



# CAMEROUN: LA CRIMINALISATION DE L'ETAT EST ATTESTÉE.



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**SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC  
PARTIES AND THE  
CHALLENGES OF  
DEMOCRATIC  
RENEVAL IN AFRICA**

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Par Louis-Marie KAKDEU

## CAMEROUN : LA CRIMINALISATION DE L'ETAT EST ATTESTÉE.

La littérature parle de la « criminalisation de l'Etat » en référence à la situation d'un « Etat malfaiteur » (Jean François Bayart) et d'un « Etat falsificateur » (Béatrice Hibou) où le « capital social » est le crime et le faux. En clair, c'est la situation d'un Etat où les tenants du pouvoir utilisent le faux et le crime (politique, social, culturel ou économique) comme mécanisme de gouvernement. Bayart, Ellis et Hibou (1997) parlent d'un Etat où l'on atteste les fraudes et trafics en grande nature, l'exploitation sauvage des ressources naturelles, le pillage de l'économie, la privatisation des institutions publiques, la multiplication des milices armées, l'extension



de la guerre, etc. Où en est-on au Cameroun ? Je m'en vais relever juste quelques faits d'actualité.

Sur le plan politico-administratif, l'autorité publique prend de plus en plus des actes formels pour demander de tuer, neutraliser, écraser ou déporter un individu. C'est tout sauf le sens de la République. L'on a le cas d'un sous-préfet qui a demandé sans conséquence à ce jour "d'abattre" un

individu en pleine République au nom du maintien de l'ordre. C'est aussi le cas du préfet du Mfoundi qui a même menacé toujours sans conséquence de déchéance de résidence ou de déportation des opposants hors de la capitale Yaoundé, pourtant censée être une capitale POLITIQUE. Dans l'actualité quotidienne, les autorités publiques s'attaquent à la fortune publique, détournent la propriété privée, s'immiscent

dans la gestion des associations et partis politiques, s'approprient les biens publics, dilapident les caisses de l'Etat, etc., sans conséquence. On se rappelle que devant la Représentation nationale, le ministre des finances qui était appelé à dire quels étaient les critères pour bénéficier des chapitres 94 et 65, avait répondu : « Demandez, on vous donnera ; frappez, on vous ouvrira ! ». Devant les députés! Et aucune motion n'avait été initiée contre lui! Dans l'indifférence totale, il exprimait ainsi la situation d'un pays où l'achat des consciences et l'impunité étaient érigés en règle.

Sur le plan sécuritaire, la banalisation du crime corporel était récurrente.

Par Louis-Marie KAKDEU

L'affaire Martinez Zogo est venue mettre à nu la situation d'un pays souillée où les forces de l'ordre supposées lutter contre le crime sont utilisées plutôt pour commettre des crimes. L'on a découvert au grand jour la situation d'un pays où la torture, la sodomie, la soumission forcée, l'humiliation, etc., sont au cœur des pratiques du pouvoir. Ce seul cas a mis à nu les mécanismes de financement du mal par les institutions de l'Etat. Cela avait délié les langues et de multiples vidéos fusent sur les réseaux sociaux comme celle de l'artiste Longue Longue qui montrent com-

ment l'on obtient par force le mutisme de l'opinion publique.

Pire, l'Etat fait la guerre à ses propres citoyens radicalisés. En 2024, 6 régions sur 10 sont en situation d'insécurité préoccupante et 3 régions sont en situation de guerre. Si vous regardez bien la situation de ces régions, vous comprendrez que la promotion de l'économie de guerre par les tenants du pouvoir de l'Etat est la seule raison qui explique la poursuite des affrontements sur le terrain.

L'Etat du Cameroun est devenu un mal-facteur : ce sont ceux qui sont censés vous proté-

ger qui représentent une menace pour votre vie. Il émerge au sein du pays une multitude de milices privées ou d'agents de sécurité qui peuvent octroyer la sécurité personnelle, attaquer les adversaires politiques, suppléer les forces de l'ordre ou déstabiliser l'Etat. Le Cameroun est devenu un pays dangereux. Et le danger est incarné par l'Etat lui-même. Le comble est qu'il n'y a en l'état aucune perspective positive à l'horizon. De jour comme de nuit, l'impunité évolue à une vitesse exponentielle et rare sont ceux des citoyens qui acceptent encore de jouer la

carte collective.

Nous - autres, citoyens politiquement engagés, avons accepté de faire le pas. Mais, rendons-nous à l'évidence ! Le rapport des forces sera toujours en faveur des forces du mal si une plus grande mobilisation des camerounais, où qu'ils soient, n'est pas attestée pour renverser la vapeur.

C'est maintenant ou jamais !

## Longue Longue : Le président du SDF condamne les actes inhumains de nos forces de l'ordre

● La torture est interdite par la loi ! Une vidéo virale montre le musicien camerounais Longue Longue victime d'abus inhumains par nos Forces de l'Ordre. Le FRONT SOCIAL DÉMOCRATE condamne fermement ces actes ignobles et barbare et demande l'ouverture d'une enquête pour établir les responsables et les commanditaires. #Justice #Cameroun



● Torture is against the law! A viral video shows Cameroonian musician Longue Longue the victim of inhuman abuse by our Forces de l'Ordre. The FRONT SOCIAL DÉMOCRATE strongly condemns these despicable and barbaric acts and calls for the opening of an investigation to establish those responsible and the instigators. #Justice #Cameroon

**29 OCTOBRE 2023 - 29 OCTOBRE 2024.**



● Cela Fait Exactement Un An Que Le Sdf S'est Donné Un Nouveau Président National En La Personne De Joshua Osih. Disons Lui Félicitations. Bonne Fête Monsieur Le Président National.

● It Is Exactly One Year Since The Sdf Elected A New National Chairman In The Person Of Joshua Osih. Congratulations To Him. Happy Birthday Mr National President.

# SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES AND THE CHALLENGES OF DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL IN AFRICA

by

Bobuin John Gemandze (PhD)<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Introduction

In May this year, Cameroon's economic capital – Douala, hosted an international conference organized by the Progressive Alliance in Africa. The theme of the conference was, *'Reaffirming Solidarities for Justice and Democratic Renewal.'* Douala was chosen to host this important conference thanks to the instrumentality of our National Chairman Chief Hon. Osih Joshua. Participants at the conference deliberated critically on the theme and sub-themes of the conference. However, due to time constraints, they could not undertake a detailed and comprehensive examination of all the issues raised. I wish to seize this opportunity to revisit the debate on one of the important sub-themes of the conference – *'The role of progressive parties in the renewal of democracy.'* This sub-theme is of immediate relevance to not only Cameroon but also Africa and the world at large.

## 2. Worldwide Retreat of Democracy

It is clear from the main theme of the conference that the issue of democratic renewal was one of the major concerns of the organizers/conveners of the conference. This concern is legitimate and in fact, justified. It is important to note that the world witnessed a wave of euphoria and optimism regarding democracy following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. Many observers claimed that these events marked the triumph of neoliberalism and liberal democracy. Furthermore, it was claimed that liberal democracy would easily spread to all corners of the world. This optimism and triumphalism was also entertained in academic circles. For instance, in a publication titled *'The End of History and the Last Man'*, the American political

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scientist Francis Fukuyama asserted that, 'the triumph of the West, of the Western idea', is evident first, *'in the total exhaustion of viable systemic alternatives to Western liberalism<sup>2</sup>'*. Unfortunately, the euphoria and optimism turned out to be short lived. In fact, democracy has since suffered major setbacks in all regions of the world. For instance, in its 2015 annual report titled, *'Discarding Democracy: Return to the Iron Fist'*, Freedom House states that the 'acceptance of democracy as the world's dominant form of government' and of an international system 'built on democratic ideals—is under greater threat than at any point in the last 25 years<sup>3</sup>.' The situation is further complicated by the fact that liberal democracy and neoliberalism have contributed to the emergence of populism (for instance, Trumpism in the US), as well as the emergence and/or consolidation of far-right parties (for instance in France, Austria, United Kingdom, Italy and Germany). Against this background, any initiative taken today aimed at the renewal of democracy either at national or global level must be appreciated and encouraged.

### **3. Democratic Renewal: the role of Social Democratic Parties**

The global crisis of democracy raised serious concerns about the relevance and future of social democracy. However, the rise of populism, the electoral gains of far-right parties and the unprecedented levels of inequality and poverty throughout the world have reignited interest in socialism and social democracy. This is evidenced for example, by the recent victory of the Labour Party in the general elections in the UK as well as that of the coalition of socialist parties in France in the second round of parliamentary elections in that country. In fact, I agree with some scholars (such as Katharina Hofmann de Moura et. al., 2022), who suggest that this century could well be the 'social democratic century.' This renewal of interest in social democracy offers an excellent opportunity for social democratic parties and progressive movements in Africa in particular and the Global South as a whole. Progressive movements and social democratic parties must seize this unique opportunity and contribute to the revival and/or renewal of social democracy. In the next section, I attempt to present a

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<sup>2</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>3</sup> Emphasis added. See, Freedom House (2015) *Discarding Democracy: A Return to the Iron Fist*, Freedom in the World Report 2015. Available at: [https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/01152015\\_FIW\\_2015\\_final.pdf](https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/01152015_FIW_2015_final.pdf).

framework for the renewal of democracy and social democracy in particular, in Cameroon and Africa as a whole from two perspectives. Firstly, from the ideological and conceptual perspective and secondly, from the developmental perspective.

### 3.1 Rethinking democracy

The renewal of democracy calls for a fundamental rethinking of what we mean by democracy especially in the African context. From this perspective, I rely on a renowned African intellectual – the Late Professor Claude Ake. Professor Ake (2000)<sup>4</sup> argued that the socio-cultural realities of Africa are such that democracy in Africa must be considered or construed as social democracy. This means that the most appropriate model of democracy in the African context is social democracy. The next challenge would be to identify appropriate strategies for the institutionalization or ‘embedding’ of social democracy in Africa. This can be achieved firstly, by learning from the experiences of other socialist or social democratic parties. For instance, valuable insights could be gained from the challenges faced by older socialist parties such as the ANC of South Africa, the Labour Party in the UK and the Socialist Party in France and from the successes of social democratic parties in the Nordic countries such as Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Secondly, it would be helpful to identify the socio-cultural norms and values in Africa that are relevant for the ‘nurturing’ and institutionalization of social democracy on the continent. Thirdly, socialist parties must establish social contracts or pacts with progressive and productive forces such as labour unions, youth/women organizations, employer organizations and community-based organizations (CBOs), at national and international levels, especially in the Global South.

### 3.2 Rethinking the model of development

The renewal of democracy does not only involve the adoption of an appropriate model of democracy. For the democratic model to be viable or sustainable, it must be complemented by the adoption of an appropriate model of development. Democracy would have no meaning to the masses if for instance, they are languishing in poverty and ignorance. As the saying goes, ‘*a hungry man is an angry man*’ and in French, ‘*ventre*

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<sup>4</sup> See for instance, Ake Claude (2000) *The Feasibility of Democracy in Africa*, CODESRIA, Dakar; Ake, C. (1996) *Democracy and Development in Africa*, Washington DC: The Brookings Institution Press.

*affamé n'a point d'oreilles.*' What is the meaning of development to a father/mother who cannot put food on the table for their children? Who cannot send their children to school? What is the meaning of democracy to jobless youths without a future? In fact, democracy cannot take root in a society where the masses do not see or enjoy what has been referred to as the 'dividends' of democracy. Therefore, the question that arises here is what is the most appropriate model of development for Cameroon and Africa as whole, that is, a development model that is conducive for the institutionalization or 'embedding' of social democracy in African societies?

### (i) Rural development

There is theoretical and empirical evidence to substantiate the argument that the failure of development in Africa is due largely to the fact that post-colonial African governments have adopted an inappropriate development model. In fact, it is argued that in the African context, development 'must be construed initially as rural development'<sup>5</sup> that is, development policy must be based on or underpinned by rural development. This argument is substantiated for instance, by the contribution of rural industrialization policy to China's industrial revolution. However, it is important to note here that contrary to what obtains today in many African countries, (and promoted by NEPAD), rural development involves much more than just agricultural development. Apart from agricultural development, rural development is also concerned with rural industry, rural infrastructure and the provision of basic services. Social democratic parties and progressive movements in Africa must adopt this broader approach to rural development. This approach to rural development is compatible with the core values of social democracy because it takes into account the 'nature of power relations in rural society' and addresses issues of democratization and empowerment. From this perspective, rural communities/societies could be a fertile ground for the 'nurturing' of

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<sup>5</sup> See for instance, Ake, C. (1996) *Democracy and Development in Africa*, Washington DC: The Brookings Institute; Gemandze, B. John (2006) Transcending the Impasse: Rethinking the 'State' and 'Development' in Africa, *African Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 9:1&2:75-90.



social democratic values.

### **(ii) Social and solidarity economy (SSE) programmes**

The revival of democracy requires a radical departure from the neoliberal capitalist economic model. This would involve the adoption of alternative economies or alternative economic models such as the social and solidarity economy (SSE). There seems to be no consensus on the definition of social and solidarity economy (SSE). The *United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy* states that SSE encompasses 'organizations and enterprises that have explicit economic and social (and often environmental) objectives', involving varying degrees and forms of 'cooperative, associative and solidarity relations between workers, producers and consumers; and practice workplace democracy and self-management.' Furthermore, SSE includes

*'traditional forms of cooperatives and mutual associations, as well as women's self-help groups, community forestry groups, social provisioning organizations or 'proximity services', fair trade organizations, associations of informal sector workers, social enterprises, and community currency and alternative finance schemes. (UNTFSSSE 2014).*

It is clear from this definition, that SSE is compatible with the core values of social democracy – freedom, equality, justice and solidarity. In fact, the principles and practices of SSE can contribute to the embedding of the values of justice, humanization of the economy as well as the adoption of innovative solutions that are grounded in people's agency. Furthermore, it could be an effective strategy for the institutionalization and renewal of social democracy especially at local/community or grassroots level.

### **(iii) Social policy**

The failure or collapse of the welfare state has contributed to the crisis of democracy in general and social democracy in particular. The adoption and implementation of policies based on liberal democracy and neoliberalism has led to drastic cuts in expenditures on basic services. In the UK for instance, the new Labour Prime Minister recently noted the negative impact of policies implemented by successive Conservative governments on the National Health Service (NHS). In Cameroon and other African countries, the failure of the welfare state is evidenced by the lack of basic services and

infrastructure especially in rural areas, high levels of unemployment and poverty. Yet the contribution of social policy to inclusive and sustainable development is firmly established in the literature<sup>6</sup>. Social democratic parties and progressive movements must advocate for social policies to figure prominently in government and political programmes. The development model outlined above must therefore be complemented by a comprehensive social policy strategy underpinned by the transformative social policy paradigm<sup>7</sup>. This would involve for instance, the adoption of universal pension schemes, unemployment benefits and the extension of child benefits to (single) parents in the informal sector and a re-evaluation of care giving and domestic work policies<sup>8</sup>.

## Conclusion

The global crisis of democracy compounded especially by the negative socio-economic impact of liberal democracy and neoliberalism in terms of unprecedented levels of poverty and inequality, presents a unique opportunity for the revival/renewal of social democracy given its core values of freedom, equality, justice and solidarity. In fact, this is the 'social democratic century' and borrowing from Fukuyama, I would say social democracy is today, the only '*viable systemic alternative*' to Western liberalism. Social democratic parties and progressive movements in Africa must seize this opportunity and adopt strategies for the revival, renewal and deepening of social democracy on the continent. The framework for revival and renewal of social democracy presented here could be adopted and adapted to the specific context of each country.

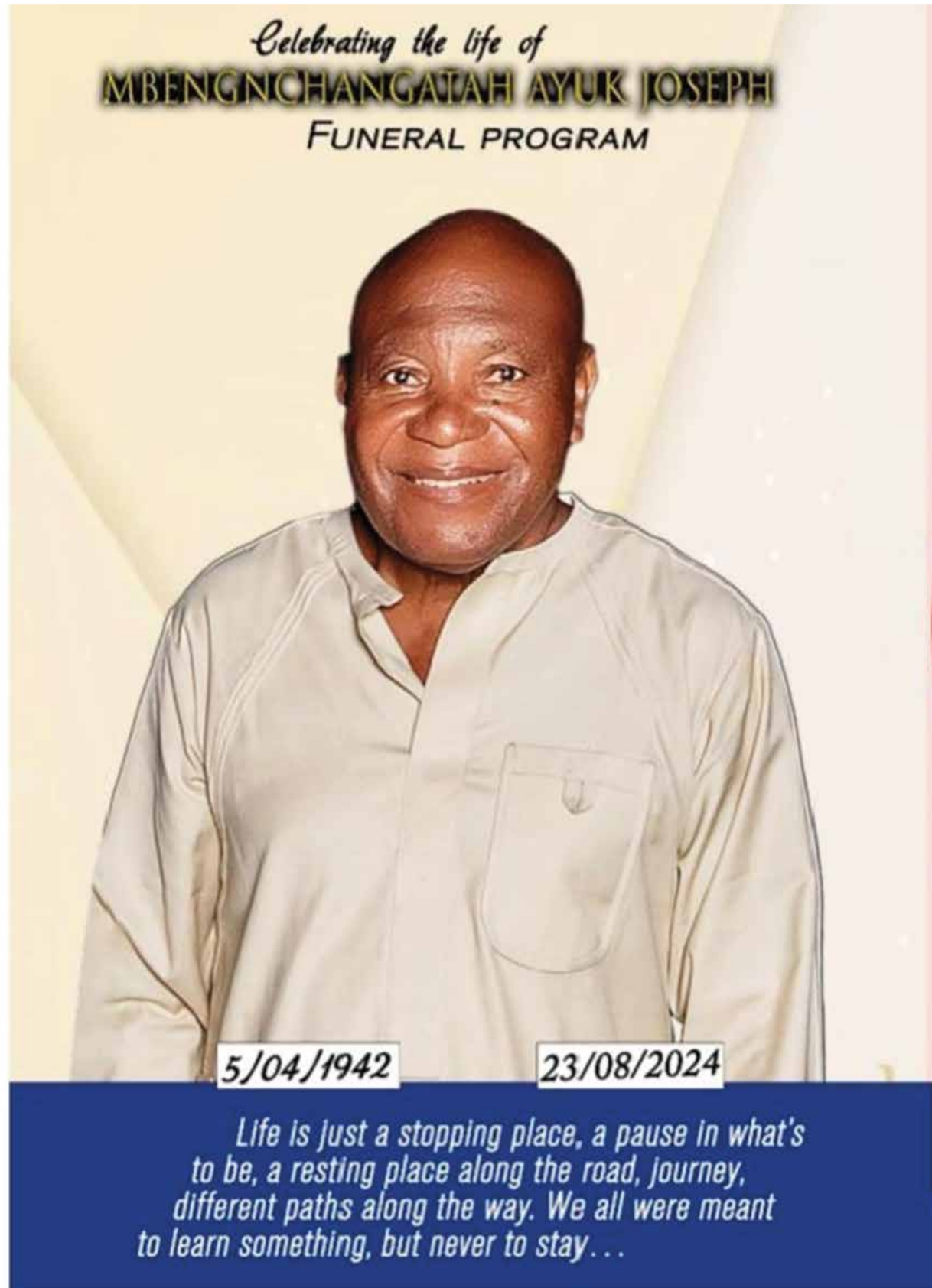
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<sup>6</sup> See for instance, Mkandawire, T. (ed.) (2004) *Social Policy in Development Context*, Palgrave Macmillan, London.

<sup>7</sup> UNRISD (2006) Transformative Social Policy Lessons from UNRISD Research. *UNRISD Research and Policy Brief 5*. Available at: <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/28607/RPB5e.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> See for instance, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) (2016) *Policy Innovations Transformative Change, Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, Geneva.

## ILS NOUS ONT QUITTÉS



**Chers camarades, c'est avec un cœur rempli de tristesse que nous vous annonçons le décès des camarades MBENG JOSEPH AYUK, Président de la Cellule SDF NKONGMONDO Rails, et l'ancien coordonnateur départemental de Faro et Deo, le nommé Baba Ada survenu ce jour à Ngaoundéré. À cet effet, nous adressons nos sincères condoléances à la famille nucléaire, ainsi qu'à la grande famille politique du SDF.**

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