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The New Dawn

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MONDAY, JUNE 10, 2019

Protesters to be back



A view of the protest scene

-failed to present petition



Businesses were shut on June 7

Monrovia shuts down



Continental News

Sudan security forces tear-gas protesters

Sudanese security forces have fired tear gas and live ammunition to disperse protesters setting up barricades in Khartoum.

At least one person was killed in the northern district of Bahari according to doctors aligned to the opposition.

Campaigners called for ongoing civil disobedience from Sunday to make it as difficult as possible for the military to govern Sudan.

It comes days after a military crackdown left dozens dead.

A number of Sudan's bank, airport and electricity workers were arrested ahead of a strike against the military rule, the main protest group says.

The Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA) says employees are also being threatened by the authorities to scare them into going to work instead of



People injured in Khartoum's crackdown are recovering in hospital

taking part in the nationwide strike.

The ruling Transitional Military Council (TMC) has made no comment.

What is the background?

The military took over Sudan after persistent protests led to the ousting of long-time President Omar al-Bashir in

April. They promised a transition to civilian rule.

But pro-democracy campaigners say the military council cannot be trusted after Monday's crackdown against a sit-in demonstration in Khartoum - and they have rejected an offer of talks.

In a separate development,

three opposition figures involved in mediation efforts have been arrested.

What's the latest from Khartoum?

Groups of young men have set up barricades in roads as part of the civil disobedience campaign.

Most offices and businesses remain shut and traffic is light in the city, says the BBC's Catherine Byaruhanga in the Sudanese capital.

There have been reports of gunfire as security forces maintain their deployments across most parts of the city.

Protest leaders have asked people to stay home and not work. They say that demonstrations are no longer possible because of the violent crackdown by the military.

"The civil disobedience movement will begin Sunday and end only when a civilian government announces itself in power on state television," the SPA said in a statement.

"Disobedience is a peaceful act capable of bringing to its knees the most powerful weapons arsenal in the world."

The goal of the strike is to create an effective government shutdown that will make it hard for the military council to govern, our correspondent adds.

What about the opposition arrests?

Opposition politician Mohamed Esmat was detained on Friday soon after his meeting with Ethiopia's PM Abiy Ahmed, aides said.

Meanwhile, Ismail Jalab, a leader of the rebel SPLM-N group, and his spokesman Mubarak Ardol were arrested early on Saturday.

Their whereabouts are currently unknown, and analysts say the arrests suggest that the mediation efforts have not been taken seriously by the military.

Family give inherited house away for clinic in Ghana

A family is raising funds to transform a house they inherited in Ghana into a clinic, which they are giving away to the community.

Paul Benson, 67, who lives near Hull, inherited the house in Okorase from his parents after their deaths.

He said the village lacked a medical facility and the project would "bring enormous relief" to hundreds of people.

His son Phil Benson said

they hoped to raise £50,000 to build and equip the hospital with medical equipment.

"We could've sold it because it's got a large compound land with it. But we knew there were issues with health and medical care there... so the best thing really was to convert the house into a small clinic or hospital," said Paul Benson, a Ghanaian-born organist and retired school teacher, who lives in Cottingham, East Yorkshire.

"We decided to hand over

the whole thing to a charitable organisation who would hopefully run it permanently.

"We're offering it freely so they actually own it and possess it and run it for the benefit of the villagers."

Mr Benson said it was difficult for people living in Okorase - about 40 miles (65km) from the capital of Accra - and neighbouring areas to access medical treatment, with ill villagers having "a long journey walking about six to 10 miles away" to the nearest facility.

"It'll make a huge difference," he said. "[It will] make people's lives a bit better, to live a bit longer and to enjoy life in the way we probably take for granted."

Mr Benson's son, Phil, 36, said: "It's just inspiring."

"We've inherited something but we actually want to give it away for the benefit of the people who live there so for me that's an amazing gesture."

Paul Benson, who also lived in Okorase, said his parents had "brought a lot to the village" including setting up a local school and providing accommodation for one of the teachers in the house.

As part of their fundraising activities, the organist is due to perform and host a concert of classical music later in Kirk Ella, East Yorkshire.

Mother and daughter graduate from US university on same day



Not many people get to study in the same class as their parents, but a Somali mother and her youngest daughter did just that. Mother Falhad Ahmed Mohamud and her daughter Amina Mohamed recently graduated from a university in Virginia together with Masters degrees in IT.

The family came to the US as refugees in 1980, but her

husband returned to Somalia and was killed in fighting. Falhad raised their two daughters Amina and Sofia on her own, working to ensure their education.

She and Amina told the BBC's Newsday programme about returning to the classroom in her 50s, and how she fulfilled a promise she had made decades before.



Paul Benson recently inherited this house in Okorase, Ghana, from his parents after their deaths

EDITORIAL

A show of people's power

FRIDAY, JUNE 07, PROTEST in Monrovia which saw thousands of Liberians converged on Capitol Hill to petition their government is a clear show of strength and truly demonstrates that democratic power indeed, derives from the people.

CHAPTER (1) ARTICLE (1) OF the Constitution of Liberia under the titled, Structure of the State partly reads, "All power is inherent in the people. All free governments are instituted by their authority and for their benefit and they have the right to alter and reform the same when their safety and happiness so require..."

THOUSANDS OF LIBERIANS led by the group, Council of Patriots exercised their right Friday, 07 June as guaranteed under Article 17 of the Constitution which stipulates: All persons, at all times, in an orderly and peaceable manner, shall have the right to assemble and consult upon the common good, to instruct their representatives, to petition the Government or other functionaries for the redress of grievances and to associate fully with others or refuse to associate in political parties, trade unions and other organizations.

THE ASSEMBLY LED by the CoP was intended to petition the government of President Manneh Weah to effect reforms in the economy and in his administration that would reposition the State on the right trajectory and bring about socio-economic harmony.

FROM ALL INDICATIONS, the government did not want this assembly, as its ran a campaign, including scare tactics to discourage citizens from coming out, ignoring the plight of the ordinary citizens.

ALTHOUGH THE PETITION is rescheduled to a later date, but Liberians generally, are unhappy about the current State of affairs, including hyper-inflation, rising prices and rising exchange rate, coupled with corruption, lack of accountability and jobs, culminated to severe hardship, among others.

THE PEOPLE WANT real actions, rather than promises, promises, and promises. In his recent nationwide address, President Weah promised that government is working on measures to salvage the economy without saying anything about the sky-rocketing exchange rate now at nearly 200 Liberian dollars to US\$1.00.

THE GOVERNMENT SAYS it has not increased petroleum price, but the exacerbating exchange rate pushes gasoline price above 600LRD per gallon, while fuel is nearly 700 per gallon in the capital, the first time ever in many years.

A HALF BAG of rice or a 25kg bag previously sold at 2,000LRD to 2,250LRD per bag, is nearly 3,000LRD in the market. The rising prices are affecting other basic commodities thus, seriously shrinking the purchasing power of ordinary Liberians.

PRESIDENT WEAH HAS no choice but to listen to the cries of the people, most of whom elected him. There is no other way. To continuously ignore or downplay these concerns might lead to something else. The government should accept the petition and immediately begin to addressing those demands that can be responded to in the short run and then constitute a team or committee, which may include some members of Council of Patriots to seek long-term solutions.

The
New Dawn
TRULY INDEPENDENT

COMMENTARY

By George Soros

Europe's Silent Majority Speaks Out

What voters said in last month's European Parliament election is that they want to preserve the values on which the European Union was founded. But can Europe's leaders carry out the radical institutional reforms that voters also want?

LONDON - Last month's elections to the European Parliament produced better results than one could have expected, and for a simple reason: the silent pro-European majority has spoken. What they said is that they want to preserve the values on which the European Union was founded, but that they also want radical changes in the way the EU functions. Their main concern is climate change.

This favors the pro-European parties, especially the Greens. The anti-European parties, which cannot be expected to do anything constructive, failed to make the gains that they expected. Nor can they form the united front that they would need in order to become more influential.

One of the institutions that needs to be changed is the Spitzenkandidat system. It is supposed to provide a form of indirect selection of the EU leadership. In fact, as Franklin Dehousse has explained in a brilliant but pessimistic article in the EU Observer, it is worse than no democratic selection at all. Each member state has real political parties, but their trans-European combination produces artificial constructs that serve no purpose other than to promote the personal ambitions of their leaders.

This can best be seen in the European People's Party (EPP), which has managed to capture the presidency of the Commission since 2004. The EPP's current leader, Manfred Weber, who has no experience in a national government, appears willing to enter into practically any compromise in order to remain in the parliamentary majority. That includes embracing Hungary's autocratic prime minister, Viktor Orbán.

Orbán has posed a serious problem for Weber, because Orbán has openly flouted European norms and established what amounts to a mafia state. Nearly half the national parties constituting the EPP wanted to expel Orbán's party, Fidesz. Instead of following through, however, Weber managed to convince the EPP to make a relatively easy demand on Fidesz: allow the Central European University (CEU, which I founded) to continue functioning freely in Hungary as an American university.

Fidesz failed to comply. Even so, the EPP did not expel Fidesz, but merely suspended it so that it could be counted as part of the EPP when the president of the Commission is chosen. Orbán is now trying to reestablish Fidesz as a bona fide member of the EPP. It will be interesting to see if Weber finds a way to accommodate him.

The Spitzenkandidat system is not based on

an intergovernmental agreement, so it could easily be changed. It would be much better if the president of the European Commission were directly elected from a carefully selected list of qualified candidates, but that would require treaty changes. The President of the European Council could continue to be elected by a qualified majority of the member states, as the Treaty of Lisbon prescribes.

The reform that would require treaty changes is justified by the increased democratic legitimacy conferred by the European Parliamentary elections. Turnout in the recent election surpassed 50%, up sharply from 42.6% in 2014. This is the first time that turnout has increased at all since the first election in 1979, when 62% of eligible voters participated.

Strangely enough, on this occasion, the Spitzenkandidat system promises to produce a dream team. French President Emmanuel Macron, who is opposed to the Spitzenkandidat system as a matter of principle, is largely responsible for this development. At a dinner with Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, the winner of Spain's national general election, which preceded the European Parliament vote, the two leaders agreed to support two Spitzenkandidaten who would be ideal for the Commission and for the Council.

Germany is the main supporter of the Spitzenkandidat system. If Weber loses out, Germany will be pushing for Jens Weidmann, President of the Bundesbank, to become President of the ECB. He would hardly be ideal. In fact, he is disqualified by the fact that he testified before Germany's Federal Constitutional Court against the ECB in a case seeking to invalidate the Bank's so-called outright monetary transactions, a policy that was crucial to overcoming the eurozone crisis earlier this decade. I hope this fact will become more widely known.

Any other qualified candidate would be preferable to Weidmann as ECB president. As things stand now, France will not have any of the top jobs. It would be a good thing if Germany didn't have one either, because it would leave more room for other countries.

There are many EU institutions aside from the Spitzenkandidat system that require radical reform. But that can wait until we find out whether, and to what extent, the promise held out by the parliamentary election results is realized. This is not yet the time to declare victory, relax, and celebrate. There is a lot of work to be done to turn the EU into a well-functioning organization that fulfills its great potential.

O-PED

By Ishac Diwan

Pulling Sudan Back from the Brink

NEW YORK - Sudan is on the threshold of disaster. On June 3, paramilitary forces opened fire on peaceful pro-democracy protesters in Khartoum, killing over 100 and wounding hundreds more. Now, hope for a smooth transition to civilian rule is giving way to fear that the country will go the way of Yemen, Syria, or Libya.

Just a few weeks ago, the military seemed to be on the protesters' side. In April, following months of demonstrations against President Omar al-Bashir, the military forced Bashir to resign. The commander of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary group, General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (better known as Hemeti), even claimed that he had refused an order by Bashir to open fire on protesters.

Bashir's regime, in power for nearly 30 years, was replaced by the Transitional Military Council (TMC), headed by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, with Hemeti as his deputy. But protests continued, now demanding a transition to civilian rule. This spurred the TMC to initiate negotiations with representatives of the Sudanese Professionals Association, which has spearheaded the protests.

Those negotiations were initially promising, but their tone changed abruptly after Burhan and Hemeti returned from visits to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates - countries that previously supported Bashir's regime. There is reportedly a lot of money on the table for the generals - who have particularly close ties to the rulers of Saudi Arabia and the UAE - if they consolidate power and avoid a political opening.

The Saudis and Emiratis have several goals. They hope to stave off a democratic precedent in the region, ensure plenty of foot soldiers for their wars in Yemen and elsewhere, secure access to fertile agricultural land, and gain a foothold in the geo-strategically sensitive Horn of Africa. Their tactics are not new: in 2013, they backed a bloody crackdown on pro-democracy protesters in Cairo by General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who became Egypt's de facto leader after a military coup removed the democratically elected President Mohamed Morsi from power.

But, as with the crackdown in Cairo and the war in Yemen, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are pursuing a half-baked and shortsighted strategy in Sudan. True, Burhan and Hemeti can ensure that Sudanese troops keep flowing to Yemen. But the RSF's massacre in Khartoum, coming on top of its previous war crimes in Darfur, will effectively prevent the Sudanese people - and the international community - from ever accepting the TMC's rule. Moreover, funneling cash toward Sudan's military will do nothing to address the grievances driving social unrest.

Those grievances are partly economic. Decades of mismanagement meant that the economy could not withstand the decline in oil revenues after South Sudan (home to 75% of Sudan's oil reserves) gained independence in 2011. In the past five years, the government had to slash public spending from 18% of GDP to a paltry 10% today. Military spending now accounts for at least 30% of Sudan's public budget. In 2018, the loss of foreign support from the Gulf triggered a massive devaluation of the currency, causing the inflation rate to soar to 70%.

But the protesters' grievances are also political. Large swaths of the population yearn for democracy and the rule of law. They are tired of watching successive governments funnel benefits toward a small group of northern tribes that have looted the rest of the country, in alliance with security forces and crony businessmen.

As long as these grievances persist, so will instability. In fact, for the last 50 years, Sudanese have resisted the government's violent rule. From Darfur and the Nuba mountains in the west and south to the Blue Nile region in the east, violent conflicts continue to rage.

The RSF's attack will only exacerbate such strife. Already, protesters have rejected an offer by the TMC to reopen negotiations, and they called for civil disobedience until the military regime falls. It is hard to see how Sudan, already a fragile state, can be governed under these circumstances.

Poor governance has led to a tragic waste of the country's enormous potential. Sudan has significant oil resources of its own, as well as gold and hydropower - none of which it has managed to develop for the benefit of its population. Moreover, it boasts so much fertile land (including under irrigation schemes) that it could become the breadbasket of the Middle East. Until now, however, regime cronies have been expropriating and exploiting traditional land, generating conflict, misery, and food insecurity.

Sudan will not reverse its slide toward anarchy, let alone reach its full potential, unless the international community steps in. With trust between the military and the protesters destroyed, external mediators are vital to secure a transitional agreement between representatives of the protesters and at least part of the armed forces.

Such an agreement will require a structured peace process, underwritten by third-party assurances to ensure proper implementation. Credible carrots and sticks will be crucial. For example, debt reduction, together with political stabilization, could open the way for a generous international aid package.

China, which has important oil interests in Sudan, will need to be involved, while Saudi Arabia and the UAE must be pressured to cooperate in the search for a peaceful resolution to the crisis. The African Union is another critical partner, though, given Egypt's current dominance, the AU should not take the lead.

The international community is heavily invested in Sudan. It played a central role in the South's secession, has worked to stabilize Darfur, and finances a large contingent of United Nations troops in Darfur and South Sudan. Now, it must go a step further - and not by issuing sympathetic communiqués. To save the country - and its surroundings - from a new wave of chaos and misery, the international community must mobilize rapidly to support the Sudanese people's aspirations for better governance.

OPINION

By J. Bradford Delong

What to Do About China?

BERKELEY - In a recent issue of *The New York Review of Books*, the historian Adam Tooze notes that, "across the American political spectrum, if there is agreement on anything, it is on the need for a firmer line against China." He's right: On this singular issue, the war hawks, liberal internationalists, and blame-somebody-else crowd all tend to agree. They have concluded that because the United States needs to protect its relative position on the world stage, China's standing must be diminished.

But that is the wrong way to approach the challenge. In the near term (1-4 years), the US certainly could inflict a lot of damage on China through tariffs, bans on technology purchases, and other trade-war policies. But it would also inflict a lot of damage on itself; and in the end, the Chinese would suffer less. Whereas the Chinese government can buy up Chinese-made products that previously would have been sold to the US, thereby preventing mass unemployment and social turmoil, the US government could scarcely do the same for American workers displaced by the loss of the Chinese market.1

In the medium run (5-10 years), the US would face even larger problems, because China would have begun to replace US customers and suppliers with those of Europe and Japan. At the same time, an America that has just blown up its relationship with China will have a hard time convincing anybody else to fill China's shoes as a trade partner and source of investment. Becoming the world's irrational doofus comes with costs, after all.

That is why it is entirely foreseeable that America's attempt to "get tough" with China could accelerate its own relative decline, effectively handing China the semi-hegemony it is already approaching. As for America's geopolitical or even military options, there are few left. After more than two years of chaotic unilateral behavior, the Trump administration has squandered any chance it might have had to work with other countries to contain China.

Following Trump's unlikely election victory in 2016, congressional Republicans who claimed to support free trade and American soft power could have sought to impose limits on the new administration. Instead, they joined the cult, and have served as Trump's sycophants ever since. After two years, America's alliances have been gravely weakened, even more so than after former President George W. Bush's disastrous wars. The US will never reclaim the standing it had in 2000, and it probably cannot even recover the tenuous but still solid geopolitical position it enjoyed in 2016.

As for the military option, the Trump administration may well be envisioning a new cold war, with occasional hot-war proxy conflicts. And yet, nobody really has any idea what a twenty-first-century cold war would look like. We can be somewhat confident that it would not involve a nuclear confrontation, mass deployments of standing armies, the fomenting of armed insurgencies in colonial territories, or any of the other forms of imperial adventurism that defined the original Cold War. Mutually assured destruction still (one hopes) rules out a nuclear exchange or mobilization of conventional forces, and there aren't really any colonial powers left.

When one considers all of the "unknown unknowns" associated with cyber warfare, one is left with no viable model to follow. Presumably, a great-power conflict would take the form of what the Prussian general Carl von Clausewitz called "politics by other means"; we just don't know what that would look like. In the face of such uncertainties, it is folly to pursue politics by any means other than politics itself.

So, what should the US do to shore up its position vis-à-vis China?

For starters, it could show that it has a more competent and less corrupt government than China does - that it is still a healthy democracy that adheres to the rule of law. It could also work to improve its high-tech sector, by welcoming workers and ideas from all over the world and rewarding them handsomely. It could demonstrate that it is capable of overcoming political gridlock, fixing its broken health-care system, bringing its infrastructure into this century, and investing in new energy sources. It could finally start to limit the undue political influence of the superrich. It could once again become a society in which all citizens enjoy better standards of living than their predecessors, because the fruits of economic growth are equitably distributed.

In short, the US could start to become what it would have been if Al Gore had won the 2000 presidential election, if Hillary Clinton had defeated Trump, and if the Republican party had not abandoned its patriotism. Such an America would have the world's respect and more than enough diplomatic power to forge a constructive and strategically sound compact with a rising China. To address the defining geopolitical challenge of this century, America must look inward, not abroad.

ARTICLE

ARTICLE

Where are Liberia's missing millions?

REUTERS

By Kanika Saigal Financial reporter

Liberians are angry about the apparent disappearance of state funds - and are protesting to demand answers.

Their anger centres on two scandals:

1. Revelations last year that \$15.5bn Liberian dollars (\$104m, £82m) of freshly minted currency had disappeared from Liberia's ports
2. The mismanagement of a 25m US dollar cash injection into the economy last year.

What happened?

In September 2018, local media reported that shipping containers filled with newly printed Liberian dollars from Swedish banknote manufacturer Crane AB disappeared from Liberia's entry ports between 2016 and 2017.

The Central Bank of Liberia denied the allegations and stated that the money was stored in vaults across the city.

Just a few months before the revelation, President George Weah, who came into office in January 2018, announced that the central bank would pump \$25m into the economy to replace older Liberian dollars.

The Liberian dollar has been losing value - or depreciating - since July 2017. This has led to higher import costs and inflation, which means that everyday goods have become much more expensive for the average person in the country.

The President's "mop-up" exercise, as it was dubbed, took place between July and October last year. It intended to reduce the amount of local currency in the economy to slow further depreciation.

But there were a number of concerns around the exercise and unanswered questions about the shipments of cash into Liberia. Two reports were commissioned to examine the details. The government's Presidential Investigative Team (PIT) completed one. Risk advisory firm Kroll, the other.

Both found major flaws in how government policy was implemented in each case, and neither the PIT nor Kroll were able to account for all of the newly printed Liberian dollars or the additional US



dollars in the country.

What were the findings?

According to Kroll, only L\$5bn of the total L\$15.5bn

and deliver the money to Liberia anyway.

Kroll also found an excess of L\$2.6bn was printed in addition to what was initially disclosed. The PIT's report recorded a similar finding.



was printed and distributed in line with Liberian law. The central bank did not receive legislative approval for the remainder of the cash, but entered into another contract with Crane who proceeded to print

There is still little information on what happened to this excess, but the former executive governor of the Central Bank, Milton Weeks, and his former deputy, Charles Sirleaf - both in charge of the central bank when the notes were ordered - were arrested in March on the PIT's recommendation.

Mr Sirleaf, son of former President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, and Mr Weeks are due in court for the start of the trial in the coming weeks when they will be asked to enter a plea to the charges.

Ex-President Sirleaf said her son, who along with Mr

Weeks has been released from prison but banned from leaving the country, had been unjustifiably and illegally charged. As for the US dollars pumped into the Liberian economy, this is where each reports differs slightly.

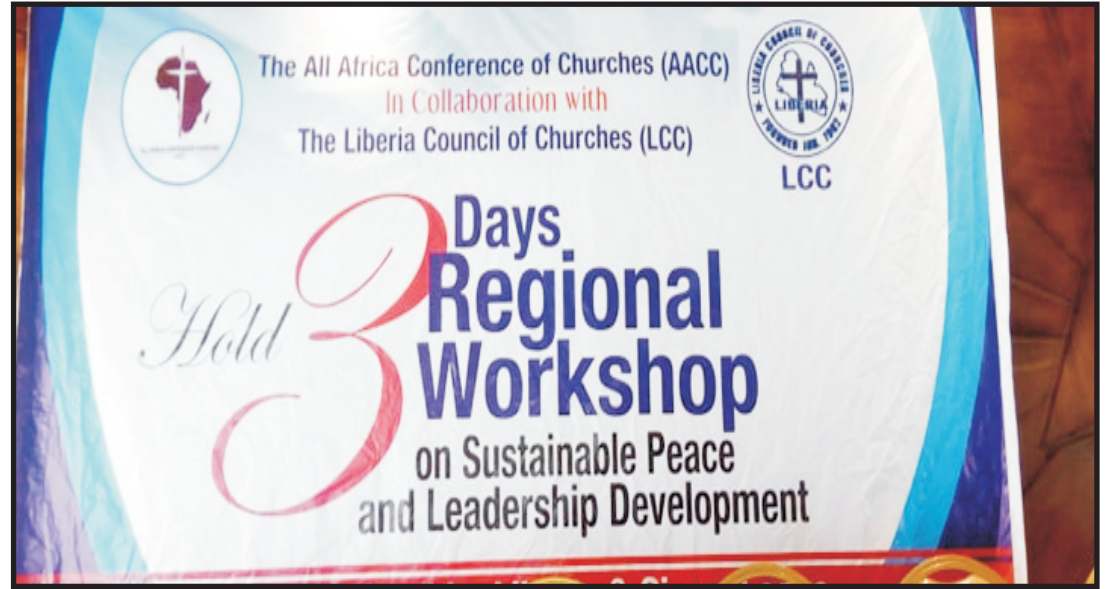
According to Kroll, the central bank sold \$15m for L\$2.3bn. This means that US dollars replaced older Liberian notes in the economy. The PIT report, however, stated that in addition to the \$15m, another \$2m was sold to oil and gas company Total. But the PIT also outlined that 15 of the companies listed by the central bank to have taken part in the "mop-up" exercise denied any involvement. Another eight companies listed by the central bank were not in operation when the PIT made their visit.

So where has all the extra money gone?

As for the extra L\$2.6bn printed "the most likely answer is that it is in the pockets of self-interested individuals," says Euler Bropleh, a Liberian national and founder and managing director of VestedWorld, a private equity firm that invests across Africa. This has not yet been proven and remains speculation at this point. **Culled from BBC**



Pictorial of a Three-day Workshop Under the Theme: Workshop on Sustainable Peace and Leadership Development June 4-6, 2019, Monrovia, Liberia organized by the All Africa Conference of Churches



Mo Ibrahim condemns Khartoum massacre

The Mo Ibrahim Foundation says it is deeply concerned by the situation in Sudan, which has recently taken a turn for the worse, with a brutal armed crackdown on peaceful protestors, claiming the lives of an alarming number of civilians in recent days, and crushing hopes for a democratic transition.

The TMC, which toppled Omar al-Bashir in April, claimed they were taking over to protect the protestors. Now they have unleashed the unruly Rapid Support Forces (Janjaweed 2.0) on the Sudanese people.

The Foundation expresses support for the African Union's action against Khartoum saying the African Union is right to suspend



Sudan's membership, pending the transfer to civilian rule.

It said the international community has been largely

slow and hesitant on support to the democratic aspirations of the Sudanese people.

"Unfortunately, some

regional powers, led by Saudi Arabia, appear to side with the military, with disastrous results. China is damaging its

standing and its reputation in Africa by blocking the UN Security Council resolution condemning TMC's violence. We have not seen a single tweet from the White House in support of the people of Sudan and of democracy," the Foundation said.

The Foundation hopes that the global community will unite to use all possible means to encourage all parties to re-establish political negotiations, leading as soon as possible to a civilian-led government, in order to organize free and fair elections in an open political space. Democratic civilian rule is the only way to ensure sustainable good governance for all the people of Sudan, and stability in this volatile region. -Press statement

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

Rep. Seboe wants by-elections postponed

By Bridgett Milton

Montserrado County District #16 Representative Dixon W. Seboe, writes the House of Representatives here, requesting that body to ask President George M. Weah to postpone all subsequent

occurrences in recent years. The Montserrado County lawmaker further notes the Constitution also speaks of the provocation of emergency powers by the President based on relevant prevailing situations, as was done most

to ask the President to declare an economic emergency, which will thereafter lead to a resolution from the Legislature for the sole purpose of hence, postponing all other by-elections that may be due after the already scheduled July 2,



by-elections to 2020.

According to Rep. Seboe, Article 37 of the 1986 Constitution of Liberia clearly provides provision for how and when a vacancy created in the Legislature should be filled.

He says because of such provision the Legislature has gone through a barrage of by-elections with particular notice on the frequent

recently during the 2014 Ebola crisis, which led to the postponement of the midterm elections, among many other challenges.

Rep. Seboe says based on the constitutional provisions quoted above and considering the pronounced economic squeeze the country endures, as stated in President Weah's latest speech, he requests as representative of the people

2019 by-elections until the 2020 midterm election.

Meanwhile, the plenary of the House of Representatives has forwarded the communication to its committees on Election, Ways, Means and Finance and judiciary to report in two weeks. *-Editing by Jonathan Browne*

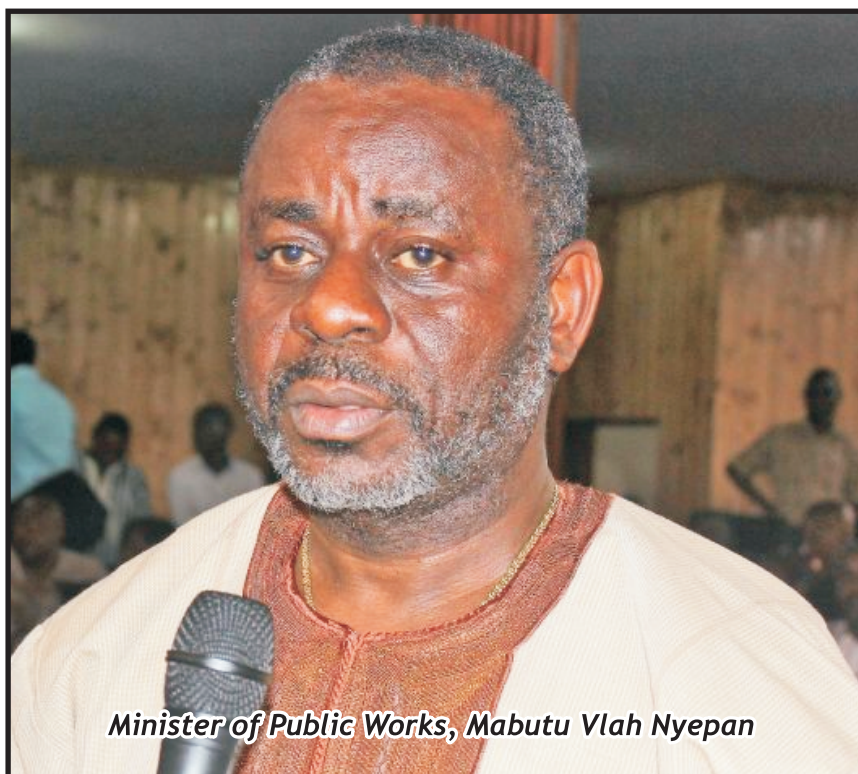
Senate summons Works Minister

By Ethel A. Tweh

The Liberian Senate through its committee on Public Works summons the Minister of Public Works, Mabutu Vlah Nyepan, to appear before full plenary.

The summon of Minister Nyepan is in the wake of Sinoe County Senator Cllr. Augustine S. Chea's communication, requesting the presence of the Public Works boss to explain the status of the Timbo River Bridge and other bridge projects across the country.

Sen. Chea notes the rainy season is here and people along the Buchanan-Greenville highway will face difficulties because that corridor, which is part of the proposed coastal highway, is always deplorable during such season, making traffic



Minister of Public Works, Mabutu Vlah Nyepan

difficult and risky.

He notes the situation accounts for scarcity and unavailability of basic

commodities, leading to rise in prices in Sinoe and other counties connected to that route.

Pro-temp Chie Donates 1m to G'Kru Students

By Ethel A. Tweh

The President Pro-tempore of the Liberian Senate, Albert Chie donates One Million (1million) Liberian dollars to the Grand Kru University Students Union.

The Administrative Assistant to the Senate President Pro-Temp, Furcas Wilson, assures Grand Kru University Students of Senator Chie's preparedness in working with them to achieving their dreams.

Mr. Wilson, who deputized for his boss recently during installation and fund raising rally for Grand Kru university students, indicates that the donation is geared towards aiding students from the county attending various universities and colleges in Monrovia to have unhindered

peaceful election that brought into place a new leadership.

He urges the new leadership not to betray the trust reposed in them by their colleagues, adding, "Always have an open leadership and information-sharing and the interest of Grand Kru shall be the hallmark of your leadership."

At the same time, Grand Kru County Electoral District# 2 Representative, Cllr. J. Fonati Koffa also donates Four Hundred

Seven-Five Thousand (475,000LRD) Liberian dollars to the Grand Kru University Student Union.

In response, the president of the Grand Kru University Student union, Nelson Torbel, hails both lawmakers for the gesture rendered them.



quest for higher education.

He also assures the students that Pro-Tempore Chie's doors will always remain open for interventions, acknowledging that his boss, being an instructor himself, has and will always intervene in meaningful ventures for the youth and student communities.

Furcas at the same time commend the students for a

Torbel describes the donations as milestones in helping students of the county to achieve their dreams of attaining quality education.

According to Torble, Pro-Temp Chie always identifies and remains the highest contributor to the student community of Grand Kru County. *-Editing by Jonathan Browne*

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He says the road condition is exacerbated by the recent dismantling of the Timbo River Bridge by the Minister of Public

Works or its contractors due to faulty construction. *-Editing by Jonathan Browne*

Français

Manifestation De Milliers De Libériens Déçus Par George Weah A Monrovia

Des milliers de Libériens ont manifesté pacifiquement vendredi à Monrovia pour obtenir de meilleures conditions de vie, premier test d'envergure pour le président George Weah, qui peine à redresser l'économie et à lutter contre la corruption 17 mois après son arrivée au pouvoir.

Des dizaines d'associations de la société civile, y compris des pans de la jeunesse ayant porté l'ex-footballeur star au pouvoir en janvier 2018, réunies au sein d'un "Conseil des patriotes" et soutenues par des partis de l'opposition, appelaient depuis deux mois à manifester ce 7 juin.

Venus en chantant et en dansant, les manifestants se sont rassemblés par milliers dans les jardins du Parlement, placé sous forte protection policière. Les organisateurs n'ont pas souhaité avancer d'estimations, mais une source policière a évoqué quelque 4.000 participants.

Pour des raisons de sécurité, ils devaient

présenter leurs doléances à la vice-présidente Jewel Howard-Taylor, ex-épouse de l'ancien chef de guerre et président Charles Taylor (1997-2003), plutôt qu'au chef de l'Etat.

Mais Mme Howard-Taylor ne s'est pas présentée et les manifestants ont refusé de s'adresser aux ministres des

Affaires étrangères et de la Justice, exigeant comme préalable la libération de six manifestants arrêtés mercredi lors de heurts avec la police, qu'ils n'ont pas obtenue.

L'animateur radio Henry Costa, fer de lance du mouvement, a leur demandé en fin d'après-midi de "rentrer

chez eux et de revenir lundi".

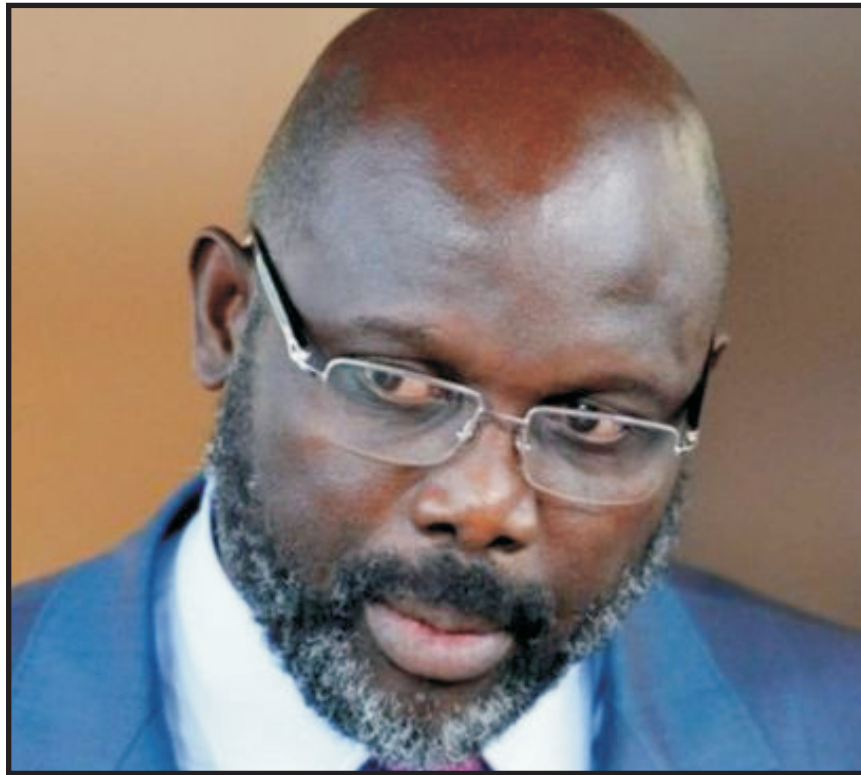
Dans la foule, certains se disaient "admiratifs" du déroulement pacifique de la manifestation, alors que la communauté internationale s'était inquiétée d'une possible résurgence des violences dans un pays hanté par une guerre civile qui a fait quelque 250.000 morts de 1989 à 2003.

- 'Plus d'insultes' -

C'était une journée test pour George Weah, élu sur un programme de redistribution en faveur des plus pauvres. Un an et demi plus tard, l'inflation a réduit le pouvoir d'achat, l'économie souffre de la chute des cours des matières premières, mais aussi d'opérations monétaires opaques et de possibles détournements révélés par plusieurs rapports internationaux.

Certaines opérations datent de l'ère Sirleaf, l'ex-présidente. Mais d'autres, comme l'injection en juillet 2018 de 25 millions de dollars américains dans l'économie, ont été mises en œuvre par l'actuel ministre des Finances, Samuel D. Tweah. Ce que souligne le député d'opposition, Yekeh Kolubah, l'un des organisateurs de la marche : « Le taux de change est au plus haut, il atteint 200 dollars américains pour un dollar libérien. Le coût de la vie est très très élevé. Le ministre des Finances et le gouverneur de la Banque centrale disent qu'ils ont injecté 25 millions de dollars dans l'économie. Mais un rapport est sorti disant que l'argent a été mal géré. Le gouverneur de la Banque centrale doit partir, le ministre des Finances doit partir ! »

« Plusieurs responsables de la Banque centrale ont déjà été mis aux arrêts, dont le fils de l'ancienne présidente Helen Johnson Sirleaf, et un audit commandé par le chef de l'Etat », répond le ministre de l'Information, Eugene Nagbe.



Côte d'Ivoire : Soro rencontrera finalement Laurent Gbagbo ?

L'Ex-Président de l'Assemblée nationale de Côte d'Ivoire, Soro Guillaume est depuis plusieurs mois, en train de manœuvrer avec des proches de l'ancien président ivoirien pour lui "demander pardon".

Il y a 9 ans que le président Laurent Gbagbo appelait ses adversaires politiques à la table des négociations pour une paix durable en Côte

d'Ivoire. La phrase qu'il prononçait tout le temps était : «Asseyons-nous et discutons». Aujourd'hui, Soro Guillaume, en rupture de ban avec Alassane Ouattara, tente de rappeler au président Gbagbo ses propos afin de se rapprocher de l'homme.

19 Septembre 2002, à la tête d'une cohorte d'armée venue d'un pays frontalier de la Côte d'Ivoire, Guillaume Soro tentait un coup de force sur le

pouvoir de Laurent Gbagbo. Ce coup d'Etat manqué s'est mué en rébellion armée, qui a occupé la moitié nord du pays pendant huit années. Aussi, à l'issue de plusieurs accords, dont celui de Ouagadougou, le Chef de l'Etat d'alors a fait du patron des Forces nouvelles (FN, ex-rébellion), son Premier ministre.

L'on croyait la confiance revenir entre les deux hommes, que tout se dégradait à nouveau lors de la crise postélectorale. L'armée conduite par Soro Guillaume, appuyée par les Forces françaises et onusiennes, a réussi à débusquer Gbagbo de son bunker et l'a remis à la Cour pénale internationale (CPI), après un séjour en résidence surveillée à Korhogo.

Cependant, beaucoup d'eau semble avoir coulé sous le pont depuis, et Soro Guillaume éprouve des remords quant au combat mené contre son ancien mentor (Gbagbo (opposant) et Soro (SG de la FESCI) étaient très proches dans les années 90). Lors de ses dernières sorties, il ne se cache pas les regrets qu'il éprouve quant à toutes les mises en garde de

Celui-ci ajoute que « tous ceux qui ont été identifiés comme responsables par ce rapport ont été arrêtés et poursuivis par la justice, et le ministre des Finances n'est accusé de rien dans ce rapport. Le président a hérité d'une économie à la dérive. Alors que l'opposition vienne maintenant accuser le président des conséquences de leurs actions, c'est un peu fort ! »

Mais George Weah a défendu son bilan, invoquant le poids de l'héritage de l'administration précédente.

Depuis plus de deux mois, des dizaines d'associations de la société civile, réunies au sein d'un "Conseil des patriotes" et soutenues par des partis de l'opposition, appellent dans les médias et sur les réseaux sociaux à manifester ce 7 juin.

Mais des responsables de tous bords ont été accusés, notamment par Washington, de vouloir créer à cette occasion des tensions entre l'élite "américano-libérienne", descendante d'esclaves affranchis qui domine la vie politique du pays depuis 170 ans, et les "autochtones", dont fait partie George Weah.

La communauté internationale s'inquiète d'une possible résurgence des violences, alors que le pays reste hanté par une guerre civile qui a fait quelque 250.000 morts de 1989 à 2003.

"Nous ne méritons pas d'être punis pour avoir construit des routes pour des localités longtemps oubliées, avoir payé les frais d'exams de ceux qui ne peuvent se les permettre ou proclamer la gratuité dans les écoles publiques", a-t-il notamment affirmé.

"J'ai voté pour Weah, mais je manifeste contre lui car je suis déçu. Il est venu pour le changement, on demande le changement", a déclaré Anthony Wleh, 25 ans, en montrant sa carte de membre du parti de George Weah.

"J'aime toujours le président, mais son entourage est vraiment décevant", abondait un autre jeune électeur de George Weah, Blamo Varplah.



Laurent Gbagbo vis-à-vis du Président Alassane Ouattara et son camp.

Mais au-delà de ce mea culpa, l'ancien Président de l'Assemblée nationale veut franchir le pas et rencontrer Laurent Gbagbo pour lui "demander pardon", ainsi qu'il l'avait annoncé à maintes reprises. Soro a, pour ce faire, pris attache avec l'entourage de Gbagbo. A en croire le magazine panafricain, « bien plus discrètement, l'ex-chef rebelle discute avec le camp de l'ancien président Laurent

Gbagbo, en liberté conditionnelle à Bruxelles, et n'a pas rompu les liens avec Simone Gbagbo, l'ex-Première dame, deuxième vice-présidente du Front populaire ivoirien (FPI) ».

En se rapprochant d'Henri Konan Bédié et en décidant d'appartenir à sa plateforme de l'opposition, Soro espère également renouer avec Laurent Gbagbo, récemment acquitté de crimes de guerre et crimes contre l'humanité devant la CPI.

Français

L'ONU appelle à redéployer sa mission dans le centre du Mali

Horrifié par l'augmentation des violences dans le centre du Mali, le secrétaire général de l'ONU, Antonio Guterres appelle au redéploiement de la force Minusma dans la région de Mopti.

À quelques semaines d'une décision du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU sur l'avenir de la Mission des Nations unies pour la stabilisation au Mali (Minusma), le secrétaire général des Nations unies a dénoncé la montée de la violence intercommunautaire et la prolifération d'attaques terroristes dans le centre du pays. Face à ce constat alarmant, Antonio Guterres appelle à renouveler le mandat de la mission de maintien de la paix et à redéployer des troupes.

Dans son rapport remis au Conseil de sécurité, Antonio Guterres s'inquiète de l'augmentation des attaques contre les civils dans la région du centre du Mali. Pour le secrétaire général des Nations unies, l'effort sécuritaire doit se concentrer autour de Mopti où les tensions communautaires s'aggravent et les attaques terroristes se multiplient. Dans ce contexte dégradé, le rapport pointe du doigt l'apparition de groupes d'autodéfense ethniques et de la prolifération d'armes.

Le secrétaire général des Nations unies a appelé le gouvernement malien à protéger les civils et à prendre "des engagements forts" pour mettre fin à l'impunité et éviter l'escalade vers de nouvelles "atrocités". Le 23 mars, près de 160 personnes sont mortes dans l'attaque du village de Ogossagou. Ce massacre visant la communauté Peule est le plus meurtrier depuis 2012.

Le rapport fait état de plusieurs attaques intercommunautaires mais aussi visant les forces de sécurité et la Minusma qui restent des cibles privilégiées pour les terroristes. 67 soldats maliens et 4 casques bleus sont morts cette année dans des attaques.

Six ans après l'intervention française contre les jihadistes qui avaient pris le contrôle de Tombouctou, Gao et Kidal, la situation dans le nord reste, elle aussi, instable. Pour rétablir l'ordre, Antonio Guterres préconise de poursuivre la stratégie de "désarmement et remobilisation des combattants". Mis en place fin 2018, ce programme a permis d'intégrer près de 1 500 personnes issues de différents groupes régionaux au sein de

l'armée.

Un contexte régional qui inquiète

Autre source d'inquiétude, les zones frontalières avec le Burkina Faso et le Niger. "Ces dernières années, la situation régionale s'est considérablement dégradée", explique Jerome Pigné, président de 2r3s (Réseau de réflexion stratégique sur la Sécurité au Sahel), contacté par France24. "On n'a pas réussi à préserver le Niger et le Burkina de cette violence. Des régions entières du Burkina sont aujourd'hui hors de contrôle. La dégradation de la situation est comparable à ce qu'il s'est passé avec le nord Mali".

Le rapport de l'ONU pointe du doigt les groupes terroristes qui évoluent dans ces régions, traversent les frontières et élargissent leurs actions aux pays voisins. Pour Jerome Pigné, la crise régionale est avant tout liée à une fragilité structurelle : "C'est le contrôle des ressources et du trafic qui crée les conflits. Les populations nomades et sédentaires n'ont pas les mêmes logiques, ce qui pose parfois des problèmes. Le terrorisme est un phénomène ponctuel qui instrumentalise les aspects religieux et ethniques pour attiser les tensions."

Prolonger et "adapter" la Minusma

Alors que le Conseil de sécurité doit se prononcer, le 27 juin, sur le prolongement de la mission Minusma, Antonio Guterres affiche son soutien au maintien des troupes. S'il ne prévoit pas d'augmentation du contingent, (environ 1 500 militaires et policiers), il préconise par contre un changement de stratégie visant à mieux "adapter" la répartition sur le terrain, notamment en transférant une patrouille de Bamako à la région centre.

L'autre stratégie vise à céder progressivement le contrôle de certaines zones stratégiques aux Maliens. Ainsi le commandement du camp de Diabaly, au centre, devrait passer sous contrôle des autorités locales permettant de récupérer et déployer 650 soldats supplémentaires dans la région de Mopti.

Une communauté internationale divisée

Face à une menace jugée grandissante, le secrétaire général des Nations unies préconise la continuité à budget constant. Il faut dire que le renouvellement de la mission n'est pas vu d'un bon œil par tous les membres du conseil de sécurité.

COMMENTAIRE

Par George Soros

La majorité silencieuse européenne se fait entendre

LONDRES - Les élections au Parlement européen le mois dernier ont produit de meilleurs résultats que prévu, et cela pour une raison simple : la majorité silencieuse européenne s'est exprimée. Elle a fait savoir qu'elle entendait préserver les valeurs fondatrices de l'Union européenne, mais également qu'elle aspirait à des changements radicaux dans la manière dont fonctionne l'UE. Cette majorité silencieuse a par ailleurs pour première préoccupation le changement climatique.

Elle soutient les partis pro-européens, et en particulier les Verts. Les partis anti-européens, dont on ne peut rien attendre de constructif, ont échoué à franchir le cap qu'ils s'étaient fixé. Ils n'ont pas su former le front uni qui leur est nécessaire pour devenir plus influents.

L'un des mécanismes institués qui nécessite un changement réside dans le système du Spitzenkandidat. Ce système est supposé opérer une forme de sélection indirecte du leadership dans l'UE. En réalité, et comme l'explique Franklin Dehousse dans un article brillant mais pessimiste paru dans l'EU Observer, cette démarche est encore moins judicieuse qu'une absence totale de sélection démocratique. Chaque État membre abrite des partis politiques réels, mais leur combinaison transeuropéenne produit des constructions artificielles, qui ne servent aucun autre objectif que la promotion des ambitions personnelles de leurs leaders.

On l'observe particulièrement dans le Parti populaire européen (PPE), qui occupe la présidence de la Commission depuis 2004. L'actuel chef du PPE, Manfred Weber, qui n'a aucune expérience du pouvoir au sein d'un gouvernement national, semble prêt à conclure n'importe quel compromis pour demeurer dans la majorité parlementaire, y compris s'il le faut à donner l'accolade au Premier ministre autoritaire de la Hongrie, Viktor Orbán.

Orbán a posé de sérieuses difficultés à Weber, dans la mesure où le Premier ministre hongrois n'a cessé de bafouer les normes européennes, jusqu'à établir ce qui s'apparente à un État mafieux. Près de la moitié des partis nationaux composant le PPE ont souhaité exclure le parti d'Orbán, le Fidesz. Au lieu de cela, Weber est parvenu à convaincre le PPE de n'imposer au Fidesz qu'une demande peu exigeante : permettre à la Central European University (la CEU, dont je suis le fondateur) de continuer de fonctionner librement en Hongrie, en tant qu'université américaine.

Le Fidesz n'a pas accédé à cette demande. Pour autant, le PPE ne l'a pas exclu, mais s'est contenté de le suspendre, de sorte que le Fidesz puisse être comptabilisé comme faisant parti du PPE au moment du choix du président de la Commission. Voici désormais qu'Orbán s'efforce de rétablir le Fidesz en tant que membre de bonne foi du PPE. Il sera intéressant d'observer si Weber trouvera un moyen de le satisfaire.

Le système du Spitzenkandidat ne reposant sur

aucun accord intergouvernemental, il pourrait être facilement modifié. Il serait beaucoup plus judicieux que le président de la Commission européenne soit directement élu parmi une liste consciencieusement élaborée de candidats qualifiés, ce qui nécessiterait toutefois des changements dans les traités. Le président du Conseil européen pourrait quant à lui demeurer élu par une majorité qualifiée d'États membres, comme le prévoit le Traité de Lisbonne.

Cette réforme qui nécessiterait des changements dans les traités est justifiée par la légitimité démocratique croissante que confèrent les élections au Parlement européen. La participation citoyenne aux dernières élections a dépassé les 50 %, en nette hausse par rapport aux 42,6 % de 2014. C'est la première fois qu'une augmentation de la participation est observée depuis les toutes premières élections de 1979, auxquelles 62 % des électeurs inscrits avaient participé.

En l'occurrence, et fort étrangement, le système du Spitzenkandidat promet de produire une équipe de choc. Le président français Emmanuel Macron, qui est par principe opposé à ce système, est en grande partie responsable de son développement. Avant les élections européennes, lors d'un dîner en compagnie du Premier ministre espagnol Pedro Sánchez, vainqueur aux législatives en Espagne, les deux leaders ont convenu de soutenir deux Spitzenkandidaten idéaux pour la Commission et le Conseil.

L'Allemagne est la plus fervente adepte du système du Spitzenkandidat. Si Weber est battu, l'Allemagne poussera pour que Jens Weidmann, président de la Bundesbank, devienne président de la BCE. Or, il ne serait certainement pas le président idéal. Weidmann est en effet disqualifié par le fait d'avoir témoigné devant la Cour constitutionnelle fédérale allemande dans une affaire consistant à invalider les fameuses opérations monétaires sur titres de la Banque, une mesure politique pourtant cruciale dans le surmontement de la crise de la zone euro plus tôt dans la décennie. J'espère que ces faits deviendront connus de tous.

N'importe quel autre candidat qualifié serait préférable à Weidmann au poste de président de la BCE. En l'état actuel des choses, la France n'obtiendra aucun des plus hauts postes. Ce serait une bonne chose que l'Allemagne n'en obtienne pas non plus, car ceci conférerait davantage de place aux autres États.

De nombreuses institutions de l'UE autres que le système du Spitzenkandidat nécessitent des réformes radicales. Mais elles peuvent attendre jusqu'à ce que nous déterminions si, et dans quelle mesure, la promesse représentée par les résultats des élections européennes se concrétisera. Il est encore trop tôt pour crier victoire, pour se relâcher ou pour célébrer. Beaucoup de travail reste à accomplir pour faire de l'UE une organisation qui fonctionne à la hauteur de son formidable potentiel.

FEATURE

FEATURE

ANALYSIS OF THE PLANNED JUNE 7 PROTEST IN LIBERIA: A LOOK AT POWER STRUGGLE IN LIBERIA AND THE ELEMENTS OF FEAR

BY DAGBAYONOH KIAH NYANFORE II

This article looks at the planned June 7 protest in Liberia by major opposition parties under the banner of "Council of Patriots". The paper reviews the issues surrounding the protest and analyzes data and observations on the past history of protests or demonstrations, and on the power struggle in Liberia. The article takes this research approach in order to understand the fundamental reasons for the protest.

George Weah, the second Liberian president of full native parentage, came to power in January 2018 after his party, the Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC), overwhelmingly won the 2017 Presidential Election. Many members of his cabinet are young, while some are older with unique qualifications in public and private sector high professional capacities. (Nyanfore, D.K, 'Analysis of the George Weah Cabinet', 2018) Most Liberians viewed his election with high expectation because, under the 12 years of the Sirleaf administration, her government squandered opportunities (VP Boakai) and misused over the US \$17 million in international aids and investments into the country. Under her leadership, the country GDP performed poorly. A consequence of this performance was an acute social and economic hardship in Liberia. Her son Robert Sirleaf mismanaged the National Oil Company losing millions of dollars.

Further, the exchange rate of the US dollar increased as the country balance of payment reduced due in part to the sharp drop in the prices of rubber and iron ore on the global market. An international report stated that under her administration, the average Liberian lived on less than the US \$1.25 a day. Despite her effort to maintain peace and allowed free speech and press in the country, prices of common commodities increased. Most Liberians felt that her administration was not improving the living condition.

A Washington Post article by Agnieszka Paczynska discusses the situation further.

"During Sirleaf's tenure, Liberia made progress in rebuilding the country after 14 years of brutal and devastating civil war. But in several areas, Liberians feel that progress hasn't come quickly enough. In 2015 only 26 percent of Liberians thought the nation's economic situation was fairly/very good, a drop from 34 percent in 2008. Liberians generally looked unfavorably on the government's effectiveness in delivering education, jobs, improved roads and higher living standards for the poor. And most saw public officials as corrupt". (Washington Post, November 13, 2017)

The Post's graph below shows the country's growth domestic product (GDP) during her presidency. Accordingly, when she came into office, the GDP was a little over 12%, but by the end of her 12 years in power in 2017, the growth decreased significantly to 4%, though the economy did better from 0% in 2015. However, the decrease in 2015 was due largely to Ebola, which was not her fault.

With this economic reality, the article states that Liberians will face economic hardship "no matter who replaces Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as Liberia's president". It goes further to warn that whoever is elected, "he'll face serious challenges running the country. Citizens don't think the government has been doing an effective job as it is in difficult financial straits. The need for foreign investment conflicts with rural Liberians' land rights and economic security".

Certainly, the Liberian people did not realize this factor or the incoming Weah government did not foresee the weight of the problem and the drastic need to tighten their belts. Consequently, the Liberian people expected an immediate change in their conditions when Weah came into power. He was the president for change and for hope. Disappointing to Liberians, under his 18 months of his presidency, conditions have



become worst, causing a double-digit inflation rate of 28%. The prices of needed foodstuff and other goods have increased tremendously. Example, the exchange rate for the US dollar has gone up. It is currently 190LD or 195LD to a US dollar; a cup of rice is 50LD from 40; a half bag of rice is 2750LD from 2300; "a pack of peppers is 20LD from 10 or 15 depending on size, and a plastic bag of cold water is 10LD from 5." The results are financial difficulties and the reduction of social services.

The government took some steps to address the problems. For instance, in mid-2018, it reduced taxes/tariff on 2000 major imported commodities and infused \$25M into the economy. But the measures earned little or no result. The \$25M mop-up was problematic and questionable of its impact. A recent audit report appears to put blame on the Central Bank of Liberia (CBL) for mismanagement of the funds. Last year, a \$16 million LD was reported missing. Critics and opposition accused the Weah government and Sirleaf administration to have stolen the money. But Kroll Associate Inc, a US auditing firm hired by the US government, reported that no money was missing, but the CBL printed extra money without authorization. The government jailed CBL officials responsible, including Charles Sirleaf, Former Sirleaf's son. However, the opposition complained of the imprisonment.

Last year, the government invited all opposition parties to discuss the way forward, but the major opposition parties now supporting the protest complained then that less important opposition parties were also invited and that there was inadequate time given to speak. Abraham Dillon, Liberty Party vice chair, walked out of the meeting.

Israel Akinsanya, a former chairman of the opposition Liberty Party, talked about "managing expectation" when he joined Weah's party. But perhaps the party did not listen to his call. Some observers said that Weah made a big mistake when he, a few months after his inauguration, announced to the nation that the country was broke. Yet he conducted no audit on the Sirleaf government. Pundits viewed that he may have made a deal with Sirleaf to let her off the hook. The All Liberian Party Political Leader Benoni Urey remarked that Sirleaf gave the presidency to Weah, which to mean that Weah did not earn the office. With some administrative missteps, the opposition seized the opportunity to criticize Weah and the administration of being incompetent. With the exception of Former Vice President Joseph Boakai, the leaders of the opposition are of the settler background. Their continuous criticisms of every try of the administration, and their inability to offer alternatives have earned them the name, "lazy opposition". The Post article is correct that whatsoever effort the government would make it would be inadequate.

The protestors alleged that the Weah led government does not practice good governance, that the regime violates the constitution, is creating unbearable economic hardship, is corrupt, is incompetent, is looting the Liberian treasury, and the president, in addition to being unqualified, is surrounded by sycophants. Weah is being accused of building private apartment complexes in the midst of hardship and has not answered the allegation. To the protestors, the economic condition will reach to a state of chaos and they must do something. So they called themselves "Council of Patriots" to "Save the State". They also claim that their protest is to bring the problems to Weah's attention and to the attention of the international community. Seemingly, their central complaint is the rising double-digit inflation in the country. They have set June 7 to protest as their right as stipulates in the Liberian Constitution. The constitution guarantees the right to free and peaceful assembly of citizens to appeal to the government for a redress of their concerns. Protest planners vow to protest daily and give no time it would end.

However, other Liberians differ on the issues, arguing that the government is addressing many of the concerns, particularly the economic hardship. They say that these problems have been in existence in previous administrations and that the Weah government inherited them. They maintain that the government needs time, for it has been in power for just a year and six months. They point out, also, that many of those calling for protest are past government officials who misused government funds, which resulted in the current problems. They indicate that the opposition parties backing the protest leadership failed at the ballot box in the 2017 Presidential Election and are using the protest to gain power. They say that the apartment buildings are FIFA properties arranged with Weah prior to the election for the housing of the association's football academy participants in Liberia. They question the sincerity of the protest planners, asking, "Where were they when the country was under extreme economic condition under Sirleaf administration? Why did not they protest to save the state? Where were they when Robert Sirleaf mishandled the oil millions and bankrupted the company? Did they protest and ask for his resignation? Did they protest to ask for former President Sirleaf to resign?"

HISTORY OF PROTEST AND POWER STRUGGLE IN LIBERIA

Protest against the Liberian government is relatively new in Liberia. Historically, demonstrations against a sitting regime were discouraged. Specifically, the Tubman administration disallowed anti-government protests; the regime encouraged and entertained public marches which praised the government, and thus, created a culture of impunity, sycophancy and what is now called in Liberia, "gravy seekers". Tubman was of the Americo-Liberians/Congo stock also referred to as the settlers.

Protesters to be back

By Othello B. Garblah

Thousands of protesters marched before the Capitol Building, the seat of the Liberian Legislature on Friday June 7 to demand several reforms within the barley 2-years old regime of President George Weah, but failed to present their petition, promising to return to the streets after a press conference on Monday June 10.

The protest, first of its kind since the end of the back to back civil wars in Liberia was peaceful.

The Weah government and organizers of the much heralded June 7 protest had earlier reached an agreement that they (protesters) would have presented their petition to Vice President Jewel Howard Taylor, the estranged wife of jailed former President Charles Taylor, but the latter was reported ill and could not make it to the capitol to receive the petition.

The Government at the eleventh hour designated



Justice Minister Musa Dean, who was accompanied by Foreign Minister Gbehzongar Finley and officials of ECOWAS but the protesters insisted that it was either President Weah or his Vice President- that was after they demanded that some students who were arrested ahead of the planned protest be released.

But Justice Minister Dean said the students would be released to their lawyers and not to the planners of the protest.

An official of the Council of Patriot (COP) Boakai Jaliba told this paper that there was no need keeping protesters on the streets over the weekend. He said they asked protesters

to go home and would return following their press conference on Monday.

Mr. A. Darius Dillon, a senatorial candidate for Montserrado County and an official of the June 7 Protest organizing group told this writer that they are demanding reforms in all sectors of government. This include rule of law, security, health, education and agriculture.

"We have a list of demands. We have identified problems and we have proffered suggestions for the way forward. It is with no choice," Mr. Dillon said.

Contrary to what many fear that protesters would not leave the streets until their demands are met, Mr. Dillon said upon presentation of their petition, for an example the issue for the establishment of a war crimes court, they (protesters) don't expect the president or the government of Liberia to build a war crime court or implement same on the same day but would demand a definite decision on the issue.

Mr. Dillon also explained that another demand is a reform within the economy. "The President needs to tell us a clear definite position on the economy where are we, where we're going, short term, medium term and long term."

"What is the government doing to mitigate the rising inflation? We want concrete answers. He must declare his assets and publish it so we know what he worth before becoming president- we have seen him acquiring all of these material possessions, almost richer than the country." Dillon added. Mr. Dillon also said protesters are demanding a definite position of the president on the removal of Justice Kabineh Ja'neh, something he said has undermined the independence of the Judiciary.

However, Mr. Dillon diverted a little from the protesters demands to take a swap at the president for his recent pronouncement that anyone who insults him henceforth will not walk away free. Mr. Dillon said it was ridicules for a president who parades as the champion of free speech to at the same time issued such statement which demonstrates dictatorial tendency.

"That's dictatorial, undemocratic. The president speaks with one thing on one side of his mouth and speak with another on the other side. The President cannot be speaking as someone who champion free speech and at the same time suppressing free speech." He said as politicians "when our conduct is being described and we term that as an insult then it's something else."

Monrovia shuts down

By Winston W. Parley

Monrovia and its suburbs have suffered the severe economic shock of a peaceful assembly graced by thousands of aggrieved citizens on June 7, as panicking private businesses and schools shut down completely on Friday despite government call to go about their normal businesses.

On President George MannehWeah's order, public offices appear to defy the distractions that came on the day of the peaceful assembly by remaining opened, but it is uncertain what service they were able to render on the day that looks much like a public holiday.

The day witnessed heavy joint security deployment

and tough screening of commuters, after the well-armed security forces conducted a rare confidence patrol on Thursday, 6 June across Monrovia and its surroundings.

Neither President Weah nor his Vice President Jewel Howard - Taylor could receive a petition from the protest organizers Council of Patriots (COP) which is backed by Liberia's four collaborating opposition parties and other government critics.

In place of the two leaders, a government delegation including Justice Minister Frank Musa Dean, Foreign Minister Milton Findley, Bomi Rep. Edwin Snowe and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Envoy to Liberia assembled outside

the Capitol for the protesters to present their petition.

But it did not work after it emerged lately that the protesters wanted some of their members held in police custody to be released before they could proceed further.

There was no violence seen or reported so far, but there were series of occasions when COP members and supporters apprehended certain individuals from their midst and immediately turned them over to police to avoid conflict.

One of the key engineer of the June 7 "Save the State" protest, talk show host Henry Costa told an interview during the peaceful assembly on Capitol Hill that they want transparency in the way the government conducts itself.

He demands President Weah to publish his assets to enable the citizenry to know what he owns and where he got the money from to build all the houses in a short period.

"We want the president to publish his assets; we want to know what he owns before becoming president; we want to know where he got the money from to build all those houses while our people are suffering," Costa says.

"We want Samuel Tweah and Nathaniel Patray fired and prosecuted for their role in the \$25 million scandal; we want George Weah to undo his CTN - the Tracking Number Deal [at the Port] that is increasing the cost of commodity on the market for our people. We want the war crimes court,"

Costa explains further.

The protesters and other government critics continue to see Finance Minister Samuel Tweah and Central Bank of Liberia (CBL) Executive Governor Nathaniel Patray key persons that must answer question over the alleged mismanagement of US\$25m intended to mop-up excess Liberian dollars.

The General Auditing Commission has cited series of inconsistencies in the mop-up process because certain entities listed to have received part of the money could not be seen, but Justice Minister Musa Dean insists that no money went missing during the mop-up.

But Costa says protesters will not rest until their demands are addressed.

Also speaking on the war crimes court, Costa indicates that all members of the COP support the establishment of the war crimes court.

"Because they feel they are innocent, so they will have their day in court," he says in response to suggestion that some COP members are listed in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report for their roles in the past Liberian civil war.

Earlier in interview with state - run University of Liberia student Thomas Saah Saleh on the protest ground on Capitol

Hill, he laments that the country is not proceeding well, and that the peaceful assembly is intended to petition President Weah to take some actions.

Another protester from the Old Road Community, Prince Ford complains too that rice price is high and the foreign exchange rate keeps going up.

"I want the government to come up and drop the rate. If the government drops the rate, things will come down," he says.

A resident of Gardnersville Mr. NjamilahSaahBornquoi says he joined the protest on Capitol Hill because he believes that if things are fine in the country, every Liberian will benefit, regardless of which political party they affiliate with.

"When things are hard, it affects everybody. And so with the current situation in the country, the economy is hard," he laments.

Elderly women and men, young people and students took part in the protest to demand some reforms in government here.

It is not clear what will be the next course of action, but it is reported that the COP is planning to call a press conference on Monday, 10 June.-Edited by Othello B. Garblah



June 7th Protest Finds its way into History

After more than two months of planning, the much-heralded June 7th protest finally came to an end with no report of violence in sight. The protest has gone down into history as one of the most peaceful protests in the country as well as the world. There was not a single shot fired, nor anyone arrested, molested or tortured.

In spite of the fear that grip the nation that the protest was going to be chaotic and deadly, both the government and the organizers proved critics and pessimists wrong. The day which started with a down pour of rain ended with the rising of the sun signaling a new beginning and setting the benchmark for protesting in Liberia.

Anyone living in the memories of previous protests in Liberia including the 1979 Rice Riot and post conflict protest would have easily deduced that the June 7th protest would have been violent if not bloodied. The precursor was evident of what happened on the



morning of June 4th when supporters of one of the organizers of the protest in person of Rep. Yekeh Kolubah clashed with bystanders on Broad street. The show down which began after Rep. Kolubah appearance on the T-Max 50-50 Talk Show left few persons bloodied.

As if to add more gas to the fire, June 5th created another round of tension when officers of the Liberia National Police carried out a search operation at the home of Rep. Kolubah's

resident on the Old Road. After series of scuffles between police and supporters of Rep. Kolubah, it took the intervention of Hon. Snowe and ECOWAS' Ambassador to escort the lawmaker to the LNP Headquarters. Riot also ensued between police and students of the University of Liberia leading to the arrest of few students.

With this sort of tension in the atmosphere, even international partners had concluded that the protest was

going to be bad for country. But contrary to all of the obvious reasons for a chaotic protest, it proved successful with citizens crediting the peaceful nature of the day to both the government and the organizers.

Recounting years of protests a resident of Capitol By-Pass, Mr. Michael Swen noted that George Weah Government will go down in history as one of the most peaceful administrations. "From the tension in the air my mind went way back to the 1979 rice riot when I was a young man. I saw people gunned down by military men. But this one proved different; it was like an easy Sunday morning" he noted.

Johnson Karlay a resident of West Point said: "For me, my mind went back to the incident that led to the shooting to

death little Shaki Kamara in 2014 by a member of the AFL. But as it turned out, the protest was so peaceful to the extent that not many persons were aware if there was a protest" he said. For Lorraine Wrights a local business woman: "I got scary when I saw the international partners leaving the country and all those advisory notes from the US and UK governments. But as God would have it, it was nonviolent".

Though disappointed that the organizers refused to present their petition on Friday, many left feeling a sense of respect for the government, especially members of the police and other security forces for the orderly manner in which the protest was conducted.

Arsenal star ties the knot in Turkey with Turkish President as best man

Mesut Ozil was married in Istanbul with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan as his best man.

The 30-year-old Ozil, who has Turkish family roots, sparked controversy last year when he was photographed with Erdogan, raising questions about the footballer's loyalty to Germany on the eve of their disastrous 2018 World Cup campaign.

The Turkish leader arrived

in the early evening for Friday's ceremony at a luxury hotel on the banks of the Bosphorus to see the former Arsenal

midfielder marry his fiancée, former Miss Turkey Amine Gulse.



Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan speaks to Turkish-German soccer player Mesut Ozil and his wife Amine Gulse during a wedding ceremony over the Bosphorus in Istanbul

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