are often considered as sorcerers who have eaten the lives of youngsters.

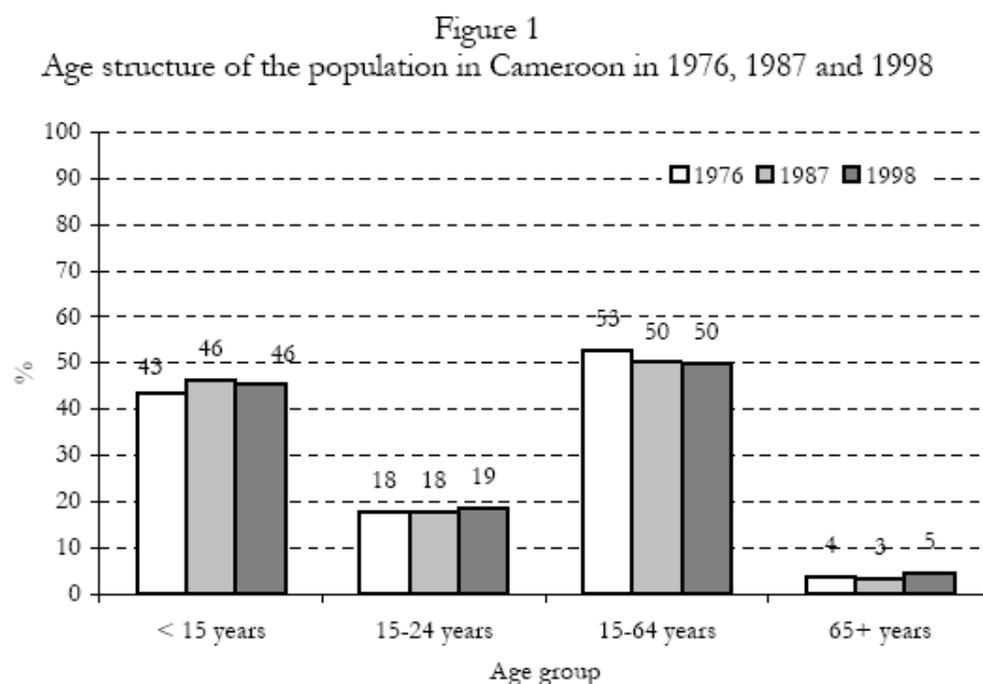


Figure 3, source: Beninguissé and Koné (n.d:107)

In their semiosis of the causes of death and the will to live, urban youth in Cameroon put the emphasis on the human agency while admitting the absolutism of death. Death is caused both by human beings and God. Human beings take a godlike character by causing the death of other. But the very fact that the death caused by human beings is perceived as unnatural in contrast to the death caused by God which is perceived as natural, justifies the refusal of urban youth *to die pour rien*. But also their leitmotiv to rebel against the human

necropower<sup>11</sup> despite the sentence of death which may result directly from this kind of action. In this sense the godlike character of human beings is also an unmasked depiction of the state necropower and its materiality. This viewpoint is supported by the proposition of Rowlands and Warnier (1998:121) stating that ‘in the area under consideration, sorcery and power are perceived as the two sides of the same coin. As a result, power is ambiguous and any concentration of power in the hands of the state or local officials has to deal with this issue.’ Moreover, Simone (2005:523) reminds us that the Cameroonian state has managed to convince many that ‘it rules by sorcery, that it is able to control through deploying invisible powers that take what is discernible to residents and connect it to unknown events, persons and situations’. Rebellious urban youth in Cameroon is therefore refusing to ‘die pour rien’, refusing to subjugate his life to a sorcerer’s necro-power (both individuals and the state) and enjoying the benefits of their own death while living. The nature of this act of rebellion is political if we understand politics as death that lives a human life (Mbembe 2003:14-15).

Regardless of the fact that rebelling does not preserve the rebel’s life from the absolutism of death rather than risking to anticipate its term, it is neither a suicide nor a sacrifice *per se*. It is a personal economy of one’s own death and life, in which the distance between death and life is transformed as a space of agency and construction of identity where the sense of what is right and what is wrong is redefined for the sake of survival. In their (re)-discovery of ‘the life of the Spirit<sup>12</sup>’, urban youth in Cameroon engaged themselves in a self–self relationship, an ethical relation which according to Foucault must struggle to invent the terms by which it will relate itself to others. Such terms are not ready-made, they are not simply prescribed as a part of moral (Murray, 2006:210). Following this idea, urban youth’s acts of rebellion can be better appreciated through the prism of politics viewed in the words of Bataille as a spiral transgression, a difference that disorients the very idea of the limit (Mbembe, 2003:16).

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<sup>11</sup> David Theo Goldberg notes that the necropower can take multiple forms: the terror of actual death; or a more benevolent form, the result of which is the destruction of a culture in order to ‘save people’ from themselves (Mbembe, 2003:22)

<sup>12</sup> According to Hegel the Life of the Spirit is not that life which is frightened of death and spares itself destruction, but that life which assumes death and lives with it (Mbembe, 2003:12).

### 3.2 THE STATIST PRODUCTION OF HISTORY AND THOSE WHO 'DIE POUR RIEN': SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC COGNITION

Thirty years after direct colonization, it is already known that the African state is engaged into an enterprise of production of time, manipulation of memory and re-creation of historical facts. It is also known that this refabrication of the history connects conflicts for social production and hegemonic control (Mbembe, 1991:93, my translation).

The fact that the means of political violence has never succeed to overthrow any regime colonial or postcolonial in Cameroon have been in favour of the writing of a particular version of the political history unfaithful to the facts it describes and reinforcing the hegemony of the ruling elite. The postcolonial regimes in Cameroon eluded some violent episodes of the political history able to question his legitimacy and shaped an archetype of martyrdom in the public cognition. Crisis Group (2010:25) argues that 'harrowing memories of guerrilla war of 1950s remain and are often handed down through families (with the advice to "not get involved in politics")'. Moreover the regimes of Ahidjo and Biya with the support of France have done everything to erase the traces of this movement in collective memories therefore discouraging if not forbidding any culture of martyrdom at the national level. In fact the movement of national liberation, UPC despite his prominence in Cameroon in the pre-independence period and his struggle against the colonial power never took the lead of the country. Cressent (2003:1) notes that the book of Mongo Beti (one of the most famous Cameroonian writer) called *Autopsie D'une Décolonisation (1972)*, focus on the trial of Ernest Ouandié Ndogmo ( a nationalist militant of UPC) denouncing both the Cameroonian dictatorship and the French connivance have been censored in France just after its publication. De Baets (2002:89-90) notes a couple of examples following this line. In March 1985, a decree announced that it was forbidden to import, possess, sell, distribute or circulate a book of essay by Ruben Um Nyobe a leading figure of the nationalist movement edited by the historian Achille Mbembe. This book was censored because it discussed the pre-independence nationalist uprising led by Um Nyobe and violently put down first by the French army and then by the Cameroonian army. *In Gaulist Africa: Cameroon Under Ahmadu Ahidjo* (Enugu, 1978), a book on the post independence dealing with repression laws and edited by historian Richard Joseph was confiscated in a police raid on the Yaoundé

university bookshop. According to De Beats the name of Ahmadou Ahidjo president in 1960-82 have been systematically eliminated from text and speeches because of its alleged implication in the attempted coup of 1984. In 1994, the 6<sup>th</sup> April edition of the newspaper *Le Messenger* carried a cover story of the tenth anniversary of the 1984 failed coup attempt was banned by a province governor for 'disturbing public order'. In relation to that censorship, Jua and Nyamnjoh (2002:58) argue that:

The pervasive academic censorship exhausts and defeats most Cameroonian scholars. Pessimistic about their ability to provide innovative and convincing answers to Cameroon's present malaise, far too many become preoccupied with upward social mobility. Their ambition is fuelled by the media, especially state-run print and electronic media. Political intellectuals appear on television programs such as "Dimanche Midi," "Cameroon Calling," and "The Debate" and have contributed enormously to the growth of what might be called a "heteronomous culture" in Cameroon-that is, a culture of expertise validated by the mass media. Among other payoffs of this strategy has been the selection of these sorts of people to act as "Chargés de Missions" for CPDM campaign teams, positions that in turn increase in their visibility.

Thus we can argue that the nationalists who perished for the sake of national independence 'die pour rien' because neither their ideals have been respected genuinely nor their memories honoured. The negation of a culture of martyrdom has been also illustrated during the students revolt of the 1990s in Cameroon. Trying to investigate the drivers of youth revolt in postcolonial Africa, Diouf (2003:3-4) says that early in the independence, African political cultures made use of both pre-colonial communitarian resources i.e. African values, the practices of administrative modernity and postcolonial politics in order to redefine the meaning of young people and youth. Thus the post-colonial project intended to go beyond an ethnology/anthropology concerned with rituals of initiation and socialization to sociology focused on the generational and sexual division of labour and on social economic mobilization. According to him, in its cultural and political versions, the nationalist project sought to do two things: to maintain the frontier between elders and juniors that characterized traditional African values, and to put young people at the core of its plans for economic development and national liberation. Youth represented not only the hope of African nation under construction but also the chief actor in African societies' struggle against underdevelopment, poverty, misery and illiteracy. As both subjects and objects of training and mobilization, young people incarnated the future and was the representation of the promise of restored identity, both national and pan- African, as opposed to the colonial

alienation and postcolonial forms of domination and subordination. Diouf argues that as bearers of the twofold project of modernity and the return to the source of African cultures, they were seen as the promoters of political and moral obligations of citizenship and of political, social, and cultural responsibility, with a view to construct African democracies. The results of these approaches were a conception of youth that relied heavily on cultural prestige and transformation of African societies. He [Diouf] notes that paradoxically, youth achieved this status only because they were considered as channelled and supervised by adults.

Nonetheless Simone (2005:518) stresses that a huge number of urban youth in Africa are disconnected from both the post-independence narratives of national development and the collective social memories that had established an interweaving of individuals life histories with the prospective and 'eternal return of ancestral knowledge. The failures of the nationalistic project marked in Cameroon by economic crisis of 1980s had a dreadful effects on youth but the political liberalization of the 1990s opened a door for youth to voice their grievances about the poor living and studying condition on campus . In his examination of student revolts at the University of Yaoundé-the only university institution until the 1993 university reform-Konings (2002:181) points out that:

While Cameroonian university students share most of the grievances expressed by their counterparts in other West-central African states, they appear to have played a somewhat different, and to a certain extent exceptional, role in the political liberalization process. Although political liberalization offered them the opportunity to organize to defend their interests, it also tended to divide them along ethno-regional lines. This led to the intensification of the simmering tensions between two groups of students: the 'autochthonous' Bêti students who tended to support the ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) on the other hand, and the Anglophone and Bamiléké 'stranger' students who were more inclined to support the major opposition party, the Social Democratic Front (SDF), on the other.

In effect the configuration of the conflict during the political liberalization follows the schemata of the social space in Cameroon defended by Luc Sindjoun (n.d.:61-62). According to him the Cameroonian social space seems to be represented mainly but not exclusively by three geopolitical spaces: The anglo-bami space structured around the SDF and binds by the common grassfield culture of the people of Northwest and Southwest provinces. The Bêti space, the most fragmented dominated by the ruling party and a culture called 'pahouine'.

And finally the space dominated by the Fulbé and located between the Adamaoua and the Benoué. Sindjoun adds that these social spaces despite their national vocation are not homogeneous and there is also a process of reconfiguration of these social spaces by criminal networks. Through that perspective, we can argue that the student revolts of 1994 followed merely the existing channels of the mainstream politics in Cameroon to express their grievances and defend their interests. Such attitude acknowledges a great degree of youth sympathy for the ethno-political ideologies of political organizations pro or against the government.

Furthermore Konings (2002:192-199) notes that the repression of the student protests (parliament<sup>13</sup>) by the soldiers and the Bêti militia have been illustrated by an unprecedented degree of violence on campus. Reportedly, 218 students were arrested, but there were contradictory reports about the number of deaths, disappearances and injuries. However the minister of information and culture and government spokesman, Augustin Kontchou Kouomegni began swift rise to prominence in the regime and notoriety in the opposition by claiming ‘zero mort’ [no deaths]. Realizing that the population was shocked after this bloody event, the government appointed a committee which while critical of the role of university authority and the law enforcement conclude that there were: ‘no deaths, no rapes, no disappearances’. Similarly to the failure of the opposition party to impose the national conference through *ghost town*, the *ghost campus* didn’t bring a considerable change concerning the living and the studying conditions on the campus but stopped finally with the deteriorated morale of the strikers. In effect the arrest and the dismissal of the revolt’s leaders, the deaths of many strikers but more importantly the public misrecognition of those deaths illustrates a statist production of a version of the history negating a culture of martyrdom in Cameroonian society. Additionally the fact that throughout the Cameroonian history the political violence has been unable to bring a substantial change, opened the door to the development of different kind of forms of rebellion more subtle and often illegal. Diouf (2003:10) claims that:

Combining violence, madness and pleasure, sex and the temptations of the religious chastity, the desire for autonomy and the impulse to rip themselves away from the continent and to erase all

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<sup>13</sup> Group of students often of Bamileke or Anglophone origins revolting against the authorities during the ghost campus.

attachment to history and place, young Africans symbolize the uneven trajectory of Africa in search of its rhythm and its identity.

Further Fokwang (2006:76) notes the way urban young people (students of the cities of Yaoundé and Limbé) negotiate their citizenship in the contemporary Cameroon was not homogeneous. In broad perspective he identifies three categories. This categorization is in agreement with the trajectories drawn by students in the realm of African politics as asserts by Koning (1997:2):

Besides the rebels, there are students who tend to conform to the state model of student behaviour which the president of Cameroon, Paul Biya, defined in 1991 as follows: 'La politique aux politiciens, l'école aux écoliers' (Konnig, 2002). They usually project themselves as responsible students who refuse to participate in any form of student activism, claiming that they have no interest than advancing their academic careers. In addition, there are students who are designated as victims and predators alike. Unlike the rebels, they still appear to have faith in the state as a vehicle for upward mobility. They remain to the group of citizens that, as Bratton (1989:414-15) has acutely observed' remain drawn to the state, because even in diminished circumstances, it remains a major source of spoils and one of the available channels for getting what little there is to get'.

In the first category according to Fokwang we find therefore individuals or members of groups who aspired to or saw themselves as an elite in –waiting that is as 'protégés' of the ruling regime. The individuals portray their transition to adulthood as an easy process facilitated further by their strategic connection to the state institutions and high officials. Secondly, individuals or groups who were scrupulous in their attempt to draw a line between themselves and the state but would make use of any possibilities (either from the state or elsewhere) to negotiate their transition into adulthood and for recognition as citizens. In this category you can find a group called PRESBY (President Biya Youth), which is in fact the avatar of the committee for Self –Defense and the Bêti vigilantes who illustrated itself during the student revolt of 1996. According to Koning (2002:200) this new group which expresses its unshakable loyalty to President Biya, is composed mainly of university students and other sections of the educated youth either engaged in informal-sector activities or unemployed, including number of university graduates and dropouts. Finally, individuals whose struggle for transition into adulthood were framed with secessionist discourses or yearning to seek different kind of opportunities such as migration. In this category the members of the

Southern Cameroon Youth League (SCYL), its original leadership was made of Anglophone members of Parliament and its membership was composed of ‘young people who do not see any future for themselves and who would prefer to die fighting than continue to submit to the fate imposed on Southern Cameroon by la République du Cameroon’ (Koning,1997:10-13).It is important to note that this group distances itself from the SDF or Southern Cameroon National Council<sup>14</sup> ( SCNC) by its use of violence as a means of pressing home their demands. In some extent this distinction reflects the disillusion of urban youth about the traditional political organizations and the way politics is practiced in Cameroon. The SCYL is seen by the Cameroonian government as the most dangerous Anglophone movement some of their members have been arrested for their criminal activities and another went into exile.

The diversity of the paths of the student’s involvement in politics in Cameroon remind us the fragmentation of the civil domain in the country. But does not enable us to understand the revolts of Cameroonian urban youth beyond the structure of the traditional politics or the veil of overt resistance. Furthermore the violence of conversion<sup>15</sup> upon the students influence their behaviour in a certain way which is not surely the same as those of the urban youth who have never being students or who did not spend a lot of time studying in the academy. The expectations of students from the state could be higher than those who don’t have the same academic background as well as their faith in the system. Therefore the use of violence by educated youth could be slightly different from the one of those who are not educated. As a result the high schooling rate during the 1987 and 1998 –if we consider that it implies a high number of students attending universities- the huge number of youth, coupled with the economic crisis<sup>16</sup> may explained some aspects of the political violence of 1990s in Cameroon (Urdal, 2006 ; see figure 4 and 5).

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<sup>14</sup> This organization is the mouth piece of the critical wing of Anglophone minority ( Nyamnjoh and Koning,2000:6)

<sup>15</sup> The essentially violent, externally- and internally-driven initiatives and processes to domesticate or harness, transform, alter, remodel, adapt, or reconstruct Africa and Africans through schools and universities to suit new ways of being, seeing, doing, and thinking, from colonial times to the postcolony (Jua and Nyamnjoh:2002:3).

<sup>16</sup> The economic dependency ratio went from 0.89 in 1976 to 0.99 in 1987. In other words, in 1976, a working person supported on average less than one non working-person, whereas in 1987, one person was supported. Between 1991 and 1998, the weight of the working population and the economic dependency ratio stabilized.

Figure 2  
 Schooling rate of children from 6-14 years in Cameroon  
 in 1976, 1987 and 1998

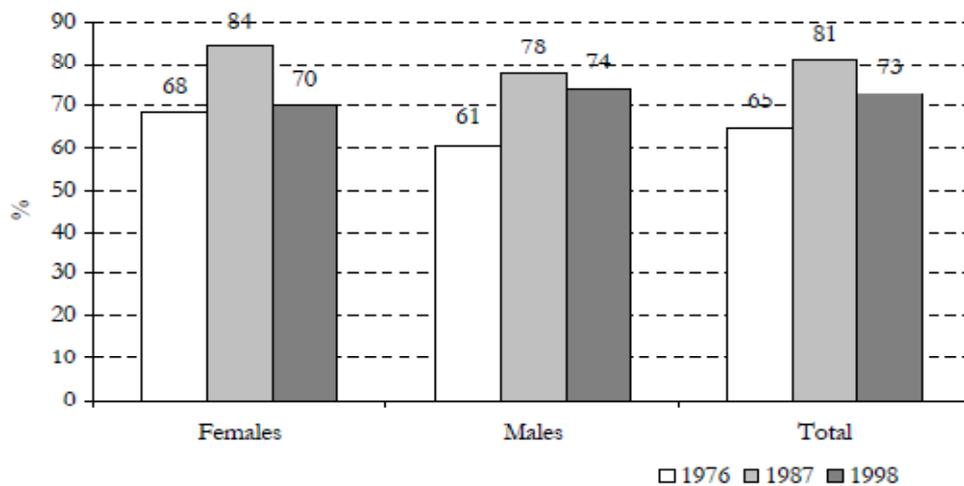


Figure 4, source: Beninguissé and Koné (n.d:107)

However the heterogeneity (predator and victim) of youth association like PRESBY broadly informs the politics of connivance of the postcolony and emphasises the need of a re- definition of the term rebelling as I suggested early. The state violence has seriously re- structured the subjectivity of urban youth in Cameroon and therefore influenced the creation of a kind of habitus<sup>17</sup> borrowing and sharing its features with the mainstream social habitus but keeping a high degree of autonomy. This urban youth's habitus has contributed to the enlargement of the social space not only of its transformation but of its exploitation through an eager of illegality rather than political violence and its domestication through spirituality and migration.

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The potential burden of the working population is mainly due to the under 15 years.( Beninguissé and Koné ,n.d:108-109)

<sup>17</sup> Habitus are generative principles of distinct and distinctive practices-what the worker eats, and especially the way he eats it, the sport he practices and the way he practices it, his political opinions and the way he expresses them are systematically different from industrial owner's corresponding activities. But Habitus are also classificatory schemes, principle of classification, principle of vision and division, different tastes. They make distinction between what is good and what is bad, between what is right and what is wrong, between what is distinguished and what is vulgar and so forth, but the distinctions are not identical (Bourdieu, 1998:8).

### 3.3 SURVIVING IN THE POSTCOLONY: REBELLING AS A LIFESTYLE

Contrasting the logic of martyrdom and the logic of survival, Mbembe (2003:36-37) argues that terror is not on one side and death on the other, terror and death are at the heart of each. Based on the argument of Elias Canetti, he points out that:

The survivor is the one who, having stood in the path of the death, knowing of many deaths and standing in the midst of the fallen, is still alive. Or, more precisely, the survivor is the one who has taken on a whole pack of enemies and managed not only to escape alive, but to kill his or her attackers.

In the logic of survival 'each man is the enemy of every other' and the cost of my survival is calculated in terms of my capacity and readiness to kill someone else in the words of Mbembe. Here the act of killing keeps its literal sense but means also the betrayal in the context of Cameroon. In other side , according to the logic of martyrdom , the will to die is fused with the willingness to take the enemy with you, that is with closing the door on the possibility of life for everyone. In her analysis of the figure of the suicide bomber in the Middle East, Murray (2006) emphasises the rhetorical effects of his death on those who remained alive. While the suicidal deed can be read by the suicide bomber community's as an act of hope for the victim's community it is the death of a despaired person. A death which haunted their imaginary and continue to kill. In this regard the death *per se* is has no meaning, what is at stake is the interpretation put upon it by those who remained alive. Thus in the context of Cameroon two questions can be explored: Why shall I rebel till death if the audience which is supposed to benefits from my death is not able to read it as a martyrdom ? How shall I die in order to benefits from my own death ? In the first question, the self is represented as a potential martyr questioning the significance of its projected recognition. In the second, the self assumes that it will die but engage itself in an economy of its own death? Therefore view the negation of the culture of martyrdom in Cameroon it is almost sure that the self will be less prone to a meaningless action or 'die pour rien'. The response to the second question deal with the logic of survival while admitting the absolutism of death. Those two questions and their answers are connected, they depict a gradual way to interrogate the same reality and inform about the habitus the one who is rebelling.

In his study of the urban youth in Douala, de Rosny (2002) notes the eager of social condition among them and equates its pursuit to migration's attempts, practice of feymanism and Pentecostalism. What he termed 'les échappées' are some means used by the urban youth to domesticate their difficult conditions of life or to escape physically or mentally the violence of the reality in Douala. The local terminology of migration offers an interesting insight to understand in depth the modes of survival of urban youth. For the urban youth in Douala, to migrate means 'aller au front' (going to the battlefield). 'Aller au front' can be understood like the readiness to die but also the will to survive. It implies that the journey leading to the projected destination will not be easy therefore only a soldier's soul or the 'Life of the Spirit' could drive the migrant in order to reach his goals. Furthermore it is also a transgression of the prohibition to kill, a transgression of the legality not only during the journey to the intended destination but during the whole period of migrant's life. Thus the shade of death behind the idea of migration reflects the way urban young people encode state violence and use it paradoxically as an energy to tame its ubiquity and to create or enlarge social space.

Stressing the issue of state violence in Cameroon, Malaquais (2002) argues that the institution of the 'commandement opérationnel' (Operational command or CO), a paramilitary body bringing together local and national police and armed forces in order to end to a wave of banditry during the years of economic crisis ( thefts, break-ins, car-jacking and murder) led to a process of reshaping Douala city with a vocabulary of death. According to him right at the beginning CO was well received both by poor and rich people. Before the government instituted CO in the city's many slums, men and women both had taken to lynching bandits because of the incapacity of the police to guarantee security. Very soon the activities of the CO started to go wrong. A huge number of people were being arrested. Entire neighbourhoods were being cordoned off and their youngsters taken in to CO post command. Malaquais says that for the people under the control of CO, two things happened: those arrested were being ransomed-made to buy their freedom- and many were being tortured. Many of the arrested disappeared. In the early days of the CO, bodies tortured and killed were positioned in highly strategic places by the army and police: at the most visited place like the colonial core of the city. The exhibition of the lifeless bodies of the victims of CO have been purposive, in so doing the CO was trying to create a climate of fear and intimidation. As the number of death increased, a different approach was adopted. Corpses began to be systematically disposed of. They ( corpses) were dump around the city. Some of the masse

graves were discovered; other were the subject of hushed speculations and people began to speak about the burial sites as a circle of graves, ringing Douala. Sustained by the denunciation of the Archbishop of Douala (Christian Tumi) in a letter text in *Le Messager*, the geography of death became widespread rumours as Malaquais (2002:139) opines:

This knowledge found expression in a series of renaming streets, plazas, dumps were given new names. Among these was a site located in the peripheral neighbourhood of PK 57. Here, a trench was uncovered, in which dozens of bodies had been piled. Once known as Mangoule, it was renamed 'Montagne de sang' ( Mountain of Blood ). In the neighbourhood of Bépanda, in April 2001, nine young men arrested, alledgly for stealing a canister of cooking fuel, and murdered. Their remains were never found. This site, now infamous , was re-named *Carrefour des Neuf Disparus* ( ' Crossroads of the nine disappeared' )

We suggest that the militarized terminology of migration in Francophone areas belongs to the vocabulary of death in Douala as a concept , but as a mode of action it draws the new lines of the geography of death of urban youth in the real world. Besides, the terminology of migration in the Anglophone cities of Cameroon make it clearer . 'Falling in bush' as it is called, it is Cameroonian pidgin phrase borrowing from 'the indigenous notions of the odious and dangerous expedition into the black bush' in the words of Fokwang (2006:84). According to the popular parlance, the black bush refers to a 'forest' far away from human settlement. It is a jungle of abundance par excellence, the area of mysterious entities, attractive to the daring but uncertain. For Argenti (2001:84) in the grassfield region personal status was achieved by hunting big game or success in the warfare located in the forest. He notes that:

If the forest could once be opposed to the village as a space of danger opposed to one of safety, nurture, and civilization, the fractured polity is now subject to modernist sources of danger which are no longer topographically distinct; the wild now breaches village boundaries as the state feeds upon itself, becoming its own monster.

To 'fall bush' therefore means going to the black bush, not the one of the elders but the new 'black bush' represented by Europe and North America (Fokwang, 2006:85). This tendency can be justify by the incapacity of the Cameroonian economy to absorb the population of unemployed youth but also by the inadequacy of the training offered by the national universities. This situation justify also at some points the diminution of the prestige of the figure of intellectual in the postcolony which can be partly explained by the irrelevance of

the curricula of universities and the clientelistic practices of scholars as pointed by Nyamnjoh and Jua (2002).

Richard Banégas and Warnier (2001: 6-8) on the other hand connect the degradation of the prestige of the intellectual in the postcolonial state with the rise of the new trajectories of accumulation of economic, social and political capital epitomized by the figure of feyman, artist, athlete and religious leader or businessman. Those new role models do not reflect a complete autonomy but a kind of connivance with state apparatus. In Cameroon, if this point of view can be merely true for the athletes especially footballers, as it have been nicely put by Roger Milla - one of the best Cameroonian footballers and the best African football player of the last century- after scoring two goals against Romania in the world cup 1990: 'Je suis un officier de reserve, fier de servir mon pays depuis vingt' (Ramonet, 1996:29). For the other epitomes like artist and feyman, the argument of Banegas et al (2001) become seriously questionable (Nyamnjoh and Fokwang: 2005; Djio: 2008). Let us just insist in the next section on the figure of the feyman.

Speaking about the feymania in Cameroon de Rosny (2002: 628-629) says that:

I give him a place, because it reveals in a spectacular fashion the game of invisible potency in the mental world of youth. In the sense, it represents a model of transition between an escape abroad and an escape in the mystical world. It promises to the one one who practices it a greater social upward, perhaps ephemeral but enough to make him think that he/she will gain recognition just like in a daydream (my translation).

For de Rosny, the term feyman originates from the Cameroonian pidgin English. The feyman would be the fireman ('homme de feu'). Fey originates from fire, it means at the same time the blazing man and the one who blazes. In the traditional cosmology the fire represents an ambiguous and magical power. For example in Haiti the traditional healer in vaudou religion is called docte-fey. Exploring the rumour stating that all feyman come from New Bell, Malaquais (2002:142-144) reveals the *raison d'être* of this phenomenon and the determinants of its localization. In fact New Bell is a sprawling cluster of neighbourhoods southeast of the city's colonial core, it is Douala's poorest and most congested section. Its name come from the Bell dynasty, one of several Duala's clans whose rulers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries controlled trade networks linking Cameroon's ivory and palm-rich interior with the

coast. As New Bell was taking shape, the tensions increased between the neighbourhood's first inhabitants mostly Duala and migrants from the grassfield region known as Bamiléké, representing 75 % of the population nowadays. New Bell has been at the centre of what the issue of autochthony/allogeny in Cameroon and what has been called la *question Bamiléké*, concerning the economic hegemony of this ethnic group. Malaquais notes that the matter of alienation is central to any discussion of feymania or the commandement operationnel. Far from being an exclusivity of the Bamiléké's practices, the phenomenon of feymania is pan-ethnic. Still the first generation of feyman represented most famously by Donatien Koagne (the most famous Cameroonian feyman) himself counted among the plethora of young men of Bamiléké origin, a majority of whom had grown up in New Bell. This is to say that such phenomenon is due to the disastrous impact on poor urban youth of ever-worsening economic conditions in the 1980s and 90s. Malaquais (2002:145) argues that :

It is from this context, of rural exile, demoralization and ever-worsening poverty, that feymania emerged. For Donatien, his colleague and those who sought to follow in their footsteps, the get-rich-quick schemes for which feymania is infamous offered more than a way out. They were a form of revenge. French-style schooling, hard work, obeisance to the rules of chieftaincy and nation: these, young men had been told for generations, were the keys to success. Untrue half a century early, by the mid-1990s such admonitions, were laughable. Success was the stuff of ill-gotten wealth and political patronage, lies, bribery, fraud. The means and methods used by feymen to acquire their fortune were those of the ruling elite- tools unavailable until then to the common man, re-worked to fit his needs and the context at hand.

Feymania defines a new aesthetic of social success borrowing from hip hop culture dress code to the neo classical portico demanding attention to the new bourgeoisie it represents. The practice of feymania reconfigured the Cameroonian economy and according to Malaquais it challenged the French sponsored elite and the Biya's regime. Roger Botte (2002:141) notes that the seduction of economic activities like feymania is reinforced because the lines of legal and illegal practices are blurred. While some feymen like Donatien have benefited the support of some high ranking officials of the regime, feymania as whole experienced the disgrace of the ruling elite. Consequently the cohort of youth involved in this practice, have been the preferred target of the CO. Also intentionally or not those who suffered the most from it was the youth from Bamileke origins (Malaquais, 2002:148). One should take account of state violence among the factors which led the feymen to search new pasture outside the continent according to Djio (2008:11). In fact the first factor was the

saturation of the African front. The second factor was growing setbacks of feymen and 419 scammers in a number of African countries and the fact that many people was already aware of their old tricks. Finally, following the spectacular coups achieved by some notorious feymen and scammers in a number of African countries and the brutality of the response of local authorities. By exporting their expertise in Europe and North America, the feymen reinvented the global capitalism as Djio (2008:21-22) states that:

Another critical aspect of this reinvention of global capitalism is its transmutation into a vast economy of illusion and simulacrum in which success in business ventures mainly depends on the ‘ performance of the art of con games’ which involves stagecraft, impersonation, and those ‘ collusive fabrications’ as Apter ( 205: 228 would put it. In this moral economy of masquerade, delusion and semblance, the achievement of dirty tricks and economic malpractice also rest on one’s ability to cover one’s real project and activities, conceal one’s real motives and intention, or flout one’s true identity; in short to ‘wear the mask of appearance’ as Suzanne Brenner (1998) would say.

In this sense the feymen is intimately what he represents, an admired figure of social success but also a crook. A victim of the state violence and other social injustices but a predator as well. If he can stimulate the desire to migrate as a source of hope for urban youth because he is an overcomer of the odds of the ‘forest’, he can also use the produced admiration as way to enrich himself. The feyman is both a sniper and a target: It is a survivor.

‘In business it is dishonest to be honest because everybody is dishonest’ (Djio,2008:21).If this assertion can be considered as the maxim of feymen it is almost against all the beliefs of Pentecostal youth in Cameroon. however both Pentecostal and feyman are concerned about the improvement of their economic situation. Therefore they represent different way to deal with the same reality on the ground. In effect Mbe (2002: 360-370) notes that the rise of Pentecostal churches during the years of economic crisis especially in the English speaking provinces of Northwest and Southwest of Cameroon. According to him several reasons explain the spread of Pentecostalism in Cameroon among urban youth. The first factor is the fact that the Pentecostal doctrine put an emphasis on salvation and justification by faith, the belief of the second coming of Jesus Christ, the stress on divine healing ,and the belief that the holy spirit empowers a Christian to live victoriously and to witness effectively and whose gift enables the believer to perform supernatural power. Secondly, the campaign of

evangelization run throughout the country has been a strong weapon to convert the unbelievers. Thirdly the economic opportunities provide by the building of facilities (churches, colleges) and a team of pastors who can only be benefited by a member of those churches. Fourthly contrary to the mainstream churches, catholic and Presbyterian for instance, youth take the lead of strategic position in the organizational apparatus of the Pentecostal churches. Also the way the pastors preach and the style of music (soul, rap and reggae) play in those churches seduces the urban youth because of its shared features with the popular culture. Finally and maybe the most important for our study is the economic message of the Pentecostal churches. While they places less attention in the social success in the beginning of their development in Cameroon, Mbe notes a shift during the years of economic crisis. According to Him Pentecostals adopt a method by which they believe that they can possess whatever they want, a belief which is based on prosperity theology. For de Rosny (2002) the reasons of the success of Pentecostal churches lies also in his emotional appealing as well as in the flexibility in their doctrine and the belief in the divine miracle now. He notes that far from offering a refuge to their believers, Pentecostalism constructs an universe of dichotomy between the good and the evil and a permanent struggle between the holy spirit and the devil. Choosing the side of Holy Spirit, Pentecostals tend to see themselves as the faithful army of Christ where the enemy is represented by the unbelievers (persons who are not a member of a Pentecostal church).

Broadly the Pentecostalism is an universe of spiritual struggle and where one of the outcomes of the struggle is the poverty alleviation for the believer and defeat for the enemy. The enemy here can be everyone but the Pentecostal believer; it's not only the Devil as an imaginative figure but a cohort of unbelievers constituted by some fragments the ruling elite and the poor masses. However becoming born –again (Pentecostal) can erase the evils of a member of the ruling elite as it can catalyze the improvement of the condition of life of a newly converted poor. This promise is objectively feasible and attractive if we look at the Pentecostalism as a network of people sharing the same doctrine about God and ideology about social success. Furthermore by dividing the world in to two sides good and evil, the Pentecostalism engage itself both in a symbolic and a materialistic struggle against the regime and the others unbelievers. First by their doctrine Pentecostals do a calculus in which their death equates to the natural death, a death which originate from God's will. But not a death in vain like 'die pour rien' but a death occurring while fighting against the enemy. In this sense we can argue

Pentecostals experience the 'Life of the Spirit' in the same way feymen do. If we can agree that this kind of struggle tend to avoid the real death of the Pentecostal during a possible warfare against the enemy in the real world, we can also agree that such life dedicated to the economic improvement can have some effect on the ground not only by praying but by using the churches' network for business venture and economic opportunities. The struggle of the Pentecostalism is a struggle for its members, a struggle which do not acknowledge a positive change outside the boundaries of its ideology and theology but which embrace anyone willing to operate inside its network and control. Therefore pentecotism is just a different means to conquer and attend social success in the postcolony with a genuine economy of death and life.

### **3.4 THE RISE OF PRIVATE VIOLENCE**

Usually the use of political violence in Cameroon has been more spontaneous than planned for the reasons we have stated up until but also because of the youth bulge (Urdal, 2006; Beninguisse and Kone, n.d.; Bidima,2001; see figure 3). In order to take account of this violence nowadays , we suggest that the acts of rebelling should be considered as a lifestyle. Failing to consider it as such , but comprehending it as an act of protestation trying to overthrow the regime in place instead lead to the construction of the rebel in a more or less traditional sense of the term . I suggest that rebelling and becoming a rebel are located between the gradual shift of two kind of mimesis drawn firstly by Michael Kirby and explored in African context by Frances Harding (1999) . According to those scholars there is a continuum between acting and performing. Therefore by rebelling urban young people are performing their own self but when they become rebel they simulate purposively their own self putting the emphasis on violence. Such a performance is rooted in the practicality of their existence but its meaning depend on the accustomed audience ( power elite and media) , for whom the use of violence takes another significance .

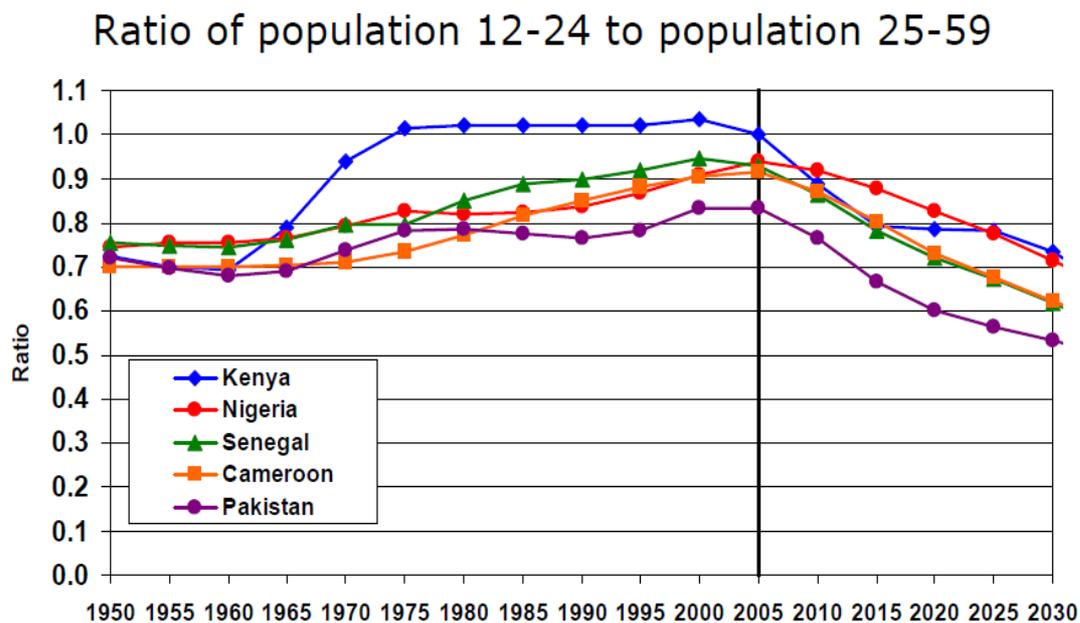


Figure 5, source: United Nation estimates and Medium variant production quoted in Lam (2007:19)

In this respect we should pay more attention on a particular group the so called ‘les Bendskineurs’<sup>18</sup>. *Les bendskineurs* are drivers who used motor bike as taxi in the urban cities of Cameroon . It is a form of self-employment and a means of resistance against the state . The bendskin phenomenon in Douala have been the outcome of the *ghost town* during the 1990s. Initially designed as a contingent solution to replace the conventional system of public transportation during the *ghost town* , it became quickly a legitimate response by young people in Cameroon to the transportations problems facing the majority of residents of urban cities . According to Simone ( 2005: 523-524) they are about 35, 000 *bendskineurs* in Douala most of them are Bamiléké, predominantly youth between 18-35 years , whose origin are rooted in the north region of the city ( Dakar, New Bell, etc). In the light of a survey conducted by Konings (2006:42) among hundred bendskin drivers and fifty *pousseurs*<sup>19</sup> in November 2003 : All were male, and most were quite young, 81 percent were between 15-35 years old , 61 percent were single, and 76 percent had been in the profession for less than five

<sup>18</sup> Benskineur originate from the word bendskin which is both a Pidgin English expression, meaning ‘ bend yourself’ ( to hold on tightly to the driver) and the name of popular music introduced in the 1960s by the famous Bamiléké singer Andre Marie Talla (Konings, 2006:36)

<sup>19</sup> It is Francophone expression referring to the use of handcarts for transporting merchandise.

years. They tended relatively well educated: 45 percent had attended primary school, 43 had enjoyed some secondary school education and 7 percent had been university students. The rest of five percent were illiterate. The bendskin drivers are usually organized in small groups. Konings argues that despite the fact that the majority of the members of these groups are Bamiléké , the group does not exclude members of other ethnic groups but non-Bamiléké according to him are usually close friends such as ex-school mates or ex-colleagues. Each of those groups is characterized by the solidarity among its member. Further those groups are able to transcend the rivalries which may occurred between them and act in common to protect their common interests or defend a colleagues threatened by outsiders. The bendskin drivers are well known for their non respect of traffic rules. In relation to that there are some animosities between taxi drivers and bendskin drivers which according to Konings (206:44-48) have precluded any form of coalition against their common enemies, namely the state and the police . Due to some obvious reasons linked to corruption and social rights abuse, the relations between bendskin drivers, police and other state agent are really conflictual but the main source of this conflict lies in a competition for power and control over the road. In this regard bendskin drivers illustrated themselves with their recurrent habit to resolves their problems through violence instead of peaceful negotiations. In the same path Konings adds that there is substantial evidences that bendskin drivers , just like taxi drivers, have become involved in armed robbery of their passengers. Also Bendskin drivers have fiercely resisted the government's controlling efforts which have failed dismally. Roitman (2006:251-261) reports how in the Chad basin ( region including northern<sup>20</sup> part of Cameroon ) the legal deviations of Bendskin and Coupeurs-de-route- those who cut off the roads- is seen as a illegal yet licit practice. According to her in the late 1990s in an effort to quell incivisme fiscal and benefit from this lucrative domain bendskins were legalized through a series of regulations. These included a new tax ( impot libérateur), driver license, vehicle registration, a permit to carry passenger, a parking permit, and custom's receipt for imported motorcycles. She notes that while drivers are supposed to paint the motor yellow and wear helmets and gloves, the reality is that almost all the bendskin drivers do not respect such prescriptions. In contrast to Douala where the relationship between bendskin and police is

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<sup>20</sup> There has been almost no impact of the transport's strike during the February 's event in the northern part of Cameroon. Perhaps it was a consequence of the partnership between police and the bendskin drivers as reported by Roitman (2006) .

tense , in the northern part of the country things seems to be slightly different as a bensdkin driver in Ngaoundéré puts it :

The police and the moto-taximen, we're partners. We know that if we are disposed to giving them a bit of money from time to time, we can work together-that is , the police and the moto-taximen-we exploit illegality. Even when you have all your papers in order, you are in illegality because the motorcycle is illegal. Not even 5 percent are painted in yellow . We have imposed our vision of things on the authorities. The police themselves close their eyes; they can always find an infraction to ticket. That way, they have money for beer....So that the system can continue to function properly, it's important that there are people in violation because, if everyone was in line with the law, the authorities-the police- wouldn't gain their share and then they would suppress the motorcycles on the pretext that they causes, that we are hoodlums, etc. Today , maybe we are hoodlums , but we are hoodlums who helps sustain families and contribute to the well-beings of agents of the force of law .Long live the tolerant police [ la police comprehensive]! (Roitman,2006:262).

Similarly Roitman argues that in the same region road banditry is often regarded as a form of work. She mentions the example of *zarguina* (roughly translated as bandits but with a connotation of class actors ) who historically have been associated with local chiefdoms, some of then attaining the status of bandit-notables (bandit-dignitaries) ; enjoying the right to 'work' the chiefdom's territory in return of a part of the spoils and protected by various important chiefs. Roitman stresses that it is still the case in the territory of Rey Bouba in the northern Cameroon where the recently deceased chief have been an important member of the ruling political party (CPDM).

In a context of increasing insecurity in Cameroon , Chouala ( 2001:13-14) infers from the practice of banditry, a political underpinning . This viewpoint is reinforced by Tedesco (2009:3) who acknowledge that in case of persistent social exclusion, different class citizens can be created especially among the poor and the disenfranchised who lack the means to use their political and civil rights. These subjects according to her create a different culture one bound to their day-to-day existence in the slums. Such culture which in previous years could have been labelled culture of poverty is now increasingly connected to violence, marginalization and hostility. Even so Roitman ( 2006:259) emphasizes that the 'ambivalence which characterizes both organized banditry and unregulated economic activities today, is such that one cannot clearly delineate these endeavours in terms of counter-realm, or as

instances of rebellion, resistance to the state, or acts of social justice'. Hence it is important to examine closely this type of illegal yet licit practices. Illustrative of such practices, is the series of pictures of bendskin's actions captures by Konings (2006:45-47):

In early 2001, a heated confrontation between a policeman and a group of bendskin drivers occurred in the quarter of Madagascar. The group had come to rescue of colleague who was being harassed by policeman. Feeling threatened, the policeman drew his pistol, and at the moment that he wanted to fire, he was pushed from behind by a group member. During his fall, he accidentally shot and killed himself.

In November of the same year, bendskin drivers occupied the most important traffic intersections in Douala, bringing all traffic to a standstill. They blew their horns continuously and carried placards protesting the corruption of municipal agent charged with collecting taxes from bendskin drivers. According to the demonstrators these agents were behaving like policemen and gendarmes, demanding not only their tax certificates, but also other documents, such as proof of vehicle insurance and driving license. If they could not produce these documents, the agents threatened to seize their motorbikes unless they paid a bribe of between FCFA 2,000 and FCFA 5,000. The protesters were later received by the senior divisional officers, Laurent Mindja, who ordered the municipal agent to restrict themselves to collecting taxes.

In March 2002, a police vehicle hit a group of bendskin drivers standing at their parking place on the road near Tunnel Ndokoti, killing one of them. In reaction, the group immediately set fire to the vehicle and wanted to lynch the two policemen in it. The latter narrowly escaped by firing several shot in the air.

On several occasions, bendskin drivers have protested against police harassment and extortion by erecting barricades on the Wouri Bridge, which forms the only connection between the two parts of Douala. During a demonstration in the city on 23 February 2003, they used sticks to chase the police away. Only a few months later, a renewed incident between the police and the bendskin driver in New Bell gave rise to a violent rebellion in the city (Messenger2003b; Herald 2003a.2003b)

In those snapshots of the collective actions of bendskin drivers what is interesting to bear in mind for the rest of this paper, is their strong capacity of mobilization, the dynamic of greed and grievances in the movement they impulse but also the central role of violence in their form of protestations. In relation to that on 25 February 2008 a general strike was launched by the syndicates of transporters including bendskineurs-it was the first time for this group to follow such strike- demanding the improvement of their social conditions (Ngouem,2008:11).

Subsequently, from the 25 to 29 February 2008 Cameroon was the theatre of violent demonstrations fuelled or explained by a vast array of arguments among them we can find, the proposed constitutional amendment, the rising prices of fuel and basic commodities (NHRO,2008). In this context the objectives of the next chapter won't be to restore a particular regime of truth but to grasp different newspapers' perspectives of the event and point out the implications that particular versions of the reality which they promote might conceal.

## **CHAPTER 4: JOURNALISM IN CAMEROON: A FIELD BOUND BY THE RISK OF DEATH**

### **Introduction**

In short, the journalist is an uneasy awkward figure, capable of good as well as bad, who has to come to terms with the political and economic constraints that weigh on him, rendering his position unstable and uncomfortable (Champagne,2005:48).

The double dependency of the journalistic field on economic and politics, suggested by Champagne are reflected in the way the freedom of press is experienced in Cameroon. The dual structure of the journalistic field in Cameroon shapes a space of liberties where journalists, journalism and the media business are constrained by the risk of death (violence against journalists, bankruptcy of press business and absence of ethic and deontology in the profession).

### **4.1 THE LEGAL STRUCTURE OF PRESS FREEDOM IN CAMEROON**

The colonial legacy of civil law and common law, the former inherited from the French and the latter from the English have been a structuring factor in the history of press law in Cameroon. Until 1966 when the first press law was enacted, pressmen in French speaking Cameroon were regulated by different laws from those of English speaking Cameroon. In Francophone areas, the law in force was the French law on press freedom of July 29, 1881 which was introduced in the mandated territory in 1923 and amended in 1936. The French Cameroon assembly adopted the 1881 law as law No. 55-35 of May 27, 1959. This law regulated the press in francophone Cameroon until 1966. In the Anglophone sector, the sources of press law originate from Licensing Act in Britain in 1662. But the law which regulated the practice of journalism in the area was the Nigerian Newspaper Ordinance No.

10 of 1903, modelled after the Sierra Leonean press law of 1857. The 103 law was further amended by the Newspaper Ordinance No. 40 of 1917, the newspaper Ordinance No. 26, 1941 and the Eastern Nigerian Law of 1955. By the time the Nigerian Newspaper Ordinance was enacted, Southern Cameroon was operating as an autonomous region but it was only after unification in 1961 that the West Cameroon Newspaper Ordinance was passed to govern the establishment of newspapers.

Churchill (1992:21-22) says that with the unification of the country, the practice of vetting and censorship provided in the 1959 French Cameroon law, was extended to the English speaking Cameroon under the instructions of the Minister of Territorial Administration. The Anglophone journalists decried the practice this law implied and regarded it as unconstitutional since the 1959 law was signed prior to unification. Considering the embarrassment these protestations caused, the federal government prompted its adaptation by enacting the Law No. 66/LF/13 of December 21, 1966 by the Federal Assembly. Churchill notes that:

The major feature of the 1966 press law and its subsequent amendments was its elaborated system of control which involved administrative, financial and territorial surveillance. It was based on 'preventive press' ideology where ownership of a press organ was scrutinized and emphasis laid on pre-publication control by the administrative authorities. Less regard was given to judicial control of the press in matters of libel and defamation. Moreover, the spirit of the law was essentially repressive which showed in its prescription for heavy imprisonment sentences whenever its provisions were violated. The 1966 law was essentially a newspaper law which excluded radio journalist from actionable offences committed under common law as concepts such as 'publisher' and 'printer' could not be extended to the Director or Chief of Station of a radio station.

Ndam (2004:548-549) reports that the 1966 press law liberated Cameroon from the French law of 29 July 1881 regarding the press. According to him the former made the publication of newspapers subject to censorship, seizure or interdiction by the administration if deemed detrimental to public order, social mores and national security. After some minor adjustments the law 80-18 of the 14 July 1980 marked a break with the liberal character inherited from French legislation, thus signalling the conceptual autonomy of the legislators in Cameroon: the creation of a newspaper became subject to administrative authorization and required both a fiscal and the deposit of security receipt. In contrast the audiovisual communication regime

underwent a slower evolution, limited early to radio broadcasting, the service was monopolised by the state. This was also the case for the television which has been entrusted to a public institution whose organic and functional autonomy was limited in its effectiveness by the existence of state-imposed control. Ndam suggests that the monolithic political system founded in 1966 with the creation of a single party, largely explains the restrictive character of the legislation and administrative control in place until 1990. On December 19, 1990 the government scrapped the 1966 law and its subsequent amendments like the 1987 law and replaced it with law No. 90/052 related to the freedom of mass communications. This shift of the Cameroonian government's policies regarding the press freedom should be understood in the context of the political and professional turmoil of the 1990s. Concerning the spirit of this law and its objectives, Churchill (1992:24) notes that at a political level, it sought to create a forum to permit the expression of diverse opinions while at the professional level it was aimed at creating responsible journalism.

Ndam (2004:549-551) provides an interesting analysis of Law 90-52. He argues that this law did not establish a single administrative system for the creation of all information- providing organizations. According to him in the article 6, the freedom of the press is affirmed but it makes publication subject-in the light of article 7, paragraph 1- to prior statement of intent to the prefect of the relevant department. *De jure* , this system should lead to the prefectural authorities noting the creation of a newspaper. *De facto* in accordance to the prior statement of intent, there is not only the noting of the creation of a press organization but also the administrative recognition of said creation. For instance speaking about the recognition by the way of prior statement of intent, he notes that since 1990 the government tolerates publishers to operate without prior authorization or deposit of security but any publication must be preceded by a statement of intent in accordance with Article 7 , paragraph 1 of law 90-52. Furthermore the role of the prefect is pivotal in the procedure for issuing the receipt for the statement that is valid as administrative recognition of the creation of newspaper. This pivotal role has been made possible by the 1990 reform and by the legislative modification of 1996. Ndam argues that:

From prefecture control of the procedure....The exorbitant power of the prefect in issuing the receipt can be measured from the laconic wording of Article 7 of Law 90-52 following the submission of the prior statement of intent without any formal advice of receipt as foreseen by paragraph 1, paragraph 3 states in fine that a receipt is issued by the prefect. Without prescribing

any formalities for confirming neither the submission nor a limitation on the delay which the prefect may impose, it could be understood that the submission of the statement and the issuing of the receipt are simultaneous. However, the prefect can remain silent, given that he/she is not constrained by a precise period of time. On this point, it has been claimed that a manager can publish his/her newspaper without waiting for a receipt just by meeting the requirements for submission. We cannot subscribe to this point of view because receipt by the prefect copies of the newspaper does not constitute a tacit issuing of a receipt. The latter which implies administrative recognition of the creation, must be obtained prior to publication, because failure to complete the prior statement of intent properly is considered by the authorities to be a case of illegal publication...

2...to the procedural framework for prefectural power. The framework for prefectural power is issuing the receipt for prior statement is subject matter of the prescriptions of the article 7 of Law 96-4. Paragraph 1 of this article stipulates that submission of the prior statement of intent is always acknowledged with a receipt. This formality marks the point in time at which the procedure regarding the prior statement that should end in the issuing of a receipt by the administrative authority is initiated

Churchill (1992:26-29) highlights the major defects of the 1990 press law. Firstly by embracing a variety of issues, the law reflects its structural weakness. The division of the laws affecting written communication, audio-visual communication, journalists and offences is too broad. According to him this law is essentially a print law because while sections on print media represent almost 31 (32%), those on audiovisual media are only 10 (9%) and those affecting journalists spread over only 6 sections. Secondly, the restrictive classification of the means of mass communications into the print (newspapers, periodicals, magazines, pamphlets, books and bill posting) and the audiovisual media (radio and television). This classification is far too exhaustive because it omits other mass communication channels like photography, the cinema, paintings, mobile advertisement vans, and folk media like songs, dances and drama. Thirdly the law is based on the false assumption that the judiciary in Cameroon is independent. In practice the judiciary has political and administrative functions. Fourthly, the issue of libel is not clear. The law is silent on who is liable in cases of reproduced libellous material. It does not also state precisely whether the publisher and editor could be joint tortfeasors if they were not on the day the libellous article was published. Fifthly, the law also has not been able to create a competitive political system based on media exposure. For instance the section 41(1) states the principle of equal access to airtime by all political parties but does not stipulate whether it would be equal or proportional.

Finally the law is silent on other issues of media like plagiarism, obscene publication and seditious libel.

In addition, Ndam (2004, 555:556) puts the emphasis on the reality of freedom press in regard to public order. He suggests that censorship, seizure and interdiction of newspapers significantly limit the freedom of the press but do not always take the written form, thus making it problematic to qualify them as administrative decisions. According to him the decisions that restrict freedom with the recurrent motive of disturbance of public order take an important place. When it is obligatory in character the motive leads the party taking a decision to explain the legal and factual reasons for which it is being taken. In Cameroon, the measures that restrict the freedom of the press depend on whether the newspaper is located in Cameroonian territory or not. On the one hand the legislator justifies the censorship seizure or interdiction of national press publication that would be detrimental to the public order or more; on the other hand the legislator remains silent concerning the motives for its decision, whereas the second case is not subject to an obligation of motive. In effect the Cameroonian authorities justify their intervention mainly on the basis of the need to maintain 'public order'. Drawn on the argument of some Cameroonian scholars, Ndam states that in Cameroonian law, public order is a legal notion surrounded by a 'thick fog' that the doctrine has not failed to emphasize. While acknowledging that 'this notion of public order is not defined in Cameroonian law whereas it even seems to have a particular meaning, in any case one more restrictive than that in French law upon which is based'. Professor Kamto assumes that 'the notion of public order so dear to administrative law on its own efficiency for controlling the press with goal of protecting the public interest'. For Doctor Biyoum the polysemic character of this notion legitimise all intervention by the state that be whether *a priori* and *a posteriori*. From that point on, Professor Nlep invites us to go further in depth and not be satisfied with the public order alibi to reveal and comprehend the motives for censorship, seizure or interdiction of newspapers. For him, the defence of power in place constitutes the unstated motive expressed as 'all those reasons which, although not found in either the letter or the spirit of the law nonetheless influence the decision to censor, seize or forbid on behalf of the administrative authorities'. Thus it is through this lens that the numerous decisions to seize national or foreign newspapers should be viewed and analysed.

In order to make sense of the gap between the statement of the press Law of 1990 and the administrative censorship, Nyamnjuh (2005:175-182) explores the way this law has been interpreted both by the government and by the press. By quoting a Cameroonian minister, he infers the government's interpretation. In fact the Minister argues that the Cameroonian state 'exercise a sort of legal control on the press, thanks to some legal measure providing for a censorship that is extremely light and symbolic'. For Him [Minister], 'poorly managed, poorly used, freedom of expression can prove harmful to the consolidation of social balance and especially to the integration of and peace'. Thus according to the minister viewpoint the administrative censorship taken against certain papers and some journalists of the private press critical to the government could be justified by the lack of respect for the law or the lack of respect for deontology. On the contrary the newspapers believe that the administrative control is merely a means to limit their freedom in order to silence the critical voices of the state's political behaviour. Many journalists assume that the critical press' only crime has been its consistent refusal to succumb state violence and the refusal of the statute of praise singer of the government and ruling party (CPDM).

On the 4 January 1996, law No. 96/04 was promulgated amending certain provisions of the 1990 law. Nyamnjuh's reading of that new law gives us an overview of what it is about. In fact according to the new law, news paper publishers are no longer expected to submit their dummies or papers for administrative control by civil servants. However the administrative hasn't been totally abandoned because some sanctions like seizure, ban and suspension remain legal with possible severe financial consequences for the press. The process of establishing a newspaper has been made more difficult by requiring more documents. The new law empowers the administrative authority either to grant or reject an application therefore re-instating the principle of prior authorization which was abolished 1990 law. Also the 1996 law allows for seizure of the premises of a press organ by the police without warrant or judicial action, if the public order is considered endangered by an administrative authority. Hence the state's structuring power through the means of law has produced a particular type of press freedom where journalists' rights and duties have been defined more by the political will than by the journalists' professional groups.

## 4.2 THE ECONOMY OF JOURNALISTIC PRACTICE

In Cameroon practising journalists should be registered with the government, so that they acquire a card granting the access to cover public events. The Cameroon Union of Journalists (UJC) acknowledged in 2005 that there are 874 practicing journalists in the country: 183 women and 691 men (Alobwede, 2006:8). Those numbers should be taken with caution because journalism in Cameroon is not a unified body. For Nyamnjoh et al (n.d:55), unlikely other professional groups in Cameroon such as medicine, Law and architecture, journalism is the only one whose has stayed fragmented. He notes that even UJC created in 1996 does not represent the consensus within all the factions of the divided professional landscape of Cameroonian journalism. Paquot and Abega (2000:4-9) stress that among the numerous factors splitting the journalism profession there are: ethnic divisions, division between journalists in the public press and independent press, divisions between employees and freelance journalists, and divisions between 'bosses and journalists'. According to those scholars, these inter-cine divisions have weakened the lobbying for the respect of journalists' rights as a profession and strengthened the state interferences in this field. In this respect, Frère (2007:176) captures the state of Cameroonian printed media in these words:

The written press, losing momentum, is now suffering from a double burden: the weariness of the people, who have seen that polemics have not led to the hoped-for changes; and the economic crises, which force people to 'make do' in order to survive. Obsolete equipment is not replaced, journalists are underpaid and therefore open to corruption, and cost high. Circulation has fallen spectacularly.

Paquot and Abéga underline several factors fuelling the crisis undergoing by the Cameroonian press: Plummeting sales, readers lack of trust in newspapers, corruption and 'media blackmail' on the rise, low quality writing, very tense relationships between public authorities and the independent press etc. Furthermore they insist that the public loss of interest for press is justified by the devaluation of the CFA and the disillusion of the masses who had believed in political change and democracy.

In effect the practice of journalism has been shaped by the economic environment but also by the multiple cleavages embedded in Cameroonian social space. For instance Frère (2007:176)

points out the existing tensions between the Anglophone press support the separatist ideas and the Francophone press hostile to any idea of splitting the country. She also highlights the contrast between the Bamiléké owned press more inclined to support the political opposition and the Bêti owned press more supportive of the Government. According to her the main players of the written Cameroonian press, principally *Le Messenger*, *La Nouvelle Expression*, *Challenge Hebdo* ( no longer published) and *Le Quotidien Mutations* have been accused by the supporters of the government of being instrumental in the service of the Bamiléké cause, seeking to seize power and removed the Bêti from the government.

Looking at the media frame in Cameroon as dependent variable, ethnicity<sup>21</sup> and *gombo*<sup>22</sup> can be considered as the major factors influencing the way journalists represent certain issues. Also Nyamnjuh (n.d:2) stresses the importance of ethnic factor both in the media frame and individual frame:

Unwittingly or not, the press in Cameroon has seen its case weakened by appearing to be regionalist, ethnic or partisan. It is common to judge papers not from their content, but from the region of origin of their proprietors and to dismiss or accept them accordingly, even without having read their contents. Quite coincidentally the most critical private papers in Cameroon happen to be owned by persons who share the same ethnic/regional origins as the most persistent opposition leaders (Anglophone and Bamileke) and the most conciliatory papers to government also happen to be owned by persons from the same ethnic group or region like President Paul Biya (Bêti) (cf Nga ndongo, 1993; Nyamnjuh, 1997; Ndembiyembe,1997;Chindji-Kouleu, 1997). It is

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<sup>21</sup> For Vubo (2003:597:598) ethnicity influence the equilibrium of the administration as well as the popular imaginary. According to him ethnicity is seen as a force fuelling all social phenomena within the political sphere in Cameroon. Inter-ethnic conflicts such as (Baya-Fulbe, Shuwa Arab-Kotoko, Bali Nyonga and its neighbour, Balikumbat-Bafanji, Kedjom Ketinguh- Bambili, Kedjom Keku- Ndawara) are often perceived as illustrative of the political cleavage between the ruling party and the opposition. Moreover we should bear in mind that ethnic conflicts in Cameroon are most of the time based on a political manipulation of the fluctuating notion of ethnicity that instead designate political alliances between groups. Consequently the reconfiguration of interest groups entails re-defining the lines dividing ethnic territories in Cameroon (Paquot and Abega, 2000:1).

<sup>22</sup> ‘Within Cameroon’s journalism fraternity , *gombo* is a metaphor for various payments, freebies and rewards solicited by journalists an provided by various new actors to journalists before, during or after events to tilt a news report in favour of a benefactor( Ndangam,2009:820)’.

therefore incumbent on the press to unfetter itself to become veritable champion of public interest and the concerns of the powerless in society, regardless of ethnic origin or political affiliation.

Ndangam (2009:826:829) notes that reporting 'breaking news' - understood as hard news (e.g. crime, accident, public demonstration, political resignations, arrests) distinguish 'real' journalists from 'other' journalists. This distinction is flawed since she agrees that *gombo* can function as a technology of anticipated rewards and ambush. Because framing the hard news according to a particular perspective could increase the symbolic capital<sup>23</sup> of a journalist therefore increase the chance of some kind reward in the future. Further both 'real' journalists and 'other' journalists can be influenced by *gombo* in the way they write hard or soft news because it is an internalized structure, as she puts it:

Gombo is frequently cash but can assume the form of drinks, fuel, free rides, materials goods such as car, airtime for mobile phones and sexual favours (this category is rare). It involves diverse processes of negotiations, which have in turn been internalized by both those who solicit or receive *gombo* and those who provide it. In its most obvious manifestation, it entails receiving cash from elites, politicians, NGOs and companies, in return for reporting an event, organization or personal favourably. The exchange initiates a patron-client relationship in which both journalist and the news actor mutually benefit.

In respect to the ownership of media in Cameroon we subscribe with the viewpoint of field theorists. Benson and Neveu (2005:10) argues that in relation to political economy, field theory rejects the Chomsky style notion that the news media's behaviour can be explained solely in the light of their capitalist ownership and control. They note that in contrast to such mechanical thinking, field theory is concerned with the understanding of the web of mediations which intervenes between Marx's 'infrastructure' and 'superstructure'. In fact in 2000, 1,300 papers were legally existing in Cameroon. Newspapers which arose before the political liberalization of press and which continued to publish were: Cameroon tribune was established in 1955, Le Messenger in 1979, Aurore Plus in 1988, L'Effort Camerounais in 1955, and Le Patriote in 1984. Other papers was established after 1990. We can mention

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<sup>23</sup> ' I call symbolic capital any kind of capital (economic, cultural, academic, or social) when it is perceived according to the categories of perceptions , the principle of vision division, the systems of classification, the classification of schemes, the cognitive schemata, objectives structures of the field in consideration, that is , of the structure of the distribution of capital in the field being considered (Bourdieu, 1998:85).'

Mutations, Perspective Hebdo, PoPoli, La Nouvelle Expression, Dikalo, Ouest Echos, Le Front Independent, The Skeeth, The Herald, and The Messenger. During that period all those newspapers were weeklies, bi-weeklies or tri-weeklies. Cameroon tribune ( the state -owned paper) was the only daily and bilingual. For Paquot and Abega (2000:5) outside of these leading newspapers the other (irregular) publications are filled with editorial-style advertisements and harm the profession because of the lack of the poor quality of their content. Drawn from UJC records, Alobwede (2006:19) provides an updated picture of the Cameroonian media landscape nowadays (figure 6). In contrast to the circulation of papers, he notes that the market for press itself in Cameroon saw a massive growth in the number of newspapers and magazines from around 50 in 2000 to 500 in 2005.

**Figure 7: Percentage Readership Amongst the Ten Largest Publications (Newspapers and Magazines)**

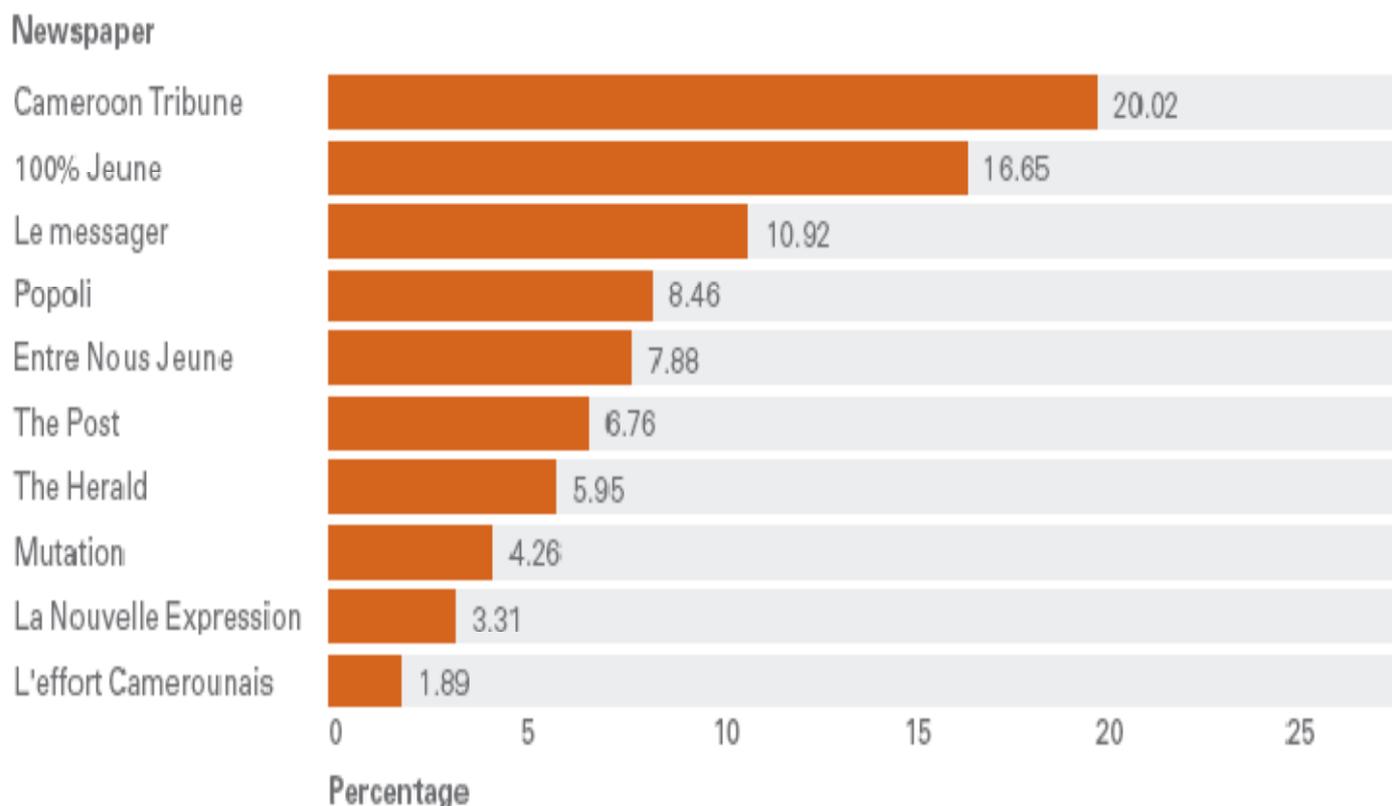


Figure 6

In effect in Cameroon, the media ownership and control has been the subject of more political constraints than economic forces. The laws enacted and enforced by the successive

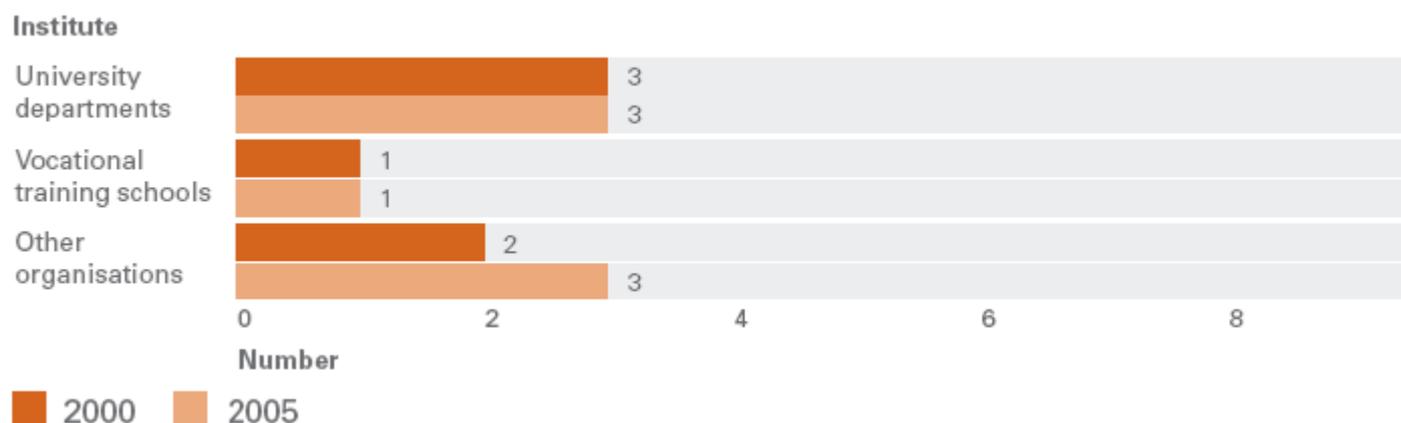
governments clarified the fact that the press was at the mercy of politics. The survival or the death of a paper has been much more the result of its political orientation rather than their economic performance (Nyamnjoh, 1996:1). In a context where the political factor prevail over the economic it is then easy to understand why the journalistic field understood as a business is far to acquire its autonomy. In this regard the subsidies provide by the government to support the private media can be used as a weapons against any paper which attempt to rebel. In this highly politicised environment where the salaries<sup>24</sup> of journalists, especially those of independent media are very low, the practice of corruption libel, blackmail and risk of death have become common. In this regard Paquot and Abega (2000:8) argues that ‘ Journalism in Cameroon remains a journalism of struggle, with the implication and courage that it implies in a very morose text but also with all the accompanying excesses and lacks of professional ethics’. Furthermore the arrests , the detentions, the trials and the imprisonment of journalists, all those legal and illegal means used by the state in order to protect the so called ‘public order’ weaken the development of journalism both as a profession and as a media business . In this respect Amnesty international (2009:20-26) reports many violations of freedom of expression through state violence against journalists, prohibition of broadcasting for critical media and seizure of equipments. On the other hand, Nyamnjoh (2005:94-191) says that it is difficult if not impossible to find journalist who go for the truth and who treat it with the respect and distance that a news story deserves. He equates the practice of bad journalism in Africa with the lack of professional training for most journalists. According to him while the journalists of official media have generally speaking, benefited more from formal training in such of journalism, it is not by their professionalism they distinguish themselves from their counterparts in the private press who had little or no formal training in most cases. He also stresses the lack of material resources and the dilapidated equipments which rendered the training schools increasingly theoretical in approach. In this regard Alobwede (2006:9) numbered the few institutions providing journalism training in Cameroon (figure 7). He notes that there is a vocational journalism school, the advanced School of Mass Communication based in Yaounde. There are also three university

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<sup>24</sup> ‘ State media employees are categorised as A2 state workers, getting an average monthly salary of F.CFA 165, 500 (\$U 300) (republic of Cameroon,2000b). An average monthly salary for teacher is also \$US 300. It is difficult to estimate the wages of independent journalist in Cameroon. Private media employers generally poorly remunerate journalists.(Alobwede,2006:8).’

departments offering journalism programmes , two which are private institutions ( Siantou and Institut Ndi Samba Superieure ) and the third a public institutions ( Department of Journalism and Mass Communication , University of Buea). He notes also that there are NGOs providing journalism training such as UNESCO, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and the British Council in Collaboration with the Thompson Foundation.

**Figure 4: Number of Journalism Training Institutes**



Source: Author estimate, 2006

Figure 7

In other words the lack of ethic and deontology but also state violence and manipulation of laws bound the journalistic field in Cameroon by the risk of death both as a media business and as a profession. Therefore the risk of death produces by the political sphere can also be considered as main factor influencing the way the journalists frame news in the country.

### **4.3 CONTRASTING REPRESENTATIONS OF THE FEBRUARY'S EVENT IN CAMEROONIAN NEWSPAPERS**

Cameroon Tribune is the government owned printed media, it has been established in 1979 and till now it enjoys the highest percentage of readership in Cameroon. By its ascribed role of mouthpiece of the government in the words of Nyamnjoh (2005:155), it is one of the main vehicles of the ideology of the ruling elite. This has been verified before and after the liberalization as predicted by Nga Ndong (Nga quoted in Gallagher , 1991: 48) in the dawn of political liberalization: 'It is Cameroon Tribune best interest to keep the audience it has...if

it want to keep its audience it should be more critical of the opposition. A paper should have a clear ideology.’. By its pivotal role in the government apparatus of governance , Cameroon tribune itself conceals yet simultaneously reveals the strategies used by the power elite to produce and reproduce their dominance. Consequently the articles published in this paper highlight the way the power elite attempts to (re) shape the public cognition in order to sustain their dominance. Conversely some independent papers such as Le Messager, Le Quotidien Mutation and the Post provide some perspectives more inclined to support the view of political opposition and the Anglophone cause, In this respect those papers differentiate themselves from Cameroon Tribune’s framing. Further those independent newspapers enjoy a relatively high circulation. For those reasons stated above, we would like to analyse the content of those papers during the period starting from 25 to 29 February 2008 marking some violent demonstrations in Cameroon.

The report of the National Human Rights Observer ( 2008:9-10) provides us a recapitulation of the event prior 25<sup>th</sup> February 2008. According to this report view the climate of latent tension in Douala, on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2008 the Governor of the Littoral province issued a banned order . This order prohibited, inter alia, unauthorized public manifestation throughout the province for an indefinite period. The report notes that this decision reawakened the popular discontent fuelled by the proposed reform of the constitution. Even though several meetings convened by the opposition parties on the issue of constitutional reform successfully taken place in Douala, the capital of the Littoral province. On 13<sup>th</sup> Wednesday, after a press conference on constitutional reform granted by Mr. Ni John Fru Ndi , the leader of SDF, clashes occurred between the participants of that conference. On Thursday 21 February, Equinoxe TV , a Douala based private television station which broadcasted the images of this strike was shut down by the local authority for the motive that it was ‘operating without the legal framework of audiovisual communication’. On Friday, February 22, Radio Equinoxe was also shut down. The report adds that these media were usually critical toward the government and especially in respect of the proposed constitutional amendment. Saturday the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February , a rally of the SDF scheduled to take place at ‘ Rond point Dakar’ in Douala with the aim to raise awareness about the amendment of the section 6 sub.2 of the constitution, was cancelled at the last minute by the SDF Provincial officials for fear of police reprisal. Regardless of this later cancellation, the situation degenerates to a riot. The report says that :

The spontaneous confrontation turns out to be bloody in this neighbourhood of Douala. The riots continued in the night. In addition to the confrontations between the youth and police there was looting of shops, burning of vehicles and destruction of buildings ( petrol stations, the kiosks of Pari-Mutuel Urbain Camerounais- PMUC). The police fired live bullets and killed three persons and wounded many. A number of people were also arrested.

On Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> February, the tension in Douala was continuous but no violence was reported except for some sporadic gunfire. The report says that through the channel of the political movements that were protesting against the constitutional amendment, the agitators expressed a range of economic grievances. At this very moment the transporters unions also called for a general strike. On Monday 25<sup>th</sup> February, the call for general strike was respected. The transportation system was shut down. In the main cities of five provinces namely; Centre, Littoral, North West, West and South West, no taxis, no bendskin, and intercity buses circulated . Aware of the danger of possible vandalism , most vehicles were packed. The Post gives an account of the event:

‘Benskin Riders Poised for Strikes Action Today’

Over 42,000 commercial motorcycle riders commonly called bendskin riders have vowed to paralyse activities in the economic capital, Douala , today Monday February 25, to protest the continuous hike in the prices of fuel. The bendskin riders arrived at the decision after fuel prices soared to as high as FCFA 600 a litre. They complained that the prices have made it impossible for them to break even in their business activities.

On February 21 , a group of about 100 benskin riders, some of whom carried placards noisily rode round town, announcing their planned strike. They were however confronted at ‘ Rond Point’ Deido, by a truckload of anti-riot policemen from the mobile Intervention Unit GMI, Bonanjo who blocked the road.

In the violent confrontation that ensued, four people were wounded with two of the victims from each side. The local administration has since being holding series of emergency meeting with security officials on how to tackle the planned strike. The local administration is the more worried with the planned strike because the leaders of bendskin riders are not coming out clear, when they talk of no circulation in Douala on that day. Many are interpreting this to mean that the bendskin riders will not allow urban transporters like taxis to circulate.

Meanwhile in the morning of February 23, the SDO of Wouri, Bernard Atebede, hired a local publicity operator known as Papa Douala, to go round town and propagate his message of appeal for peace and public order to bendskin drivers. But Douala, had barely started his mission when a group of bendskin riders gave chase and caught up with him opposite former Maturité at Mboppi. The irritated bendskin riders dragged him out of his publicity van, sucked out fuel from the tank of the van and were about fire on the vehicle, when gendarme arrived and stopped them (Pefok ,2008:1).

The focus on Bendskin drivers in this article, is certainly justified by the fact that it was their first time to strike together with taxi-men. In effect the tension between bendskin drivers and taxi men have precluded any form of association against the state. Although when the taxi drivers went on strike in 2004 and 2005 against police harassment extortion and excessive rise of petrol price, the bendskin drivers took the advantage of these strike to double or even quadruple their fares (Konings,2006: 46). By putting the emphasis on the strike of bendskin drivers, The Post highlights the causes of such actions, the forms it may take and the risk of violence it may generate.

In the front page of No 9044/5243 of Cameroon Tribune of the 25<sup>th</sup> February we can read two things in relations to the strike : Un mort dans une émeute à Douala ( a death in a riot in Douala) and LA FERME CONDAMNATION DU GOUVERNEMENT (THE STRONG CONDEMNATION OF THE GOVERNMENT). The latter clause has been written in capital letters while the former has been written in small letters. Considering the size of the letter is obvious that Cameroon Tribune puts the emphasis on the reaction of the government. The opposition/association between ‘ A death in a riot in Douala / THE STRONG CONDEMNATION OF THE GOVERNMENT’ plays a dual role which can be captured if we understand these clauses firstly separately and secondly in opposition/association to each other.

‘A death in a riot in Douala’. The use of indefinite article ‘a’ alters the significance of ‘riot’ and ‘death’ by making it sound distant therefore difficult to relate to ( Linklater,2007). Also while we can assume that Douala is the location where this death and riot occurred, we can also acknowledge the fact that the symbolism of Douala – town of political opposition and disorder *par excellence* -put together with the vagueness of the pronouns used, reinforce the banality of this event.

THE STRONG CONDEMNATION OF THE GOVERNMENT. This sole clause implies many other questions like what is the object of this condemnation . Why is the government condemning ? why is it a strong condemnation ? Why is the government angry? The questions surrounding this clause help to internalise and reinforce the authority of the government without questioning its genesis. Because of the size of its letter , this clause is the first to capture the attention of the reader and the fact that the questions it raised only find some responses in association or in opposition with the former clause are purposive. This inverted reading put the emphasis on the authority of the government but dilutes and justifies this authority when relates to the second clause.

‘A death in a riot in Douala /THE STRONG CONDEMNATION OF THE GOVERNMENT. The banality of the first clause contrasts with the vigour of the second to create a double meaning. A first reading of the association of the two clauses may suggest that the government care about the life of any of its citizen therefore it is ready to defend its citizens against any threat, no matter its scale. A second reading embedded in a rupture between these two clauses, stresses that on one side we are in front of a strong and caring government and on the other side with a casual event. But the overall implication is that there is nothing to worry about because the government is in control.

In contrast in the headlines of *Le Quotidien Mutations* of the same date ( 25 February 2008) we could read : DOUALA, LA REVISION CONSTITUTIONELLE FAIT SES PREMIERS MORTS.(DOUALA,THE FIRST VICTIMS OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT). The location of ‘Douala’ at the beginning of this sentence and as the first clause, structures the space of the semiotic power of the reader with the symbolism of this town. The second clause of this sentence fills this space with the following content: the victims of the constitutional amendment. The reliability of the second clause is constructed when “The first victims of the constitutional amendment’ are associated with the symbolism of “Douala”. In fact Douala , Constitution, and victims are three terms which remind the *ghost town* of 1990s. As a result *Le Quotidien Mutations* put the emphasis on the political linkage between the deaths, the resistance and the current issue of constitutional amendment. The symbolic capital of Douala - a town of political opposition and historical resistance since the transition- is used here as a hyperbole of the political capital resulting from the death of

some people related to the issue of amendment of constitution. Faithful to this frame is the article about the strike which occurred on February 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2008: *La Revision Constitutionnelle : Les Premiers morts tombent à Douala* ( The Constitutional Amendment: The First Victims in Douala)

Samedi 23 Fevrier 2008. Les populations riveraines du lieu dit rond point Madagascar commencent à supputer sur les raisons de la non tenue d'une marche annoncée par le Social Democratic Front (SDF). Sur la chaussée, libérée depuis par les badauds accourus sur le lieu présumé de la manifestation, la vie reprend son cours normal. C'est alors qu'une colonne de véhicules de la gendarmerie en tête s'immobilise. La grille de protection du char se baisse et une manoeuvre suspecte commence.

La population de passage ainsi que des personnes assises devant les bars qui jouxtent le Carrefour sont copieusement arrosés. Des bombes lacrymogènes sorties des caisses neuves sont projetées dans toutes les directions. Des fusils à pompes dégagent aussi et propulsent des tubes de gaz. Pris dans la nasse, les journalistes ne sont pas épargnés. Peu avant le début des opérations l'adjoint au commissaire de Douala leur avait déjà réitérés leurs pièces d'identité.

La manoeuvre solitaire des hommes en tenue va se poursuivre pendant plus d'une heure. La manette tournante du char-lance-eau commence à montrer des signes de faiblesse. La nuit tombe sur Douala, et la zone chaude de Madagascar-Brazzaville-Axe lourd va vivre les pires émeutes jamais connues de ce coin de la capitale économique. De leurs retranchements, les jeunes de ces quartiers organisent la riposte contre 'ceux qui ont jetés les gaz...

Au cours du face à face où tous les coups sont permis les populations s'empressent à tout ce qui est associé aux hommes en tenue... Deux morts au moins sont tombés sous les balles des forces. Le jeune Alex Raoul Pelo, un mécanicien de 18 ans atteint sur le flanc gauche est mort sur le champ. Là également, Loveth Tingia Ndima, un vendeur de porc à la braise ordinaire de la province du Nord-ouest a été mortellement atteint au cou... La mort des deux jeunes à Madagascar, a en effet radicalisé les populations riveraines. Ces bavures seraient donc à l'origine de la violence qui a secoué une bonne partie de la ville de Douala Samedi dans la nuit (Kwebo, 2008).

On Saturday, 23<sup>rd</sup> February on 2008. The populations bordering the street of the place called ' rond point Madagascar' begin to whisper on reasons of not keeping of a planned step by SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT (SDF). On the free road supposed to host the demonstration, the passers-by have left since some minutes and life takes back his normal lesson.

It is while a column of vehicles of the gendarmerie arrived. The gate of protection of the tank bends down and a suspicious manoeuvre begins. The people passing by this place and those sat in front of the pubs near the crossroad are sprinkled. Tear gases are thrown in every direction. Guns with pump shoot and project gas tubes...

The night falls on Douala, and the suburb of Madagascar-Brazzaville-axis is going to live the worst riots never known by this corner of the economic capital. In their entrenchment, the young persons of these quarters organize quick-witted answer against ' those who have thrown the tear gas ...

More high other young persons in solidarity with the movement have attacks a gas station belonging to Tradex company . The gas station called Mobil was subjected to the meme goes out. Its shop was looted and ransacked by angry people (Kwebo,2008:4, my translation ).

In this article the policemen started the hostilities by using an unjustified violence against the population of the neighbourhood of 'the so called 'rond point Madagascar' , despite the fact that the happening of the SDF's rally was cancelled. This situation led to the reaction of young people of the neighbourhood, who were followed by the other segments of the population in their use of counter-violence against the policemen and other symbols of the state authority. Also the involvement of other groups of youth later in solidarity with this initial wave of protestation deviated to the destruction of private properties and looting of shops. The violence escalated when the policemen killed two people. Mutations insists on the profile of these people, the first was an employed youth male (18 years of age/ auto mechanic ) named Alex Raoul Pelo and the second was a self employed male name Loveth Tinga Ndimba from the North –West province. Apparently the portrayal of the identities of those victims could be seen as the consequence of the available information which the journalists were able to grasp at the time of their investigation. It could be also be seen as a genuine way to identify people both by journalists and their targeted audience. In this respect we can ask what does it mean when a young ' debrouillard<sup>25</sup>, name Alex Raoul Pelo die in such conditions? What does it mean when a young 'debrouillard' from the North –West province die in such conditions ? The responses to those questions should be in line with the

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<sup>25</sup> 'Un debrouillard' is self employed person in the informal sector of the economy in Cameroon.

semiotic power<sup>26</sup> of the targeted audience in Cameroon. In this regard, firstly we can note that the precarious conditions of the employment of those victims are a sign of their strong will to survive honestly. But the circumstances surrounding their death suggest something else. Secondly there is a kind of incoherence between the way they die and the way they manage to survive. Commonly these contradictions infer that the death of those young people is unnatural, meaning that they *die pour rien*. Knowing that it is common to identify the ethnicity of someone according to his surname, we can ask more questions. What does it mean to be called Alex Raoul Pelo? Or what does it mean to be called Loveth Tinga Ndimba and come from the North-West province? The answers of these questions depend also on the semiotic power of the target audience. It is possible to deduce the ethnicity of a Cameroonian just by inferring from his name his region or the ethnic group who usually adopt that name. But that popular method of identification is problematic and sometimes inaccurate considering the inter-ethnic wedding and other factors influencing the process of naming a child in the contemporary Cameroon (Nyamnjoh, 2002:613). However the inference one can make from the North-West province seems more obvious. The North-West province is the cradle of the SDF and a symbol of Anglophone political opposition. One can ask if *Le Quotidien Mutation* was not tempted to draw and add force to the Anglo-Bamileke axis through the use of the surnames and the province of origin of the victims. This question finds its answer in the individuals' frames of its targeted audience.

The story of Cameroon tribune in relation to the same event follows a different rationale. The article titled *Cameroun: Les Emeutes à Douala (Cameroon: Riots in Douala)* suggests that:

La nuit tombe sur Douala. Les quartiers Dakar et Village, sur l'axe lourd Douala-Yaoundé, ne vont pas dormir. C'est que les forces de sécurité viennent de quitter Dakar où elles sont venues disperser une manifestation du Social Democratic Front (SDF), explique le gouverneur de la province du Littoral, Fai Yengo Francis. Une fois le secteur bouclé, quelques policiers remontent dans leurs camions pour s'en aller. C'est après leur départ, et à la faveur de la tombée de la nuit, que des centaines et des centaines de jeunes gens installent des barricades sur les routes, incendient des pneus et se livrent à des déprédations. Stations d'essence, véhicules dont un bus de la Socatur, et d'autres biens sont saccagés ou brûlés. Pillages et braquages sont perpétrés dans des habitations et des commerces. Dakar et Village, sur l'axe lourd Douala-Yaoundé, sont

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<sup>26</sup> Ability to an audience to assign meaning to media representations, even if these were not intended ( Danesi, 2009:265)

particulièrement touchés. Toute la nuit, les forces de sécurité interviennent. Un mort<sup>27</sup>, Gingay Louvert Fouambouh, est enregistré alors qu'un blessé grave, Ngeugang Guetnberg, est interné à l'hôpital Laquintinie, de source policière. 24 personnes sont interpellées ( Tchakam, 2008:1).

In fact that article, Cameroon tribune , reporting a state official notes that the policemen intervene to stop the SDF's rally which was about to happen. It is just after this intervention and in the absence of policemen, when started some indiscriminate acts of violence and looting by young people. As a result the policemen intervened during the whole night . One person name Gingay Louvert Fouamboh died and another one was seriously injured. 24 people were arrested. In this story the policemen are portrayed as those who intervene, which means those who happen in the time between events or those who interrupt an action or a process by happening ( Oxford,2002:539). Therefore the policemen's aim in the neighbourhood of 'rond point Madagascar ' was to interrupt the acts of violence. By portraying the policemen in this manner their actions become legitimate in contrast to those of youth which appear unjustified and ruthless. Such a view is echoed by the headlines of the No 90555245 of Cameroon Tribune , 26<sup>th</sup> February 2008: "Violences aveugles et destructions injustifiées à Douala/FORCE RESTERA A LA LOI" ( Blind Violence and Unjustified Destructions in Douala/ FORCE REMAINS TO LAW) or 'Douala ,Government Bent on Restoring Order'.In this issue of Cameroon Tribune , the article titled *Revoltantes Derives (Annoying Deviations)* informs of that the motivations of government's action/reaction is to restore order.

On les croyait définitivement exorcisés les vieux démons de l'intolérance, de la diabolisation de l'adversaire, de la haine des institutions. C' était sans compter avec les politiciens opportunistes et autres acteurs de l'ombre. Si prompte la récupération du moindre malaise social pour avancer leur pions. Aux fin de positionnement, d'instrumentalisation et de manipulation. Dans le but inavoué de conquérir subitement et à moindre frais tout ou partie de pouvoir politique...L'on ne trompera personne à cet egard les acteurs d'une telle entreprise criminelle se rendent coupable d'une violence aussi révoltante qu'injustifiée( Pondi,2008:3).

Here, Cameroon Tribune acknowledges that there is a social crisis in the country , a ' malaise social' to use its own terminology . However it rejects the fact that the social malaise

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<sup>27</sup> Considering the identities of the victims cited in the papers we are analysing, during the riot in 'rond point Dakar' it seems that there were at least 3 victims instead of 2 for Mutations and 1 for Cameroon Tribune.

as he puts it can be a justifiable impulse for the current acts of violence. According to him this violence are the fact of opportunist politicians and other actors of the shade trying to destabilise the regime by the means of violence. In his view their actions are merely criminal. Thus it is really interesting to see how the rationale of this article follow or introduce the Biya's perspective of this event became apparent one day later ( Wednesday 27 February 2008) in his address to the nation.

Our country is witnessing a situation which brings back unpleasant memories of a period we thought was long gone.

While it may be understandable that when negotiations fail, the demands of a group are sometimes expressed through strike action, it is unacceptable that such action should serve as a pretext for outpourings of violence against people and property. Besides, it is now established that any industrial dispute can always be resolved through negotiation.

In actual fact, that is not the problem. What is at issue is the use, not to say exploitation of the transporters' strike for political ends. For some people, who by the way, did not hide their intentions, the objective is to obtain through violence what they were unable to obtain through the ballot box, that is to say, through the normal functioning of democracy.

They therefore did not hesitate to throw into the streets bands of youths who were joined by delinquents lured by the possibility of looting. The results are there: public buildings destroyed or burnt down, shops and businesses looted or devastated (Post,2008:1).

According to the president Biya, the country is undergoing some events reminding a painful epoch- ghost town, my emphasis- which was considered as no longer relevant. For him the strike of transporters is the surface of this social conflict. The real cause of this conflict should be found in the deeds of his political opponents. Unable to attend their goals through a fair election they are now manipulating young people .Those 'apprenti sorciers' as he called them later in his speech, has intrumentalized the transporters' strike and youth for their own sake. In this part of Biya's speech we can realize that the question of constitutional amendment is eluded. While he recognize that there is a conflict, he ascribed the caused of this conflict and labelled it 'social'. In so doing , he moves the referent of understanding of the cause of violence firstly from the constitutional amendment to the transporters strike , and secondly from transporter strike to the actions of political opponents. This process of fabrication of a new meaning for the current violence construct the legitimacy of Biya's plan to restore order. The protestations have been firstly disconnected with the political, secondly

limited to a specific social space, and thirdly abounded by law or more clearly projected into the sphere of illegality. It is therefore with confidence but also with a fabricated legality that he says later in his speech: . ‘It should therefore be made absolutely clear that Cameroon is a Constitutional state and intends to remain so. It has democratic institutions which are functioning normally. It is within this framework that the nation’s problems are addressed. ’. In order to fully understand the implications of Biya’s statement it is important to comprehend the notion of order or constitutional state within the frame of a rhetorical engine of the legal command<sup>28</sup>.

On the other hand , Le Messenger of 26 February 2008 has a different tone as one of its headlines suggest :LA REVOLTE DU PEUPLE ( PEOPLE’s REVOLT). For this paper the demonstrations which are occurring in the country are the illustration of people’s agency. The strike launched by the transporters have been followed also by the majority of the population .While it recognizes that there have been some acts of vandalism, it emphasis remains on the plethora of grievances of protesters. These grievances encompassed the constitutional amendment, the resign of Biya, the rising prices of fuel and basic commodities etc...The entire paper provides a snapshot of the event in almost the entire country. The insights of some quotations took from this newspaper draw the leading lines of trajectory of its frame .For instance ‘ La population donne l’impression d’avoir repris son destin en main’(Massoussi,2008:1). Clearly the idea behind this assertion is that the people seems to regain the control of their fate therefore the manipulations of some segments of population is not on the menu. However the role of the policemen during the protests in Douala is at stake as RT (2008:2) puts it: ‘ Mais pendant qu’ils manifestaient pacifiquement , les éléments de la gendarmerie les ont dispersés avec du gaz lacrymogène. Les manifestestants ont pris cet acte comme de la provocation.’ The paper argues that the protestations were initially peaceful, it turns into a violent reaction just after the attempt of the policemen and gendarmes to stop the movement through the use of weapons ( tear gas).

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<sup>28</sup> For Englebert (2009:62) what endures African statehood in times of weakness or failure is legal command that is the capacity to control, dominate, extract, or dictate through the law.

Besides it is interesting to look at the way this newspaper connects the current acts of violence with some other conflicts in the world. In this path the report of the death of a man at 'Village' is a good example (Awana,2008:3).The first sentence of this article state: ' La scene rappelle quelque peu la Palestine' ( "the setting reminds Palestine in some extent" ). Another article is merely titled : 'Scènes de guerre à Mendong' – which means "Episodes of warfare in Mendong" (Tamba,2008,3-4). For Le Messenger, Cameroon is a battlefield where the people are fighting against the regime represented by the policemen and gendarme. The reasons of the rise of violence in the country are explained by the misbehaviours of policemen and gendarmes in the way they used coercion. Moreover there is not a single cause which can capture entirely the drive of this movement, since it is no longer limited to the transporters or the youth but drove by an heterogeneous group of people. Consequently the grievances expressed justified the diversity of the population involved in the protestations. The comparison between the event in Cameroon with the conflict in Palestine and the use of the vocabulary of asymmetrical warfare by Le Messenger acknowledge the imbalance of power between the protesters and the policemen but also the political nature of the protests. Further Le Messenger assumes that the state has used a disproportionate violence against its own civil population .Such type of representation of state violence betrays its illegitimacy and might open the door to the claim for an international humanitarian intervention.

The Post's headline of the 3rd March 2008, "CAMEROON: NATION DEMONSTRATIONS TIT-BITS" suggests a chorus of grievances and a spread of people's actions throughout the entire country ( Pefok, Bongben, and Tah, 2008:1). The patchwork of facts contented in this paper points out the complexity of actors' behaviour during the February event. According to this paper the act of looting were not the exclusivity of youth. Policemen were also involved in the looting of private properties. For instance in an article titled, 'Gendarmes vandalise Magic FM', The Post reports that gendarmes vandalise this radio because they accused it to inciting people's revolt. In Buea the paper notes that 'the transporters strike plunged Buea on Monday, February 25<sup>th</sup> into a *ghost town* of sorts. While the paper insists on youth's acts of looting in Amanda , it reports also that at the same time some activities of a coalition of students associations both Anglophone and Francophone which held a meeting in Douala in February 17<sup>th</sup> declaring that the constitution could only be revised after 2011. The Post acknowledges some acts of violence both by the policemen and the youth in an article titled *4 Shot, I killed IN Muea*.

Troops deployed in Muea reportedly shot youths killing one on Wednesday, February 27. A boy of about 12 was shot in the chest and he died immediately. Bullets caught three others in their legs and buttocks. A certain Roland Moki was shot in his right buttock, while another, Yenyong Abubakar, received a bullet in his ankle.

The third only name we got as Eric , received a bullet in his right leg that was amputated. The post learned from Buea Provincial Hospital Annex that five victims injured by police bullet were received on Tuesday, February 26. The youth had reportedly blocked the entrance and exit of Muea. They destroyed part of king David Square Hotel and the house of its owner, Chief David Molineg , who allegedly told the protesters to go and strike in Bamenda ( Pefok, Bongben, and Tah, 2008:2).

In fact The Post suggests that the deployment of troops in Muea entails the death of a young boy and the injuries of 2 others on February 27<sup>th</sup> . This action was not an isolated one since five other victims were injured by the police the day before. Consequently the youth perpetrated some acts of violence in Muea and destroyed some private properties owned by Chief David Molineg. The Chief allegedly urged the protesters to go and strike in Bamenda. It is clear that in this article of The Post , the troops started the hostilities and the youth react. However the article eludes to mention the causes which entailed the presence of troops at Muea. By doing so the actions of the troops appear unjustified and take the form of gratuitous violence while the youth violence is portrayed as a reaction. Besides The reported allegation of Chief Molineg illustrates the rivalry among Anglophone elite between the North-West province and South West province. The former is well known as a core of political opposition and the second famous for his sympathy for the Biya's regime. Moreover the CPDM' elite of those regions compete for positions in Biya's government. By urging the protesters to go and strike in Bamenda, the Chief Molineg is described as a guardian of the regime, a characteristic which in this context of uprising is not fashionable and which may explained the attacks upon his property.

On February 27<sup>th</sup> an address of the Cameroonian government has been published in Cameroon tribune, declaring the reduction of the price of gas and oil as the outcome of the negotiations between the government and the representatives' of transporters undertaken on the 26<sup>th</sup> February. The government has stated that the application of the new pricing start on 27<sup>th</sup> February. The paper reports that after the government's declaration , the transporters

called off the strike. Despite the calling of transporters and the measures of Cameroonian authorities, Cameroon Tribune acknowledges that the strike continues in Yaoundé and notes the decrease of acts of violence in Douala (Tchakam,2008:5). Unlikely, The Post points out the bias in the agreement between the government and the transporters and provides some reasons which justified the continuity of the strike in an article titled *Drivers Say their Leaders Were Bribe*:

Drivers have accused their leaders of being corrupted by the government for them to call off the strike. They say that this explains why they did not negotiate well enough. To them, it is normal for the government to raise fuel by 16 FCFA only to take it down by a meagre FCFA 6. Following the accusations, some of the syndicate offices are said to have been destroyed and the leaders are in hiding. Though there are threats for the strike to resume on Monday, the president of the Taxi Drivers Trade Union has maintained that efforts are underway to ensure that the arrested drivers are released before Monday (Pefok, Bonghen and Tah, 2008:1).

On Thursday February 28, the NHRO (2008:16) reports that the main cities of the country were under surveillance by the military the day long due to the measures taken by the head of State on Wednesday night during his address to the nation. There was a relative calm but the tension remains in most cities. Apart from 'le Jour', a privately-own daily press newspaper and Cameroon-tribune, no news paper was available in the capital city. The publishers of press organs were invited to the Ministry of communication. The gendarmerie invade Magic FM, confiscated their equipment and some mobile phones belonging to journalists. On Friday 29<sup>th</sup> February due to the massive presence of the law enforcement officers calm returned to the country.

#### **4.4 THE WORK OF THE POLITICAL DISCOURSE IN CAMEROONIAN MEDIA : CONSTRUCTING A MEANING OF YOUTH IN RELATION TO VIOLENCE**

Political discourse in the media is a complex phenomenon incorporating institutional discourse, media discourse and mediated political discourse. As institutional discourse, it

differs from everyday conversation in being subject to institutional goals and procedures. As media discourse it is different from other types of institutional discourses by being above all, public discourse addressed to a mass media audience. This sets it apart from the discourse of other institutions such as mediated political discourse as it is the outcome of the encounter of two different institutional discourses those of politics and media (Lauerbasch and Fetzer, 2007:15). The discourse in the media is a means used by the power elites to (re) produce their social domination. This section analyses the discourse on youth in relation to violence in Cameroonian media (mostly newspapers).

In his Address to the nation on the 27<sup>th</sup> February when the violence in the country escalated, the President Biya notes that ‘They [his political opponents, my emphasis] therefore did not hesitate to throw into the streets bands of youths who were joined by delinquents lured by the possibility of looting. The results are there: public buildings destroyed or burnt down, shops and businesses looted or devastated.’ He adds that ‘Cameroonians know that disorder can only bring about calamity and misery. We cannot allow that to happen. To those who are responsible for manipulating the youth to achieve their aims, I want to tell them that their attempts are doomed to failure. All legal means available to Government will be brought into play to ensure the rule of law’. While he thinks that the protestors have been manipulated, Biya distinguishes among them in one side youth and in another side what he called ‘delinquent’. In his view it seems like youth are not delinquent or the youth are not supposed to be delinquent. To understand what he really means by youth it is important to return to his speech during the *ghost town*, at that time condemning the youth involvement in the protestations, he said ‘la politique aux politiciens et l’école aux écoliers’ (politicians should be concerned with politics while pupils should be concerned with school). Therefore the distinction made between youth/delinquent is in fact a distinction between student/delinquent. In his viewpoint a student is not a delinquent. What does delinquent mean for him? It appears clearly that by delinquent he refers to those protestors who were involved in the acts of looting. But how can he be sure that the students were not involved in such acts? There is not the point, because in his rationale he equates protestation to a mere act of manipulation by his political opponents. Since the protestations originate from a political action, they exclude students in principle. Further the youth's protests *per se* lose their autonomy through the alleged manipulation of his political opponents; but at the same

time its political significance ( if there was ) is removed. At this stage we can understand the usefulness of his distinction between youth/delinquent. In Biya's calculus Youth=Political opponents but in the real world political opponents = Youth + Political parties – if we consider that youth have specific grievances. The real function of Biya' equation is to negate the existence of a new political opponent (youth) while tackling two political opponents (youth + political parties) in the figure of one only (political parties). By relegating the youth violence to political parties' outcome , Biya clothes the former with the illegitimacy of the latter. For Biya the action of his political opponents (political parties) through the use of youth violence is illegal since he won a fair election. Further those delinquents involved in the protestations are violating the laws of the state protecting the Cameroonian citizens. To overcome the turmoil created by such illegal actions , Biya process by announcing the forthcoming measures regarding law enforcement , by mentioning early that the Cameroonian knows that misery and suffering result from disorder. This process has two direct objectives. The first one is to reinforces the legitimacy of state violence and the second one is to appear as acting on the behalf of the general interest of the population while using state violence. In this respect Mbembe (n.d:319) argues that :

As a counterpoint to political imaginaries that make the project of domestication of violence their central object are cultural configurations where politics consists in conserving individual life by virtue of the presupposition of its sacrifice. In other words, the production of political imaginaries hinges on two parameters : the fear of death and the will to survive....

For individual subjects , immunizing themselves against death involved continually calculating the risk to which their words and actions could expose them and contriving, at any price, the means of avoiding such situation or extracting themselves from it (Esposito, 2000:25-35).

In such circumstances, the angle of refraction from which the subject considered life and gauged the political environment was the desire to avoid death at all costs. And it is this desire that was its corollary , but to build uncertainty. Instability and the unexpected became from this vantage point, resources for the exercises of power.

Thus the function of Biya's speech is also to strengthen the status quo in people's political imaginaries which seems to be challenged by youth's protests in the country. Biya's viewpoint and political action is rooted in the Cameroonian political history and behaviours. For example the declaration- this declaration aggravated the situation just as the address of the president's Biya did during the February's event - of Peter Agbor Tabi -minister of education accompanied with more than two hundred gendarmes in Yaoundé University campus - during the students' protests (parliament) against the imposition of special levies

upon them by university authorities, on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1996 is evocative: 'You people already know me and the sanctions I can take against you caught striking. If you want to march, go on marching, but I advise you to run rather than to march. If you want violence, I will teach you what it means to love it ( Herald quoted in Konings ,2002:197)'. As a result we can re-assert that the risk of death is embedded in any attempt to protest in Cameroon and its fear works both as a mechanism to avoid protest and protect one's own life. However since the state necro-power hasn't been able to eliminate youth's protests in the country it therefore important to explore how those who refuse *to die pour rien* have been represented (or involved) in the February event.

In Tiko, CT gathered that vandals attacked the main market yesterday morning and scared away vendors and buyers. We contacted by telephone ) the assistant Divisional Officer for Tiko subdivision Mrs Eyong Charlotte who informed that there were no taxi or commercial motor-bike in the street. She said the scare was extended to many schools whose pupils and students had to rush back home...

Kumba was seriously affected by the strike action. Contacted by phone, the Meme Divisional Delegate of Communication. Mr Tafong Tchichi , said strikers had erected barricades in town and no transport vehicle visible on the streets. He noted that the situation was still as tense as it was when the strike started on Monday. An attempt to burn the taxation on Office at the Buea Road ( in kumba) was halted by the security forces (Mbonkwon,2008:6).

This article of Cameroon Tribune reflects without ambiguity the position of state officials, it provides their reports of the event. Here we can see that the vandals are represented as a threat for the rest of the population because they destroy public and private properties and avoid the student to undertake their class. They are neither identified as strikers nor as students. But they are portrayed as using the strike as a way to channel their violence. Besides there is nothing about the identity of those vandals , nothing is mentioned about their age and their profession or sex. They are represented as a common enemy of the rest of the population ( students, vendors and buyers). The dichotomy between vandals and the rest of the population corroborates the distinction youth/delinquent- a vandal is synonym of delinquent. But who are those vandals? Another article of this paper, provides some details about their identity.

Early on Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> February, the departmental capital of Haut Nkam has been by hundreds of demonstrators blockading the traffic in the city. All the shops have been closed and the students of different schools of the town have been ejected from classes by demonstrators. Some acts of vandalism have been also recorded but the situation remains in control...

This peace of Monday will be quickly replaced by the violence of the first hours of Tuesday, 26<sup>th</sup> February on 2008 notably in the city of Bafoussam. Population woke up and discovered the blockade in the main streets of the town...

Demonstration is going to turn in drama in the mobile grouping of intervention of Bafoussam taken by attack by demonstrators apparently obviously angry. As part of face to face has tightened and while police force remains calm despite the rain of pebbles which beats down on them, gunshots erupted and Tantoh Emmanuel ages of 23 years died and others get wounded...

The relative young age of the demonstrators has been noticed, this implies the presence of some manipulators hidden in the shade (Biybeck, 2008:6).

In this text the opposition between the vandals and the rest of the population is also relevant. This text notes that the protesters are youth and they started the hostilities (using stones) against the military. During the clashes one youth has been killed and others were wounded. Cameroon Tribune does not describe the military shouting youth but represent the death of a young person as an inevitable accident resulting from the imbalance of powers (stones/guns) during the clashes. It adds that because of the young age of protesters it seems that they have been manipulated by some actors of the shade. Therefore it appears that this paper denies the agency of Cameroonian youth and relegates their actions to the artefact of political manipulations of people in the shade and the drive to loot. But the young people represented in this manner are not students or more clearly are not supposed to be students as the state officials (gendarmerie and police) have claimed during the violence in Douala on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February. According to them they are volatile youth addicted to drugs and perhaps manipulated (Mutation, 2008).

The strike organized since Monday in the main cities of the country is a demonstration of a generalised discontentment. Different attempts of certain members of the government and punters of the Cameroonian People Democratic Movement (CPDM) to manipulate the public opinion in governmental and independent media, have also irritated the population. The police and the gendarmerie called to repress the populations, should consider these parameters. They failed in the mission of advice and supervision of populations (Massoussi, 2008:1)

According to *Le Messager* among the protesters there are many youth as well. For this paper the protestations are the fact of the whole population and that situation reveals the failure of law enforcement to fill their duty – advice and control the population. The February's event for this paper is the theatre of conflict between youth and states' officials (policemen and gendarmes). Here youth are identified as a component of the group of protesters which is the whole population.

“Paul Biya, youth before the revision of constitution ', they could read on the placard held by a child less than 14 years old. Around him, one packs of young people come from Bépanda area gets ahead towards 'Carrefour écoles publique of Deido '. They advance by singing slogans roughly audible under the gaze of stunned populations. The police station of the 9<sup>th</sup> division nearby is warned. The policemen take out nightstick, willing to disperse this crowd come to fluster their quietude. They collide against unusual demonstrators, toddlers, who for most part sound like pupils. Tearing off clapping and dinghies of the public, they stop in front of the national flag standing near the police station (Batana, 2008:3)

The scene reminds a little of the Palestine. It is almost 10 o'clock at 'texaco aeroport'. Five young peoples, pot washes in one huge They , push a carrier - very by running and by howling, 'they have killed! they have killed! on a carrier, lies the body of a young man of about 20 years (Awana, 2008:3).

However the terminology used to portray youth refers to innocence, immaturity but sometime violence. For instance the toddler ('bambin') which means 'child who is just beginning to walk'(oxford. 2002:1109); or the expression 'packs of young people'( meutes de jeunes) referring to the aggressive character of youth. In so doing Le Messenger just like Cameroon Tribune denies youth's agency . By victimizing them or hyperbolizing their characteristics, it validated the superiority of state's necro-power and its rationale and paradoxically weakens the people's revolt it pretends to report and in some extent to support.

Le Quotidien Mutations attempt to restore the agency of youth through this article about violence in Douala on 23<sup>rd</sup> February.

On Saturday, 23 February on 2008. The populations bordering the street of the place called ' rond point Madagascar' begin to whisper on reasons of not keepings of a planned step by SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT (SDF). On the free road supposed to host the demonstration , the passers-by have left since some minutes and life takes back his normal lesson. It is while a column of vehicles of the gendarmerie arrived. The gate of protection of the tank bends down and a suspicious manoeuvre begins.

The people passing by this place and those sat in front of the pubs near the crossroad are sprinkled. Tear gases are thrown in every direction. Guns with pump shoot and project gas tubes... The night falls on Douala, and the suburb of Madagascar-Brazzaville-axis is going to live the worst riots never known by this corner of the economic capital. In their entrenchment, the young persons of these quarters organize quick-witted answer against ' those who have thrown the tear gas ...

More high other young persons organized in solidarity with the movement have attacks a gas station belonging to Tradex company. The gas station called Mobil was subjected to the meme goes out. His shop was looted. It is even with rapidity that its shop is ransacked by angry people (Kwebo,2008:4).

In this text youth are organizing themselves to react against state violence and through their impulse the rest of the population followed the movement. Further the acts of lootings and destruction of private properties are perpetrated later by another group of youth who join the movement in solidarity with those who initiated it. The sequences of the event are gradual first the cancelation of SDF's rally, second the state violence, third the reaction of youth explicated by the destruction of state's symbols and finally the act of looting linked with the enlargement of the movement. Still the main protesters are young people and the expression of their grievances induces also greed. But right at the beginning of this article, Mutations disconnects the cancelation of SDF rally with state violence and links the latter with the violent reactions of youth in a tacit fashion. In so doing he raises some doubts about the accuracy of his story and weakens its own text as a counter-narrative. Because the presence of SDF even as a passive actor in this text and context of political instability is a pretext which can be capitalise by the State officials to nullify the youth agency. In this respect the Cameroonian Minister of Communication stated that : 'As I said earlier, the nerve centre of the trouble is in Douala V, IV, III and a part of Douala. These areas are the areas where there is a strong presence of SDF. Government will take its responsibility to restore order (Forbinake,2008:4)'.The Post provides a more nuanced picture of the event of Saturday , 23<sup>rd</sup> February in Douala.

Troops in the evening of Saturday, February 23 , reportedly shot to death two young people and wounded others they (troops) clashed with anti-constitutional demonstrators in Douala.

The victims, whose names we did not readily get; one is lying in the mortuary, while the other is critical condition in hospital. Early, troops had dispersed a group of demonstrators after the SDF littoral Provincial Chair, Jean Michel Nintcheu, addressed SDF militants and other sympathisers Rond Point Madagascar.

He was requesting Littoral Governor, Francis Fai Yengo, to lift the Ban he had slammed on public demonstrations. But later, irate commercial motorcycle riders commonly called bendskin, started another demonstration, demanding the lifting of the ban on Equinox RV/Radio, the decrease of fuel price and end the bid to amend the constitution.

A confrontation later erupted between the troops and riders. It was at this point the police open fire, killing one and wounding the other in Quartier Belongue and Madagascar. The furious riders also burnt down a newly acquired SOCATUR bus run by the Douala City Council ( Pefok, 2008:1).

In this article it is clear that the expression “young people” encompasses also the bendskin drivers. In fact according to *The Post* , the bendskin drivers started a protestation independently of the rally planned by the SDF and for many reasons (lifting of the ban of Equinoxe RV/Radio, the decrease of the fuel price) but still in connection with the constitutional amendment. The death of two young people is the outcome of the confrontation opposing bendskin drivers and the police officials; and according to the Post, it seems that the young people who died were bendskin drivers. Therefore we can question the use of the term youth ( or the expression “young people”) in the Cameroonian newspapers. Does the word youth refers to some characteristics or to a social group according to these newspapers? It seems that youth in the newspapers which we are analysing refers more to some characteristic like age, immaturity or innocence and less to a coherent social category . In addition by putting the emphasis on the age of victims and protestors these newspapers denounce their youth’s immaturity and pronounce youth’s innocence. Hence the youth’s portrayals in both public and independent newspapers remain trapped in the dynamic parties’ politics therefore of continuous denial of youth’s agency. In this regard, John Fru Ndi the - leader of the political opposition- in line with Biya’s address states that :

Some white collar thugs manipulated the State apparatus and his information system, who helped Cameroon top corruption league and are unfortunately still free and in position of power, want to escape the of Ondo Ndong [ former member of state official and member of the CPDM] and others and have therefore decided to loot and burn our fatherland in order to change the ongoing of their imminent demise ( Post News line, 2008:1)

Although the reference to Bendskin drivers in the newspapers is slightly different. In reality there is not a particular focus on this group as instigator of violence in the government owned press, Cameroon Tribune . This paper refers to young people incline to use violence just as delinquent or vandals. A teleological reading of the collective actions of bendskin’s drivers can equate their social behaviours to those of vandals or delinquents (see, Chapter 4). It seems that by representing the violent youth as vandal or delinquent , the government’s officials and state- owned press is also targeting the bendskin drivers. But why do they do it

implicitly ? We have seen that in his address to the nation , the president Biya recognises the relevancy of transporters strike, urges for negotiations and condemns violence . However by connecting the violence to delinquent and the actors in the shade the president Biya avoids a public and direct conflict with the transporters- a conflict he could probably looses because of the legitimacy and the resilience of the movement - but by labelling such actions illegal he tackles the very mode of protests of Bendskin drivers and other actors using the same means to threat his regime.

#### **4.5. REPRODUCTION OF THE DOMINANT REPRESENTATION OF YOUTH**

In a press release published in Cameroon tribune on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2008 , Simon Tonye Bakot ,the Catholic Bishop of Yaoundé says:

Violence has never had benefit of reason in any way. The claim of fundamental rights is legitimate as long as it is evicted from any will of violence and destruction...

That the Cameroonians should not be driven by violence but by reason. May the Christians and volunteers present in different political areas, economic and social become artisans of peace, friendship and of comprehension in the service of the good for all. Cameroon undergone too much similar violence in the past , so that it would be improbable to do not wish that common sense and wisdom, justice and respect for civil peace continue to sustain the life in our country.

That all Christians, men and women and volunteers, put an end to any acts of violence and other evils which may threat the good step of our country...

We invite you all to pray for our country, you Christians, believers and all the volunteers for the recovering of a lasting peace in our country .

That God bless us and that He grants us his peace.

In this declaration , the catholic bishop<sup>29</sup> is not only targeting catholic or the Christians but the believers in general . He points out the inaccuracy of violence to express for the grievances of human rights and emphasises its destructive character. He opposes the use of violence with the use of reason and recommends the Christian and other actors involved in

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<sup>29</sup> The viewpoints of the Catholic church is not homogenous, The former cardinal of Douala Bishop Christian Tumi has been really critical of the regime in the issues related to state violence and human right abuses.

the social arena in Cameroon to become peace-makers. The bishop reminds that Cameroon encountered extreme violence in the past and because of that the common sense and the wisdom dictate a civil peace in the country. Bishop Tonye preaches Cameroonians to stop using violence and other evils which can threaten the stability in the country. For him [ Bishop Tonye ] those who use violence in the country are not rational since the violence is destructive and remains a threat for social stability. This position echoed the viewpoint of state officials who describe the violent youth as drug addicted or merely delinquent. The inaccuracy of violence as a mode of protestation and the emphasis of its destructive character have been also accentuated by the president Biya in his address to the nation . The political theology of violence of Biya and the bishop are quite similar.

Furthermore in his ‘sermon’ the bishop preaches the believers to abandon violence and pray for peace. But what type of peace is he talking about ? Surely the absence of violence of February event’s intensity. Therefore the bishop is speaking about a negative peace. In this press release the legitimacy of the bishop is used for the political gain of the regime and the Catholic church. If we can agree that it is one of the prerogatives of the bishop to act in coalition with the government to sustain social stability, we can also question the type of stability the bishop want to sustain and the real driver of its action. The third chapter of this thesis response clearly to the first question, for the second one I will draw my argument from Bayart idea the so called “the governmentality<sup>30</sup> of belly”. Bayart (1973, 521-524) notes that the relationships between churches and the state are political in nature and institutional in many extent. But it is difficult to understand these relationships without taking in consideration the ethnicity, families and personalisation. Concerning the historical relationship between the churches and the state in Cameroon, he notes that:

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<sup>30</sup> Gouvernmentality is defined by Michel Foucault ( Foucault quoted in Bayart , 1989:8) in this word ' There is number of possible actions: it operates on the field of possibilities or comes to register the behaviour of active subjects: it encourages, leads, he diverts, he makes easier or make it more difficult it enlarge or he restricts, it is more or less probable, to the lesser extent it limits or avoids absolutely; but it is definitely a way of acting upon one or many active subjects, as long that they act or as they are likely to act '

Far from expressing only particular interests, churches consider themselves as universal. The achievement of their pastoral mission has therefore caused political conflicts, and not religious antagonism as such. However they just partially substitute of the structures which are considered fully political. They constraint their own actions: they know that the regime would not support to be criticised. On the other hand, if Protestant-especially presbyterians and the well known evangelical pastors feel undoubtedly a deep nostalgia of “ l’Union of the Population of Cameroon (UPC)”, at least an historical one . The Catholic Church has been always against this movement in whom she saw a serious danger <communist>.T he rebels reacted to this unfriendly feeling by attacking systematically the catholic missions. Broadly the called for terrorism and violence were not fashionable in the Christian circles and this inform the Catholic church position to stay apart from the nationalist left. Therefore the catholic church haven’t brought any logistical support to UPC -If we except individual cases among which, the most famous case with Bishop Dogmo. Similarly , they haven’t participated in any attempt to overthrow the regime, except the confused and probably imaginary ‘ complot sainte croix’.

The relationship between the churches and the state is therefore a relationship of connivance . While the question of their own survival it is at the centre , the churches do pledge for the general interests as long as these interests do not threat their very interests. Historically the Catholic church has condemned the use of violence by the dissidents , such attitude toward violence is justified by their fear of the spreading of communists’ ideals- a fear raised by, a nationalist movement (UPC) connected to communist regimes around the period of independence- in the country and a dogmatic rejection of violence and terrorism. Alternatively, the position of the Bishop Tonye in the realm of politics of belly can also inform his disposition to act in favour of the regime. Inspired from Achilles Mbembe’s essay *Afriques Indociles*, Bayart (1973:12) argues that the religious leaders in coalition with the ruling elite , used their social imaginary to sustain authoritative regime in one side . On the other side churches follow the logic of accumulation of wealth in the poscolony just like the ruling elite. Thus the catholic church perhaps like other churches in the country, is contributing in its own way to the reproduction of the system. Such a practice is not limited to the churches but it is illustrative of the political behaviours of the power elite in Cameroon, as this report of the Post acknowledges :

Archbishop Esua

We expected a fatherly advice from the head of state when we heard he was going to address the nation. Unfortunately that fatherly advice never came, I called youth to turn to Christ despite their grievances because violence can never solve any problem.

Simon Achidi Achu [former Anglophone ,member of the government]

I call on the youths to exercise restraint because Biya remains the only leader they should look up to. We are destroying our houses just as we did in 1990/91 and we are going to be the hardest hit and losers in all of this.

Simon Nkwenti, Civil Society

Biya's address worsened matters because he [ Biya] missed the target and instead of addressing the real issues as presented by the protesters , he instead directed missiles at opposition that had nothing to do either the strike action. Nkwenti called on the youth to restrain form looting and wanton, destruction.

Fon Chafah [ traditional Chief], President General Northwest fon's Union , NOWEFU

I was devastated and disgraced by the extent the strike action look. Let the youths come to us the Fons for dialogue so that as custodians of our traditions and auxiliaries to the administration, we can channel their grievances to the highest authority. I congratulate President Biya for his prompt reaction which to him brought calm to the most part of the nation ( Post newline,2008:1-2).

To sum up there is not something we can call a counter-narrative of youth in the political discourse in the Cameroonian newspapers we have examined. Youth is a mute social category still in search for its own leaders or for a genuine narrative liberated from the miasma of parties' politics and others impurities of the systems ( corruption, nepotism, neo-patrimonialism , etc...). Such a situation may be due to inherent vagueness of the term youth. Even the understand of youth by the Cameroonian media remains fuzzy despite the fact that it nullifies the agency of the people they describe-there is not a clear cut on the age and other social and biological characteristics. It seems that the media construction's of the term "youth" would like to operate more in the term of a relationship between 'ainee-cadet'<sup>31</sup>'( elder-junior). Thus more as means of domination and less as a social group. Therefore we can interrogate the relevancy of this term (youth) as a social category in Cameroon. De Boeck and Honwana (2005: 3) note that:

As Bourdieu remind us, youth is 'just a word; (Bourdieu, 1993). We understand childhood and youth to be historically situated social and cultural constructions (Aries, 1962; James and Prout,

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<sup>31</sup> It is the relationship between youth and elders, which according to Bayart the process of historical reproduction of social inequalities and political domination (Toulabour, 1985:448).

1990). The concept 'youth' is, to adopt Durham phrase, a 'social shifter': it is a relational concept situated in a dynamic context, a social landscape of power, knowledge rights, and cultural notions of agency and personhood. According to Durham 'to imagine youth and to imagine the concept relationally, is to imagine the grounds and forces of sociality' (Durham, 2000: 116). Definitions and notions of children and youth cannot, therefore, be simply based on biology or chronological age. They do not denote a fixed group or a demographic cohort (Aguillar, 1998; Kurimoto and Simone, 1998). Such social and cultural variables as gender, religion, class, responsibilities, expectations, race and ethnicity play important parts in defining who is regarded or considers themselves as child or youth-and ways young persons are perceived do not necessarily coincide with their self-definitions.

Jua (2003:17-18) argues that in Cameroon, the state control the borderline between youth and adulthood and the markers that it uses in defining youth tend to change. According to him the ambiguity in definition of youth is acknowledge by the fact that whereas the penal code stipulates that criminal responsibility starts at the age of 18, the electoral law gives the franchise only to those who are 21 and above. Further, he [Jua] adds that the elasticity of 'adult; becomes obvious when we explore carefully the text of the ruling party (CPDM), which comprehends youth as being between 15 and 25 years old. But in practice is common to find members of its youth wing, especially national officials, who are more than 40 years of age. Therefore if we look at youth as a heterogeneous category, we should also look at the narrative it might produce as heterogeneous. Consequently, there is the possibility of misrecognition of a produced counter-narrative due maybe to the limitation of the selected data we analysed for the current study since then; or simply to the doxic<sup>32</sup> attitude we share in common with journalists in the way we look at youth. Thus in agreement with Diouf who argues that young Africans can be seen as searching for a narrative, we would like to turn a little bit our focus by locating youth's agency inside on the practice of rebellion as lifestyle as a whole.

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<sup>32</sup>'It is when the embodied structures and the objective structures are in agreement, when perception is constructed according to the structures of what is perceived, everything seems obvious and goes without saying, It is the doxical experience in which one attributes to the world a deeper belief than all beliefs (in the ordinary sense), since does not think of itself as a belief (Bourdieu, 1998:81).'

## CHAPTER 5: THE PRACTICE OF REBELLION AS A LIFESTYLE

### Note from the front

Crime vs. . . .

Who're the criminals, the gangs or the government?

Did the Capital just happen to have the power to punish men?

Monopolice manipulate majorities to run with them

So whats the police force but a resource to reinforce the plan of the dominant?

I' am haunted by questions, spending time behind bars

Statistics on TV, that concede we're sadistic, deceive me

'cause murder and thievery thrives on all sides of the lines that divide class.

I take pepper-spray with a pinch a'ssault and battery and I'm charged to step'n say:

"yo honour, go bother the office of your bosses where the crime starts"

And I ask, while cleaning dirty white collars for a living,

Why law suites the raw brutes in board rooms that horde loot?

They set the precedent then send the president to assure you,

His lady justice, is blind. But she's got contacts that say too!

The colonists, the capitalists and wordy bright scholars make a killing.

(Marlon Burgess quoted in Comaroff and Comaroff, 2006:1).

### 5.1 IN SEARCH FOR A NARRATIVE : YOUTH, VIOLENCE, AND RAP MBOA

If violence *per se* tends to be silent, it always finds a voice in the legal and religious discourses or in the narratives of its perpetrators and victims. Donald Black (Black quoted in Wilkinson, 2007:27) argues that: 'Crime becomes social control when state laws and protection fail'. Without law the violence may be outrageous, immoral, depressing, hurtful, demoralizing and lamentable but is not a crime. The socio-genesis of Law enlightens the

forces leading to the construction of the meaning of violence. In fact there are two strands explaining how laws are created. For the consensus model, the members of a society by and large agreed on what is right or wrong and the law codifies these agreed-upon social values (Adler Mueller and Laufer,1998). The second strand is the conflict model, in which power is the key for lawmaking. According to this model people with political and economic power make laws that protect their interests while using laws to keep the poor at a disadvantage. Related to the conflict perspective is the view that social reality in general, including criminal law is constructed (Berger and Lukmann; Spector and Kitsuse1987). Brownstein provides a succinct statement of this perspective when he argues that:

From the social constructionist perspective, social reality is a product of social interaction in the form of individual decision, interpretation and actions. In that individuals act and interaction make decisions and interpret their experience in the context of their unique social positions and interest, social reality and hence all social phenomena are necessarily constructed in an ideological and political context. That is the social world in which we live is designed by us in the context of our own values and interests, or more precisely by those among us who have the power to design that world in the context of their own values and interests.

The address of the president Biya during the February 2008 illustrates Brownsteins's statement by the virtue of being an explicit form of "legal command". Further, Mbembe (2001:6) notes that the social reality in Africa is the outcome of a number of socially produced and objectified practices. According to him, 'These practices are not simply a matter of discourse and language, although of course the existential experience of the world is here as elsewhere symbolically structured by language; the constitution of the African self as reflexive subject also involve doing, seeing, hearing, tasting, feeling, and touching'. Acknowledging that the African subject like other human beings engaged meaningful acts, Mbembe adds that 'the African subject does not exist apart from the acts that produce social reality, or apart from the process by which those practices are, so to speak *imbued of meanings*'. Concerning the logic of practice, Bourdieu (1998:82) argues that "practice has a logic which is not that of logic, and thus to apply practical logic is to run the risk of destroying the logic one wants to describe with the instrument used to describe it'. Therefore the practice of rebellion as a lifestyle has its own logic, a logic which is neither the logic ascribed to it by the political discourse in the media nor by the logic of any given archetypes of traditional custom or culture even if hegemonic. Therefore the practice of rebellion as a

lifestyle is asserted in what Biaya (2000) called ‘ Culture de la rue’ ( culture of the street ). In this regard the next paragraphs will explore some trends of the popular culture in Cameroon, especially the so called the ‘ Mboa rap’.

There is not a clear definition of the so called ‘rap Mboa ’ in Cameroon and it is not the purpose of this paper to vanish the clouds weakening its conceptualization or to do justice to its opponents or proponents. However I would like to state that the ‘rap Mboa’ it is an appropriation and mutation of American hip hop music and culture by Cameroonians living mostly in the country. To paraphrase Caldeira (2006:117) , 'rap Mboa' represents languages and styles appropriated by groups suffering from discrimination and prejudices worldwide to re-elaborate their identities and expose the injustices to which they are subjected. In this sense it is to some extent ‘a monstrous screen, a repugnant mask of the lack of character of our artistic project. It fills a place, a geographical plot, small corner where we ( Cameroonians) masturbate of our artistic stammerings because we are unable to assert ourselves on the global scene’(Nick,2009:1). Presenting ‘ rap Mboa’ in these words is also to criticise it. But the very nature of this critique underpins our interest on it as an alternative media<sup>33</sup> for marginalized youth in Cameroon. For this purpose I will have a look on the work of two prominent figures of ‘rap Mboa’ Sultan Hoschmin (n.d.) and Valsero (2008) - those artists are former university students in Cameroon, some of their video and songs have been censored both by public and some independent media. The reason why I choose these two artists is because of the way they engaged the thematic of youth, education, violence and political leadership in Cameroon.

In his song titled *What school is that ?* ( Quelle Ecole? ), Hoschmin (n.d.) says:

What school is that ?

They say that primary school is for free in Cameroon

The levies ( frais d’ APE) are still obligatory

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<sup>33</sup> The new technology of information and communication (internet, computers and CD’s) and some private radio and TV facilitate the circulation of ‘rap Mboa’ in Cameroon.

Parents have no money to purchase books  
 When the school start they are in trouble  
 Youth understood that issue, all they are in centre of the cities  
 They sell sweetsies , they sell groundnuts  
 When is difficult , they smoke weed  
 Babylone , look! Look! Look! look!

This song is a critique of the whole educational system in Cameroon as its title informs: What school is this? Here Hoschmin reminds that youth are conscious of the duplicity of the ruling elite. While they ( ruling elite )affirm publicly that the school is for free, they keep the levies obligatory. Conscious of this situation and anticipating the trouble which this situation may cause to their poor parents, young people abandon their studies to get involved in the informal sector of the economy in urban cities. Once there, when they (young people) undergone difficulties , they just smoke weed to relax . Hoschmin urges Babylone to look, as if it was saying to those who are ruling the country to pay attention to the outcome of their political behaviours. Clearly from this statement of the rapper we can see that the youth are not mute or naïve and Biya's urge for students to be dedicated to their studies instead of politics is not practical. The delinquency he condemns is according to this text the outcome of failure of its own regime. Following the same path in *Lettre au Prési* ( Letter to the President ), Valsero says that :

Sorry , Prési I have to speak to you  
 On your behalf all of them speak but for us none speak  
 They pretend to defend your vision, It seems that they follow your agenda  
 But you are the one who decided to exclude us from your plan  
 Prési , I would like to know why for us things are not working  
 I studied during many years but I did not find a job  
 Do you remember you promise that we would reach the end of the tunnel  
 We are still there and the same people are the masters of the game  
 Look in the country those young girls have no choice

Younger than 16 years old, they sell their body[ prostitution], they have no choice

Apparently school ( education) is useless, ‘ les gars’ [ dudes] ! it sinks like shit.

While your ministers are swaggering with their Prado. C. A [ luxury cars of government’s official]

Right at the beginning of this text we can see how the relationship elder-cadet is diluted, despite the fact that the rapper starts by excusing himself for this unusual letter, the word ‘ Prési<sup>34</sup>, he uses to designate the head of state show that, along his text he does not intend to be the junior *par excellence* but will use both simulacra of respect and insolence to channel his aim. Valsero says that ‘ they ‘ ( certainly to mention the patrons and clients of the regime) speak for and in favour of the head of state but none is speaking for them ( youth). And he recognizes that apparently ‘they’ are following the impulse of Biya, who according to him has decided to exclude the youth in his plan<sup>35</sup>. He reminds the president of a promise he made at the height of the economic crisis, which was calling for a better situation for all after this difficult phase. In so doing he acknowledges that nothing has changed for them (the youth) the same people are ruling and are enjoying the fruits of the state to the detriment of youth. Thus having no solution the young girl of 16 years of age become prostitute. Also he portrays himself as someone who studied during many years without being able to find a job after his graduation therefore concluding that education seems useless. Moreover in the midst of this misery the government officials are frustrating the masses with the riches of the state.

In the words of Valsero, Biya’s empty promises are attacked and the relevancy of education is questioned in relationship with the predation and the bad-governance of the elite in power. The quest for the relevancy of school in Cameroon which rises from these texts is found and echoed among the masses in Cameroon and is made salient by the existing gap between the

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<sup>34</sup> Prési is common name used by Cameroonians to designate some prominent members of organization and other persons in order to get favour from them. Many people can be called presi without being effectively member of any organization. In this sense Prési determines mostly the intention of the one who designate rather than the social status of the one who is designated. (De Rosny, 2002).

<sup>35</sup> For Jua (2002:18) , Biya did not fail categorically to appoint youth to position of authority. In fact he did appoint many connected youths, mostly the children or the protégés of the ruling party’s barons. These rappers are conscious of that, as is acknowledged by some of their songs and texts which are not analysed in this study.

salaries of civil servant and the military. Jua (2003:19) notes for example that , a sergeant in the army on index 530 with just a primary or grade school certificate earned 193,855 FCFA that is twice the salary of a secondary school teacher with a bachelor degree. Considering the devaluation of cultural capital in Cameroon, for Hoschmin and Valsero it appears that the delinquency is resultant from the system and it is perpetuated by it. Such a view is strengthened in another song of Valsero (2008) entitled ‘ *Ce pays tue les Jeunes*’ ( *This country kills young people*) in direct connection with the February event. He notes:

In this situation we understand each other because we speak to each other.

For 2008, I speak to myself

For 2008 , I speak to you

I hope you are fine and that life will treat you well

Valsero

I am 28 years of age, no job but a child and a girlfriend to support

I live in Yaounde, you consider it as a life !

Gars ( dude) ! it is better to die

Here we survive through ‘grattage’ [ activities oscillating between mendicity and informal jobs]

And often banditry became the option of those who refuse to become homosexual

Among Prado .C.A [ luxury cars of government’s official], I am walking on the dust

The dry mouth , the empty stomach and the eyes in fire like a volcano.

It is difficult to be young in rio dos Camaroes (Cameroon)

You should be a child of wealthy family, a homosexual, a policemen or politician

Meanwhile the same people eat

It is the same people who starve

The way the rapper portrays himself illustrate the vagueness and the elasticity of the term “youth”.In the tone of the text seems both connected to a form of warning and a call for dialogue. In effect according to Valsero , young Cameroonians are undergoing the evils of the

system and their responses ( 'banditry,' 'debrouillardise', violence, homosexuality<sup>36</sup> ) are just some strategies to survive. In so doing the artist points out that the youth are neither listened nor considered with dignity but exploited by the political system. In relation to that the chorus of this song is evocative:

This country kills young people  
 The elders are still in control  
 50 years in control  
 After that there are still in control  
 The country is degrading youth  
 Youth is dying gradually  
 While the elders in their fortress are getting drunk with whisky

By highlighting the dichotomy between an older generation enjoying riches and stocked in power since many years and a dying and excluded young generation, valsero portrays the elder as the sources of the evils which threaten the existence of youth. Besides the elders to whom the youth look up for guidance, have let the youth down, by accepting their situation and not advocating for genuine uprising. But this portrayal of the youth's pain is not a victimization as these other verses of 'letter au prési' can acknowledge:

Even if it is often said people are dying  
 People are sovereign, they are never wrong  
 People have the numerical advantage, they can mislead you  
 We are not afraid of death  
 Even if your friends called the policemen to support you  
 They say you are the lion-man  
 But their only dream is to kill the lion

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<sup>36</sup> Homosexuality and prostitution of young women have become a common practice in Cameroon used by the youth to survive and abused by the power elite for sexual or witchcraft related reasons ( Jua,2003:20)

They encourage repression

The use of tear gas against your people is stupid

Listen to your people , when they say ‘no’

They [people] make perhaps noise but they have grievances

Presi, what are your intentions?

Presi , do you have solutions ?

Because our situation has to change in the country

Otherwise , my friend you will have different kind of dreams

By opposing people’s sovereignty against state violence in this fashion, the artist questions the legitimacy of the regime and insists on the grievances of the masses. While pointing the inaccurate tendency of Biya’s clique to prone the use of violence against the population, the rapper also warns him against the ambitions of those members of his crew who the sole aim is to replace him. In this text we can see that the pain of youth in Cameroon is not an isolated case. Youth’s grievances according to the rapper are in line with those of the rest of the population. However he [Valsero] represents youth taking the lead of people’s grievances in Cameroon. By presenting young people in this manner, the rapper re-enforces the legitimacy of youth revolt and attempt to grasp support from the different strata of the population. For him the common enemy of the whole population is Biya and his clique. Further the claim that the people are not afraid of death, coupled with the fact that he urges Biya to find solutions if he wants to continue his job, makes explicit his view that the recourse to violence is a means we should consider to reach social and political change. Through this lens (“rap Mboa”), youth are neither silent nor unaware of the development in Cameroonian politics. Moreover they are producing a narrative which is deconstructing the political discourse in the media on youth and challenging the traditional mode of actions by its explicit reference to collective violence and banditry as a means of survival but also of political change. Therefore we are in agreement with Nyamnjoh ( 2002:663) when he argues that:

In a context where youth unemployment is rife and where education has ceased to be equated with social mobility, the frustrations of Cameroonian young people are quite understandable. The ; petit’ , the ‘ sauveur’ or ‘ debrouillard’, unable to make ends meet in the midst of official optimism about the future, and daily provoked by the sumptuous display of wealth by few, finds himself at the mercy of violent thoughts and acts, which in turn are used by filthy rich to justify

further containment of the poor. Feymania (crookery), prostitution, burglary, riots, are various practical strategies for the side-stepped in the face of the repressive instincts of the state. Dreams of escape, and fantasies articulated around the West and whiteness, are the mental equivalents of those material strategies.

## 5.2 THE STYLE OF YOUTH VIOLENCE

To substitute a practical relationship of pre-occupation, immediate presence to a coming moment inscribed in the present, with a rational calculating consciousness, positing ends as such , as possible, is to raise the question of cynicism, which poses unmentionable ends as such ( Bourdieu, 1998:82) .

In the continuum of a possible counter-narrative led by mboa-rap movement or induced by some practices of young Cameroonians , this thesis has attempted to situate the use of violence during the February event within the broad spectrum of rebellion as a lifestyle. The aim of this concluding section is not to capture the whole logic of the rebellion as a lifestyle but to emphasise the contextual relevancy of its violence and the sign it may infer prior to its association to the political or the illegal.

By locating the rise of ‘ *la culture de la rue* ’ ( culture of the street) in a context of economic crisis in Africa, Biaya (2000:3) notes that:

In urban middle, this economic crisis also had very important impact on the traditional, family, clan or ethnic solidarities, favouring associative groupings in return. There is at the same time, a promotion of the culture of the street, which the basics features are the uniformity of modes of survival, the mechanisms of production of the child of the street are (extreme poverty, parental divorce, individualism and moral crisis) and invisible and visible violence . Often latent, this one widens as soon as institutions and social regulations get weaker and as soon as corruption corrupts them. The culture of the street works out therefore in a particular context where forms of violence answer (the social violence calling one against - state violence), but reveal only a party of the dialectic of violence. Brutal urban violence is far from constituting the unequivocal mode of expression of the young persons; games, poses and attitudes of consumption and free time are used by them just as much for asserting their historical presence as social group and actor in each postcolonial society. So, the making of the culture of the street registers in the transformative dynamics of the postcolony and in its contradiction; it is fulfilled in several historical stages to a double logic of rupture with the colonial society: have been born in the postcolony and live in the urban margin. Influenced by this double referent, the urban young people re-appropriate existing hobbies while transforming them.

According to this statement violence together with many other elements (games, attitudes, consumption ...etc) follow the logic of transformation of the space in urban African cities but also of rupture with the colonial society. It appears then that youth violence is not only destructive but also transformational. Kriegel distinguishes violence from force. For her, 'la force, ou le conatus, telle que l'on analysée les classiques, c'est-à-dire l'énergie, la puissance, n'a en soi rien de mauvais. La force est à l'origine du mouvement, du déploiement de l'énergie'. In contrast she notes that 'la violence est autre. C'est une énergie, mais au lieu d'être une énergie c'est une énergie destructrice. La violence n'est pas une augmentation de la puissance d'agir mais la destruction de la puissance d'exister d'un autre'. She adds 'A l'inverse, la violence est toujours destructrice. Elle est fondée non sur la compétition par l'accumulation de forces mais sur l'établissement de la domination par la suppression des vies humaines.' In contrast as Breen (2007) argues, we cannot operate a clear cut between those using force in one side and those using violence in another as Kriegel's distinction suggests. In the symbiosis of violence and power lies her arbitrariness and her (Kriegel) flawed supposition that force doesn't kill. Because even if we agree that those who label themselves as law enforcement (force) are really agents of force, it remains utopian to believe that the movement impulse by those agents will never kill. If by force she distinguishes actors who are technologically advanced from those who are not by violence she designates both the two categories. The energy can be used both as a destructive and transformational means as she notes, but labelling violence or force with positive/negative attributes reflects more about the position and the dispositions of the one who is observing than the practicality of a violent act (signifier). Following this path, Konings (2002:2) notes that according to some existing studies, the reason why both African governments and youth are using violence lies in the tendency of the former to still look upon youth (students) as 'cadet'-who according to African tradition should listen to elders. Consequently by using violence students attempt to transform their relationship with their government (elders). But in Cameroon the use of violence as a mode of protestation is not the monopoly of students or the sole characteristic of a political turmoil. In fact the use of violence by social group has become endemic. The Bendskin drivers' use of violence is an illustration of this fact, it is almost impossible to differentiate their behaviour during political turmoil and during an incident of the every day life. This story reported by Simone (2005) shared all the characteristics of some sequences of the February's demonstrations without being one.

In the early morning hours of 10 July 2003 near the major market at Nkololoun, a bendskineur, age 19 was reportedly killed from a blow to the head during an altercation with police. Several other deaths occurred in the immediate aftermath of this struggles. Within hours, after word of the incident spread like wildfire, the entire city was shut down, with hundreds of barricades set up using commandeered vehicles, equipment being used in the massive road repair project, and various corner stalls used for cell phone calls and lottery sales. While many youths who were not bendskineurs were quick to join in the escalating may, bendskineurs were also seen in strenuous efforts to curtail looting and other actions not focused on simply shutting down the roads. Bridges roundabouts, major axis routes, underpasses and lateral arteries were all quickly cut, significantly delaying the possibilities for state security organs to provide reinforcements and allowing bendskineurs to burn several police stations, as well as ferry significant numbers of their supporters to key strategic locations. Without any centralized command operation, the speed through which the dispersion of blockades was accomplished indicated a remarkable proficiency in both disseminating information and ensuring a comprehensive coverage of the entire urban area.

Usually those who strike encourage or force others (members of their groups or the rest of the population) to do the same. The rationale behind such action is clear: in order to expect from the government to consider the strikers' grievances, a state of chaos is necessary in the area where the protestations occurred. This report of Bendskin drivers' practices during strike highlights their mode of reasoning :

'Mister parks here. Fast, don't waste us time !' urge angry motorbikes-taximen, angry to a driver in the Steering wheel of his personal vehicle. This altercation occurs at the Lycee bilingue d' Essos. This one tries to make understand to them that the vehicle is not has commercial usage, without success. 'You use some combustible( gas)'. It is the bulk. Do not make believe us that when you arrive at the gas station, the prices are lower because the combustible which you take will not be used for commercials aims.' Cease to live a lie'. ' Help us struggle for everybody, argues one motor-taximan. As long as the personal vehicle circulates the government cannot take our problem seriously ', adds another one while snatching the car's key. This driver is giving a left to his pregnant wife, unable to reach her office on feet. ' (Tchunte, 2008:4)

Such measures of coercion have been adopted also by taxi-men against the bendskins drivers who failed to respect the order of strike.

In Yaoundé, the quarter Briqueterie is packed the biggest number of drivers of taxis. The most part of the syndicates of public transport install their sieges there. On Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> February 2008 around 7 o'clock, the atmosphere is tense. In the said place 'carrefour Aurora', a group of taxi-men are conversing about the ongoing strike decided the day before. Student and other passers-by

are crowded at the side of the road since the beginning of the day. They are waiting for taxis and other means of transport. No yellow-car ( taxi) arrived.. Almost all of them decided to walk .

Youssoufa, taxi driver, seems to enjoy this situation: ' Combustible ( gas) is expensive! And the students that you are seeing usually pay 100 FCFA, half of the of the official fare ( for taxi) in Cameroon. The government has nothing. Coupled with the police and other states officials' harassment, we interrogate the relevancy of such job. It is necessary therefore for the populations to tolerate our strike ' .While expressing himself in that way, his argument is confirmed by the agreeing smiles of his colleagues, and at the same time cars become more and more rare on the road.

On the contrary, the crowd of the students which have to reach their schools hurries up on the road. Even the which cars has personal usage become rare. Especially taxi-men strikers order them to prove to be supportive of the cause of the movement. Some bendskins transporting students cross the quarter. This situation irritates right away the group of the taxis' drivers. ' What does it means? ' One of them argues: 'they say that there is strike and some people take the liberty of cheating? We must stop this situation now ' Immediately, very the motorcycles which cross Briqueterie with passengers are stopped. The motos-taxi-men protest is manhandle (Chanon, 2008:4).

Also during the students' strike in 1996, Konings (2002:196)) notes that : during the operation ghost Campus, any students who were carrying books to or from the campus were seized by the strikers, 'baptized' with dirty water and urine, had their faces smeared with mud, and ordered to return home . It follows then that this type of violence is used by different groups in Cameroon and often for the same purposes. In the context mentioned it is used as incentive to cooperate, to formulate and strengthen a collective action against the state. The coercion created through private violence increase the number of grievances and the incoherence of protestation. In this context the organizational apparatus of both taxi-men and bendskin groups can operates as channel of the grievances of the rest of population just as it has been the case in the food riot in Argentina, on May 1994 -when some delinquents and theft gangs' organizations structured the protestations (Sekulnikov, 1994:77). By doing this, they (bendskin-drivers and taxi men) create a political turmoil<sup>37</sup> because of the very fact

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<sup>37</sup> 'Political turmoil in Africa does not depend so much upon the size and the profile of the jobless population in to, but rather upon the number and the profile of unemployed individuals. The political mobilization of these unemployed individuals seems to be facilitated by their age, their matrimonial status and their urban and educational experiences...

of their cooperation with the rest of the population. It follows then that the initial drive of the violence is the practicality of protestation but it incidentally infer a sign which can be interpreted, misunderstood, manipulated or devaluated but no longer ignored. It is a sign of the practicality of their existence, with a disturbing signifier for the power elite, a nuisance which is absolutely labelled for political gain but which open the door to any kind of social deviations as well. Put succinctly violence in the hands of those who refuse *to die pour rien* is just another feature of the lifestyle of the postcolonial subjects and agents in Cameroon.

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Political turmoil may depend, upon the degree to which unemployed persons are able to obtain the cooperation of their peers who have lost employment. While the political mobilization of the unemployed seems to result from the alienation associated with their relative deprivation, that of those who have lost jobs probably reflects the fears of a growing misery (Clignet,1969:486-487)'.

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## **APPENDIX**

CT 25 fev 2008

# Cameroon *tribune*

**Yaoundé : un chauffard tue une élève**, pp.16-17

**Sept nouveaux ambassadeurs nommés par le chef de l'Etat**, p. 3

N° 9044/5243 - 34<sup>e</sup> année / 34<sup>e</sup> year - Lundi 25 février 2008 / Monday 25 february 2008 - Directeur de publication / Publisher : Marie-Claire NMAHA - Web : www.cameroon-tribune.net - Tél : 22 30 41 47 300 FCFA

## Un général américain reçu par Paul Biya



A l'issue de l'audience que lui a accordée le chef de l'Etat vendredi dernier, le général William E. Ward, commandant du commandement des forces américaines en Afrique s'est félicité du rôle leader du Cameroun dans la paix et la stabilité en Afrique centrale. p.2

## Un mort dans une émeute à Douala La ferme condamnation du gouvernement

● Les affrontements entre forces de l'ordre et manifestants qui ont bloqué la circulation sur l'axe lourd Douala-Yaoundé ont fait un mort et un blessé grave samedi soir.  
● Le gouvernement déplore cette perte en vie humaine, les dégâts occasionnés et condamne fermement ceux qui exploitent la naïveté des jeunes les amenant à commettre des actes susceptibles de mettre en danger leur vie. pp.6-7

## Far North : PM Inoni on Two Fronts

On the instructions of the Head of State, the Prime Minister, Head of Government, Ephraim Inoni, last Saturday inaugurated the Kolofata District Hospital and the Mora Court complex. It was an occasion for the Head of Government to communion with the population of Mayo Sawa Division of the Far North province. p.5

## Constitution La révision n'est pas un tabou juridique

L'analyse du Pr. Narcisse Monelle Kombi, agrégé de droit public et science politique et directeur de l'Institut des Relations internationales du Cameroun (IRIC). p.9

## SOPECAM : cap sur 2010

Une direction commerciale, deux nouvelles agences, de nouvelles ambitions. Le 13e conseil d'administration extraordinaire tenu vendredi dernier a examiné et approuvé le plan de développement 2008-2010 de l'entreprise. p.15

## Grogne des transporteurs Des appels à la modération

Alors que certains appellent à un débrayage illimité ce lundi, des voix s'élèvent parmi les syndicalistes du secteur, pour relever que quatre des six revendications ont pu trouver des solutions lors de la rencontre de jeudi dernier entre le gouvernement et les transporteurs. Et que par conséquent, la grève ne devrait plus avoir d'objet. pp.16-17

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TRANSPORTS

Les taximen en grève ce lundi  
Les moto-taximen se joignent au mouvement. >>> P. 11

ACHARNEMENT

Le gouverneur du Littoral ferme Radio Equinoxe  
La télévision du groupe avait déjà été scellée 24 heures plus tôt sur ordre du ministre de la Communication. >>> P. 11

ÉVOCACTION

Les neuf disparus de Bépanda ressuscités dans un documentaire  
Le ministre de la Communication prépare la riposte. >>> P. 13

FAILLITE

Eric Djemba Djemba pourchassé pour une dette de 400 millions Fcfa  
Une société anglaise de recouvrement à ses trousses. >>> P. 14

Supplément Avenir >>> P. 7-9

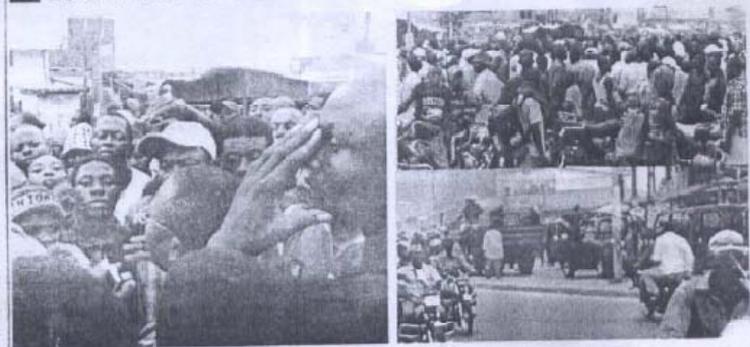
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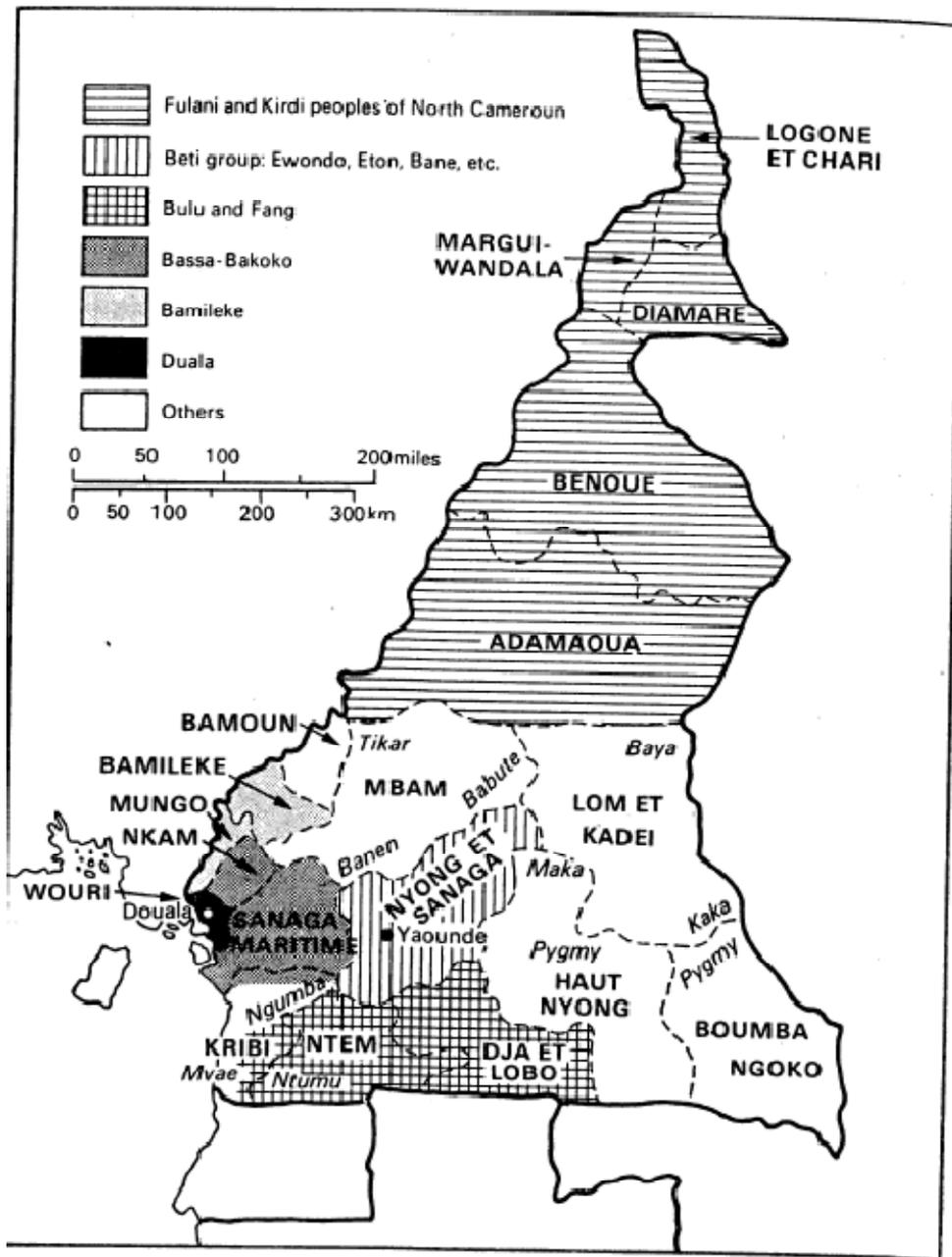
QUOTIDIEN

## Douala La révision constitutionnelle fait ses premiers morts



- Les gendarmes tirent et tuent deux personnes au cours d'un affrontement avec les populations ;
- Le film des événements de samedi dernier à Ndogpassi ;





MAP II. Administrative Divisions and Major Ethnic Groups

Source: Fearon and Laitin (2005)