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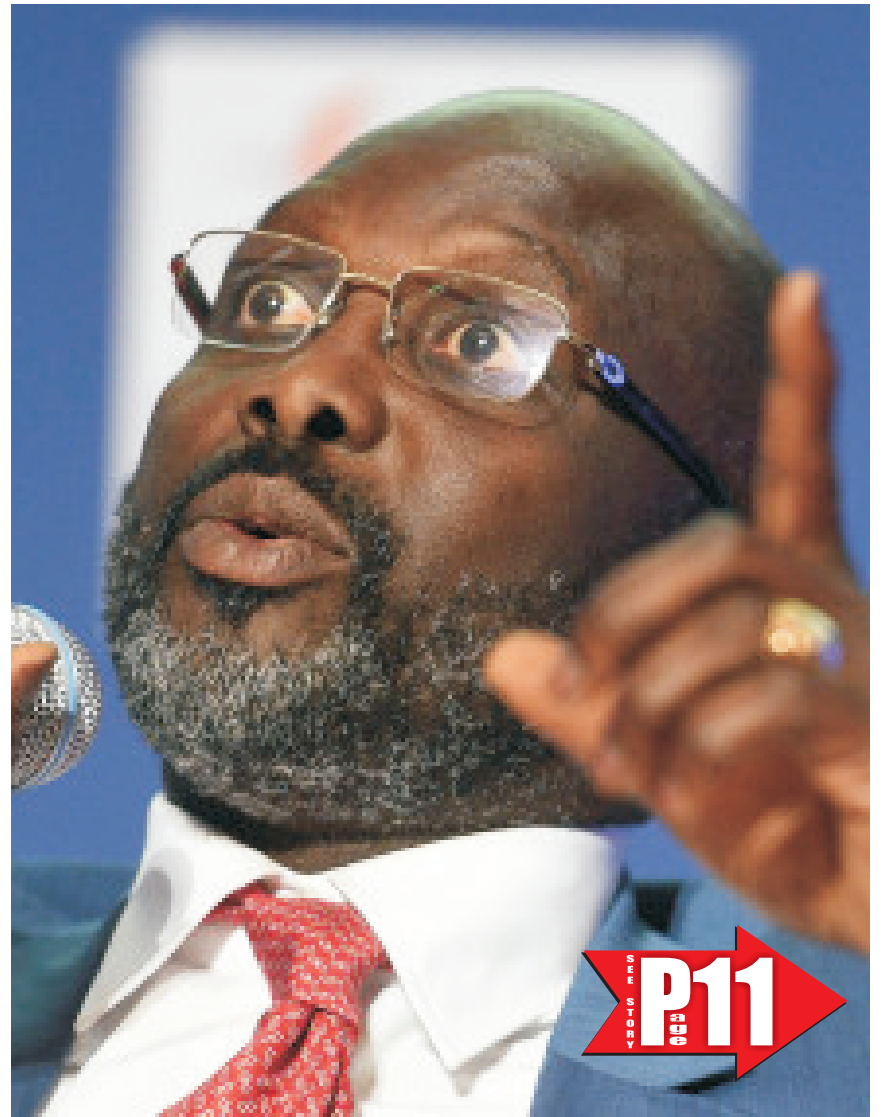
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Weah prepared for protesters



Opposition rallies support for June 07

REPRINT**No plan to meet protesters****-Pres. Weah**

By Ethel A. Tweh

Liberia's President George Manneh Weah says he has no plan to meet with protesters that are seeking to assemble beginning 7 June to demand a number of reforms in government.

His comment came in an interview with journalists on Capitol Hill Tuesday, 7 May after meeting with members of the Liberian Senate and discussed several national issues.

In the wake of panic among Liberians over the pending June 7 Protest, suggestions have been coming in from different quarters of the society for a dialogue between the government and the protesters.

Allegations of corruption, the poor state of the economy and a US\$25m mop-up exercise are among many other reasons why opposition and critics of President Weah's regime are saying they will protest and make demands for some reforms here.

While President Weah says he has no plan of meeting with the protesters, he, however, suggests that there is a need to dialogue for the peace of the country.

He notes that it is the constitutional right of the people to protest.

He says he is moved by the June 7 protest, as he reflects on the April 12, 1980 protest in Liberia.

The violent historical event referenced by President Weah records a coup d'etat when sitting President William Tolbert was overthrown and murdered.

"We know what protest did in Liberia on April 12, 1990," he says.

Briefing the press on the closed door meeting with the President, Senate President Pro-Tempore Albert C. Chie says the meeting was in line with the

spirit of the constitution of Liberia which calls for coordination among the three branches of Government.

Pro-Tempore Chie says the Senate presented to the President issues of national concerns and interest which include justice and security, economic situation, status of investigation report on the LRD\$16 billion and the US\$25 million intended to mop up excess Liberian dollars from the market.

Additionally he says the Senate presented issues of the withdrawal of the Tenured Bill, the assessment of the performance of current government officials, government of inclusion, the United Nations letter regarding the management of funds, proposal for a national reconciliation conference and information dissemination from the government to its people.

Following the Senate's presentation, Pro-Tempore Chie discloses that President Weah committed himself to the resolution of the issues raised in the interest of the people of Liberia.

According to Pro-Tempore Chief, former Pro-Tempore Cletus Wotorson's request to the Senate [to calm the tension here] helped to re-enforce the Senate's meeting with the President, indicating that they already had such plan.

Sen. Chie adds that the Senate's leadership met with the advisors of the Council of Patriots (COP) that are also members of the Liberian Senate, including Senators Sando Johnson (Bomi), and Daniel Naatehn, Sr, (Gbarpolu).

According to Sen. Chief, Margibi County Sen. Oscar Cooper was not in the meeting.

The President Pro-Tempore concludes that some of the things that were discussed with the advisors of the COP were the same issues they put forth to President Weah.--*Edited by Winston W. Parley*

EDITORIAL

The warning from America

THE UNITED STATES warns against inciting “unlawful acts through ill-considered rhetoric that could jeopardize Liberia’s hard-won peace and security.”

THE EMBASSY OF the United States near Monrovia says it is concerned by recent comments made in various fora which could impede Liberia’s progress, and that those who promote through their words or deeds a Congo-Country divide do not have Liberia’s best interests or that of their constituents at heart, but rather appear motivated by personal ambitions or fears.

A STATEMENT FROM the embassy specifically stresses that it is unacceptable for Senator Prince Y. Johnson, Representative Yekeh Kolubah, ‘ex-generals’ or other former actors from Liberia’s civil wars to engage in such acts, noting that it is equally irresponsible for people within leadership positions in government or the ruling Coalition to promote such division as Deputy Information Minister Eugene Fahngon has done on social media.

IN OTHER WORDS, the United States admonishes Liberians, particularly government officials, to turn down the hate messages, and instead, promote peace, national reconciliation and unity.

SENATE EX-PRESIDENT pro-tempore Cletus Wotorson, recently urged Liberians on all sides of the divide to calm down the tension in the country, and get to work.

BUT THE GOVERNMENT appears to be mesmerized by the words of war being led by its officials, who should rather, be focused on conducting the matters of state instead of responding to every sound coming from the public.

SENATOR PRINCE JOHNSON claims ownership of his native Nimba County and therefore, threatens opposition parties to not step in the county without getting his approval yet, he professes to subscribe to tenets of democracy that allow pluralism and opposing views.

SUSPENDED DEPUTY MINISTER Fahngon is fond of spewing hate and divisive comments on social media, but believes somewhere in his brain those are his private views. Even if his views were private, for God’s sake, can’t he be civil in the public space? Who told him that the social media is a private space?

OUR OFFICIALS HAVE stood so low that it now takes outsiders and foreign partners to chastise them for their utterances in public. Are they obsessed with the offices they occupied or power drunk?

AS THE U.S. EMBASSY statement notes, Minister Fahngon and his likes should take cognizant that to “take such a public stance and suggest it is a private opinion or a personal right reflects a misunderstanding of the nature of public service in a democracy.”

The
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COMMENTARY

By Raghuram G. Rajan

Why Capitalism Needs Populism

Globalization, digital technologies, and other factors have allowed competitive US corporations to achieve market dominance. If the past is any guide, it is only right that these “superstar” firms should now be challenged by grassroots political movements protesting against an unholy alliance of private-sector and government elites.

CHICAGO - Big Business is under attack in the United States. Amazon canceled its planned new headquarters in the New York City borough of Queens in the face of strong local opposition. Lindsey Graham, a Republican US senator for South Carolina, has raised concerns about Facebook’s uncontested market position, while his Democratic Senate colleague, Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, has called for the company to be broken up. Warren has also introduced legislation that would reserve 40% of corporate board seats for workers.

Such proposals may seem out of place in the land of free-market capitalism, but the current debate is exactly what America needs. Throughout the country’s history, it has been capitalism’s critics who ensured its proper functioning, by fighting against the concentration of economic power and the political influence it confers. When a few corporations dominate an economy, they inevitably team up with the instruments of state control, producing an unholy alliance of private- and public-sector elites.

This is what has happened in Russia, which is democratic and capitalist in name only. By maintaining complete control over commodity extraction and banking, an oligarchy beholden to the Kremlin has ruled out the possibility of meaningful economic and political competition. In fact, Russia is the apotheosis of the problem that US President Dwight D. Eisenhower described in his 1961 farewell address, when he admonished Americans to “guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence” by the “military-industrial complex” and the “potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power.”

With many US industries already dominated by a few “superstar” firms, we should be glad that “democratic socialist” activists and populist protesters are heeding Eisenhower’s warning. But, unlike in Russia, where the oligarchs owe their wealth to the capture of state assets in the 1990s, America’s superstar firms have gotten to where they are because they are more productive. This means that regulatory efforts have to be more nuanced - more scalpel than sledgehammer.

Specifically, in an era of global supply chains, US corporations have benefited from enormous economies of scale, network effects, and the use of real-time data to improve performance and efficiency at all stages of the production process. A company like Amazon learns from its data constantly to minimize delivery times and improve the quality of its services. Confident of its superiority relative to the competition, the firm needs few favors from the government - one reason why Amazon founder Jeff Bezos can back The Washington Post, which is often critical of the US administration.

But just because superstar firms are super-efficient today does not mean they will stay that way, particularly in the absence of meaningful competition. Incumbents will always be tempted to sustain their positions through anti-competitive means. By supporting legislation such as the 1984 Computer Fraud and Abuse Act and the 1998 Digital Millennium Copyright Act, the leading

Internet firms have ensured that competitors cannot plug into their platforms to benefit from user-generated network effects. Similarly, after the 2009 financial crisis, the big banks accepted the inevitability of increased regulations, and then lobbied for rules that just so happened to raise compliance costs, thereby disadvantaging smaller competitors. And now that the Trump administration has become trigger-happy with import tariffs, well-connected firms can influence who gets protection and who bears the costs.

More generally, the more that government-defined intellectual-property rights, regulations, and tariffs - rather than productivity - bolster a corporation’s profits, the more dependent it becomes on government benevolence. The only guarantee of corporate efficiency and independence tomorrow is competition today.

The pressure on the government to keep capitalism competitive, and impede its natural drift toward domination by a dependent few, typically comes from ordinary people, organizing democratically in their communities. Not possessing the influence of the elite, they often want more competition and open access. In the US, the late-nineteenth-century Populist movement and the early-twentieth-century Progressive movement were reactions to monopolization in critical industries such as railroads and banking. These grassroots mobilizations led to regulations like the 1890 Sherman Antitrust Act, the 1933 Glass-Steagall Act (albeit less directly), and measures to improve access to education, health, credit, and business opportunities. By supporting competition, these movements not only kept capitalism vibrant, but also averted the risk of corporatist authoritarianism.

Today, as the best jobs drift to superstar firms that recruit primarily from a few prestigious universities, as small and medium-size companies find the path to growth strewn with impediments laid by dominant firms, and as economic activity abandons small towns and semi-rural communities for megacities, populism is emerging again. Politicians are scrambling to respond, but there is no guarantee that their proposals will move us in the right direction. As the 1930s made clear, there can be much darker alternatives to the status quo. If voters in decaying French villages and small-town America succumb to despair and lose hope in the market economy, they will be vulnerable to the siren song of ethnic nationalism or full-bore socialism, either of which would destroy the delicate balance between markets and the state. That will put an end to both prosperity and democracy.

The right response is not revolution, but rebalancing. Capitalism needs top-down reforms, such as updated antitrust regulation, to ensure that industries remain efficient and open to entry, and are not monopolized. But it also needs bottom-up policies to help economically devastated communities create new opportunities and maintain their members’ trust in the market economy. Populist criticism must be heeded, even if the radical proposals of populist leaders are not followed slavishly. This is essential to preserving both vibrant markets and democracy.

O-PED

By Carmen M. Reinhart

Explaining Inflation Inertia

CAMBRIDGE - The stubbornness of inflation continues to challenge and mystify central bankers worldwide. Whether they are trying to boost price growth or rein it in, policymakers are effectively wrestling with the same problem.

Consider Japan, which has experienced deflation (a decline in the price level) in 11 of the past 20 years. Since 2016, deflationary forces appear to have receded, but inflation rates have consistently remained well below the 2% target set by the Bank of Japan, despite accommodative policies. The BOJ has maintained the policy interest rate below zero since 2016, capped long-term rates near zero, and expanded the monetary base by about 250% since 2013 via record purchases of Japanese government bonds (JGBs). The BOJ now holds about 50% of the outstanding stock of government bonds. This is no small achievement, as Japan's government debt ratio, at 238% of GDP, is the highest in the world. And yet, despite these policies, inflation expectations five years out are still anchored close to 1%.

At the other end of the spectrum, there is Argentina's ongoing inflation battle. The Central Bank of Argentina (BCRA), in connection with an International Monetary Fund program in June 2018, promised to keep the monetary base unchanged. This has forced the policy rate to climb to almost 74%. Nonetheless, the annual inflation rate has accelerated from around 26% a year ago to about 55%.

The pick-up in inflation largely reflects higher import prices, as the peso crashed (plummeting about 115% against the US dollar during the 12 months that ended in March). But pass-through from the exchange rate to the price level is only part of the story. And an overheated economy has played no role at all. On the contrary, Argentina is grappling with a deep and lingering recession. The IMF expects GDP to shrink by 1.2% this year (following a larger contraction in 2018).

And yet, despite a credit crunch and other indications of tight monetary conditions and a recent spate of price controls, inflation remains close to 40%. Under President Mauricio Macri's administration, Argentina had a short-lived spell of inflation targeting during 2016-2018. When the scheme was unveiled, the 2019 target was set at within 1.5 percentage points of 5%. Credibility has been a problem.

Why have inflation expectations failed to respond to draconian changes in policies?

In 2001, one Argentina peso traded for one US dollar (see chart); today, one dollar costs around 44 pesos (a cumulative depreciation of over 4,000%). Since 2001, the Japanese yen has appreciated about 12% against the US dollar (and by almost 70% since the exchange rate began floating in 1971). Any modest amount of extrapolation would attach a low weight to a near-term yen crash or to a stable peso. During times of global financial market stress, there was a flight not only to US dollars (the global reserve currency), but also to yen (and swiss francs). In 2008-2009, for example, nearly all other currencies crashed.

These secular exchange-rate trends reinforce existing preferences in saving-consumption patterns and asset allocation. In the case of Japan (prior to the more recent era of negative real interest rates), they allowed savers to maintain the purchasing power of their savings. They also help to explain the strong Japanese bias toward domestic, yen-denominated assets.

As for Argentina, chronic inflation and currency depreciation have cemented a clear preference for the US dollar as a store of value. The compulsory pesoization in January 2002 (when existing US dollar deposits and loans in the domestic banking sector were forcibly converted to pesos) provided only a temporary and artificial reduction in the domestic use of the US dollar. Saving rates are low, and a nontrivial share of private savings is held outside the country. As Christoph Trebesch and I have highlighted, reliance on fickle foreign saving does not help with currency instability or external indebtedness.

So, what can governments do to induce turning points in stubborn inflation expectations when central banks' policies prove insufficient to the task?

In the case of Japan, convincing the private sector that higher inflation is the path of the future requires a break from the current practice of indexing public-sector wages to the previous year's inflation. Bold increases in public-sector wages may provide the official signal that has been lacking, with private-sector wage and price setting following suit. The very fact that such a measure would run counter to fiscal prudence in such a highly indebted country might help undermine the entrenched trend toward yen appreciation. Higher inflation has to be part of the solution to the existing overhang of public and private debt.

As for Argentina, to avoid fueling a classic wage-price spiral, de-indexation requires significant reductions in real wages, starting with the public sector. The political difficulty of doing this (especially when the public sector is large, as it is in Argentina) is daunting at the best of times; in an election year, there is (at least as far I am aware) limited historical precedent for it. Apart from dampening inflation expectations, real wage cuts mitigate the real exchange-rate appreciation (loss of competitiveness) that often accompanies disinflation plans. For a country like Argentina, facing increasing difficulties in global capital markets, current-account deficits are a luxury.

Perhaps inflation expectations are stubbornly high (or low) because the public has learned to extrapolate from another historical trend: governments tend to avoid making difficult choices.

OPINION

By Harold James

Stories That Can't End Well

PRINCETON - In today's irrational world of fake news and bad-faith politics, a new mantra has emerged: It's all about narratives. Power today lies in one's ability to tell a story. As a case in point, consider Ukrainian President-elect Volodymyr Zelensky, a comedian whose only political experience is that he played a president on TV. Zelensky beat the incumbent, Petro Poroshenko, because he knew how to spin a yarn.

Today's performative politics represent a sharp break from a century in which social science drove governance. Until recently, policymakers sought to provide empirically compelling - albeit often simplified - assessments of problems such as poverty, disease, and violence, in order to build political support for evidence-based solutions.

After the 1930s, this technocratic approach was shaped by economists who used national income accounting to manage macroeconomic conditions. Relying on a straightforward conceptual framework developed by the British economist John Maynard Keynes, they saw deficient demand as the root cause of underemployment and overcapacity. At the same time, they abided by an economic orthodoxy that linked monetary growth to inflation. In both cases, there was a simple causal mechanism, embodied in the Phillips curve, for controlling unemployment and prices.

Keynesianism fell out of favor during the stagflation of the 1970s, when both unemployment and inflation rose simultaneously in the US and other advanced economies. And though the 2008 financial crisis occasioned what Keynes's biographer, Robert Skidelsky, described as a "return of the master," momentum toward a new Keynesianism proved short-lived. Instead, the world embarked on a massive experiment in monetary easing.

Meanwhile, policymakers during the post-crisis years became deeply ambivalent toward fiscal deficits. On one hand, they worried that debt levels in some countries were unsustainably high; on the other hand, they took solace in the notion that a world awash in easy money should be able to finance its way out of anything.

But this policy confusion and reliance on illusory arithmetic recalls the Soviet experience of the 1920s and 1930s. In the Soviet planned economy, prices were set by the state, and the interest on capital was effectively zero. This meant that the cost of financing was the same for a grandiose infrastructure project as it was for anything else. And so, in planning a railroad, engineers would pull out all the stops, proposing tunnels through mountains just to avoid ever having to go uphill.

Needless to say, reality soon caught up with the authorities. As more and more projects went uncompleted, Soviet planners tried to cover up the failures by simply declaring them a success. But they looked clueless, and the result was a loss of confidence in technocrats generally.

The 2008 financial crisis produced a similar loss of confidence. A deeply complex event with many causes, the only way to explain it was to tell a straightforward story. Hence, many people came to believe that the crash had discredited conventional economics in its entirety. The reality was more complicated. To be sure, economists in the lead-up to 2008 had neglected money and finance; but standard (and older) economic models are still enormously effective in assessing the impact of policy. What was discredited, then, was a specific analytical approach that relied on too little data when calculating risk.

Humans are wired to be influenced by stories. Having finally recognized this fact, international bodies such as the World Economic Forum, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank now organize their annual meetings around the quest for a new "narrative" to replace neoliberalism.

Historians, of course, have always understood the power of narrative. Ancient Rome owed its primacy to the poet Virgil as much as to Augustus Caesar; and seventeenth-century England derived more of its strength from Shakespeare and the King James Bible than from Queen Elizabeth. And yet, today's new narratives may be too ambitious, tracing contemporary shortcomings to fundamental and ancient problems such as greed - a basic emotion that previously went by the name of avarice - and institutions that have existed for centuries.

Unfortunately, this is one of the consequences of the financial crisis. The sheer depth of political and economic uncertainty turned historians into pundits whose critiques of conventional social science are overly biased toward random pet narratives. Worse, many historians have begun to lend their academic authority to policy prescriptions that are even more problematic than anything pre- or post-crisis economists ever proposed.

For example, by peddling fallacious assertions about the centrality of sovereignty in Britain's constitutional tradition, a number of prominent historians have played a devastating role in precipitating the Brexit crisis. They would have British voters believe that leaving the European Union is no different than Henry VIII's declaration of sovereignty in opposition to the Roman pontiff.

If historians are going to participate in high-stakes political debates, they should provide a broader context for understanding the issues. When they advance simple narratives that imply specific policy prescriptions, they are even more dangerous than social scientists.

Partial historical knowledge pressed into the service of national myths - the Reformation or the 1992 Exchange Rate Mechanism crisis as a model for Brexit; the Battle of Poltava for contemporary Russia - causes confusion, sows discord, and inflicts harm. With a growing chorus of flimflam artists pushing such "scholarship," it is incumbent on all sober and cautious commentators to set the historical record straight.

REPRINT

Over 4,000 to face salaries cut



Vice Pres. Taylor and Cabinet members in photo

By Winston W. Parley

The office of President George Manneh Weah says some 4,140 higher-earning government employees will be affected by salaries cut in government's new measures seeking to synchronize pay system and to revamp the economy.

"The cut will affect higher-earning government employees in the Executive Branch. We want to underscore that ... Considering, uh, some 4,140 out of 71,000 plus employees," Deputy Presidential Press Secretary Smith Toby told a press briefing at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Tuesday, 7 May.

In announcing the new government austerity measure, Toby laments that what was planned in the past 12 years is what President Weah's government is reaping today, in his attempt to find a cause for today's economic challenges facing the new administration.

"Those who understand the economy will tell you that, uh, what was being planned or implemented in 12 years or in six years is what we are reaping right now," he says.

The Deputy Presidential Press Secretary explains that the economic condition of the state was not manufactured by the Weah led-government, recalling that President Weah has said time without number that he inherited a bad economy.

In previous administration, he continues that people were earning around US\$45,000, but President Weah's government is working towards synchronizing the pay system of government employees.

To standardize salaries, Toby reveals that all cabinet members, heads of autonomous agencies and public agencies earning between US\$5,000 and

US\$7,861 will experience a 10 percent reduction in salaries.

He adds that there will be an additional 3.5 percent to 7.5 percent salary reduction affecting deputy and assistant ministers, as well as civil servants making above US\$1,000.00.

He clarifies rumors here that the measures are being introduced to further deepen the hardship on civil servants, saying only civil servants making below US\$1,000 will not be affected by the cuts.

Toby says he is told that the cabinet and the heads of public enterprises and autonomous agencies have agreed on these measures, meaning that no longer will these officials in the Executive Branch make above US\$10,000.00.

The measure, he says is government's way of putting employees into categories based on the type of work they do.

Additionally, the presidency announces that a very big cabinet meeting is due to be held today, 8 May, as government seeks to put into place some measures to address the status of the economy.

Touching on other issues, Toby announces a plan to extend President Weah's housing unit projects to the rest of the 15 counties upon completion of the ongoing construction of a US\$3.8m project for 282 housing units in Grand Kru County.

According to him, another 1,500 housing units will be constructed in the 15 counties here for the poorest of the poor, after the completion of the 282 housing units in Grand Kru County.

Each of the counties are expected to benefit 100 housing units, according to Toby.

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

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Liberians speak on Eugene Fahngon's suspension

By Ben P. Wese

Liberians home and abroad are hailing President George Manneh Weah for suspending controversial Deputy Information Minister Eugene Fahngon, urging the president not to rest until he uproots all the bad seeds from government.

The suspended controversial Deputy Information Minister for Press and Public Affairs, Mr. Fahngon faced President Weah's wrath this week over his persistent use of social media Facebook to propagate divisive messages against those he calls Congo-Liberians.

Facebook has been flooded with reactions by Liberians, many of whom have been hailing the president's decision.

Following the president's decision, our reporter spoke with a number of citizens to get their reactions.

"I will like to say bravo to the people's president for the first bold step taken," student Abraham Varney of privately run United Methodist

University (UMU) says.

But he says there are a lot of people in President Weah's government that do not mean well for the president and the

that more heads will follow to safe the face of the country. "...People who are in government that supposed to be preaching peace message,



country they claim to be serving.

Student Varney indicates that he expected this long time ago, expressing belief

are the same people causing division among their citizen. You read what the American Embassy statement said, that should be a strong warning to

the president to act now, "MotherHawa Cooper of the God's Divine Healing Ministry told marketers at the Waterside Market.

"Pres. Weah must succeed through our help. Deceptive elements must be cleared from his immediate surrounding," Lewis Dennis posted on his Facebook page.

SiattaDukuly of the African Methodist Episcopal University (AMEU) on camp Johnson Road pointed out that Fahngon's suspension should be a warning to other government officials.

She urges officials here to focus on their jobs as Liberia is above every individual.

She calls on President Weah

not to reinstate suspended Minister Fahngon.

She argues that social media is not a platform for government ... to cause division among its citizen, noting that the American Embassy's statement was not just limited to government officials, but Liberians as a whole.

"This is one thing Eugene Fahngon has been doing since his ascendancy to Deputy Minister post. He has been very divisive and rude in his word mostly on the social media. Fighting sitting lawmaker was not just enough, insulting the media," Siatta says.--Edited by Winston W. Parley

Get permit before you talk

-Weah orders Executive officials

President George Manneh Weah, has issued an Executive Memorandum directing all Ministers, Deputies and Assistant Ministers, and Heads of Agencies and Commissions, and their deputies to refrain from making public comments on policy issues of national concern on both conventional and social media without first seeking authorization from the

Executive Memorandum Wednesday through the Director General of the Cabinet, Mr. Jordan Solunteh.

The Executive Memorandum also instructs all government Ministries and Agencies to direct their communications on public policy matters to the Minister of Information or his designee.

The Memorandum warns

Liberia urged to prioritize modern education

By Lewis S. Teh

The Chief Executive officer (CEO) of Belle Vue Eco Smart Tec International School (BVIS) Sekou Doumbouya is urging the government of Liberia through the Ministry of Education to prioritize the use of modern technologies in various classrooms for the future of Liberian students.

"When our school - going

kids are given the requisite tools they need for learning, including the use of modern technology, I think it will help in the advancement of the education sector of this country," Mr. Doumbouya said recently at his school in Caldwell during celebration of Earth Day.

Speaking to reporters at the start of the celebration, Mr. Doumbouya explained that

the day was a traditional day observed at BVIS.

He says the day is observed to teach the kids how to preserve mother earth, and how to bring the children closer to nature.

Mr. Doumbouya believes that Liberia is facing so much problems due to lack of self-sufficiency in the production of food, resulting to serious economic hardship for the citizens.

He says the idea behind the Earth Day celebration comes from the fact that Eco School cares for the soil, and mother earth.

"We have to celebrate to show to the country that the earth is important to the human nature," he says.

According to Doumbouya his school uses the British curriculum, but it also infuses the Liberian curriculum to allow students to form part of the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE).

For his part, Mathematics and Science instructor Mohammed Dukuly says the earth day celebration was significant to the school because the event is a worldwide annual event that is normally celebrated on 22 April of every year.--Edited by Winston W. Parley



appropriate authorities.

The order issued Wednesday, 8 May comes after President Weah suspended Deputy Information Minister Eugene Fahngon for propagating divisive messages that promote tribal divide between native and congo Liberians.

The Executive Mansion says President Weah issued the

further that there would be grave consequences for any member of the Executive Branch of Government found in violation of the directive.

"The President therefore cautions all members of the Executive Branch to take heed and govern themselves accordingly," the Executive Memorandum concludes.-- Press release

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EU, Liberia Hold 7TH Political Dialogue

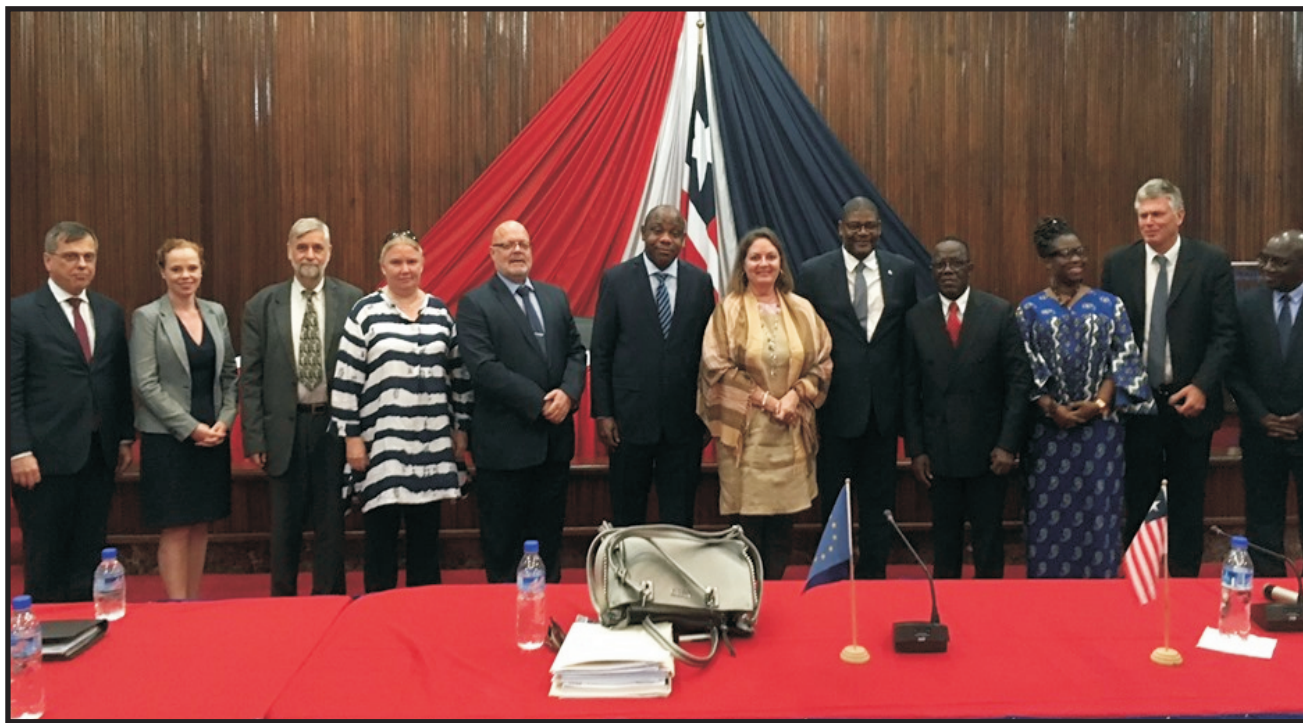
The Government of Liberia and the European Union has held their Seventh EU-Liberia Political Dialogue aimed at strengthening the existing bilateral ties and cooperation between the two parties.

According to a Foreign Ministry release, the Seventh EU-Liberia Political Dialogue which took place on Monday, May 6th was convened in the C. Cecil Dennis' Auditorium at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Members of the Liberian Government's delegation at the forum were Finance and Development Planning Samuel Tweah; Labor Minister Moses Y. Kollie; Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection Ms. WilliamettaPisoSaydee-Tarr as well as Hon. Wesley Momo Johnson of the Governance Commission and a host of other officials of the Liberian Government.

There were also representatives from the Justice Ministry and the National investment commission at the deliberation.

Members of the European Union delegation included the



following: the Ambassador of the Republic of France, H. E. Terrence Wills; the Ambassador of the United Kingdom, H.E. Mr. David Belgrove; The Charge d'Affaire of the Federal Republic of Germany, M. r. GuenterPlambeck and the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium, Hugues Chantry among other EU Diplomats in Liberia.

Liberia's Foreign Minister, Gbehzohngar Milton

Findley, led the Liberian Government delegation at the dialogue, while the EU Ambassador accredited to Liberia, Her Excellency Hélène Cavé headed the European Union Delegation at the one day event.

The Seventh Political Dialogue was co-chaired by Minister Findley and EU Ambassador to Liberia, Ms. Helene Cave.

At the Dialogue, the two sides discussed critical

economic, political and social issues including "Creating the Conditions for Broad-Based Economic Growth and Job Creation - measures aimed at fostering an enabling business investment environment; Private Sector Development; Good Governance; Accountability and Transparency.

Other issues deliberated at the just ended Dialogue were the Post-Cotonou Negotiation and the Schengen Visas issues among others. The two parties also highlighted the state of the Liberian Economy and the country 2019/20 National Budget.

Speaking at the dialogue, Foreign Minister Findley extolled the European Union and its member states for the many bilateral assistance it has rendered and continues to provide the Government and people of Liberia.

Minister Findley told the meeting that Liberia will continue its bilateral engagements with the EU member countries aimed at promoting the country's 'Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development.

Making closing remarks, Minister Findley added "Let me first of all thank you Madam Ambassador and members of the EU delegation; I would also like to thank all Ministers and heads of Government entities here present from the Liberian side. Today, once again Madam Ambassador we have been able to sit openly and to discuss those issues that are affecting our bilateral relationship and to some extent our multilateral relationship with the European Union;

The Dean of the Cabinet expressed delight over the progress the two sides made together at the dialogue.

He indicated that since last July, both the EU and GOL have had open and frank discussions on the EU-Liberia relations

stressing "we will continue to work together to improve the living condition of the Liberian people".

The Minister who co-chaired the dialogue revealed that President George Manneh Weah cannot over emphasize his concerns about the EU-Liberia relationship and has expressed his desire to continue to engage with the Union to solve the differences with the European Union.

"We will continue to liaise with you as partners to help improve the living condition of the Liberian people," he added.

For her part, the Head of EU Delegation expressed delight over the engagement and stated that "we have addressed critical issues of concern including political, social and economic and human rights.

The purpose is to make progress together on a platforms where questions and answers are raised from both sides and exchanges are made; we are building the country together, she said.

Ambassador Hélène Cavé then commended the Liberian Government for systematically addressing the EU concerns. She expressed hope that the next dialogue would take place at a reasonable time frame with the view to take note of development taking place in the course of six months in Liberia, adding "our assistance are linked to this".

During the opening deliberation, the Government of Liberia briefed the EU delegation on state of the economy, the country's national budget as well as the Liberian business climate. The GOL also highlighted some of the challenges the country is faced with and efforts the Weah-led administration is making in addressing some of the problems.

The European Union, for its part, underlined the importance of creating friendly business environment to enable investors come to Liberia and appreciated receiving an update from the Government on the efforts being made thus far.

The Liberian Government also informed the meeting about the condition of people in pre-trial detention in Liberia and the challenges faced by the Liberian government in dealing with the situation.

On this note, the European Union committed to continue its support for Government's efforts to address these challenges.

Koijee warns opposition

By Lewis S. Teh

Monrovia City Mayor Jefferson T. Koijee is warning protesters here to desist from staging the June 7 protest which is being planned by the Council of Patriots.

Speaking Sunday evening, 5 May in West Point, Koijee said if opposition believe that "this government is underperforming and has brought hardship" on the Liberian people, they should challenge the ruling Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC)

at the ballot box.

"But don't push this country into chaos with your so-called June 7 protest," Koijee warned during his visit in West Point, Montserrado County District #7 where he was warmly welcomed by residents that were chanting slogans.

His comment comes against a plan by some Liberians to stage protest beginning June 7 to demand some meaningful change in the way the state is being governed.

Koijee alleges that the

decision by the opposition to hide under the canopy of Council of Patriots to plan a protest on June 7 is meant to push the country into chaos, rather than good.

He criticizes opposition of allegedly hiding their true identity to stage a protest, noting that during the CDC's days in opposition, it did not hide its identify when partisans wanted to protest.

Meanwhile, Mayor Koijee has mocked the opposition by appealing on their behalf to the Ministry of Justice to allow the Council of Patriots to carry out their protest.

Koijee says if the Council of Patriots come one time, the CDC will come out 10 times and will show itself.

"I challenge any member of the four collaborating parties calling themselves opposition to get on the ballot and contest, only if they claim that this government has lost its popularity," says Koijee.

He narrates that sitting in the back to throw stone at the government is not the right thing for the opposition to do.

Koijee told residents of District #7 that his mission there was to visit, interact with residents and to know how they are doing.--Edited by Winston W. Parley



Mayor Jefferson T. Koijee

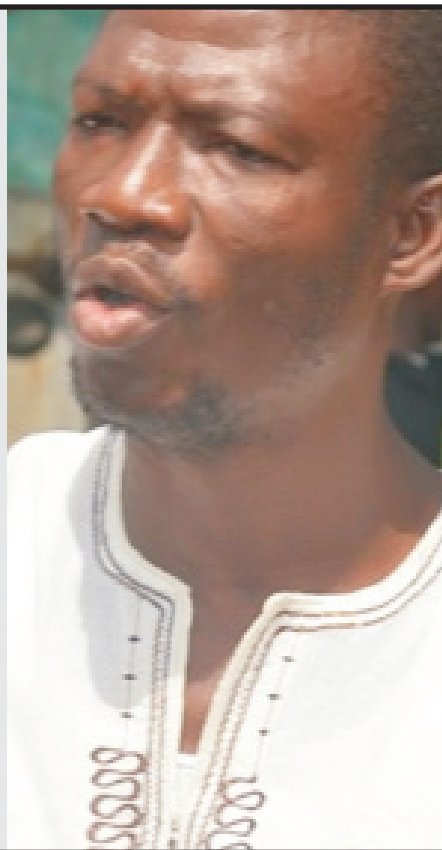
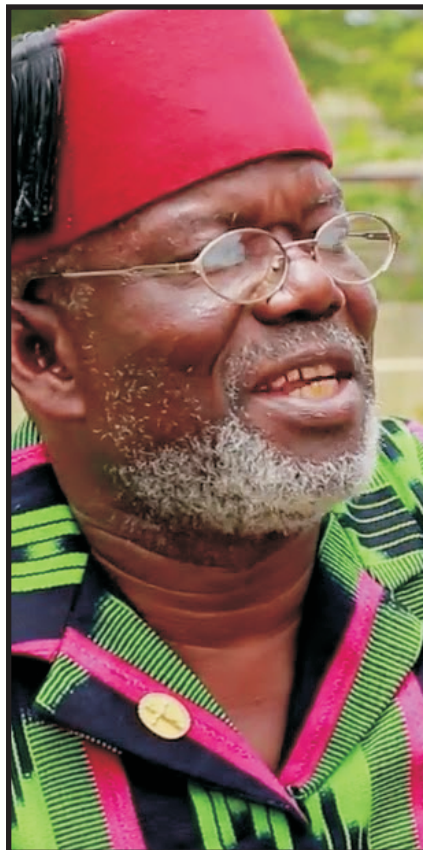
Français

« Inacceptable ! », le gouvernement américain tape du poing sur la table

Le sénateur Prince Yormie Johnson, ancien chef de guerre, le représentant Yekeh Kolubah, les soi-disant « ex-généraux » et le vice-ministre suspendu Eugene Fahngon peuvent être de honte après avoir été vivement grondés comme des enfants par l'ambassade des États-Unis près de Monrovia pour les propos qu'ils ont tenus récemment en public, lesquels propos risquent de compromettre la paix et la sécurité du Libéria.

Ces personnalités de l'État du Libéria ont, dans leurs discours politiques irresponsables, livré des messages de haine, tenu des propos incendiaires, prôné la violence, proféré des menaces et semé la discorde sur les ondes et les médias sociaux.

Dans une déclaration publiée le lundi 6 mai, l'ambassade des États-Unis a déclaré que ceux qui promeuvent, par leurs propos ou leurs actes, une division entre les Congos (descendants d'exclaves affranchis) et les



indigènes n'ont pas à cœur l'intérêt supérieur du Libéria encore moins de leurs administrés, mais semblent plutôt animés soit par des ambitions personnelles ou par la peur.

« Il est inacceptable que le sénateur Prince Y. Johnson, le

représentant Yekeh Kolubah et les "ex-généraux" ou autres anciens acteurs des guerres civiles du Libéria incitent à des actes répréhensibles par des discours irréfléchis qui risquent de mettre en péril la paix et la sécurité du Libéria gagnées au prix de

grands sacrifices », peut-on lire dans la déclaration.

A la déclaration d'insister qu'il est tout aussi irresponsable de la part des personnes qui occupent des postes de responsabilité au sein du gouvernement ou du parti au pouvoir de promouvoir une division comme le sous-ministre Eugene Fahngon, sur les médias sociaux. « Adopter une telle position publique et suggérer qu'il s'agit d'une opinion personnelle ou un droit personnel met en exergue sa méconnaissance de la nature du service public dans une démocratie », a ajouté la déclaration.

Le chef de l'exécutif a suspendu lundi le vice-ministre de l'Information, Eugene Fahngon, pour une durée indéterminée, immédiatement après la déclaration de l'ambassade des États-Unis.

Pendant ce temps, alors que les Libériens célèbrent la Journée de l'unification nationale la semaine prochaine, l'ambassade des États-Unis encourage tous les Libériens à réfléchir sur leur rôle dans la contribution constructive au développement et au maintien de la paix dans le pays.

Les activités économiques du Libéria sont mises en berne en raison de la probable manifestation publique que

prépare un groupe de Libériens réunis sous la bannière du « Conseil des patriotes (COP) » pour, dit-on, attirer l'attention de l'administration Weah sur « la mauvaise gouvernance, la corruption, la mauvaise gestion des ressources de l'État et les violations flagrantes de la Constitution », entre autres.

Le COP, dans une lettre datée du 24 avril 2019 adressée au ministre de la Justice, Frank Musa Dean, a déclaré : « Nous vous écrivons pour vous informer de notre intention de tenir une réunion pacifique qui devrait commencer le vendredi 7 juin 2019 et qui pourrait durer plusieurs jours à Monrovia. »

A la lettre de poursuivre : « Au cours de ce rassemblement pacifique, nous avons l'intention de présenter nos doléances au président et aux responsables des pouvoirs législatif et judiciaire sous forme d'une pétition écrite. »

Mais le Ministre garde des sceaux Frank Musa Dean, dans sa réponse officielle rendue publique le mercredi 01 mai, a fait valoir que les conseillers et les membres du COP, qui ont signé la communication, n'ont aucune autorité pour représenter une organisation et / ou un organisme non constitué en organisation. Au ministre d'ajouter : « Par conséquent, pour se conformer aux procédures légales, il faut que la demande soit faite à travers des responsables statutaires du "Conseil des patriotes", après avoir fourni au ministère de la Justice la documentation indiquant que cette organisation est dûment constituée et régie par le droit de la République du Libéria. »

Il a ajouté que les signataires de la lettre peuvent choisir de présenter la demande sous leur propre nom, en tant que groupe de citoyens libériens.

Mais certains observateurs pensent que la position du ministère de la Justice est une tactique qui vise à refuser l'autorisation aux manifestants pour se réunir pacifiquement le 7 juin, comme ils l'avaient annoncé. Le COP maintient que la manifestation aura lieu comme prévu.

Le ministre Fahngon suspendu

Le président George Manneh Weah a immédiatement suspendu pour un temps indéfini le controversé vice-ministre de l'Information chargé de la Presse et des Affaires publiques, Eugene Fahngon.

Selon un communiqué de presse publié le 6 mai par The Executive Mansion, le

président Weah a déclaré l'attachement de son gouvernement à la politique de « un pays, un peuple » avec le principe de la tolérance zéro en matière de politique de discorde ou de tribalisme.

Le président Weah a profité de l'occasion pour mettre en garde les représentants du gouvernement et tous les

citoyens contre toute velléité divisionniste et tribaliste ou ethnocentrique.

La décision du président Weah de suspendre M. Fahngon fait suite à des propos controversés tenu par ce dernier sur les réseaux sociaux concernant la manifestation prévue le 7 juin. Ses propos avaient tendance à semer la discorde entre les Congos (descendants des esclaves affranchis) et les autochtones.

M. Fahngon fait partie des représentants du gouvernement et de la Coalition pour le changement démocratique (CDC, parti au pouvoir) dont les propos ont été condamnés par l'ambassade américaine près de Monrovia.

En voici un extrait : « Vous avez tué 250 000 personnes de notre peuple autochtone et vous êtes libres. Nous protégerons notre président, notre gouvernement et notre pays !!! Pourquoi faut-il que ce soit un groupe de personnes tout le temps ? N'est-il pas citoyen libérien aussi ? Est-ce parce qu'il s'appelle Manneh Weah ? ... ». Ces mots écrits sur Facebook le



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4 mai ont clairement tendance à insinuer que le président Weah est combattu

parce qu'il est d'origine autochtone.

Français

Éditorial

Les politiciens libériens rappelés à l'ordre

Les États-Unis mettent en garde contre toute incitation à « des actes répréhensibles à travers des propos irréfléchis ayant la tendance de mettre en péril la paix et la sécurité du Libéria gagnées au prix de grands sacrifices ».

L'ambassade des États-Unis près de Monrovia s'est dite préoccupée par les propos qui se tiennent partout sur toutes les chaînes, avertissant que ces propos risquent d'entraver les progrès réalisés par le Libéria. Elle se dit convaincue que ceux qui, par leurs propos, veulent semer la division entre les libériens issus de la descendance des esclaves affranchis communément appelés « Congo » et les indigènes n'ont pas à cœur l'intérêt supérieur du Libéria encore moins de leurs administrés, ils semblent plutôt animés soit par des ambitions égoïstes personnelles ou par la peur.

Dans une déclaration rendue publique, l'ambassade a souligné spécifiquement qu'il est inacceptable que le sénateur Prince Y. Johnson, le représentant Yekeh Kolubah, les « ex-généraux » ou encore les autres anciens acteurs des guerres civiles qui ont endeuillé le Libéria se livrent à de tels actes. Il est également irresponsable de la part des cadres du gouvernement ou de la coalition au pouvoir de promouvoir une telle division, comme l'a fait le ministre adjoint de l'Information, Eugene Fahngon, sur les médias sociaux, selon l'ambassade.

En d'autres termes, les États-Unis exhortent les Libériens, en particulier les responsables gouvernementaux, à cesser leurs discours de haine et à promouvoir la paix, la réconciliation nationale et l'unité.

L'ancien président du Sénat, Cletus Wotorson a récemment exhorté les Libériens de tous les bords à apaiser la tension politique dans le pays et à se mettre au travail.

Mais le gouvernement semble fasciné par les propos incendiaires tenus par ses responsables, qui, au lieu de se concentrer sur la gestion des affaires de l'État, veulent réagir à tous les bruits que fait la population.

Le sénateur Prince Johnson revendique la propriété de son comté natal, Nimba, et menace donc tout parti politique de l'opposition qui tenterait de s'y rendre sans sa permission explicite. Il déclare pourtant souscrire aux principes de la démocratie qui autorisent le pluralisme et les points de vue opposés.

Quant au sous-ministre suspendu Fahngon, il a le plaisir de tenir des propos haineux et de division sur les réseaux sociaux, tout en croyant quelque part dans son cerveau que ce sont des opinions personnelles. Même s'il s'agissait des points de vue personnels, pour l'amour de Dieu, ne peuvent-ils pas être imbibés ne serait-ce d'un peu de civilité d'autant plus qu'ils sont tenus dans un espace public? De fait, qui lui a dit que les médias sociaux sont un espace privé?

Nos dirigeants se sont rabaissés si bas au point qu'ils sont maintenant réprimandés par des étrangers et des partenaires étrangers pour leurs propos irresponsables tenus en public. Sont-ils obsédés par les bureaux qu'ils occupent ou sont-ils ivres du pouvoir?

Comme l'a si bien dit l'ambassade américaine dans sa déclaration, le ministre Fahngon et ses semblables devraient prendre conscience du fait que "prendre une telle position publique et suggérer qu'il s'agit d'une opinion personnelle ou d'un droit personnel met en exergue sa méconnaissance de la nature du service public dans une démocratie".

COMMENTAIRE

Par Raghuram G. Rajan

Pourquoi le capitalisme a besoin du populisme

CHICAGO - Les plus grandes entreprises sont actuellement prises d'assaut aux États-Unis. Amazon a annulé son projet de nouveau siège dans le quartier du Queens à New York, face à une forte opposition locale. Lindsey Graham, sénatrice républicaine de Caroline du Sud, a soulevé des inquiétudes concernant la position de marché contestée de Facebook, tandis que sa collègue démocrate Elizabeth Warren, sénatrice du Massachusetts, a appelé au démantèlement de l'entreprise. Warren a également introduit une législation consistant à réserver aux employés 40 % des sièges aux conseils d'administration.

Ces propositions peuvent sembler hors de propos en terres de capitalisme et de libre marché, mais le débat actuel constitue exactement ce dont l'Amérique a besoin. Car tout au long de l'histoire du pays, c'est bien la critique du capitalisme qui a permis au système de fonctionner correctement, en luttant contre la concentration du pouvoir économique, et contre l'influence politique qu'elle confère. Lorsqu'une poignée de grandes sociétés domine une économie, ces entreprises finissent inévitablement par faire équipe avec les instruments du contrôle étatique, ce qui aboutit à une alliance contre nature d'élites des secteurs privé et public.

C'est ce qu'il s'est passé en Russie, qui n'est démocratique et capitaliste que de nom. En maintenant un contrôle total sur l'extraction des matières premières et le secteur bancaire, une oligarchie obéissant au Kremlin a exclu toute possibilité de véritable concurrence économique et politique. La Russie constitue en effet l'apothéose du problème que le président américain Dwight D. Eisenhower décrit en 1961 dans son discours de fin de mandat, lorsqu'il attire l'attention des Américains sur la nécessité de « [se] garder de toute influence injustifiée » exercée par le « complexe militaro-industriel », et sur « le risque de désastreuse ascension d'un pouvoir illégitime ».

De nombreux secteurs étant d'ores et déjà dominés par quelques grandes sociétés à succès, nous devons nous réjouir que les militants « démocrates-socialistes » et les contestataires populistes s'inspirent de l'avertissement formulé par Eisenhower. Pour autant, à la différence des sociétés en Russie, où les oligarques doivent leur fortune à la captation des actifs de l'État dans les années 1990, les géants américains en sont arrivés là grâce à leur productivité supérieure. C'est la raison pour laquelle les efforts réglementaires à fournir doivent être plus nuancés - et user davantage du scalpel que du marteau.

Plus précisément, à l'ère des chaînes logistiques mondiales, les grandes sociétés américaines bénéficient d'immenses économies d'échelle, d'effets de réseau, ainsi que de l'utilisation de données en temps réel permettant d'optimiser la performance et l'efficacité à tous les stades du processus de production. Une société comme Amazon apprend en permanence de ses données, pour minimiser les délais de livraison et améliorer la qualité de ses services. Confiante quant à sa relative supériorité par rapport à la concurrence, l'entreprise n'a pas réellement besoin des faveurs du gouvernement - ce qui explique pourquoi il arrive au fondateur d'Amazon, Jeff Bezos, d'approuver un Washington Post souvent très critique à l'égard de l'administration américaine.

Mais le fait que les plus grandes entreprises à succès soient aujourd'hui ultra-éefficientes ne signifie pas nécessairement qu'elle le resteront, particulièrement en l'absence de véritable concurrence. Les géants en place seront toujours tentés de pérenniser leur position via des pratiques anticoncurrentielles. En soutenant des législations telles que le Computer Fraud and Abuse Act de 1984 et le Digital Millennium Copyright Act de 1998, les sociétés leaders de l'Internet veillent à ce que les concurrents

ne gagnent pas leurs plateformes pour bénéficier d'effets de réseau produits par les utilisateurs. De même, après la crise financière de 2009, les grandes banques ont accepté l'inévitabilité d'une multiplication des réglementations, puis ont opéré un lobbying en faveur de règles qui se sont révélées augmenter les coûts de conformité, ce qui a désavantagé les concurrents de moindre envergure. Et maintenant que l'administration Trump dégage les tarifs douaniers sur les importations, les sociétés qui pèsent le plus peuvent influencer la question de savoir qui bénéficie d'une protection, et qui en supporte les coûts.

De manière générale, plus les droits de propriété intellectuelle, réglementations et tarifs douaniers définis par un État favorisent les profits d'une grande société - davantage que le fait sa productivité - et plus cette société devient dépendante de la bienveillance du gouvernement. La seule garantie d'efficacité et d'indépendance d'entreprise demain réside dans la concurrence aujourd'hui.

La pression exercée pour que l'État maintienne un capitalisme concurrentiel, et empêche son glissement naturel vers la domination d'une poignée d'entités dépendantes, provient généralement des citoyens ordinaires, qui s'organisent démocratiquement dans leurs communautés. Ne possédant pas l'influence de l'élite, ils aspirent souvent à plus de concurrence, ainsi qu'à un accès plus ouvert. Aux États-Unis, le mouvement populiste de la fin du XIXe siècle et le mouvement progressiste du début du XXe ont été des réactions à une monopolisation de secteurs majeurs tels que les chemins de fer et la banque. Ces mobilisations de base ont conduit à des réglementations telles que le Sherman Antitrust Act de 1890, le Glass-Steagall Act de 1933 (toutefois moins directement), ainsi qu'à des mesures visant à améliorer l'accès à l'éducation, à la santé, au crédit et aux opportunités d'affaires. En défendant la concurrence, ces mouvements ont non seulement conféré de la vie au capitalisme, mais également évité le risque d'autoritarisme corporatiste.

Aujourd'hui, à l'heure où les meilleurs emplois dérivent vers des grandes sociétés à succès qui embauchent principalement dans une poignée d'universités prestigieuses, à l'heure où les petites et moyennes entreprises arpentent vers la croissance un chemin semé d'obstacles érigés par les sociétés dominantes, et tandis que l'activité économique abandonne les petites villes et les communautés semi-rurales pour privilégier les mégapoles, le populisme émerge de nouveau. Les dirigeants politiques s'efforcent d'y répondre, mais rien ne garantit que leurs propositions nous orienteront dans la bonne direction. Comme l'ont clairement démontré les années 1930, il arrive que le statu quo cède la place à des alternatives beaucoup plus sombres. Si les électeurs des villages français et des petites villes américaines en déclin succombent au désespoir, s'ils perdent foi en l'économie de marché, ils deviendront vulnérables aux sirènes du nationalisme identitaire ou du socialisme à l'extrême, qui l'un ou l'autre seraient susceptibles d'anéantir l'équilibre délicat entre les marchés et l'État. Ceci mettrait fin à la fois à la prospérité et à la démocratie.

La juste réponse réside non pas dans une révolution, mais dans un rééquilibrage. Le capitalisme a besoin de réformes du sommet jusqu'à la base, telles qu'une modernisation de la réglementation antitrust, s'il entend veiller à ce que les secteurs demeurent efficaces, ouverts à l'entrée, et non monopolisés. Mais des politiques verticales ascendantes sont également nécessaires pour aider les communautés économiquement dévastées à bénéficier de nouvelles opportunités, et pour maintenir la confiance de leurs membres en l'économie de marché. La critique populiste doit être écoutée attentivement, même si les propositions les plus radicales des leaders populistes ne doivent pas être suivies naïvement. Cette démarche est essentielle si nous entendons maintenir pleinement en vie les marchés et la démocratie.

REPRINT**Officials face 10% pay cut**

By E. J. Nathaniel Daygbor

Following President George Weah's closed doors meeting with both leaderships of the 54th Legislature at the Capitol, the Government of Liberia announces 10 percent cut of special allowances, affecting over 4,000 officials in government.

Deputy Presidential Press Secretary Smith Toby says, the benefit and allowance cuts will specifically affect officials earning US\$5,000 and above.

Briefing reporters on the grounds of the Capitol Tuesday, 07 May after President Weah's closed doors meetings with the leaderships of the House of Representatives and the Liberian Senate, Toby details that currently, about 4,140 senior officials are being targeted, including cabinet ministers and their deputies, heads of government agencies and public corporations and their deputies.

However, he says other categories to be affected by the exercise include lower ranking officials, who earn a monthly income of US\$1,000 and above.

Since the inception of the Coalition for Democratic Change-led administration a year ago, the government wage bill has increased significantly following mass employment of party stalwarts.

Under the former administration of ex-president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the total strengthen of the civil service was around 40,000 to 44,000.

But Toby puts the current figure at over 71,000.

President Weah recently communicated with the 54th Legislature, requesting for an extra month to submitting the draft national fiscal budget, to enable the Executive make adjustments that would reflect current economic realities in the country.

Toby adds that these are government's efforts aimed at calming the economic tension associated with high cost of living being experienced by Liberians.

However, he clarifies that the benefits and allowance cuts will not affect civil servants, adding that the cut is actually intended to make the low income earners in government feel somehow equal with their respective bosses.

He discloses that in the wake of the decision to cut officials' benefits especially, from the Executive Branch of government, a cabinet retreat is being planned at a local hotel near the Roberts International Airport in Margibi County to discuss detail of the cuts.

Earlier last week, Montserrado County District #8 Representative Acarous Moses Gray of the ruling CDC wrote the House of Representatives, proposing cuts in lawmakers' benefits, but one of his colleagues in the House described the suggestion as "deception."

Rep. Gray, who Co-chairs the House Committee on Executive, notes in his communication addressed to Speaker Bohfal Chambers that the reduction will greatly help to address some of the pressing economic problems in the country. **-Editing by Jonathan Browne**

Weah prepared for protesters

By Bridgett Milton

Liberia's President George Manneh Weah has told the country's traditional partner, the United States of America that the responsibility is on him to protect the peace and stability of the state, though he recognizes the right of protesters here to peacefully assemble and petition government.

His comment was contained in a speech delivered at the United States Embassy near Monrovia Wednesday, 8 March during observance in advance of the 243rd Independence Anniversary of the United States of America.

Allegations of corruption, the poor state of the economy and a US\$25m mop-up exercise are among many other reasons why opposition and critics of President Weah's regime are saying they will protest and make demands for some reforms here.

In the wake of panic among Liberians over the pending



June 7 Protest being planned by a group calling itself Council of Patriots (COP), suggestions have been coming in from different quarters of the society for a dialogue between the government and the protesters.

The president says he has no plan to meet with the

protesters, and the chairman of Liberia's four collaborating opposition parties that have just announced support to the protest, Benoni Urey, is dramatically demanding the removal of ruling party Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) Chair MulbahMorlu from his post as

precondition for protesters to meet the president.

However President Weah emphasizes that he took an oath of office as Liberia's president to uphold the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Liberia.

As such, he says it is his constitutional duty to protect all the rights granted under the Constitution to every citizen including the right to assemble peacefully and orderly and present petition to the government on matters concerning the common good of the country.

President Weah makes emphasis that he has an equal duty and responsibility to preserve and protect the peace and stability of the state, vowing that he shall fulfill these responsibilities in equal measures.

Meanwhile, President Weah observes that since the inception of his administration just over fifteen months ago, there has been steady growth in the relationship between Liberia and the United States, as well as a closer collaboration between the US Embassy and the relevant officials of his government.

Weah says his Administration will continue to work closely with the Ambassador and her team as they explore new avenues for the common pursuit of peace, security and development.

Additionally, President Weah indicates that the two nations are bound by a special relationship which is based on common ideals, shared principles and a friendship which can never be broken.--

Edited by Winston W. Parley

Opposition rallies support for June 07

By E. J. Nathaniel Daybor

Four collaborating political parties here, including the ex-ruling Unity Party, Liberty Party, Alternative National Congress and the All Liberian Party pledge financial, moral, and social support for the planned protest on 07 June to demand reforms in the Weah administration.

Speaking during a news conference at the Alternative National Congress headquarters in Monrovia Wednesday, May 8, UP national chairman Wilmot Paye asserts: "So today, not only do our four (4) Political Parties unflinchingly, resoundingly, unapologetically and

unequivocally support efforts by the Council of Patriots to organize a peaceful assembly as guaranteed by the 1986 Constitution of Liberia, but we also announce our direct involvement and participation in the planning, execution and management of all peaceful conduct and actions geared toward achieving the noble objective of drawing the attention of President George M. Weah and his administration to issues of governance, which his administration has woefully ignored despite growing outcries from Liberians."

He observes that in recent times, in quite an unprecedented fashion, Liberia's international partners have been vocal

about development in the country.

Chairman Paye notes that this is reflected in their utterances which they make apparently reluctantly and against conventional diplomatic protocols to draw attention to Liberia's declining governance climate, adding that they do so because more than US\$10bn had been invested in Liberia's peace.

"This peace, we are under no illusion, can only be sustained through deliberate citizens-centered decisions, actions, policies and a governance culture that is characterized by the rule of law."

According to him, the opposition political parties restate and reaffirm their total belief in and commitment to maintaining Liberia's fragile peace, the sustenance of which depends wholly and solely on government mustering the courage to tackle historical wrongs and contemporary ills, saying, "Obviously, that is nothing too much for a people to ask or demand of their government."

"In this public manner, we present and place at the disposal of the Council of Patriots and for the sole purpose of peacefully rallying the citizenry to save the Liberian State, our various organizational machineries across the country. By this we mean that our national, county, district and zonal organs as well as vast pools of

Time to reverse

out of respect for elections or religious or local holidays, or the coincidence of hosting important visitors.

According to the U.S. Envoy, this year in Saudi Arabia, the Embassy of the United States hosted July 4th in February, in Egypt, it was held in March, and in Pakistan, it was celebrated in April, so the celebration in Monrovia, Liberia is closer to the mark than some colleagues in other

places.

She says the scheduling decision was based on the realization that many members of her senior leadership team will conclude their tours in Liberia in the coming weeks, some before July 4, and she wanted to thank them for representing the American people with such distinction. -Editing by Jonathan Browne

human and material resources will be marshalled for this noble goal," Paye continues.

He calls on members, supporters, sympathizers and friends of the collaborating parties throughout the length and breadth of Liberia and in the diasporas to lend maximum support to the Council of Patriots, chief organizer of the planned protest and to, as further proof of their resounding disapproval for the deteriorating economy, turn out in their hundreds of thousands beginning June to draw the government's attention to their concerns.

He assures that there will be no violence, at least from the perspective of the four political parties and the Council of Patriots movement.

"No one should instill fear in you. There is a huge difference between 2019 and 1979, to which some unqualified comparisons have been made in order to discourage [you] from speaking out. The Council of Patriots is a democratic movement that our four political parties are part of."

He underscores that June 2019 is the time for the Liberian people to speak to those on Capitol Hill who have

shown no interest in their plight, noting that their contemptible behavior is the reason for the people to unite under a single banner.

He cautions if Liberians do not act now, prices, which are already shooting up through the roof, will climb to the skies, and the hardships they are bearing will get worse as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund have already predicted.

"June is not about violence, and so it cannot be violent. And you know why those on Capitol Hill will work to discourage you, to put fear in you, not to be a part. They are the looters, you are the looted; the cheaters, you the cheated. You work; they pay themselves. You sow; they reap. You study hard; they get the pass. You trek; they fly. June 7 will be the one chance you have to make them know "Enough is enough! They must place you on the agenda," he concludes.

Momentum is building up here for the pending protest, amid fears and uncertainty about how events could turn out with the government seems unwilling for citizens to protest. -Editing by Jonathan Browne



Time to reverse corruption

-U.S. Ambassador Elder

By **Bridgett Milton**

United States Ambassador to Liberia Christine Elder tells Liberians that the time is now to reverse corruption and its corrosive and contagious effects on their country.

She says Liberia must seize the moment to achieve long-term political and economic stability, stressing, "The time is now to strengthen an economy that provides opportunities in more sectors and where open and transparent competition rules the day."

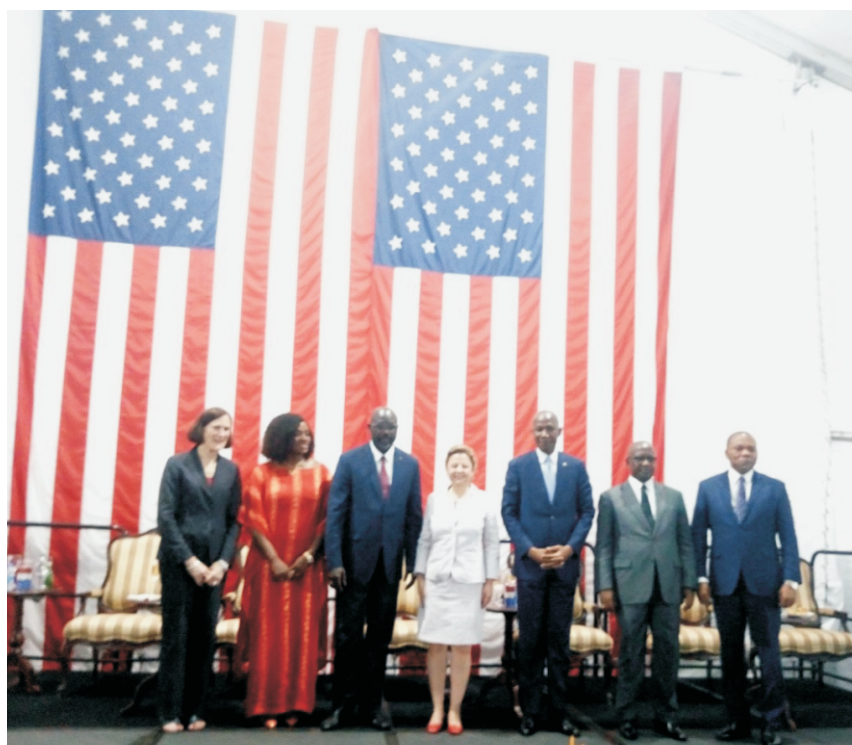
Speaking at the 243rd Independence anniversary of the United State of America in Monrovia Wednesday, 08 May Amb. Elder also urges the time is now to give women and girls a life free of abuse and an equal chance to apply their talents and bring solutions to their community's and the nation's challenges.

She also notes the time is

now to offer ideas on how to improve Liberia's economic situation, rather than solely criticize or exacerbate the problems.

She continues that as Liberia charts its journey to self-reliance, it is imperative that the country recognizes the extraordinary importance of civil society in helping to achieve a lasting peace. "Liberia's vibrant media", Ambassador Elder asserts, "experienced NGOs, and dedicated faith-based organizations have played - and continue to play - a central role in promoting accountability, supporting conflict resolution, and fostering Liberia's democracy."

The call by the American ambassador comes when Liberia is nursing a dwindling economy devastated by inflation, unemployment and a messy exchange rate that are greeted by impending citizens' unrest.



She says Liberia must now develop a private sector capable of sustaining the livelihoods of the people, and suggests that increased investment, including foreign investment is essential for growth, but stresses that in order to make Liberia a competitive location for investment, the executive and the legislative branches of

government must work together to stabilize the economy and lower the barriers to doing business here.

At the same time Ambassador Elder applauds President George Manneh Weah for opening discussions with the International Monetary Fund regarding measures that could restore confidence in the economy and

set the stage for growth. "I hope that you, the Liberian government, and the Liberian people remain open to what the IMF recommends so that Liberia can lay the groundwork for future economic productivity and prosperity", she cautions.

The ceremony held at the U.S. Embassy near Monrovia, was graced by President George Weah and senior officials of the Liberian government, including legislators and members of the diplomatic corps, among others.

Meanwhile, she says the observance of America's Independence Day normally occurs on the fourth of July, and so they are 57 days ahead of schedule because there have been many colorful theories as to why this is happening, explaining that actually, many U.S. Embassies around the world host these annual celebrations outside of July for a variety of reasons including to accommodate extreme weather,



Lucas Moura hat-trick sends stunning Spurs to UCL final

Lucas Moura's stunning hat-trick unseated Ajax's unlikely Champions League run and Tottenham will face Liverpool in the final.

Lucas Moura's incredible second-half hat-trick saw Tottenham snatch a 3-2 win at Ajax and a place in the Champions League final on away goals.

As in last week's semi-final first leg, Erik ten Hag's side were smoothly into their work



by the time inspirational captain Matthijs de Ligt headed a fifth-minute opener.

Hakim Ziyech made it 2-0 10 minutes before half-time but, in a season now steeped in implausible Champions League comebacks, Lucas' brace had the game all-square on the night before the hour.

Ziyech hit the post and Spurs defender Jan Vertonghen struck the crossbar before the irrepressible Lucas steered

home Dele Alli's pass deep into stoppage time.

It means an all-English final against fellow comeback kings Liverpool in Madrid on June 1 for Mauricio Pochettino's never-say-die team.

De Ligt powered home Lasse Schone's early corner but Spurs' response was initially encouraging, with Son Heung-min almost catching out Andre Onana when he hit the base of the post.

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