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Legitimation Strategies in the Discourse of Political Actors of the Social Democratic Front Party (SDF) in Cameroon (1990-2020)

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ABSTRACT

This article sets out to examine the various means by which political actors of the SDF party in Cameroon justify their actions or proposals for action. The justification is achieved through legitimisation which recruits many available linguistic mechanisms as vehicles for the propagation and justification of ideologies and actions. The work is theoretically rooted in Critical Discourse Analysis(CDA) whose relevance lies in its capacity to carry out analysis of texts within the perspective of legitimisation strategies as proposed by Van Dijk (2005), Van Leeuwen (1996,2007), Van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999) and Beetham (2013). The data for this study is made up of excerpts of discourses authored by four (04) frontline politicians of the Social Democratic Front party. The analysis of the discourses of the Party indicates that the strategies used license political

actors to legitimise or justify political action through authorisation, rationalisation, moral evaluation, mythopoesis and emotions. The legitimisation structures and strategies are carried out within the context of a homogenous ideology and mission. This ideology and mission aim primarily at assigning credibility to the SDF party and then go on to amplify and justify moves that focus on deligitimising the actions and deconstructing the achievements of the CPDM party.

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis, legitimisation, political actors, discursive structures, course of discourse*

1. Introduction and background

Legitimation in discourse is understood as a process in which social actors such as politicians employ various linguistic means to justify and propagate their actions and ideologies. Political action is usually predicated on or driven by the urge to convince the audience, garner support, attain popularity, discredit political opponents and accede to or maintain power. To this end, Van Leeuwen (2007) opines that the main aim of using legitimisation strategies is to provide justification or reasons why something is done and why that (some) thing is done in a particular way. To achieve these goals, political actors strive for discourse strategies that eruditely and obstinately present their convictions and political stances. Hence what is referred to in this article as legitimisation strategies are argumentative blocks that are used in poking targeted behavioural responses from the audience. The responses could be related to fear, unpredictability, confidence and assurance. Reyes (2011) notes that these cognitive reactions are generated with the help of linguistic strategies that aim at arousing emotions, constructing a hypothetical future, showcasing rationality, validating expertise claims and asserting altruism.

Empirical studies by McCann-Mortimer et al., (2004) and Tusting et al., (2002) attest that scientifically tested facts as well as personal experiences are instruments that can be used to lend credibility to legitimisation claims. This argument is corroborated by Said (2017,p.1) as

he states: "Legitimation is carried out by different types of linguistic arguments, from factual and objective information to personal experiences" The choice of these types of linguistic arguments depends on the nature of the discourse. For instance, legitimation in scientific discourse is expected to be justified by procedures or theories that are based on rational, objective and factual information that establishes the truth. On the other hand, personal experiences find validity when they are used to justify claims in daily social or political experiences.

This study takes interest in political discourse because it portrays the interface between language and politics whereby politicians seek strategies to convince their supporters and sympathisers. Prominent among these strategies is legitimation which political actors strive to use to good advantage. In the first place, Reyes (2011) opines that legitimation is used by political actors as a way of garnering endorsement and acceptance of their actions and political agenda. He goes on to state that politicians use legitimation strategies to project controversial events or policies as being beneficial for the whole society or by presenting their action as the appropriate or right thing to do.

In this article, we analyse political discourses authored by four (4) frontline politicians of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) party in Cameroon. These purposively selected politicians are John Fru Ndi, National Chairman of the party, Tazoacha Asonganyi, the Secretary General of the party, Ndiva Kofele Kalle, the party's legal affairs adviser and Jean-Michel Nintcheu, SDF Member of Parliament for Wouri West in the Littoral Region of Cameroon. The selected excerpts are from speeches that were made between 1990 and 2020. These speeches were also purposively chosen for this paper because their contexts of production warranted the aforementioned political actors to adopt legitimation as a discourse strategy to portray the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) as the party that is responsible for the problems that Cameroonians have been facing for the past three decades. On the other hand, that same strategy is used by Mr. Fru Ndi and the others to show that the SDF is the only opposition party in Cameroon that can save the country from the dangers that "loom from afar". (Asonganyi, 2007).

After its launching in Bamenda on the 26th of May 1990, the SDF Party has always mounted pressure on the incumbent regime to put in place adequate democratic institutions and better electoral laws to provide equal opportunities to all. In the early 90s, Mr. Fru Ndi's party gathered popularity in all the nooks and crannies of Cameroon. Konings (2004,p.6) notes that the charisma of the SDF Chairman and his acclaimed slogan of "Biya must go" and "suffer don finish" mobilised thousands of followers who became convinced that the SDF was a "Messiah" which had come to salvage Cameroonians from all forms of suffering. The party's gain in steam was partly as a result of the political rallies, public shows and other forms of political meetings that were organised throughout the country within the context of political propaganda and advertisement. The text and talk generated within sub-categories that pertain to formation of public opinion and self-presentation, Party Development of an informed opinion and Political Advertising, Marketing and Propaganda (Wodak and de Cillca, 2006) and Wodak (2007) cited in Dassé (2013, p.133) provide instances of discourse in which argumentation is used by politicians of the SDF Party to negotiate and enact legitimisation processes. These processes are achieved through the following strategies as proposed by Van Leeuwen (1996), Martin Rojo and Van Dijk, (1997), Duranti (1994), Weber (1947), Beethan (2013) and Habermas (1976): Emotions, hypothetical future (mythopoesis), authorisation, rationalisation and moral evaluation (altruism). It should be noted here that these strategies may operate in solo or used in a combination to generate lexical structures that justify social practices.

2. Literature Review

Scholars have of recent shifted from sociological and philosophical views of legitimisation towards approaches that study legitimisation within a linguistic perspective. In this regard, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is adopted as a suitable theoretical frame for this study. This choice is justified by the ability of CDA to unearth aspects related to ideology, power and hegemony inherent in discourse practices. It is necessary to highlight here that CDA is defined by Joseph (2005,p.367) as a theory that "focuses on how language, being a cultural tool, mediates

relationships of power and privilege in social interactions, institutions and bodies of knowledge". CDA as a research paradigm aims at examining how language is exploited within texts to construct specific ideological positions that encompass unequal relations of power. Burns (2001.p.138) reiterates the central role of CDA by stating that within this framework, "language is not neutral and all texts are critical sites for the negotiation of power and ideology". Furthermore, Nkwetisama (2021) posits that the role of language in the perception and understanding of reality cannot be overemphasised because the ecosphere is created or constructed by word, and any aspect of language used, especially in political discourse, carries ideological associations and sociopolitical undertones.

This implies that CDA has the propensity of uncovering any hidden moves an author may consciously or unconsciously adopt to zip up specific representations of the world within discourse. In this paper therefore, CDA becomes relevant in accounting for the linguistic means that SDF politicians use in constructing semantic fields that are aimed at justifying the social practices (discourses) of that party.

After establishing CDA as the framework for this study, we will now examine how researchers have used this paradigm to account for linguistic means used in legitimisation categories. Considering that the focus of this paper is on language and politics, works reviewed under this section will be constrained within the context of political discourse analysis.

Fairclough and Fairclough (2012,p.17) define "Political Discourse Analysis" (PDA) as "the analysis of political discourse from a critical perspective; a perspective which focuses on the reproduction and contestation of political power through political discourse. Though legitimisation studies in political contexts are in the most part carried out within the CDA approach, Jaworski and Galasinski (2000, p.35) adopted a socio-linguistic approach in examining how "strategic uses of forms of address by participants in political debates were used in gaining legitimacy for their ideologies." Other studies carried out, this time, within the CDA framework include those by Van Leeuwen and Wodak

(1999), Martín Rojo and Van Dijk (1997), Reyes (2011), Ali et al., (2016), Sadeghi, Hassam and Jalah (2014), Said (2017) and Ahmed (2020).

Van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999) use CDA as a research approach in carrying out analyses of some seven rejection notes that contained arguments from Austrian immigration authorities rejecting requests for family reunion from immigrant workers. The result of the findings shows that strategies of abstract moralisation and authorisation account for 69% of the 103 instances of legitimisation identified.

In 1997, Martín Rojo and Teun Van Dijk adopted the CDA theoretical framework in investigating the legitimisation strategies that were used by the Spanish Secretary of interior in a speech in 1996 to explain and justify the rash and inhumane moves that were taken to expel illegal African immigrants from Melilla, the Spanish enclave in Morocco. The study reveals that the Spanish Secretary of Interior's legitimisation strategies are made up of personal and impersonal authorisation. Personal authorisation has to make reference to his position as secretary while impersonal authorisation is backed by the power of Spanish laws and customs. The use of these strategies demonstrates that the action of expelling immigrants, albeit brutal and inhumane is carried out in full legitimacy.

In another study, Reyes (2011) adopts an interdisciplinary framework anchored theoretically on CDA to study the legitimization of discursive strategies that George W. Bush and Barack Obama use in respectively justifying the United States' military attack of Iraq and Afghanistan. In the study, Reyes demonstrates that the two statesmen use a combination of rationalisation and authorisation as legitimisation moves to justify their "war on Terror" (Reyes, 2011,p.781). Reyes' findings also show that Bush and Obama opt for linguistic choices that generate fear, paint a hypothetical future, demonstrate altruism and build up polarity blocks of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation.

A study by Ali et al., (2016) analyses legitimisation strategies used in an English newspaper published in Iraq. In this study, the authors seek and account for the linguistic means that are used in the newspaper to legitimise the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq. Results from findings

show that the strategies used in achieving legitimisation are authorisation (personal, expert and conformity), rationalisation and moral evaluation.

Another study by Sadeghi, Hassani and Jalali (2014) examines how two media outlets depict the 2011 revolution in Egypt. The data consists of 20 news items from the voice of America (VOA) and 20 others from Fars News, an Iranian news agency. The study shows that the two news agencies use authorisation to legitimise the street protests while the same strategy is used to delegitimise President Hosni Mubarak's regime.

In 2017, Hala Mohammed Said adopted a CDA perspective to examine the semantic functional strategies used by Egyptian political actors to legitimise controversial events within their public discourse. The data for this study is made up of two political speeches delivered by Egyptian President Al Sisi. The first speech focuses on the government's decision to sign a maritime border treaty with Saudi Arabia attributing the Islands of Tiran and Sanafir as Saudi territories while the second one addresses the government's decision to cut subsidies on utility bills. Results from Said (2017) indicate that the legitimisation strategies used to justify government's action in both speeches are rationalisation, authorisations and moral evaluations.

Finally, Ahmed (2020) uses CDA to study legitimisation strategies employed by former Nigeria's President, Goodluck Jonathan in his declaration of intent speech for a re-election for a second term of office. Results from Ahmed's study show that President Goodluck Jonathan uses emotionality, rationality, hypothetical predictions and altruism to validate, legitimise, justify and decolonise Africa's perspectives of political transitions.

After this review of empirical works carried out in the area of legitimisation, it is important to give an overview of the strategies through which legitimisation moves are conceived and enacted. This overview shall be followed by an analysis of excerpts from the SDF's discourse formation. The analysis seeks to examine the linguistic means by which each or a combination of the legitimisation strategies that follow here are realised.

As already indicated, Van Leeuwen was the first researcher who, in 1995, founded a system for analysing and categorising legitimisation

strategies. This founded system was consolidated and validated by Van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999) while other researchers like Reyes (2011) added three other categories to Leeuwen and Wodak's frameworks. That said, the discourses for this paper shall be analysed under the following legitimisation categories.

2.1 Authorisation

Authorisation is a legitimisation strategy that is enacted when a speaker/writer justifies his thoughts and actions by directly or indirectly echoing expertise voices. Such voices are sourced from the authority of tradition, laws and customs or from people who exercise a certain degree of institutional authority. Authors like Duranti (1994), Gal and Woolard (1995) and Philips (2004) refer to these forms of legitimisation discourses as "Authorative speech"

2.2 Rationalisation

Rationalisation is legitimisation that is achieved by arguing that any decisions that are taken are informed by a carefully evaluated and thoughtful procedure whereby the opinions of other groups are sought.

2.3 Moral Evaluation

Otherwise referred to as "altruism" (Reyes, 2011,p.787), moral evaluation is a legitimisation strategy that is enacted by making reference to specific value systems that provide the moral basis for saying something or taking a decision.

2.4 Mythopoesis

Mythopoesis is enacted when speakers/writers in their discourses use narratives to lend legitimacy to their actions and ideologies. In such a phenomenon, the speaker/writer gives a narrative that predicts a possible outcome if one does or does not do what is expected. This strategy is also referred to as legitimisation through a hypothetical future. (Dunmire 2007).

2.5 Legitimation through emotions

This is a legitimisation strategy in which social actors (politicians) justify their words or actions by arousing the emotions or their audience/interlocutors in a bid to acquire from them targeted behavioural or mental responses. Arousing emotions as a legitimisation strategy aims particularly at using linguistic means to generate the “Us” versus “Them” polarity. One of these linguistic means is to use referential or nomination strategies in demonising opponents.

3. Legitimation Strategies in the Discourse of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) Party

The texts that are used for analysis in this study are made up of 22 excerpts selected from discourses of the SDF party. Part of these discourses were drawn from speeches that were downloaded from the website of the SDF Party (www.sdfparty.org). Other texts were transcripts of speeches that were recorded during political rallies and radio or TV shows. The bolded portions of the texts retained for this article represent discourse choices that are analysed following the five categories of legitimisation that have already been overviewed.

3.1 Authorisation

One of the ways of legitimising actions and ideologies is by making reference to authoritative voices. The linguistic means that is usually employed in achieving legitimisation through voices of expertise includes the use of quotation marks to foreground the voices, and the direct citation of names or institutions predicated by verbs like ‘say’, ‘caution’, ‘announce’, ‘report’ etc. The following excerpts provide some examples.

- (1) Whether we go back to **Aristotle’s Athens** or we remain in the present with **Abraham Lincoln’s America**, we find ourselves with one viable definition; that democracy is about people and the laws that they enact to govern themselves. And you should know that the struggle for democracy is not easier today than it was in **Greece** 2500 years ago. In this context, we share the views of **Archbishop Abel Muzorewa** when he wonders aloud: “why is it that we Africans can go to **Britain**, and here I had **Europe** and the **United States of America** and be free to criticise

their governments and Heads of State without any fear of disappearing the following night or fear of being deported. Why are we afraid of doing it in Africa?" (*John Fru Ndi, 1990*).

In excerpt (1), John Fru Ndi cites the names of some iconic figures who are regarded, both in classical and contemporary history, as precursors of democracy. It is known that the names cited are among those who fought for the establishment of democratic principles that are being enjoyed today in Europe and America. Making mention of such people and countries could therefore be considered as a legitimisation strategy that John Fru Ndi adopts in justifying the robust resistance that the SDF party has built against the incumbent regime in Cameroon. In another dimension, using direct speech as a linguistic means to make reference to the thoughts of Abel Muzorewa, former Prime Minister of Zimbabwe (Rhodesia, 1979-1980) maintains the integrity and authenticity of the authorial voice. This verbatim approach gives legitimacy to Mr. Fru Ndi's course of action.

- (2) The putting in place of a federal system of government is the cry of the Anglophones. This is what brought us together because **Section 47(1) of the 1961 constitution** stated clearly that no amendment, no constitutional amendment that was to touch on the federal form of state was to be introduced; which means that the forefathers of reunification who brought these Cameroons together; we are thinking of John Ngu Foncha and the rest did not contemplate a revision of the federal form of government. (*Ndiva Kofele Kalle, 2020*).

Excerpt (2) shows some elements of legal document or constitutional authorisation as a legitimisation strategy. In this discourse, Professor Ndiva Kalle justifies the SDF's call for the (re)-instatement of a federal system of government by quoting a portion of Cameroon's 1961 constitution. The speaker goes on to supplement his legitimisation move by citing John Ngu Foncha as one of the fore-fathers of Cameroon's reunification who happened to have been a witness at the promulgation of the 1961 constitution.

- (3) We all know that **by law** after elections, the National Elections Observatory (NEO) shall draw up a general report on the conduct of the elections and forward it to the President of the Republic who shall publish it. Are these declarations of Mr. Biya based on such a report? After the two **NDI reports, one Commonwealth report, one Francophonie report, one report of the representative of the UNSG, several memoranda and releases of the National Episcopal Council** and several other local reports of the **opposition** and **civil society** all detailing serious deficiencies in the electoral system, here is the Head of State playing the ostrich. (*Tazoacha Asonganyi, 2003*)

Like John Fru Ndi, in excerpt (2) Professor Tazoacha Asonganyi begins his argument by using constitutional authorisation in achieving legitimisation. The strategy as used in this case, aims at justifying the accusation that all categories of elections in Cameroon have since 1992 been marred with irregularities. Professor Asonganyi's accusations continue with what Said (2017:50) terms "official entity authorisation". Here the speaker makes reference to the reports of the National Democratic Institution (NDI) the UN and the National Episcopal Council which add evidence to the SDF's claims that elections in Cameroon are not organised in a transparent manner.

3.2 Rationalisation

Rationalisation, as described earlier, is understood as legitimisation that is achieved by raising sound factual or theoretical evidence to support arguments and claims. For such evidence to be valid in informing decisions, it must have undergone a rigorous procedural scrutiny. The following excerpts illustrate the linguistic means that are used in enacting rationalisation.

- (4) It is from a **position of strength** that we have continued to **seek dialogue** with the CPDM, not from a position of weakness!! The **transparent ballot box is still our emblem**. We must continue to fight relentlessly for it, and for all that it represents. (*John Fru Ndi, 2003*)

Mr. Fru Ndi understands that though Cameroonians are generally a peace loving people, some supporters of his party had advocated that the SDF party should take up arms against the incumbent regime as a way of reclaiming the “theft of Fru Ndi’s victory” (Konings 2004:8). Such a recommendation does not tie with the pacifist ideology of the SDF party whose leader declared “as a matter of policy, we are against war” (Fru Ndi, 2003:2). Hence, claims and phrases like ‘position of strength,’ ‘seek dialogue,’ ‘transparent ballot box’ and ‘is still our emblem’ contain lexical choices that are used as linguistic means in legitimising the SDF’s decision to seek purely democratic means of acceding to power. In fact the noun ‘policy’ as used in this excerpt is a reminder that the party’s decision not to indulge into any form of armed struggle has been well evaluated through a thoughtful procedure. Therefore this option for peace can be brandished as the right thing to do.

- (5) **We maintain** and **reiterate** our call for an independent electoral commission because NEO is just another organ of the CPDM in disguise. (*John Fru ndi, 2003*)

It is understood from this excerpt that the government of Cameroon had conceived and created NEO as an independent body charged with the organisation of elections in the country. However, the fact that the SDF remains obstinate in her call for the putting in place of an independent organ suggests that this obstinacy is backed by proofs that NEO does not enjoy any form of independence and neutrality. In this case, therefore, the SDF employs sane judgment to legitimise criticisms on capacity of NEO to organise free and fair elections. This judgment is reinforced by the inclusive subject “we” which indicates that political actors of the SDF as well as their militants constitute an “us-group” that has dismissed the credibility of NEO on the basis of a framework of rationality. By so doing, the CPDM is automatically constructed and depicted in terms of a “them-group”. We can assert here that the positive Self-presentation and the negative Other-presentation polarity is another way of legitimising the course of action of the SDF party.

- (6) Let us make this clear to all **those** who are hearing us today that in the view of the Social Democratic Front, the **struggle** will

continue, **not only here, but anywhere in the world as long as there is someone who is governing and someone who is governed.** The struggle can only stop when all the people participate in their own government. (*John Fru Ndi, 1990*)

In excerpt (6), rationality, as a legitimisation strategy, is expressed on the basis of knowledge in the precepts of democracy i.e. “Government of the People, for the people and by the people”. In this excerpt, the speaker uses a global perspective to legitimise the ‘struggle’ against ‘those’ that are out to stifle democracy in Cameroon and other parts of the world. The rationalisation move explained here is reinforced by the demonstrative pronoun “those” as a way of portraying perpetrators of undemocratic principles as out-groups.

- (7) The SDF **noted that federation** was that system of governance that was going to effectively kick-start the people and of course, **guarantee equal opportunities for all.** Therefore, the SDF adopted federalism as the form of government since 1990 till today. (*Ndiva Kofele Kalle, 2020*)

Excerpt (7) presents a form of instrumental rationalisation in which the speaker provides a rational justification for the federalist option chosen by the SDF Party. Professor Ndiva Kofele’s legitimisation strategy of rationalisation, here, consists of making reference to the benefits of a federal system of government which include: kick starting the people and guaranteeing “equal opportunities for all”.

3.3 Moral Evaluation (altruism)

Otherwise referred to as altruism, moral evaluation is a legitimisation strategy that is based on moral values. These moral values, that may be constructed through linguistic means like adjectives, comparisons, metaphors and rhetorical questions, aim at bringing out the positive outcomes of a course of action. Such outcomes are usually perceived as being beneficial for all categories of people in community especially poor and vulnerable groups of individuals. It should be noted here that achieving legitimisation through altruism must be constructed in such a

way that the speaker or political actor appears disengaged, dematerialised and disinterested in any possible fall-outs of the course of action. In the following excerpts, the various linguistic means by which political and social actors achieve the legitimisation strategy of altruism are illustrated.

- (8) One may ask if in doing this, we mean that our objective **to mobilise, rally and galvanise Cameroonians into a united force to fight for the establishment of a just, free and democratic society in which citizens live in dignity and enjoy fundamental freedoms, rights and liberties** has failed? (*John Fru Ndi, 2003*)

This excerpt takes the form of a rhetorical question which highlights and legitimates the SDF's objective of building "a united force to fight for the establishment of a just, free and democratic society." As suggested by the excerpt, this "fight" stands to benefit the citizens as they will henceforth be able to "live in dignity and enjoy fundamental freedoms, rights and liberties."

- (9) We have set as one of our goals to **rid** the Cameroonian society of a system that deprives people from being **free** men or otherwise **punishing** them for **daring** to think freely, associate freely, and assemble peacefully and freely. Let us assure everyone here present that our own view of democracy is one where people will return to their own society. We are searching ways and means to secure the future for the generation that will follow us. (*John Fru Ndi, 1990*)

Excerpt (9) is aimed at legitimising the SDF's decision and action to free Cameroonians from the pranks of oligarchy and dictatorship. The words 'rid', 'punishing', 'free' and 'daring' insinuate that the ruling government is practicing a brand of democracy which rather bottles up the citizens and prevents them from enjoying their liberties. From an altruistic perspective, John Fru Ndi paints a contrasting picture of his party's brand of democracy that looks for ways and means to guarantee a better future for posterity. Here therefore, the legitimisation strategy used by the speaker portrays the SDF as having a moral grounding that obliges her to work for the well-being and the common good of others.

- (10) In 1990 when we declared liberty and enfranchisement, we said
Cameroonians, **you can now talk and you can now defend
yourselves.** (*John Fru Ndi, 1995*).

In excerpt (10), John Fru Ndi legitimises the creation and launching of a political party as an action that was aimed at doing good things for others; that is giving freedom of speech/expression and general liberties to all Cameroonians.

- (11) When we went into parliament where laws are made, we made it clear that the SDF wants laws that **give equal opportunities to all**. For example, the **difficulties that handicapped people face in Cameroon are really enormous**. From every indication, some handicapped people will not even have access to the polling stations. These people will not be able to vote because of the laws in place and because of the laws in place and because of where some of the stations are situated. (*Jean-Michel Nintcheu, 2020*)

Like the other excerpts used in illustrating altruism, excerpt (11) justifies the role that the SDF plays in parliament. As an opposition party, her members in parliament have a duty to fight for equal opportunities for all. The peculiarity in Jean-Michel Nintcheu's course of discourse is that the action of SDF parliamentarians focuses on a specific group of people; that is vulnerable groups made up of persons with disabilities.

- (12) The SDF **adopted federalism as the form of government since 1990** till today. It can be seen that the vision that the SDF had since 1990, many are seeing it today. For those who said that federalism was a taboo that people could not talk about; today, we are talking federalism. It is a clear indication that the SDF, being a visionary party, has always been taking her responsibility as far as the **problems of the people are concerned**, and more specifically the **problems of the people of the North West and South West regions.** (*Ndiva kofele kalle, 2020*)

- (13) It is also important to note that the SDF's **fight in this country for the respect of the rights of all Cameroonians** has led to **the release of so many political prisoners** among whom are political prisoners who **stood up to echo the Anglophone problem**. And so did the SDF **fight for the putting in place of the G.C.E board**. It is important to recall that the G.C.E Board was put in place also because of **a strong fight** led by the SDF National Chairman because the **Anglophone system of education at one time was being adulterated; was being assimilated** and the SDF took its responsibility to **protect this historical heritage** and today the G.C.E Board is there. *(Ndiva Kofele kalle, 2020)*

In excerpts (12) and (13), the speaker seeks to find justification for the SDF's penchant towards a federal form of government in Cameroon. He achieves this legitimisation move by indicating that the fight that his party has staged in matters of policy and good governance has been able to reap some fruits which mostly centre on the revalorisation of the rights and the identity of people two English speaking regions of Cameroon. Among these fruits are the release of political prisoners and the putting in place of the G.C.E Board. These two outcomes are signs of pure altruism which indicate that the option taken by the SDF are meant to serve the interests of the people (the people of the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon).

3.4 Hypothetical Future

Legitimation through a hypothetical future entails the linguistic construction of problems that are likely to occur if certain issues are not addressed. Actions within this realm of legitimisation are justified in conditional sentences in which the antecedent clause (protasis) interplays with and determines the consequential clause (apodosis). In most cases, politicians use the strategy of painting a hypothetical future to insinuate or predict dreadful scenarios. The linguistic choices that are used in achieving this include what Fairclough (2003) refers to as markers of modalisation. Such include the use of 'would', 'could', 'likely', 'can',

'may', which all aim at generating dreadful predictions and creating fear in the audience. The following excerpts provide some examples.

- (14) The histories of the Republic of Congo (Zaire), Rwanda, Burundi and other African countries in conflict have shown that **repressive leaders can use repression to maintain stability for some time, while sowing seeds of instability. Sooner or later, instability comes either during their reign or after they have they have left the stage.** (*Tazoacha Asonganyi, 2001*)

In excerpt (14) Professor Asonganyi revisits history to prove that countries which have been ruled by repressive leaders usually end up in political instability. He goes on to fit this historical fact into the present by stating that the stability maintained by repressive regimes is precarious and ephemeral. From the strength of these historical and current facts, the speaker hypothesises that if the CPDM regime is not voted out, then Cameroon would undoubtedly be plunged into the same socio political crisis that countries like Congo-Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi have gone through. Professor Asonganyi therefore predicts these future problems in a bid to legitimise the SDF's call for a regime change in Cameroon.

- (15) As we are reaping the bitter fruits of the neglect of Mr. Biya in the area of AIDS, so too **shall we reap bitter fruits of the seeds he has sown in other areas of our lives, be they corruption, national unity or peace and serenity in our country.** (*Tzaaocha Asonganyi, 2001*).

Legitimising the SDF's fight for President Biya and the CPDM regime to quit power continues in excerpt (15). Referring to the present situation, Professor Asonganyi underscores that Cameroonians are already reaping bitter fruits in the area of health where measures to contain the HIV pandemic have been described as inadequate. The speaker continues by predicting that if the current regime in Cameroon is not voted out, then Cameroonians would reap bitter fruits that the regime would have sown in other areas of public life; notably in the area of peace, security, unity, transparency and good governance. Hence, the legitimisation strategy

employed by Professor Asonganyi consists in focusing on a dangerous future in order to seek ways of deterring the audience from investing any form of confidence on the CPDM parity led regime.

- (16) Wars and crises arise not simply from arms but from the clashing interest by ruling regimes. Our nightmare now is that **the dictum that the evil that men do lives after them, has caught up with several countries and is most likely to catch up with ours.** (*Tazoacha Asonganyi, 2003*).

The legitimisation strategy of predicting a scary future is again picked up in excerpt (16). Here Professor Asonganyi uses folk wisdom to insinuate a nightmarish future if President Biya remains in power to continue doing evil whose price is likely to be paid by all Cameroonians. Like in the other two cases of using hypothetical prediction as a legitimisation strategy, Professor Asonganyi seeks to justify the SDF party's determination to whisk the CPDM regime from power.

3.4 Emotions

Achieving legitimisation through emotions involves the use of linguistic means to poke emotional and cognitive responses from the audience. These responses are measured by Austin's (1962) perlocutionary effects of speech acts. These effect are achieved by making utterances that predict disaster and induce fear in the minds of the audience. The capacity of utterances to generate fear depends on the use of lexical and grammatical items that "receive mental representations that are in some way linked (neurologically, in fact) to emotion centres of the brain (the limbic system (Chilton 2004:118)).

The following excerpts illustrate the various linguistic mechanisms that are involved in achieving legitimisation through emotions.

- (17) To Mr Biya, public interest is not an objective; it is a constraint. Every act is informed by his instinct for survival. **Like all tyrants**, he thinks that if he genuinely sets out to mend his ways, every small step he takes towards compromise, towards

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- progress will always seem to be a big step backwards for political stability.
(Tazoacha Asonganyi, 2001).
- (18) I guess he knows that the **evil deeds** of his administration have become too serious to bridge the declared intentions and eloquent phraseology
(Tazoacha Asonganyi (2003).
- (19) Each time the chaos in Cameroon has been evoked, the **Fame Ndongos** are quick to shout: here is the law!
- (20) The criminal activities of this **mafia** ensure that a **crony** of the regime is always a partner in all foreign companies that have bought privatised state corporations.
(John Fru Ndi, 2003).
- (21) I want here to congratulate militants and sympathisers of the SDF who braved the **brutal forces** of the **police state** to send this message across all corners of the country.
(John Fru Ndi, 2003).
- (22) I have seen vouchers carrying exaggerated amounts tagged on medical equipment. **The minister is lying!** (Jean-Michel Nintcheu, 2020)

In excerpts (17) to (22) Fru Ndi, Asonganyi and Nintcheu legitimise their party's ideologies and social practices by means of linguistic constructions that are emotively coercive. Such constructions are developed through a "process of demonisation of the enemy". (Reyes 2011,p.790) wherein political opponents are negatively defined through nomination and argumentative strategies.

Within the nomination perspective, the above political actors describe the members of the CPDM regime for what they are. For instance, President Paul Biya is syllogistically portrayed as a "tyrant", influential members of the CPDM party are stereotypically categorised and defined within a negative perspective as "the Fame Ndongos". Some of these members are described as **cronies** of the regime who constitute a "mafia", security forces are considered as "brutal" while the Minister of public health is portrayed as a "liar".

Form the argumentative point of view, the three political actors of the SDF party seek to negatively construct the opponent (enemy) through verb types that are aimed at charging up emotions of fear and disdain. For instance, the CPDM administration is castigated for [perpetrating] “evil deeds” and other criminal activities including “lying”.

4. Discussion of Findings

The findings have indicated that political actors of the SDF use authorisation, rationalisation, moral evaluation, mythopoesis and emotions. The legitimisation structures and strategies are carried out within the context of a homogenous ideology and mission. This ideology and mission aim primarily at assigning credibility to the SDF party and then go on to amplify and justify moves that focus on deligitimising the actions and deconstructing the achievements of the rival parties. Such legitimisation confirms Joseph’s (2005) claims that language is a cultural tool that mediates relationships of power and privileges in social interactions, institutions and bodies of knowledge. Furthermore, these findings have justified Jaworski and Galasinski’s (2000) socio-linguistic approach which examines and confirms that strategic uses of forms of address by participants in political debates succeed in gaining legitimacy for their ideologies. One practical implication of the results of this study is that politicians, just like Barack Obama and George W. Bush, as reported by Reyes (2011), use a combination of rationalization, authorisation and legitimisation moves through linguistic choices that generate fear, paint a hypothetical future, demonstrate altruism and build up polarity blocks of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation to justify their actions and ideologies

5. Conclusion

This study has shown that political actors would not always resort to physical force or other forms of overt and confrontational coercion in order to be understood and obeyed. In fact, the right to obedience can be achieved through legitimisation strategies which give politicians the possibility of using suitable linguistic means in justifying and convincing

followers to subscribe to their ideas. Throughout this article, we have been able to examine the various ways in which political actors of the SDF party in Cameroon are prone to justifying their actions or proposals for action by establishing polarities between right and wrong, between good and evil and between what is just and what is unjust. To achieve these aims, we have shown that the said political actors make recourse to structural and lexical resources of language which are significant in legitimising “their” actions and at the same time de-legitimising the actions of the “others” i.e. their political opponents.

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