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**Electoral Democracy and Poverty
Reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa:
A Theoretical and Empirical Study**

Elie Ngongang



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Abstract

This study attempts to provide a theoretical and empirical analytical framework aimed at buttressing arguments according to which electoral democracy highly contributes to the improvement of the welfare of populations in countries where it is adopted as opposed to dictatorial regimes practiced up to date.

This theoretical and empirical framework may permit to grasp the decisive factors which may transform elections into a powerful instrument more likely to lead governments or the people's representatives to pay more attention to the aspirations of the disadvantaged, and to adopt policies able to enlarge the socio-economic opportunities of the latter.

The analysis of democratic processes in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) may highlight the fact that the conditions necessary for electoral democracy are far from being satisfied within this Sub-region, since elections are yet to become a powerful means for the populations of these countries to make their governments and elected officials accountable for their promises and actions after they assume power. It is therefore important for all the national and international stakeholders participating in the fight against poverty to show more concern about those aspects which deprive the poor of their power to penalize elected officials through the ballot box, and which consequently favor the diversion by these officials of the funds intended to improve the social and economic welfare of their constituencies.

Keywords: Democracy, Election, Poverty, Sub-Saharan Africa




Introduction

It was in the early 90's that many African states, with the help of the eastern wind, committed themselves to a political democratization process at the same time that they were experiencing significant and chronic public finance deficits. Democratic governance was to become a condition for benefiting from development aid. Consequently, the leaders of developing countries and notably, those of African countries, embarked on a "race against the clock" to establish democratic institutions and to organize elections. *In fact*, it has been more than a decade since the democratic process has been in progress in Africa. However, most of the countries are as yet to witness any social or economic progress. According the UNDP (2003) through its world report on human development, the number of persons surviving in Sub-Saharan Africa on less than a dollar per day has increased, and income per head has declined in 20 countries or stagnated in many other countries during the 90's in that part of the continent.

Following these observations, many researchers, analysts, politicians, and civil society organisations have been attempting to investigate the link between democracy and economic and human development. Does democratic governance effectively constitute a necessary condition for African countries' development as opposed to revolutionary governance models experienced by countries such as Burkina Faso in 1982, Chad in 1981, the Central African Republic in 1999, and the coup attempt in Cameroon in 1984? Those who answer this question in the affirmative are interested in knowing what the minimum necessary conditions would be in a democracy, for this type of governance to induce a virtuous cycle for economic and human development.

However obvious they seem to be, these questions have yet to be subjected to in-depth analysis in the economic literature through a theoretical and empirical development of the link between democracy, good governance, and economic and human development. To achieve this objective, we choose as a framework of reference "electoral democracy", which Quantin (1998) defines as a regime in which good governance and competition for the control of the government of a State is settled durably thanks to elections which must be considered as being free and transparent by



the main interest groups in order for them to conform to these elections rather than pursue the struggle for power by other means.


The construction of a model of electoral democracy and poverty is possible only if the concept of “democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa” is considered in terms of its global functioning relative to the general logic (or standards) of democracy. After this introductory section, the paper is organized in the following manner: analysis of the electoral process in the SSA context in section 2; construction of the “electoral democracy- poverty reduction” model based on lessons drawn from the analysis of electoral processes in section 3; empirical analysis of the functioning of democracy in SSA based on the model in section 4, and lastly the conclusion in section 5.

Electoral Democracy in Sub- Saharan Africa

The interest shown in recent years by many African countries in the democratic process has notably led them to establish a large number of regulatory democratic institutions which necessarily brings up the issue of the cost of democracy incurred by states undergoing structural adjustment. In fact, in a context of economic liberalization and globalization, one may dread the risks or implications of the democratic process for countries which are already experiencing significant budget deficits. It therefore seems legitimate to ask whether or not any country has economic interest to embark on democratization, given that the democratic process contributes significantly to weighing down state expenditures and ineluctably entails an increase in budgetary deficits.

On the other hand, democracy leads to a better allocation of resources, since it permits the rationalization of public management and good governance, thanks to the actions of the countervailing powers of the democratic opposition and the sanction of voters through the ballot box, which should contribute to the development of African countries in the long run.

Owing to this ambivalent nature of the democratic process, many authors such as Becker (1982), Alson (1965, 1982), Downs (1957), Alesina and Tabellin (1992), Alesina and Drazen (1991) have paid attention to the issues of electoral democracy, good governance and poverty. Economists have therefore dwelt on the characteristics,




behaviours and electoral forms. The establishment of democracy in a country is concerned with public decisions, and this question constitutes one of the privileged themes of public choice theory, which according to Mueller (1989), is defined as ‘the economic analysis of non-market decision processes or more simply, the application of economic analysis to political science’. Public choice theory, which was pioneered by Downs (1957), and Buchanan and Tullock (1962), finds applications in developing countries, mainly in the following four fields.

- Voting theory, with studies devoted to autocratic regimes (Tullock, 1967, Wintrobe, 1989; Lafay, 1991) on the one hand, and the analysis of the links between the forms of political institutions and the rate of development (Pourgerami, 1988; Grier and Tullock, 1989), on the other hand.
- The theory of interest groups derived from studies by Olson (1965, 1982), Becker (1982), and that of the “search for unearned or private income”, the foundations of which were postulated by Tullock (1967);
- The domestic causes of foreign indebtedness and the behavior of international suppliers of capital, analyzed by Alesina and Drazen (1991), Alesina and Tabellini (1992), and Lafay and Lecaillon (1993);
- The theory of bureaucracy and the study of links between structural adjustment and political and economic interactions (Morisson, Lafay and Dessus, 1995).

Derived from a political decision, the theory of democracy may be considered as a public good, given that a significant part of its financing is ensured by the state (Bernard, 1995; Percebois, 1991; Picard, 1995). It even constitutes a collective good since it satisfies Lindahl’s three conditions (Wolfersperger, 1995; and Laffout, 1988), namely:

- The impossibility of exclusion through prices, in the sense that democracy is not solely reserved for solvent citizens, except in cases where the voting system is based on tax quota.
- The right of use, due to the fact that every citizen is entitled



to enjoy democracy.

- The absence of the crowding out effect, since there is no rivalry between citizen-consumers (i.e. the fact that an individual enjoys democracy does not hamper others to do the same).


In the literature on the electoral process in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), elections are considered by many analysts as ‘elections unlike others’ because they are notably characterized by disrespect for electoral laws and dysfunctions that Quantin (1998) classifies into three categories, namely:

- lack of discipline
- difficulties involved in the organization for mobilizing supporters and
- problems inherent in the production of representations and choices.

In this respect, before proceeding to the analysis of electoral behavior in Sub-Sahara Africa, a number of authors - notably, Lasserre (2003) and Mhone (2003) - attempt to see whether these imperfections are characteristic or specific to this region.

Electoral Imperfections and the Political Market in Sub-Sahara Africa

In a recent synthesis, Zerbo (2005) has expounded the view that recent electoral experiences in developing countries and notably in Africa have highlighted gaps and dysfunctions, particularly as concerns the absence of an internalization of ‘good conduct’ standards, difficulties linked to the mobilization of supporters, and the prevalence of voting choices based on membership in an ethnic, religious or regional group. However, it is useful to recall that these imperfections are also the permanent constituent elements of the most advanced democracies in the world. None of the Western democratic experiences functions today without ambiguity, without undermining the standards of political loyalty, without some wavering in the mobilization of supporters, and without some interference linked to identification to certain groups, some



questions about which raises the individualism of the vote (Quantin, 1998).

Thus, one could argue that the electoral imperfections observed in Africa are not uniquely characteristic of this part of the world. They may not strictly be considered as resulting from complex socio-cultural relations that are developed by African entities. These imperfections do not result from electoral competition similar to the competition that obtains in economic and financial markets. However, to entrust the designation of governments with an exchange procedure of the whole adult population leads to integrate in the operation, the characteristics usually implemented to settle non political exchanges, including those used in domestic life and in relations in the economy.

Following the example of what is observed in the other sectors of social activities, Prevost, 2004; Redjenne, 2004; Zerbo, 2005; assert that the imposition of electoral discipline is, without end, subject to the pressure of opposing forces, which propose alternative ways such as fraud, populism, vote buying, as well as violence as efficient recourse for achieving objectives in the context of democratic procedure. According to the same authors, populism, vote buying, and fraud do not constitute abnormal practices, but constituent elements of the political market. They are closely linked to competition. These types of imperfections are legion in economic and financial markets, both in the west and in African countries.

However, imperfections in the political markets of SSA countries are not of the same order as those found in the Western political market. This difference between the degree of imperfections in both political markets might not be more linked to the socio-cultural context than to the degree of mastery of the democratic game. Since Africa does not have a lot of experience in this matter, and since its adult population is not schooled, it is normal for imperfections such as populism, vote buying, and community votes to be more emphasized than in developed countries.

It follows that electoral imperfections might not be barriers to the establishment of electoral democracy, as the electoral history of developed countries has shown (Lafay, 1993). They might not be specific to the African continent, but are rather constituent

elements of the political market, and are linked to the competition imposed by the democratic game (Percebois, 1991). For this reason, the development of the theoretical foundations of the relationship between electoral democracy, good governance, and human development could be justified through the strategic behaviours of candidates and voters in order to be able to build a model. Thus the section below dwells on electoral analysis and the strategic developments of candidates and voters, with a view to formalize and specify the model.

Electoral Strategies of Candidates: Parliamentary Elections in Cameroon and Burkina Faso

Considering the experience of old democracies, the number of votes tends to rise with the level of democracy (Niskanen, 1971). According to analysts, in studying the candidates' strategies, it would be pertinent to distinguish candidates by whether or not they are in the opposition or in office, insofar as the position of political parties relative to the party in power is decisive in electoral strategies implemented in the conquest of public opinion.

For instance, legislative elections permit us to grasp the strategic behaviours of parties in power and those of opposition parties. We analyze, in the first place, the parliamentary elections of Cameroon in July 1995 and those of Burkina Faso in May 1997, which would permit to determine the strategic behavior of ruling parties, and in the second place, the parliamentary elections of Cameroon in July 2002 and those of Burkina Faso in May 2002, which could show the behavior of opposition parties.

Similarly, the Cameroon parliamentary elections of July 1995 and those of Burkina- Faso of May 1997 resulted in the large victories of the ruling parties which respectively won 119 out of 180 and 100 out of 111 parliamentary seats in both countries. According to Niskanen (1968, 1971) and Loada (1998), three factors might explain the victories of these parties, namely, the organization of these parties, their endowments in human and material resources, as well as their innovative capacity.

Organization of Ruling Parties

As concerns the organization of the party in power (or presidential parties), the opposition is usually weakened, notably, by its internal divisions, and the incumbent party was enhanced in 1995 and in 1997, respectively in Cameroon and in Burkina Faso by the rallying of several opposition militants, and it merges with other political formations to create a base resting on a common new ideology which may, for instance, be social democracy. In Cameroon, the *Rassemblement démocratique du peuple camerounais* (RDPC), and in Burkina Faso, the *Congrès pour la Démocratie et le Progrès* (CDP) effected real political and administrative cross-ruling of the national territory, relying on the structures of the former one-party system (in Cameroon), and the former popular structures put in place by the revolutionary government (in Burkina Faso), on the chieftaincies and the Lamida. These structures permitted the RDPC and the CDP to gain the political and ideological support of the populations.

Human and Material Resources

With respect to human and material resources, democracy may be considered as a public good, since a significant share of its financing is ensured by the state (Bernard, 1985; Percebois, 1991; Picard, 1995). The membership of the incumbent party (in Cameroon as in Burkina Faso) includes most of the administrative, economic, and social elites of the country, notably the youngest elites who entered the political scene following the rotation of elites (which occurred in 1983 with the advent of the revolution in Burkina Faso), or their admission to the party (after the transfer of power in Cameroon in 1982). Thus, given its power position, the party in power has no problem in acquiring the material resources necessary to carry out its electoral campaign and to use its power over the electoral process. Some candidates belonging to the party in power and having at their disposal all the information provided by the state, or being able to exert a significant influence on the spatial allocation of the state's capital expenditures, will claim their paternity or their merit, and hence multiply the number of official inaugurations or start-ups of public works, just before the period preceding election day. To this may be added populist handouts of financial




resources or foodstuffs to certain classes of the population.

Innovative Capacity

Considering innovative capacity, Zerbo (2005) asserts that to nominate its candidates to legislative elections (during the parliamentary elections of July 1995 in Cameroon and of May 1997 in Burkina Faso), the party in power, contrary to opposition parties, organizes primaries in order to get rid of certain politicians believed to be well-seated in their electoral constituencies, and to select the most representative candidates so as to maximize their chances of winning.

Thus, it emerges from these examples from Cameroon and Burkina Faso that parties in power, thanks to their appropriation of the state's machinery, and their power positions, implement strategies ranging from party enhancement or the weakening of the opposition, to the enrolment of most of administrative economic and social elites, not to mention populist methods. Confronted with such strategies, opposition parties adopt defensive attitudes, and criticize and point to the poor performance of democratic institutions without which political alternation is unlikely, instead of convincing, increasing the awareness of, and mobilizing the voters.

Contrary to the Cameroon experience where opposition parties obtained a decreasing percentage of parliamentary seats, i.e. 48 % and 16 %, respectively during the 1997 and 2002 parliamentary elections, the ruling party in Burkina Faso won the elections by a landslide. In the aftermath of this poor performance by Burkina Faso's opposition parties, the parties adopted structures which allowed them to obtain 48 % of the seats during the 2002 parliamentary elections. This highly significant opposition parties' progress may be explained by the qualitative change of the political environment in Burkina-Faso between 1998 and 2002, which is characterized by the proportional technique used for the attribution of seats, and above all, by a greater involvement of the opposition in the democratic game during the last elections. The situation is quite different in Cameroon where political parties are less involved. Contrary to the 1997 elections, which were more or less boycotted by opposition parties, the parliamentary elections of 2002



in Burkina Faso were characterized not only by a wider participation by opposition parties in the electoral process, but they also emphasized their collaboration with the electoral regulatory organizations, with the media, and by achieving better organization of their own parties.

In Cameroon, opposition parties are yet to adopt a common strategy during important elections. They have acquired the habit of boycotting elections, whereas Burkina Faso's opposition parties, which used to boycott elections, seem to have understood that the electoral process remains the most efficient means for achieving alternation in government, and that their participation in this process is crucial in advancing democracy, both at the institutional level and at the level of increasing the awareness of voters, as well as mobilizing them. This is why in 2004, all political parties committed themselves to participate in parliamentary elections. Moreover, they sent their representatives to the *Commission Electorale Nationale Independante* (CENI) and, in the context of these elections, they also agreed to collaborate with the *Conseil Supérieur de l'Information* (CSI), which is in charge of ensuring that the principle of equal time is respected in the State's media programs. This attitude partially explains the performances realized by political parties. It notably contributed, in the case of Burkina Faso, to the improvement of regulatory bodies such as the CSI (Ki-Zerbo, 2002).

By accepting to participate in the 2002 parliamentary elections, Cameroon's opposition parties consequently organized themselves in accordance with their material (quite modest) and human resources. Certain opposition parties with less representation over the national territory, and aware of their weakness, proceeded to form alliances or coalitions. Moreover, to maximize their likelihood of winning, some of these parties and coalitions abandoned their traditional methods of choosing their candidates, to henceforth let the rank-and-file designate the most representative candidates.

Similarly, opposition candidates during electoral campaigns opted to go to the voters door to door, rather than use usual populist strategies, given their limited financial and material means. These candidates not only organized meetings in larger urban centres, but they also made great efforts to come close to the voters in order to

heighten the awareness of the populations about the power of the ballot. Opposition candidates whose parties are represented in the government do not hesitate to use the logistical means of their ministries during electoral campaigns in Cameroon as in Burkina Faso.

Despite material and organizational problems, opposition parties in Africa in general and SSA countries in particular, are participating more in regulatory electoral institutions, and collaborating more, mainly with private information agencies, with a view to achieving better operation of the democratic process likely to ensure political alternation.

Electoral Attitudes of Voters in Sub-Sahara Africa

It should be noted that in electoral competition, the voter constitutes the most precious element to conquer. S/he finds himself/herself facing many candidates to chose from, and this choice depends on considerations such as membership in an ethnic group, and region - as is the case in Cameroon (Menthong, 1998); the advice of a spiritual chief as among the Mourides in Senegal (Monjib, 1998); populist relationships, the level of well-being, or ideologies.


Votes Based on Ethnic, Regional, and Religious Membership

In Sub-Saharan Africa, most voters are inclined to choose those candidates who belong to their particular ethnic, regional or religious group. For instance, during the presidential elections of 1992, 1998 and 2004 in Cameroon, Paul Biya obtained about 97 percent of the votes in the south province, where he has his origins, and 40 percent of the votes expressed on the national level. His potential rival during this period, John Fru Ndi, obtained in his region of origin (NorthWest) 87 percent of the votes, and 36 percent of the votes nationwide. In Senegal, as in Northern Cameroon, the spiritual leader's opinion constitutes a significant factor influencing the choice of the voter (Akin to the Islamic (or Mouride) vote in Senegal). According to the results of a survey conducted by the

Political Science Department of the University of Saint-Louis (Senegal) in 1998, 42 percent of the Mourides cast their ballots by affiliation to their religious brotherhood or ethnic group (Monjib, 1998). But this ethnic and regional manner of voting is becoming less significant in some SSA countries, notably in countries such as Mali, Benin, and Burkina Faso, where the parliamentary elections of 1997 and 2002 have shown that the candidates are increasingly finding a lot of difficulties in imposing themselves in their loyal constituencies due, notably, to the efforts made by many non governmental organizations (NGO), which work to increase the literacy, awareness and training of the voters, particularly those residing in rural areas, by encouraging them to become responsible for their decisions and their actions. Besides the vote based on ethnic, regional or religious considerations, a second type of vote is based on populism or the convictions of candidates.

Votes Based on Populism or the Convictions of Candidates

According to a study conducted in Benin by Banegas (1998), the responsibility of the elected representative is conceived in terms of populist redistribution as a matter of priority. The responsible elected representative is the one who redistributes. The best candidates are those who redistribute financial, material resources or foodstuffs. As noted by Banegas (1998), populist redistribution does not suffice to ensure the legitimacy of the candidate or to win the adhesion of voters in this new pluralistic context which favors “*free riding*”. Zerbo (2005) argues that a fundamental distinction is made between the fact of benefiting from the generous gifts of candidates during elections and the profound convictions of the latter. Thus the populist practices of candidates do not alone determine the vote. The voters should nevertheless take into account the likely effects of the choice of candidates on their future lives, notably on their welfare. The persistence of economic difficulties and the continued deterioration of the living conditions of populations in SSA countries during the last decade, combined with the effects of learning from past electoral experiences, could explain the increased demands by voters for a better knowledge of the candidates’ deep convictions, as well as their capacity to manage public affairs in the interest of the people, and to guarantee




better living conditions for the whole population, despite the permanent effect of mobilizing the financial resources necessary for the management of democracy.

In a recent study by UNDP (2004), support to electoral systems and processes is linked to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) as follows: Firstly, through programs of civic education and voter information, which permit the broadening of democratic participation, notably as concerns men and the other under- represented segments of society. Secondly, by reducing the costs of electoral processes which weigh down national budgets, and in terms of the proportion of the contributions of donors, it is possible to save some resources in favor of direct poverty programs of reduction programs. Thirdly, by enhancing the independence and capacity of institutions responsible for the organization of elections, the probability for contesting the results of elections may be reduced so as to achieve more peaceful transitions and alternations in power. Enhanced security and stability directly contribute to the establishment of greater stability in the lives of the poor at the economic level, and permit the saving of more resources for the provision of services, even during elections or following elections. Progress achieved in the realization of MDGs moreover permits the creation of an environment conducive to better governance.

To this end, we could distinguish between three types of voters: those whose vote is a function of its consequences on future well-being; those who vote is based on populism; and those whose vote depends on membership in a group or on ideology. The economic analysis of democracy thus leads to the construction of a model, which considers the fact that the vote of electors as a function of its effects on future welfare relative to outgoing candidates, depends above all on the progress or regression of the level of economic, social, and human development.

Electoral Democracy and Poverty Reduction: Conceptual and Methodological Framework

This section attempts to discuss the theoretical foundations of the link between democracy and the fight against poverty. This has to do with using the elements retained in the preceding analysis, then



to build a general model and to specify and adapt it for application to the context of Sub-Saharan Africa. These two methodological elements are successively presented below.

General Model of Electoral Democracy and the Fight against Poverty

The model “Electoral Democracy and the Fight against Poverty” is being based on a function called “the function of democratic sanction of the government by the people”. This function has the advantage of depending on the level of welfare represented here by the incidence and the depth of multidimensional poverty, as well as the factors highlighted in the preceding analyses (vote as a function of its consequences on future welfare), in addition to the fact it gives the percentage of electors who might vote against governments for various reasons.

Two types of votes are distinguished: The votes in favor of the party in power, and the vote against the party in power. We also consider three types of voters who are:

- a. Poor voters who vote against governments owing to their living conditions, as opposed to the poor who vote for the government because of populism or ethnic, regional or religious membership.
- b. Non-poor voters who vote against governments for the cause of the most disadvantaged. Their opposite are the most well-off voters who vote for the governments for personal interests and the interests of their social class.
- c. Voters who vote against governments simply for divergences in ideologies, religions or ethnic considerations.

The Function of Democratic Sanction of the Government

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

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

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

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

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

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

Remark: The more living conditions deteriorate, the higher the percentage of the votes of the poor penalizing the party in power will be. An increase in poverty is perceived by the population as proof of the incapacity of the government to manage public affairs to everybody's advantage.

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

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

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

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

(1)

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

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

(2)

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

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

(3)

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

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

(4)

By dividing relation (4) by the total number of voters N , we obtain the sanction function (F_{sg}), which gives the percent of sanction votes against governments (see relation (5) below):

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

(5)

By simplifying (factoring) the second member of relation (5), we obtain the simplified expression of the sanction function against the government given by relation (6) below, which highlights a partition of voters into two groups. The first part of the second member of relation (6) corresponds to the voters' sanction votes against governments linked to the Poor's living conditions, while the second term corresponds to sanction votes linked to the political weight of the opposition.

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

(6)

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

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

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

Parameter w of the sanction function captures the influence or ideological, religious or ethnic, and populist weight of all opposition parties in a country. The weaker the opposition, the lower w will be.

Programme of the Incumbents to Stay in Power

In order for governments to stay in power, they have to minimize sanction votes against them. We take into account the characteristics of functions $g(P_0, P_1)$ and $\beta(P_0, P_1)$, as well as parameter w as short and medium term exogenous data, and the government programme to minimize sanction votes against their party is given by the following minimization programme :

$$Min_{P_0, P_1} F_{sg}(P_0, P_1)$$

(7)

By using the expression of the sanction function in program (7), we obtain program (8).

$$Min_{P_0, P_1} [(1-w)(P_0g(P_0, P_1) + (1-P_0)\beta(P_0, P_1)) + w]$$

(8)

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

However, according to electoral democracy principles “to have the majority” is not equivalent to “having the support of all the voters or even 70 percent of the voters”; but it is also “having a little more than half of the voters” (i.e. 50.5, 51, 51.5, or 52 etc.)”. In this view, we may deduce the solution of programme (8) such that, if the weight w of the opposition is close to 50 percent, that is, in an equilibrium situation in terms of weight or legitimacy between the party in power and the opposition, the elected representatives are obliged to continue combating poverty until it is eradicated, otherwise they will lose power.

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

On the other hand, if the weight w of the opposition is low or negligible, that is, well below 50 percent or even close to 0 percent; or if voter social characteristics and the functioning of democratic institutions are such that the parameters g and β remain close to 0 even for high-valued poverty indicators; elections will not constitute a powerful means for the populations to put pressure insofar as the leaders are not obliged to eradicate poverty in order to gain the majority vote in elections.

To illustrate, let's assume that $w = 20$ percent. Therefore, $F_{sg} = (0, 0) = 20$ percent of the votes; in other words, if poverty is eliminated, the percentage of the voters for the ruling party is 80 percent. Yet, eradication of poverty requires, among other things, more effort, material, financial, and human resources. Rationally, taking into account the huge costs involved, and owing to the fact that resources are scarce, governments may set their electoral objective at, for instance, 60 percent of the votes- i.e. at less than the 80 percent representing the score they would receive when they would eradicate poverty. To the electoral objective of 60 percent set by governments corresponds a value of 40 percent for the sanction function. Given the fact that this function reaches its minimal value at (0,0), it follows that the governments' electoral objective at 60 percent of the votes would correspond to a couple of values (P_{0g}, P_{1g}) of the incidence and depth of poverty, which is different from (0,0). In this case, the electoral objective of those in power does not converge toward the poverty eradication objective. According to the exogenous factors characterizing the function $g(.)$ and $\beta(.)$, indicators (P_{0g}, P_{1g}) corresponding to the electoral objective of those elected are more or less far from (0, 0), which represents a situation without poverty. In a dictatorial regime, the parameters g and β are equal to zero.

The sanction function of the general model is a function yielding the probability to overthrow the regime. Given that the population cannot express itself in a dictatorial environment, this probability depends on the relative weight of the members of the opposition, who usually are forced to work outside the law or in secret. Thus, the main concern of dictatorial regimes is to reduce the opposition

to nothing. Likewise, in a regime that considers itself democratic where, however, democratic institutions malfunction, and where civil liberties and political freedom are subject to severe restrictions, the parameters g and β are totally null. Nothing guarantees that the improvement of the living conditions of populations constitutes one of the concerns of those in power. Thus, it is rather the reduction of the coefficient w of the sanction function to its lowest level possible which turns out to be the principal objective of such a regime. Again in this case, although legal, the opposition is permanently destabilized. Its leaders are kept locked up, and usually forced to go into exile by the leaders of the ruling party.


According to the general model, democracy is a necessary condition for the convergence of the objectives of those in power towards the human development objectives of populations. To this end, democracy would be a process that evolves slowly with the passing years of democratic experiences. But one may pose the question as to which minimum conditions in a democratic country would be necessary for this model of governance to ensure the convergence of the elected's objectives towards the development objectives of populations? To answer this question, we will proceed to the specification of the model.

Specified Model of Electoral Democracy and the Fight against Poverty

The specification of functions with parameters g and β is sufficient for the general model to be adapted to the Sub-Saharan African context. This means that by using the results of the preceding analyses, we propose specifications of relations (9) and (10), respectively for parameters $g(P_0, P_1)$ and $\beta(P_0, P_1)$ of the sanction function:

$$g(P_0, P_1) = k_1 P_0^a P_1^b$$

(9)



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

Where a = coefficient of naivety or inexperience of poor voters in the electoral processes; for a given level of poverty, the higher a is, the more it is easy to convince poor voters through populist methods, vote buying, arguments based on ethnic or regional membership. Thus, the percentage of sanction votes among the poor linked to their living conditions declines.

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

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

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

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

k_1 is a constant which takes into account the other factors not explicitly taken into account in the model, such as the independence of the regulatory institutions of the voters and their capacity to limit electoral frauds. A value of k_1 close to 0 indicates a weak independence and a low capacity for democratic institutions to ensure the transparency and regularity of elections. On the other hand a value of k_1 close to 1 indicates that democratic institutions are both strongly independent and capable of ensuring that elections will be transparent and free in the areas where the poor reside.

Moreover, it must be recognized that when the incidence and intensity of poverty increase, the proportion of sanction votes linked to living conditions increases among the poor.

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

$$\beta(P_0; P_1) = k_2 P_0^c P_1^d$$

(10)

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

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

d is the coefficient of tolerance, or patience of non poor voters toward those in power relative to improvement in the Poor's living conditions. For a given level of the depth of poverty, the higher d is, i.e. the more the non poor voters are patient as concerns the improvement of the living conditions of the poor, the lower percentage of their sanction votes is. When the non-poor show unlimited patience, i.e. when d tends to infinity, the percentage of their sanction votes tends toward 0 because of the poor living conditions of the poor.

k_2 is a constant which takes into account the other factors not explicitly taken into account in the model, such as the independence of regulatory institutions and their capacity to reduce electoral frauds. These factors may be different depending on whether we are talking about the poor voters or the richer voters, since the latter master relatively better, the mechanisms of the democratic process.

In relations (9) and (10), parameters k_1 and k_2 may be assimilated to scores which account for the efficiency with which the country's democratic institutions function, as well as their capacity to ensure that elections are free and transparent. Thus, the specified sanction function is given by relation (11) below.

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

From relation (11), several types of situations can be analyzed according to the dominant factors that exist in the country or community. Thus, on the basis of the hypotheses posited on the parameters, several situations will be analyzed with the understanding that the factors 'weight of the opposition' was analyzed in the preceding section to see to what extent the couple of poverty indicators $(P_0; P_1)$ corresponding to the electoral objective chosen by the government would converge toward the objective $(0;0)$, which is the objective of poverty eradication in democratic states where the weight of the opposition is weak.


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

In a context where elections are free and transparent, and where

the opposition is weak, for the electoral objective $(P_0; P_1)$ of those in power to converge toward the objective $(0;0)$ to improve the welfare of the populations, the parameters a , b , c and d must tend respectively to 0. This means that the poor are experienced or master relatively well the mechanisms of the electoral process; that a greater solidarity exists between the social strata; and that voters are demanding or do not reveal to those in power their great patience concerning an improvement in the conditions of their existence. Elected representatives would therefore be obliged to work continuously for an improvement in the welfare of the populations in order to eradicate poverty, insofar as doing so is the only way to obtain the majority of the votes in a population of voters who are increasingly cunning, demanding, and who feel a greater sense of solidarity with one another. With this in mind, the political objective of the party in power converges toward the welfare objective, notably in favour of the poor. The ruse and solidarity of the voters constitute powerful assets which may serve to put permanent pressure on those in power who are thus compelled to reduce poverty in order benefit from voter patience, which depends notably on the progress already achieved in terms of improvements in living conditions, and to reduce the incidence and depth of poverty in order for the impacts on the latter in the sanction function to be lessened.

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

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



classes, as well as sustained demands by the populations for improvements in their welfare, in addition, of course, to the conditions necessary for the regularity and transparency of elections. Divergence from the welfare objective of the poor simply means that most or some of the above factors do not obtain.

In the light of this model's theoretical conclusions, its application to the case of SSA countries will permit to capture their weaknesses relative to the convergence of the objectives of the policy makers and those of the people.

Analysis of the Situation of Electoral Democracies in Sub-Saharan Africa

This section attempts to analyze, for Sub-Saharan African countries, the conditions which ensure the convergence of the electoral objectives of elected representatives toward the welfare objective of the population highlighted in the model. The purpose here is to grasp the situation of electoral democracies relative to the decisive factors which make elections a powerful means for compelling elected representatives to become more attentive to the needs of the most disadvantaged.

Estimation of the Sanction Function

After specifying the preceding model in equation (11), we turn to data drawn from the report of the *Obsevatoire National des Elections au Cameroun* (ONEL), and from a group of University researchers who carried out a simulation using the results of the 1995 parliamentary elections. The simulation results provide us with the parameters and variables applicable to our model, and they permit the estimation of the sanction function we specified. This information has been completed by the synthesis of data obtained from the headquarters of opposition parties with seats in the National of Assembly of Cameroon, and the works of Fambon (2003) on election financing and political parties in Africa. The estimate of the sanction function is the following:

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

(12)

Emerging from this estimation (equation 12) are a certain number of observations: Firstly, the proportion g of the poor who voted during the elections against the party in power because of their living conditions is estimated to be 60 percent. The proportion of the non-poor voting against the party in power for the cause of the poor is 30 percent, and lastly, the proportion of voters which decided to sanction the party power because of ideological and ethno-religious reasons is 70 percent. The parameters $e = 0.7$, $b = 0.9$, $b = c = 0.9$, and $a = 0.95$. This means that the objectives of those in power is far from converging toward the welfare objective $(0, 0)$ of the populations whatever the values of (P_0, P_1) . Moreover, the parameters $k_1 = k_2 = 0.05$ indicate the quality of democratic institutions and electoral methods. In addition, these parameters show the degree of naivety of poor voters, solidarity or conflicts of interest between the rich and the poor strata.

According to the assumptions made on the parameters and the variables P_0 and P_1 , the estimate of the sanction function (equation 12) permits us to grasp the situation of electoral democracies relative to the decisive factors which render elections an effective tool likely to compel elected representatives to pay attention to the needs of the poorest voters, namely, the weight of the opposition, the factor of solidarity or of conflicts of interest between social strata, the level of mastery of the democratic game by voters. The analysis is simultaneously extended to some other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Weight of the Opposition and Functioning of Democratic Institutions

The model highlights information according to which the opposition's political weight is a decisive factor in the percentage of the sanction votes cast by populations against the government in Cameroon. A strong opposition supposes quite representative opposition parties covering the national territory, which are well-

organized, more united, and increasingly present on the political scene.

In Cameroon, as in most central African countries (notably, Gabon, Chad), and even in West Africa (Burkina Faso, Niger, Senegal), opposition parties are politically weak, even negligible. They are yet to be able to ensure the traditional political functions of mobilization, canalization (of the people), and representation of various interests. In Cameroon, some parties have disappeared between two elections (e.g. *Mouvement Populaire pour la Revolution*, *Le Parti des Fourmis* etc.), whereas the ruling RDPC behaves like it used to during the one-party system period. The parameters $e = 0.7$, $a = 0.95$, $b = c = 0.9$ tend to 1 and thereby indicate that the (P_0, P_1) objective of the leaders of the RDPC do not converge toward the $(0;0)$ welfare objective of the populations. Poor voters are not experienced, and do not grasp the mechanisms of the electoral process very well, or are excluded from the process by various techniques which they ignore. Moreover, the couple of indicators (P_0, P_1) which is the electoral objective set those in power do not converge toward $(0;0)$. This situation does not bode well for eradicating or at least alleviating poverty. The elected representatives are at no time compelled to work constantly to improve the welfare of the most underprivileged.

The divergences between and within opposition parties, as well as the multitude of existing parties in Cameroon, as in most Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries, brought about or not by the parties in power (which may be thought as a 'State-parties' in which the party and the State merge), constitute some of the factors contributing to the political weakening of the Opposition.

In Cameroon, in less than three years between 2001 and 2004, the three most important parties in the country's political scene (notably, the SDF, UNDP and UPC) witnessed internal crisis which caused the defection of some of their first or second leaders, and some influential members of the parties, and even many rank-and-filers. The same thing happened in Burkina Faso between 2002 and 2004, and recently in Chad between 2006 and 2007. Moreover, in


the case of Cameroon, which has about 20 million inhabitants, twenty or so parties were numbered as having participated in the 2002 parliamentary elections. In Burkina Faso, nearly 40 or so parties in a population of 12 million inhabitants took part in the 2002 legislative elections in that country.

Furthermore, aware of the advantages or spoils and the nepotism the ruling party benefit from, politicians in SSA countries change 'hats' to join the party which wins the elections (Ekomi, 2002); which, as a consequence, dampens the political fervour of the voters who henceforth lose interest in politics, thus leading to the low turnout at elections as witnessed in some SSA countries.

Besides these problems and internal difficulties, political parties in SSA countries are victims of destabilizing techniques. Influential leaders are often threatened, locked up or forced to go into exile by governments which have total control over the judiciary and security

forces. The parameters $k_1 = k_2 = 0.05$ tend to 0, indicating that the elections are neither free nor transparent. The value of 0.05 also indicates that democratic institutions totally depend on those in power. Since the 1992 elections in Cameroon, it has been observed that a party member figuring in the list of RDPC (the party in power), will certainly be elected to the tune of 98 % of the vote. But once elected, this representative will not be accountable to the populations who elected him. This situation strongly indicates that poverty reduction or the fight against it ceases therefore to be a concern for those in power. Thus, the opposition is usually weakened further by the undemocratic methods to which the parties in power resort in the context of the competition imposed by the political system.

In some SSA countries, this situation is further favoured by the absence of a balanced governmental system based on the separation of the powers of the State, and the non-existence of a well-educated, well-organised, and active civil society able to make the elected representative accountable for their actions. In these countries generally, the institutional fabric is embryonic, the separation of the powers non-existent, and the regulatory bodies put in place to run the electoral process are totally under the control of State-parties in power.




All these factors indicate and confirm the values taken on by the parameters e , b , a , and c of the sanction function of the representatives elected by the populations in Cameroon. As a consequence, they reduce the people's electoral power which is the only means that can be used to put pressure on those in power so they can adopt the policies likely to create social economic and social opportunities. Thus, the present challenge for Cameroon, as for most SSA countries, could be to put in place a system of representation with political parties, and groups for the defense of the interests of the people which are operational, a system of government based on the separation of powers, as well as an active civil society able to control the actions of those power, to propose different methods for increasing participation in the democratic game, and to favour alternation in power.

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

In most Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries, the most well-to-do generally show a sense of solidarity with the poor, owing to their duties and obligations vis-à-vis their community. In fact, the material and financial burden of the well-off increases with the rise in poverty in the community. In the Littoral Province in Cameroon, for instance, which numbers 3 millions inhabitants, there were fifteen political parties which participated in the parliamentary elections of 2002, and as we mentioned above, 40 parties or so took part in parliamentary elections of Burkina Faso in May 2002. The annual agricultural deficits in Cameroon, Gabon, Burkina Faso, and Senegal are characterized by appeals from salaried employees, employers, and self-employed workers of the urban sector on behalf of their families or rural sector communities, for assistance in purchasing foodstuffs (FAO, 2006).


Generally, when the population is very vulnerable, and work opportunities and other activities become increasingly scarce, or when formal education and health centres are more and more inaccessible, the well-off are further called upon by the poor of their community for help. A more pronounced monetary poverty entails a strong pressure on the budgets of the rich in their



community due to the support they must provide to the most underprivileged for survival. Moreover, the work opportunities are limited; the number of ‘brothers and sisters’ of ‘male and female cousins’, of ‘nieces and nephews’ and of ‘aunts and uncles’ waiting for employment to come by, and living in the households of the well-off, increase. When the modern health centres are more and more inaccessible to the members of the community, and the latter become increasingly poor and sick, they move to the city where there are health centres and benefit from the help of their well-off relatives to get well. Finally, the illiteracy of the members of the community also constitutes a determining factor which affects the welfare of the well-to-do, insofar as it limits access by the poor (already a burden to their richer relatives) to health services, the labour market, credit, and so forth.

Whether poverty is monetary or non-monetary, it has negative direct and indirect impacts on the welfare of the non-poor in the communities of SSA countries. The non-poor generally support the poor, notably demanding the adoption of pro-poor policies to ensure better living conditions for the poor. The non-poor would therefore be more disposed to vote against the leaders who neglect the plight of the poor, rather than vote for these types of leaders. In the estimation of the sanction function for Cameroon, the coefficient ($\alpha = 0.95$), which measures the boundless patience of the voters, i.e. the fact that voters are not demanding enough on the issue of improvements in their living conditions, and the fact that there are less conflicts of interest between the rich and the poor, is very significant above all in the northern part of the country where begging for charity prevails.

Aware of the existence of solidarity between the rich and the poor whose electoral effects outweigh those of eventual conflicts of interest, of past, present or future failures, the elites in power have often amplified the social divide between the rich and poor, and other social strata. They have regularly used the ethnic sentiment as an instrument to keep and legitimize themselves in power ‘while denying the official argument central to their political rhetoric fully devoted to the apologetics of development and national unity’ (Otayek, 1999). It is increasingly becoming frequent in sub-Saharan Africa to question the citizenship, the exercise of civil rights, and



the political capacity of some voters or candidates, starting from the supposed origin of their parents (Bayart, 2001). These various identity claims cannot be considered as the perverse effects of pluralism, and even less of democracy. They stem mainly from the practices which the holders of power make of ethnic or religious differences in the context of their strategies with a view to conquer power.


Mastery of the Democratic Game and Access to Information by Voters

The populations of SSA countries are limited as concerns the mechanisms, the mastery of the concepts, and the content of the electoral process, owing to their low level of education, difficulties of access to information, and to the fact that Africa does not have a large experience of multi-partyism.

According to PNUD (2004), 40 percent of the adult populations in SSA countries are illiterate as against 0 percent for developed countries, and 27 percent for all developing countries. In Cameroon 49.2 percent of the population remains illiterate with about 65.3 percent concentrated in the rural area. This proportion stands at 76 percent in Burkina Faso, and a significant part of the population is yet to have access to such traditional means of information as a radio or a television. Moreover, on the African continent, numerous are those electoral experiments which have been boycotted by opposition parties or badly organized, so that the populations have not yet learned enough or learned nothing at all from the former elections.

The preceding estimates of sanction function are quite significant.

The coefficients $k_1 = k_0 = 0.05$ indicate the fact that the democratic game engages populations which grasp neither the concepts, content, mechanisms, nor the process. Moreover, there are a lot of voters in Cameroon who are not able to carry out a pertinent analysis of the programmes and speeches of the political candidates, as well as to distinguish between the populist actions of the latter, and those actions which really aim to improve their welfare in the long-term. The naivety coefficient $e = 0.7$ of the sanction function is relatively high in Cameroon. Also illiteracy and




limited access to information contribute to render populations less demanding of improvement in their living conditions. This acts to increase the coefficients $b = 0.9$ and $d = 0.9$ of tolerance vis-à-vis those in power as regards living conditions. Consequently, the power of the populations to compel those in power to be attentive to the most underprivileged is thus reduced. This situation prevails in most of Sub-Saharan Africa.

The above foregoing, information plays an important role in the understanding of the democratic game by voters and their mobilization, especially if information is considered from the standpoint of its educational, training function, in addition to the fact it increases voter awareness. Unfortunately, in addition to the material and financial problems which constitute a serious constraint in the development project, the instruments of communication and information, the independence of the media, the freedom of expression, association, and information remain subjected to significant restrictions in SSA countries.

Nowadays, with the proliferation of local and rural radio stations in many SSA countries, the popularization of new information technologies (NIT), which are difficult to control by those in power and tend to adopt actions to heighten the awareness of the public (sometimes broadcasting in local languages); and the general wave towards the setting up non governmental organizations, populations increasingly have access to information. This relative accessibility to information by the population has led to the injection of more transparency into electoral processes, as in certain West African States such as Benin, Ghana and Mali, during their recent presidential elections.


On examining the estimation results of our model and the situation in the countries of the African continent relative to the necessary conditions which make the electoral democratic process a tool likely to help poor populations make those in power accountable, it emerges from the study that, at the present stage of democratization in sub-Saharan Africa, elections do not yet constitute the powerful tool hoped for by the poor population to compel the parties in power to pay attention to their votes and their needs. Despite the advances recorded on this matter in the



continent, it may be said that they are still far from being significant. Consequently, it is necessary and opportune that all political actors, interest defence groups for the populations, civil society, NGOs and the state, all work together to ensure the efficient functioning of democratic institutions, increase the awareness, mobilize, and train the populations on the concepts, content, mechanisms, and processes of the democratic game, including the fundamental freedoms such as the freedom of expression, of association, and of information, with a view to provide the individuals with the means to compel the governments to adopt the policies capable of enlarging economic and social opportunities.

Conclusion

This study has attempted to construct a theoretical and empirical framework based on the idea according to which good governance strongly contributes to the improvement of the welfare of populations in countries where it is implemented, unlike dictatorial systems. With this approach, it is possible to grasp the determining factors which render elections the powerful means they are to compel the party in power or the elected local representatives to be attentive to the needs of the poor, and to adopt policies likely to broaden social and economic opportunities. It also emerges as concerns the conditions necessary to guarantee free elections, as well as civil and political freedom, that balanced political weight or influence between the party in power and the opposition; a good mastery or comprehension of the democratic game by the voters; solidarity or low degree of conflicts of interest between social strata; as well as demands for increasingly better living conditions particularly for the poor; are decisive factors for the convergence of the electoral objectives of those in power toward the welfare objective to which the poor aspire. Relative to these decisive factors, some progress has been achieved here and there in sub-Saharan Africa. But, the study shows that a satisfactory level is far from being attained for some of these decisive factors throughout this part of the continent.



To that end, elections still are not a powerful means for the population to compel the governments to be more attentive to the aspirations of the poor. Hence the need for the national and international stakeholders, cooperation agencies, financial backers etc, in the context of the fight against poverty, to be concerned about those aspects which deprive the poor of their power to sanction the elected representative through the ballot box, thus favouring the poor management and the diversion of the funds allocated to socio-economic development.

However, the realization of the optimum implies, for African countries engaged in the democratization process, substantial progress in this area, since their democratic institutions function poorly. This leads us to conclude that the realisation of the democratic optimum is subject to the affirmation of real political will.

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