

**THE CAMEROONIAN SUPPORT STRUCTURES  
FOR THE NEGOTIATION OF THE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP  
AGREEMENT BETWEEN CAMEROON AND THE EUROPEAN  
UNION. 2003- 2018**

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***Abstract***

This article questions the effectiveness of Cameroonian support structures for the negotiation of the Economic Partnership Agreement between Cameroon and the European Union. It follows from this questioning that with regard to the content of the Cameroon-European Union EPA that these structures have been ineffective for Cameroon because of their weak negotiating power vis-à-vis the powerful countries of the European Union. In addition, it highlights the servile postures of Africa in general and Cameroon in particular in the negotiations of multilateral agreements with the European Union.

**Key words:** *EPA, negotiation support structures, Cameroon-European Union-Neocolonialism.*

**Introduction**

The history of trade cooperation between the European Union and the ACP countries is nearly 60 years old. It is characterized by numerous permanences and ruptures whose structural and economic factors have influenced its dynamics. It is in this perspective that trade relations between the European Union and Cameroon were also inscribed, established by the Cotonou Agreement of June 2000 (Ebalé, 2016: 19) which introduced a new framework for commercial, liberal and above all unequal, compatible with the requirements of globalization known as the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA). The latter demand the customs and even tax dismantling of imports from the European Union, the aim being to promote wider access to the market of ACP countries. Unprepared for this scenario, Cameroon, like the other ACP countries, had to equip itself with a set of structures to ensure the negotiations of this new agreement; the aim being to preserve the economic and commercial interests of Cameroon. This inevitably leads us to the formulation of the following question: have the Cameroonian support structures for the negotiation of the EPA really played their role in a critical context of Cameroon's solitary commitment to a bilateral EPA with the EU to the detriment of a regional dynamic? Attempting to answer this question will form the basis of this analysis. the aim being to preserve the economic and commercial interests of Cameroon. This inevitably leads us to the formulation of the following question: have the Cameroonian support structures for the negotiation of the EPA really played their role in a critical context of Cameroon's solitary commitment to a bilateral EPA with the EU to the detriment of a regional dynamic? Attempting to answer this question will form the basis of this analysis. the aim being to preserve the economic and commercial interests of Cameroon. This inevitably leads us to the formulation of

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the following question: have the Cameroonian support structures for the negotiation of the EPA really played their role in a critical context of Cameroon's solitary commitment to a bilateral EPA with the EU to the detriment of a regional dynamic? Attempting to answer this question will form the basis of this analysis.

### **Overview of the foundations and Cameroonian support structures for the EPA negotiation**

Understanding the Cameroonian support structures for the negotiation of the EPA between Cameroon and the European Union requires beforehand that particular attention be given to the determinants of the said agreement on the one hand and that a presentation of the above-mentioned structures be done on the other hand. It is in this logic that it seems judicious to open this reflection by highlighting the motives for the implementation of the EPAs and by proceeding to a brief description of the structures that were put in place at the level of Cameroon in order to ensure the smooth running of the negotiations relating to this agreement.

### **The determinants of EPAs**

The EPAs are above all reciprocal but asymmetrical free trade agreements between each ACP sub-region and Europe. This section of analysis aims to present the distant and immediate determinants of EPAs.

### **The distant determinants of EPAs**

If the European Community was born with the Treaty of Rome, it was with the Georgetown Agreement of June 6, 1975 that the group of African, Caribbean and Pacific States was created, better known as the "ACP group". " (Courrier ACP/UE July-August 2000), an entity made up of countries in many respects different but nevertheless having in common multiple interests and above all the socio-economic development of their peoples. Remember that this group is one of the very first groups made up only of poor countries on the international scene and having the objective, among other things, of "choosing their mode of management of their affairs" which in practice is only a chimera of the fact that the foreign powers always keep a hold on their bastion. Pursuant to the provisions of Part IV of the Treaty of Rome which invites the Six to cooperate with the countries maintaining special relations with them, namely links The accession to independence of the overseas countries and territories has led to the negotiation of their relations, particularly in the field of economic, scientific and cultural cooperation with the EEC, on a contractual basis. This cooperation has been enriched since 1957, both in terms of its field of application and its geographical scope. It is within this framework that the first Yaoundé Convention was signed on July 2, 1963, which provides for financial and commercial aid to the eighteen former African colonies. The second Yaoundé Convention, signed on July 29, 1969, relates to the financing of projects with a preponderance of black Africa. The Arusha Agreement of September 24, 1969 integrates three member states of the Commonwealth into the Yaoundé Convention. Faced with this unproductive situation, a succession of conventions called "Lomé Conventions" was set up. These agreements are in many ways a novelty in this "new" relationship. The first convention of Lomé was marked by its time. It reflected the relative geopolitical power of the ACP countries in the context

of the Cold War, the oil crisis and the ideological debate on the “new international economic order” which occupied people’s minds at the time. Revised and updated every five years, the successive Lomé Conventions have represented, at the global level, the broadest political and financial framework offered to North-South cooperation. For a long time, the Lomé Convention was considered an innovative model of international cooperation. In many ways, it served as a pilot structure for other forms of cooperation.

### **The immediate determinants of EPAs**

The Cotonou Agreement and compatibility with WTO rules are immediate catalysts for EPAs. The trade regime put in place by Lomé has come under progressive pressure for reasons of both efficiency and political acceptability. Despite preferential access to EU markets, ACP export performance has deteriorated over the past two decades. Diversification from traditional products also remained very limited. To this is added that the trade provisions of Lomé have been deemed incompatible with the new international rules set by the World Trade Organization. Conflicts over the banana trade regime illustrate this sensitive point. The more than mixed results of these agreements and their ineffectiveness, but also the evolution of world trade relations, have prompted the European Union, through its Green Paper, to question the mechanisms at work within the framework of Lomé (Core, 2007 , 14).

This is why it was deemed necessary to negotiate a new, much more dynamic agreement in order to start again on new foundations which would take into account the “interests” of each party. Negotiations for a new framework, which began in September 1998, culminated in the signing in Cotonou on June 23, 2000 of a general EU-ACP partnership agreement, commonly known as the Cotonou Convention. It should also be noted that the signing of the Agreement in Cotonou was done incidentally because it was to take place in the Fiji Islands in May 2000.

But the political instability which shook this country at the time, led the delegations to choose the Beninese capital. This date is to be marked with a white stone because it is now synonymous with a major historical and political event, and this for at least three reasons: first, it is the result of a long process; secondly, because the signing of the new agreement clearly demonstrates that after the disappointing outcome of the Seattle conference, it is still possible to maintain friendly and sincere relations between North and South; finally, because this date ushers in a new era in relations based on a profound reform of the spirit that drives cooperation, its objectives and its practice.

The agreement has a duration of twenty years and contains a clause allowing its revision every five years (article 95) with the exception of the provisions on economic and commercial cooperation which are subject to a specific revision procedure. It is centered on the objective of reducing and eventually eradicating poverty while contributing to sustainable development and the gradual integration of ACP countries into the world economy. It is based on a few fundamental principles, namely the equality of partners, ownership of development strategies, participation, dialogue and mutual commitment, among others. One of the great innovations of this agreement is the introduction of improved political dialogue. To a cooperation long focused on economic objectives, has gradually been replaced by a broader and somewhat more coherent framework integrating political aspects. Today, one of the

essential features of this multilateral partnership is to combine the development aid necessary for the ACP countries, trade to meet the challenges of globalization and a reinforced political dimension allowing consideration of important aspects which also have their impact on development.

The advent of the WTO in 1994 brought new provisions on trade. The legislative framework of the WTO imposes compliance with a set of principles, one of the most important of which is the most favored nation clause (MFN) which prohibits any commercial discrimination between members of the organization. The WTO has two main foundations that help to better understand the origins. First, it has a legal basis:

The granting of non-reciprocal preferences in favor of the developing countries of the ACP group alone is in fact not in conformity with the rules of the WTO and in particular with the Enabling Clause which makes it possible to derogate from the treatment of the most favored nation in favor of developing countries, but on the other hand prohibits any discrimination between developing countries that is not based on objective criteria. The GATT Enabling Clause thus allows the conclusion of preferential Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs) thereafter, which are not subject to the disciplines provided for in Article XXIV of the GATT (Ebale, 2016: 45).

It has an economic basis:

The liberalization of trade at world level leads to a general lowering of customs tariffs by virtue of the MFN clause, and therefore mechanically reduces the preferential margin enjoyed by ACP countries. This phenomenon is amplified by the proliferation of trade agreements between the EU and developing regions other than the ACP countries, as well as by the successive reforms of the community's GSP. Also, to make the preferential regime granted to the ACP compatible with WTO rules, three solutions were possible: transform non-reciprocal preferences into free trade areas (FTA); grant these preferences to all developing countries or obtain a waiver from WTO rules (Ebale, 2016: 45).

But it was the first solution that was adopted and that led to the establishment of the EPAs.

### **Brief overview of Cameroonian negotiation support structures**

In order to be able to effectively initiate the negotiations of the EPA which was henceforth to govern its commercial relations with its historic partner the EU, Cameroon, as was the case elsewhere, equipped itself with national instruments of negotiation which we designate here by Cameroonian negotiation structures.

These structures can be subdivided into two broad categories. These are structures of an official nature on the one hand, and those of an unofficial nature on the other. For the sake of synthesis, the various structures mentioned above have been inserted into a table which gives a brief overview. This table gives an overview of these different structures.

**Table 1: Official and unofficial negotiation structures of the Economic Partnership Agreement between Cameroon and the European Union**

Official structures	Unofficial structures
Ministerial structures	The private sector
Inter-ministerial structures	CSOs
The national assembly	Trade unions

**Source :** NP Medjo II, " Support structures for the negotiation and implementation of the Cameroon-European Union EPA: A historical analysis 2003-2018", Master's thesis in History, University of Yaoundé I, 2019.

The official structures mentioned in the table above were of three main types. They were ministerial, interministerial and parliamentary. From the ministerial point of view, we had the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development (MINEPAT), the Ministry of Trade (MINCOMERCE) and the Ministry of Finance (MINFI). On the side of interministerial structures, there was: the National Committee for Monitoring and Coordination of EPA negotiations (Kaigama Akoe, 2005: 19). With regard to the parliamentary structures, there was the national assembly which, as a framework for the representation of the people, had in principle the task of controlling government action in the negotiation of this economic agreement.

As for the unofficial negotiation structures, they were essentially made up of civil society actors, who were supposed to represent the voice of the grassroots populations. It is these different structures mentioned above that had the task of conducting the negotiations for this highly controversial agreement.

### **The deployment of Cameroonian structures in the EPA negotiation process**

One of the cardinal principles of the EPAs was negotiation between contracting parties. This required each party to have recourse to bodies or structures which were to ensure the effective safeguarding of the interests of each of them. In Cameroon, as mentioned above, these structures were divided into two main categories, namely official structures on the one hand, and non-official structures on the other. In this articulation, it is a question of presenting the various sometimes contradictory postures of these structures called to defend together the interests of Cameroon. In other words, it is a question of examining their different deployment in the field of negotiations.

### **The position of official structures in the process**

Before proceeding to examine the position that was common to all the official structures, it would be wise for their specific role to be highlighted, if only in a synthetic way. Thus, with regard to MINEPAT, it must be said that it can be considered as the central ministerial rib which politically, strategically and economically oriented the EPA negotiations with the EU and all the different public administrations of Cameroon. He was to provide technical support while having an eye on development issues related to the EPAs<sup>2</sup>. It was the technical ministry in charge of the control, the organization, the

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<sup>2</sup>Ebalé, Economic Partnership Agreements..., p. 254.

coordination and even the orientation of the negotiations at the level of all the Cameroonian institutional authorities. He was the linchpin, the prime contractor of the Cameroon-EU APEB negotiations. He also played the role of trainer, informant and sensitizer of actors on EPAs. The MINCOMMERCE had set out to list the positives (the effects of expanding trade and the effects of creating trade) and the loss effects that could result from the application of the EPA for the Cameroonian economy, in particular for the trade component. These are the effects of trade diversion, the effects of widening the trade balance deficit and the effects of crowding out domestic products (Archives of the Ministry of Commerce,

Similarly, he issued warnings during debate seminars for the protection of the Cameroonian market. The MINFI, for its part, throughout the negotiations has endeavored to issue warnings in the sense that the free entry of European goods will induce a drop in the prices of local products until the end of the dismantling period, leading to an increase in imports to the detriment of domestic production. Thereafter, the end of the continuous fall in the prices of imported products, as well as the gains in competitiveness of local businesses would allow a greater increase in the production of local substitutes. Thus, the MINFI estimated in a study report carried out in 2008 that the impact of the interim EPA on tax revenue could reach 1,330 billion in cumulative loss in 2023 and 2,470 billion in 2030.

Cumulative losses on VAT on domestic products would amount to 21 billion by 2023 and 61 billion by 2030 (Archives of the Ministry of Finance, 2008). This loss of VAT would result from two opposite effects: on the one hand, the increase in production for the domestic market, and on the other hand the fall in the ex-factory price of local goods. The National Committee for Monitoring and Coordination of EPA Negotiations (CNSCN-APE) is the inter-ministerial structure created following a national seminar organized by MINEPAT in August 2003 following sensitization and raising awareness of the challenges, opportunities and dangers of EPAs to civil society actors on EPAs.<sup>3</sup> It resulted from this seminar, a strong decision: the creation of a National Committee for Monitoring and Coordination of EPA negotiations. Consequently, it was created by a ministerial decree N° 061/CAB/PM of June 12, 2003 of the MINAEPAT as an advisory body responsible for: "studying, developing, issuing opinions and formulating all suggestions or proposal to the Government on issues relating to the conduct of negotiations relating to the European Union-ACP economic partnership agreements and the mobilization of related financing". Several missions had been entrusted to the CNSCN-APE. The aim was to: instigate and validate studies on the impact of these agreements at the national, sub-regional and regional levels:

- ensure compliance of the formal frameworks of negotiations with the Cameroonian nomenclature in terms of agreements and treaties;
- ensure synergy between international organizations, development strategies and the regional integration process;
- To prepare all the meetings planned at the national, regional and international levels and to engage, at the end of the negotiations, reflections and subsequent studies of adaptation and compatibility of the EPAs with development strategies.

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<sup>3</sup>Interview with Ebalé Raymond, around 54 years old, University teacher, in Yaoundé on July 17, 2018.

It behooves us to note that the technical working groups were created within the CNSCN-APEB/CAM-UE as follows:

- a Technical Working Group on Market Access and Customs Issues (GTAD);
- a Technical Working Group on Trade in Services and Investment (GTSI);
- a Technical Working Group on Accompanying Measures (GTMA) and;
- a Technical Working Group on the Legal Text of the Agreement (GTTJA).

Other Technical Working Groups may be created as needed. The Working Groups are technical bodies of the CSCN-APE/CAMR-UE, responsible for preparing any document, issuing technical opinions and formulating any suggestions or proposals to the Committee on issues related to the various areas of the Cameroon-EU Bilateral Economic Partnership Agreement. Note that the lower house of Cameroon viz. The National Assembly of the State of Cameroon has authorized the ratification of the interim EPA with the EU in a rather difficult context. In fact, faced with the deadlock in negotiations at regional level between Central Africa (CEMAC, DRC and Sao Tome and Principe) on the one hand and the EU on the other with a view to signing a full EPA, the 1 October 1, 2014 deadline hung over Cameroon like a sword of Damocles. The Cameroonian parliament had controlled the process of deliberation and adoption of the bill authorizing the President of the Republic to ratify the interim EPA. The Minister of Economy, Planning and Regional Development defended this bill and justified it in these terms before the Foreign Affairs Commission of the National Assembly on July 9, 2014: "This ratification will allow Cameroon to have preferential access to all its export products on the European market, and to prevent the Cameroonian market from the harmful effects of the deterioration in the competitiveness of our products" (Archives of MINEPAT, 2003).

While civil society decried the impacts of the EPA on the ACP economy and feared its consequences on local production, employment and regional integration, the Cameroonian government, for its part, multiplied its demonization of the agreement for Cameroon. It is possible to note that the official negotiation structures, particularly the ministerial ones, follow the government policy of Cameroon very closely. Here, the question of the competitiveness of businesses and the Cameroonian economy during the negotiations and the signing of the Cameroon-EU APEB was a stumbling block. They approved the negotiation of the agreement on the sole condition that the EU provide adequate responses to compensate for the shortcomings of the Cameroonian economy. The official actors of the Cameroon-EU APEB negotiation have endeavored to ensure that the EPAs contribute effectively to the development of Cameroon, the need to deal with the problems, namely: the fiscal consequences of a free zone -exchange with the EU (Ebalé, 2016: 9) and favorable treatment in terms of rules of origin. The EPAs for these official actors, must be an instrument for the economic growth and sustainable development of Cameroon, they want a multilateral trading system based on fair, transparent and balanced rules. To do so, they call on the Member States of the European Union to urgently materialize their aid for trade commitments. In other words.

### **Unofficial structures**

The unofficial negotiation structures of the Cameroon-European Union APEB were mainly made up of civil society organizations, namely the Association for Awareness of ACP-EU Agreements (ASAC), the Citizens' Association for the Defense of Interests Collectives (ACDIC), the Thursdays of Cotonou. As well as the actors of the private sector like the Inter-Patronal Group of Cameroon (GICAM), the Unions of Industrialists of Cameroon (SYNDUSTRICAM). Even if it is recognized that Cameroonian civil society has been slow to really take the train of participation in the EPA negotiations in Cameroon, it is clear that as the deadline draws near, a strong mobilization on their part has been noticed.

Cameroonian civil society had a position that these agreements are not good for Cameroon because they are too liberal and based on an asymmetrical trade regime; this is what transpires in the position of these few organizations raised. To implement its missions in the Cameroonian collective consciousness, ASAC organized round tables and press briefings from 2009 to 2013, a press briefing on the theme "EPA negotiations between Cameroon and the EU. What assessment and prospects after the signing of the interim agreement of January 15, 2009?". The aim was to shed light on the position of civil society following the signing of this agreement (Private archives of Professor Raymond Ebalé, 2009). On November 10, 2010, ASAC pursues its mission by drawing the attention of public opinion in general and that of the government and parliament in particular to recent developments in APEB Cameroon-EU cooperation and their impact in the future. It is in this perspective that it is organizing a press briefing on the theme: "Cameroon-EU cooperation: recent developments and prospects since the signing of the interim EPA". The purpose of the press briefing of November 12, 2012 was to denounce the complicit silence of the government on the subject of the EPAs which will affect the entire Cameroonian population, to draw the attention of parliamentarians through whom the ratification will pass, to put in place measures to protect the production and local producers (Ebalé; 261). ACDIC has also distinguished itself through a fruitful advocacy campaign.

It was from this seminar that led to the establishment of the platform of Non-State Actors of Central Africa (Tchakam, 2007) which enabled sub-regional civil society to sit for the first time on the regional committee of negotiation (Ebalé; 262). With the resumption of EPA negotiations for a regional agreement with Central Africa, on August 4, 2016, ACDIC made Cameroon aware that it was not right to rush by opening up 80% of its market to European products. from that date. The "Thursdays of Cotonou", a framework for expression offered by the Cameroonian NSAs in September 2004 and coordinated by Mrs. Christine Andela, a well-known activist in Cameroonian civil society, (.../company). The actors of the private sector, in particular GICAM and SYNDUSTRICAM, references for the representation of companies and industries in Cameroon, did not fail to express their concerns about the changes that will occur at the economic, fiscal and social levels with the opening of markets to the EU, such as competition from subsidized agricultural products from the EU, the low export capacity of companies in the sub-region, the non-competitiveness of products from the sub-region due to the prohibitive cost of factors of production (infrastructure, etc.), export difficulties in the face of EU sanitary and phytosanitary standards, The environment not conducive



to business development, etc. Although GICAM claimed not to be totally opposed to the signing of the EPAs, however, the employers' group intended to "fight so that Cameroon does not sign bad agreements" APE-interiminaire-dans-la-coopération-multilaterale 15.html, consulted on July 13, 2021 at 8:38 p.m.), the risk being high of seeing the national economy plunge towards the precipice, as it is true that local companies have not lack the necessary expertise and even less the appropriate means to be able to compete with companies from developed countries. For GICAM, there was no shadow of a doubt that the EPAs constituted a threat to the Cameroonian economy, and it would be playing with fire to want to apply the EPAs to the State without obtaining some substantial adjustments.» (<http://www.gicamtv.org/diner-debat/accords-de-partenariat-économique-acp-ue-1205>, consulted July 9, 2021 at 11h 03min/).

### **Critical assessment of the action of the negotiation structures within the framework of the Cameroon-EU APEB**

After several rounds of negotiations, Cameroon ended up signing and then ratifying the EPAs which entered into force on August 4, 2016. However, the content of the said agreement seems in view of the facts and even from the theoretical point of view unfavorable for Cameroon. which de facto questions the effectiveness of the Cameroonian structures responsible for safeguarding the interests of Cameroon during these negotiations. This last articulation, which closes this reflection, intends to return to the reasons for the failure of these structures.

#### **Achievements**

The combination of our readings and field investigations led us to understand that the EU used enormous means of direct and indirect pressure in the EPA negotiation process with Cameroon. Political dependence and dependence on access to the European market were decisive factors used by the EU to push Cameroon to sign a bilateral agreement while the primary vocation of the EPA was regional (Chongwang , 2003: 5). Cameroon's decision to ratify the interim EPA seems to have been largely motivated by President Paul Biya's desire to manage Cameroon's economic and commercial interests. An impetus was given from the Presidency as a factor of ratification. It is in application of this presidential instruction that the report "plan for the adaptation of the Cameroonian economy in view of the entry into force of the EPA" (Archives MINEPAT, 2013) was produced and published by MINEPAT in October 2013. The most appropriate strategy, with regard to Cameroon specifically, to allay the apprehensions and concerns generated by the EPA, would consist in accelerating the effective operationalization of the accompanying measures relating thereto. Thus, were created with the aim of recommending the appropriate support measures to mitigate the shocks induced by the implementation of the EPAs in Cameroon. The idea of anticipating the shocks of the future, relating to the signing of the EPAs, the Cameroonian public authorities have recommended some strategies in order to introduce some agility and flexibility given the vulnerability of the Cameroonian economy. Thus, several scenarios have been considered to make the EPAs more flexible and improve the chances of their implementation without this leading to harmful dysfunctions in Cameroon.

On August 13, 2013, a government meeting extended to the private sector was held, the purpose of which was to "reflect on the strategy to be adopted by the

Cameroonian economy to adapt to the EPAs that the country is preparing to ratify” (Chongwang, 2003: 6). The outcomes of this meeting were in particular the creation, on November 28, 2013, of a Committee responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Cameroon-EU Bilateral Economic Partnership Agreement (CSMO-APEB), by decision No. 1023 /MINEPAT/CAB of November 28, 2013 (MINEPAT Archives, 2013), the first session of which was held on February 28, 2014 in Yaoundé, with as the fourth item on the agenda the ratification plan for the Bilateral EPA. To this end, the CSMO-APEB has an administrative managerial procedure and missions entrusted to it. It is also with a view to making profitable and maximizing the competitiveness of Cameroon's interests that the accompanying and support programs for the implementation of the EPA such as PASAPE, the Support Program for the Competitiveness of companies (PACOM), the Business Upgrade Office (BMN) support instruments such as the Agro-Food Technical Center (CTA) and joint structures for the implementation of the Cameroon-EU APEB such as the APE Committee were set up by the State of Cameroon. However, these support structures remain under the financial influence of the EU, hence their dependence. The Business Upgrading Office (BMN) support instruments such as the Agro-Food Technical Center (CTA) and joint structures for the implementation of the Cameroon-EU APEB such as the APE Committee have been set up by the State of Cameroon. However, these support structures remain under the financial influence of the EU, hence their dependence. The Business Upgrading Office (BMN) support instruments such as the Agro-Food Technical Center (CTA) and joint structures for the implementation of the Cameroon-EU APEB such as the APE Committee have been set up by the State of Cameroon. However, these support structures remain under the financial influence of the EU, hence their dependence.

### **Limits**

The economic power of the EU is reflected by its dominant weight in international institutions, 4 of its Member States participate in the G7, note its decisive role in trade negotiations at the World Trade Organization (WTO) and it has 30 % of voting rights in the management bodies of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (Chamet, 2008: 36-44). This work allows us to see that the balance of power in the negotiation of the EPAs between Cameroon and the EU is quite unbalanced and weighs in favor of the EU. Note that reducing a negotiation to theoretical rules is impossible and vain as it is an art made of observation, deduction, synthesis, in which personal experience and intuition are as important as law and customs.

Careful observation of the official actors who are part of the cast of EPA negotiators with the EU simply shows that they are not sufficiently equipped and sufficiently prepared in the diplomacy of international economic negotiation or on technical questions relating to EPAs. . The staff of the technical groups in charge of the negotiations here are mostly weak, not seasoned in the face of the offensive and cunning negotiation diplomacy of the EU. Similarly, the EU has used negotiation tactics such as pressure from all sides, ultimatums, intimidation and even blackmail. It should be noted that, in a real negotiation, the parties deploy all sorts of tricks (psychological pressure, intimidation, deliberate lying, ultimatums, etc.) in order to

obtain an advantage over the other parties, they are often misleading and manipulative (Kotcho, 2017: 319). It would therefore be appropriate for us to say here that the EU used these strategies in the negotiation of the EPA with Cameroon to influence the course and the outcome of the negotiation process. The relations of financial dependence of the official Cameroonian negotiating structures of the EPA vis-à-vis the EU, the omnipresence of the EU in all the official Cameroonian negotiating structures also constitute a sprain or better a bottleneck strangulation for a promising negotiation. Let us also note the quarrels of leadership and conflicts of interest in certain EPA negotiation structures in Cameroon. We can mention the case of the National Committee for Monitoring and Coordinating EPA Negotiations (CNSCN-APE), which has experienced many disruptions due to conflicts of interest. Similarly, it is permissible for us to underline here the weak collusion between the official Cameroonian negotiation structures and the unofficial ones.

### **Conclusion**

This study has come to an end. It was a question of examining the synoptic title of this article which is: "Historical analysis of Cameroonian support structures for the negotiation of the Cameroon - EU EPA (2003-2018)". In a more in-depth way, it was a question of questioning a very sensitive question and of burning topicality which is located at the intersection of international economic negotiations; the face to face of African and Cameroonian economic diplomacy with European diplomacy; public economic and trade policies of Cameroon but also to issues of neocolonialism and renegotiation of the balance of power between the countries of the South and the countries of the North on EPA issues. For this reason, we have focused on some generalities on the question of EPAs in Africa and in Cameroon, our reflection was motivated by a historicization of the EPA agreements between the EU and the ACP countries in general and in particular Cameroon, a country in which our survey was based on the support structures for the negotiation of the said agreements. From the above, it follows that the EPA agreements are not an ex-abrupto phenomenon.

They are the result of a long series of agreements punctuated by a co-construction of an offensive economic diplomacy of the EU with a diplomacy of the ACP countries, sometimes lax, passive with regard to their interests. Initiated at the very beginning of the 2000s with the Cotonou Agreements with the intention of promoting the development of ACP countries and anchoring their economies in the market of globalization. However, instead of being a panacea for African economies in negotiation with the EU, these agreements have rather appeared as a real threat. It was necessary for us in this work to identify the policies of actions, the strategies of the Cameroonian structures of support for the negotiation of the EPA with the aim of obtaining an added value in the negotiation with the EU, the purpose being the maximization of the interests of Cameroon within the framework of the said agreement.

It appears that Cameroon took the commendable initiative to set up the support structures for the negotiation of the EPA. They have tried to ensure their sovereign missions, but their results remain mixed on the whole due to the strategic deficiency of the Cameroonian negotiators, the general lack of preparation of Cameroon, the excessive administrative centralization of the file, the low degree of

complicity between public authorities and civil society, the financial dependence of negotiating bodies on the EU as well as the use of negotiating tactics by the EU. The official structures follow very closely the directives of the government policy of Cameroon. Civil society and private sector actors play an important role in negotiating management in order to find new ideas for the negotiation of EPAs with the EU in Cameroon. This category of actors, particularly caught our attention, appeared to us more offensive in the maximization of the interests of Cameroon in the negotiation of the EPA agreements with the EU but also more incisive against the passivity of the Cameroonian government policy in the negotiation EPAs. They play a role of sensitization and raising awareness among public opinion with a view to mobilizing them on the issues and challenges of EPAs in Cameroon. Civil society vehemently criticized the threats of the advent of the EPAs on the competitiveness of the Cameroonian economy and industry.

This reflection allows us to observe that in a context of transformation of the economies and institutions of the Third World and the emergence of new development problems where several countries are under strong pressure from the most powerful Western countries to adjust their macro- according to their interests, countries like Cameroon must understand that the political technology of international negotiation in the 21st century is experiencing new mutations and new orientations. Thus, it is no longer the sole prerogative of politicians and state administrators. Cameroon-EU cooperation can in no way be a "win-win" cooperation, but rather a "Winner-Loser" cooperation because it does not aim to build a mutually beneficial balance but rather a balance in which one actor wins at the expense of the other. Is it justifiable to use tactics in a collaborative negotiation where the objective is to arrive at a "win-win" consensus?

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