

## **Management of Ethnic Diversity in Cameroon in the Backdrop of Social Crises, Vubo Emmanuel Yenshu**

When one poses the question of how Cameroon has managed the question of ethnic diversity during the reforms period following the end of the Cold War and the pressure for democratic change the answer is that there is no official policy. The reform period has seen a new type of crisis management: *feeding on ethnic tensions and making political capital out of grievances of local peoples in metropolitan areas especially in Yaounde and the highly urbanised areas of the Littoral and South West Province*. By posing as protector of local peoples who are the victims of invasion from other nationals – presented variously as strangers, foreigners etc-, the regime has thus come to provide a very distorted vision of the minority question and to obtain a semblance of social peace at the risk of deepening social cleavages and the fragmentation of the social fabric consequent on the unequal development of social categories and regions set in motion by peripheral capitalism and chaotic modernisation. However, this attitude has served to divert attention from a veritable social crisis characterised by unplanned urbanisation and chaotic urban growth, rising unemployment, delinquency, urban crime, as well as the unresolved land question in Fako and Douala. It also gives the semblance of credibility as guarantor of social justice by posing as protector of disadvantaged groups when discrimination and injustice is rife. The real aim is recruiting/recuperating elites in these areas and enlarging the regime's power base by buying over politically ignorant segments of the society with promises of social development (schools, health centres, rural electrification) by brandishing the spectre of extinction from compatriots presented as the real cause of the crisis. The consequence of this situation is the intensification of social divisions and tension as well as a halt to the nation building process via the retreat to tribal cocoons as the regime breeds social cleavages and disorder, thus failing as a guarantor of social peace. Moreover, the promise of social development is bound to fail: (1) as the state is presented as partial and discriminatory; (2) the means to effect such a style of development are clearly lacking; (3) it is constrained by an international environment which imposes neo-liberal reforms, one of whose essential tenets is withdrawal from the social sector, making such promises a farce by the standards of the neo-liberal gospel. This exposes the cynicism of the regime as it presents itself as feeding on ethnic tensions as well as its dishonesty the promises of paternalistic social development.