What went wrong with: National Conferences Supervising Transitions to Multiparty Rule in Francophone Africa, since 1989 – A Re-visitation

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Abstract: **After the fall of communism in 1989, the winds of democracy swept from Eastern Europe to French-speaking Africa and provoked a popular need for multiparty politics. One-partyism had lost its importance. Advocates of change advocated the Sovereign National Conference as a means of transition from one-party to multi-party. It began in Benin and became very popular throughout sub-Saharan Francophone Africa. The dictators quickly realized that it was a way to take power away from them and they quickly took steps to end the transition. Their initiative nevertheless led to the introduction of multi-party politics but not to a genuine democratic culture, the people's wish. Democracy has become a sham because it is not just about holding elections and legalizing hundreds of political parties. No one has ever sought to know who is organizing, sponsoring and proclaiming the election results, nor is it concerned about whether democratic values have actually transformed society, the ultimate goal of this system. As a result, because of the presidential majorities, people have returned to the dictatorial single party except for a few countries like Benin. In most countries, therefore, the presidential monarchy still prevails.**

Key words:- **Conference, sovereign, democracy, leaders, politics, masses**

I. INTRODUCTION

The Sovereign National Conference (SNC) emerged on the political sense in Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa in 1989following the collapsed of communism and the democratic wind of change that wafted across Eastern Europe.Like an epidemic it cut the Francophone countries like the people of Eastern Europe who were living under dictatorial regimes. To ensure a smooth transition, the Sovereign National Conference model was adopted to draw up rules and regulations for a democratic culture. It was whole heartedly embraced in the sub-region because it was seen as the sole medium by which they could do away successfully with autocratic regimes.

This paper traces the origin of the sovereign national conference, its composition, jurisdiction, proceedings and the mechanisms the incumbent presidents kindled that killed its agenda.

II. BACKGROUND HISTORY

Francophone Sub-Sahara African in 1990 was in political turmoil. After thirty years of independence, political instability and economic backwardness remained the bane of the sub-continent. The early 1990s witnessed political upheavals across the sub-region as people demanded change from authoritarian rule, which was instituted under the political slogans of national unity, national integration and development, to a democratic rule. Never in the sub-continent's history had the people wielded such extensive powers as they did in the 1990s, upbraiding the monolithic system and mandating it to destroy itself.[1] They learned to revolt against the absolute inclination of their leaders to think for the people in the name of national unity or cohesion like the benevolent despots of the eighteenth century. The majority of Africans in the 1990s did not experience colonial rule and knew only post-imperial rule characterised by presidents with endless tenures of office, one party system, military juntas, secret police networks and the exclusion of the masses from participating in government decision-making directly or indirectly.[2]

The marginalisation and exploitation of the populace by their leaders, sowed seeds of discontent for decades among the post-colonial generation. The demand for political liberalism was a step to undo authoritarian rule and be masters of their destiny.As Richard Joseph overtly puts itthat "for these populations a virtual miracle is taken place: the consummation of what is now widely called a second independence".[3] The movement to establish political liberalism believed to be the last face of decolonisation, did not entail only political liberty, but also the enunciation of sound economic policies to guarantee true independence and not flag independence that most countries gained in the 1960s.

The political upheavals that began in francophone African countries in 1989 were due to a number of factors dating as far back as to when these countries became independent. At independence with the exception of Guinea Conakry, the rest had independence in association with France. Since then France continued to exercise her political and economic hegemony over these countries. The leaders of these countries developed personal relations with France that guaranteed their stay in power and eventually become dictators. These autocratic regimes went unchallenged until 1989, when their people rose against them in an effort to establish a genuine society, whereby democratic norms should

be respected and mass participation guaranteed. To ensure this, people decided to come together and draw up new rules governing the same state in the form of a new constitution which became the supreme law of the land that guaranteed equality and liberty for all. To attain this objective the opposition leaders called on their "monarchical presidents" to summon the people's assembly, referred to as the "NATIONAL CONFERENCE." The national conference, which became very frightful to African reigning rulers, was not a new phenomenon per se in African societies. It was however a new phenomenon in the modern political scenario. This vividly explains why the leaders of the single party system and their followers dramatised the democratic revolution as a civil *coup d'états*.

III. CONCEPTION OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE

A retrospective look at Africa's pre-colonial politics reveals that whenever a major problem confronted the people, elders called for the general assembly and strong emphasis was on participation of all. The Traditional Rulers in spite their dual administrative and priestly functions, were accountable to the people more strictly than most leaders in the western democracies.[4] In the pre- colonial political set up they were answerable not only for what they did but also for natural catastrophes such as drought, bad harvest, epidemics and floods.In the circumstance of a natural disaster, as a result that the Traditional Ruler had neglected to perform certain rites he could be hung or banished from the land.[5]

From these sociological perspectives, apologists of the single party system who were allergic to the National Conference were either naïve or possessed little or no basic knowledge of how crises were managed in African traditional society. Since the leaders in power were Africans, it was presumed that they were conversant with this philosophy. This may not be eccentric or fanciful but not imaginative. Most African leaders at independence were brought up by their colonial masters and in the new dispensation they seemed to have lost contacts with the basic norms of their cosmic world.[6]The close relationship entertained between political leaders and their metropolis made them invariably agents of neo- colonialism against their own people. A gap thus existed as there was no communication between the top and the bottom which gave birth to the mass revolts in the 1990s. The political leaders were perceived by the masses as unrealistic and unpatriotic to the prevailing hardship they were facing; unemployment, poor education and abuse of human rights because of bad governance. As leaders who neglected their duties, there were uprisings to sanction them for their crimes viathe Sovereign National conference which was the representative assembly of the people.[7]

IV. WHY SOVEREIGN NATIONAL CONFERENCES BECAME SO POPULAR

As a supreme body, a Sovereign National Conference superseded the Executive, Legislature and Judicial arms of government. Its decisions set aside any other existing legislations, decrees and ordinances that were enacted by the old regime. This gave the Sovereign National Conference supreme powers to carry out its assignments effectively.

The National Conference which was demanded from the monolithic governments basically can be defined as a national forum whereby citizens of all walks of life appointed representatives with a mandate to examine and review all issues that affect their welfare. Its decisions once adopted could not be altered by any one. Advocates of Sovereign National Conference, therefore, believed in institutionalized multiparty democracy that would seek qualitative change that should lead to democratic representative and accountable governments that were to be transparent in the management of state affairs.

V. COMPOSITION OF DELEGATES

Participants at a Sovereign National Conference principally were made up of nationals of the nation in question linked by language, culture or historical tradition. The law convening the Sovereign National Conference sets its time duration and the number of representatives per administrative unite be it a province or a state. The total number of participants was computed on the bases of the overall population. The delegates were elected by their local population. The law creating a Sovereign National Conference may also select special representatives in addition to the latter. What was important was that participants should emanate from all strata of the society i.e. ***Toutes les force vives de la nation, qouiquesocientleurs affinities***.[8] At the national level, representatives included government ministers, military officials, civil servants, heads of political parties, trade unionists, student representatives, businessmen, teachers, farmers, Traditional Rulers and leaders of some international bodies.[9]

The composition of the Benin Republic Sovereign National Conference was exemplary; it included members of the diplomatic core and officials from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.[10] To be eligible for election into the Sovereign National Conference, one must not have been involved in a local and national politics as a pre-condition, competence, integrity and patriotism were the qualities needed. The venue was generally the national capital which had a jurisdiction of its own. When it came to voting only elected delegates from each interest group had the right to vote. This was to check unelected delegates from the government bench.

VI. ORGANISATION

At the first plenary session, the Sovereign National Conference elected its chairperson and the members of the secretariats. Most of those who chaired the Sovereign National Conferences were Bishops. The election of the clergymen was to ensure honesty and justice because of their neutrality, wisdom and competence. The secretariat was

manned by experienced administrators and retired competent civil servants of various disciplines. It was responsible for the co-ordination of the committees or commissions set up to prop in to the various issues. The general assembly of the Sovereign National Conference also elected chairpersons to the various committees or commissions that were set up. The committees' inter-alias included:

1.) The constitutional drafting committee
2.) The financial, economic and revenue allocation committee
3.) The reconciliation committee
4.) The committee on executive and legislation
5.) The committee for manpower resources and trade union
6.) The committee on the public service and forces of law and order
7.) The committee of Human Rights.

Each committee proposed some of the cardinal points likely to appear on the Sovereign National Conference agenda. Other elements could also crop up to be enlisted depending on the country in question. If a country like Nigeria, for example, were to hold a Sovereign National Conference amongst it committees would surely be a committee on religious affairs. All committee reports were presented to the general assembly where a final decision was taken. A Committee such as the constitutional committee may again be sub-divided into sub committees. The constitutional committee drewpeople's prime attention, for transformation from monolithic to multiparty democracy was not an easy task. The constitutions of Francophone African countries happened to be gloomy because they were not only monolithic in character but carbon copy of the French Fifth Republic constitution.[11]

Those of the Anglophone countries fashioned on multiparty democracy, on the other hand, also lost their credibility when the single party system came into existence. Because they were no checks and balances the end result was the institutionalisation of dictatorship or benevolent despotism that alienated the people as power came from above rather than from the masses. It was on this premise that in a Sovereign National Conference, adequate attention was paid to the drafting of the constitution. The constitution was the nucleus of the Sovereign National Conference. It was the fundamental law and was the legal source of legitimate authority. It was the embodiment of an agreement entered into by the people regarding how they were to be governed by their future leaders.[12]

It set out rules and regulations for the conduct of the country's political life and the limits to those who exercise authority and power on behalf of the people. Emphatically, therefore, it was the foundation of an orderly democratic society. It was on this account that the drafting of a constitution required men abound with wisdom, dedicated to serenity. In fact there were men of high integrity and dignity that were patriotic and had love for their fatherland. Thomas Jefferson once said that" the

will of the majority is in all cases to prevail."[13] This conception was one of the axioms of political thinking. The legislature therefore, had the potentials to initiate programs and formulate policies to respond to popular sovereignty.

The court on the other hand revered as impartial and independent body, guarded the fundamental law, the constitution. Unfortunately for Africa and francophone countries in particular, their constitutions lacked checks and balances that guaranteed authentic democracy. Consequently, the French model constitutions they adopted at independence aim at consolidating peace and unity turn out to perpetuate dictatorship. The constitutions failed to guarantee the basic rights of man as endowed in the Declaration of Human Rights as enshrined in the charter of the United Nations.[14]

The writing of a new constitution as mentioned earlier was the major concern of participants at Sovereign National Conferences. The conferences therefore, had to produce a constitution that reflected the wishes and aspirations of the people. The bulk of the work identifying the various issues to be embodied in the constitution was done by legal experts who were in the constitutional committee. Each committee expound on what should be included into the constitution such as the system of government, presidential, semi-presidential or parliamentary, limit of presidential term of office, create independent judiciary and legislature, draw up electoral codes and institute electoral commission by law. The constitutions that were promulgated by the Sovereign National Conferences so far embodied the fundamental rights of man such as; the rights to freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom of thought, freedom of movement, the right to liberty and security of person, the right to fair trial, the right to privacy, the right to education among others.

VII. TRANSITION FROM NATIONAL CONFERENCE TO SOVEREIGN NATIONAL CONFERENCE

This model of political mutation evolved with time and events. What began as a national conference later became a "SOVEREIGN NATIONAL CONFERENCE". The word sovereign emerged because the conference's decisions and proceedings were intermittently interfered with by the governments in power, as was in the case of Togo and Zaire (DRC) National Conferences. To make their decisions binding, the delegates in Benin Republic, where the first National Conference was held, declared themselves sovereign from any power that be. From the Benin Republic's example, it became a popular demand in francophone Africa to call upon their governments to convene Sovereign National Conferences as it proved a genuine model of transition from the one party political system to authentic multiparty democracy.[15]

VIII. MECHANISMS THAT DESTROYED THE SNC AGENDA

Time Management

The issue of time management was very essential during the holding of a Sovereign National Conference. Its deliberations were not to last for a long time otherwise old forces would instigate instability in the nation and regain some of their lost powers as was the case in Togo and Zaire. In Togo for instance, after it had successfully stripped Gnassingbe Eyadema of his power, its deliberation continued for so long that Eyadema gained back some of his powers. He was given the right to chair cabinet meetings and his party gained back the control of the Ministries of Defence and Territorial Administration.[16] Back in control of defence he and his party could have dismissed the Sovereign National Conference. On this premise therefore, the conference, had to have specific and precise objectives in view and should implement them as fast as possible. This would have minimised internal and external interventions to manipulate or destroy its plan of action. Because time factor was not taken into consideration, the outcome of the Togolese and Zairia conferences were not as fruitful as those of Benin, Mali, Niger and Congo.

From empirical indications as far as these monarchical presidents remained in control of power it was difficult if not impossible to move to authentic multiparty democracy without a Sovereign National Conference that will supervise the transitional process. It was only the Sovereign National Conference that put in place a frame work of multiparty democracy and structures that guaranteed free and fair elections. The institutions put in place made it difficult for elections to be rigged orswindledby the incumbent or any other political party. Multiparty transitions that took place in Benin, Mali, Niger and Congo were clear examples of authentic multi-party democracy. Where elections were organised without a Sovereign National Conference as was the case in Cameroon, Chad, CAR, Gabon and **Cote** d'Ivoire the incumbents defrauded the electoral process in their favour and continued to stay in power.[17]

IX. NONE EXISTING OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS– E.G. NO INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL COMMISSION

Internal and external pressures forced the presidents of the region to legalised political parties. In the one party autocracy the nature of its set up made presidents to rulefor life and their children could even succeed them. When political pluralism emerged in the early 1990s the majority of the presidents straight away began organising elections without democratic institutions put in place to replace those of the one party oligarchy. The absence of democratic institutions thus invariably implies that their concept of democracy was like that of Traditional African Village Chiefsas they remained permanently on the driver's seat of democracy. It was the presidents who legalized political parties, organized elections, and choose those who will compete against him, fund their elections campaigns and proclaim results.[18] Democratic values hold that there should be separation of powers, but what prevailed was that the president was the embodiment of the three arms of government i.e. head of the executive, judiciary and legislative.

With the non-existence of democratic institutions the presidents become self-image institutions to perpetuate their stay in power, this can therefore, not be democracy. Instead of democracy which is "democracy of the people for the people by the people;it is democracy rule of leaders, by leaders for the people". In these nations they have representation democracy and not participatory democracy. Since the opposition is not institutionalized, it is seen as an enemy rather than an alternate to the government in power. The culture of democracyin the sub-region which ensures the alternationof power did not exist and what prevailed was a presidency that functioned worse than African Traditional Chieftaincy where the elders arrogated the title of "Natural Rulerie the only candidate to rule until death".[19]

When multipartym was legalised in 1990s, the people acclaimed the birth of democracy that was a misconception because democracy demands far more than that: it embodied among other things, devolution of powers, good governance, and alternation of power and freedom of speech.

Apart from Benin, Mali, Niger and Congo (Brazzaville) republics that were socialist regimes instituted democratic institutions before liberating the political space. These other countries: Burkina-Faso, Cameroon, Central African republic (CAR),Chad ,Gabon, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Togo and Mauritania legalised scores of political parties without democratic institutions. Since the 1990s wind of change, the absence of democratic institutions have made multiparty democracy irrelevant and ineffective in the sub-region. The legalisation of political parties and the organisation of elections by leaders in power, the same leaders who rejected democratic transitions from one party dictatorship through the holding of Sovereign National Conferences, was a diversionist tactic that took off the wind from the sails of their opponents. As stated above the 14 Francophone countries of the sub-region, only the people of Mali, Niger, Benin and the Congo succeeded in forcing their dictators to submit to the Sovereign National Conference in the 1990s.[20]

In these countries the Sovereign National Conference instituted democratic institutions before political parties went functional. In Mali, Niger, Benin and the Congo therefore, it was the institutions that legalised political parties and organised elections. But the leaders of Gabon, Cameroon CAR, Chad, Togo, Ivory coast, Guinea, Mauritania rejected transition through the holding of Sovereign National Conferences. They described such a transition as a tropicalised coup d'étatand as an illegal method for the opposition to capture power. On this account, without putting in place democratic institutions the leaders of the above countries went ahead and legalised political parties and

engaged in organising elections to mollify western financial donors.

X. PRESIDENTIAL MONARCHY MODEL

The leader since 1990, are the same people who legalised political parties, determined their functional abilities, financed their existence and chose candidates that will go in for any election and determine what percentage the opposition will win, for example, the 2003 presidential election in Togo. They call their brand of democracy advanced democracy. The general cry from the side-line masses who in 1990 clamored for democratic change to liberate themand put in place governments that were accountable to the people because having political parties is not democracy. They argued that political parties without democratic institutions are worse than YuweriMusseveni's brand of democracy that was in Uganda in the early 1990s democracy without political parties.

XI. HANGOVER FROM FRENCH COLONIALISM

The problem of democracy here is a hangover from French colonialism, because of the creation of a privilege class (*citoyen*), property owning class and the traditional rulers. The French extracted them from the masses .Thus a rift was built between the privileged class and the masses (*sujet*).When the wind of change broke into Africa in 1990 the dictators saw no reason to listen to the masses or reflect on their aspirations, if they did so they will lose their privilegedpositions. TheFrench model of colonialism, unlike that of the British fragmented the society which created a problem for the blooming of democracy. It is on this setting that there exist no congress between the ruling class, the opposition leaders and the masses, because the area of convergence is very wide. The leader's interest is to stay in power. The dictators are permanently on the driver's seat. They do that by limiting the chance of others. With the non-existing of democratic institutions the dictators become self-image institution to perpetuate their stay in power. This can therefore not be democracy.

XII. SLIM CHANCES OF DEMOCRATISING OF A DICTATORSHIP

From 1990 it became evident that the chances of democratising a dictatorship are very slim because a dictatorship cannot be democratised by decrees. Putting in place democratic institutions mean destitution of dictatorship, as was the case in Mali, Niger, Benin and the Congo in the early 1990s. In these nations genuine democracy took place following the Sovereign National Conference framework. The holding of Sovereign National Conference involves the masses that were clamoring for change. In these nations, democracy becomes a way of life and an act of broad base participation by the greater number. In the above nations democratic institutions were put in place and political participation evolved from bottom to top. In the nations where there was noSovereign National Conferences, political

evolution was tele-guided from top and imposed on the greater number of the society. In these dictatorshipssovereignty did not lie with the people. The leaders did not see their position as given by the people. The political class did not entertain dissent. The top was therefore sealed and it gave room to open rebellion from below e.g.Cameroon, CAR, Chad, Ivory Coast,Togo, Bokina Faso and Gabon.[21]

XIII. FRENCH SUPPORT FOR DICTATORSHIP

Jacque Chirac, the mayor of Paris and president of French National Assembly (at the time)in Abidjan, **Cote** d'Ivoire saidthat multiparty democracy was a "political error" for developing countries and a "luxury", people should "concentrate" their efforts on the economic growth."[22] He went further stating that what Africa needed was "food" for those starving and "drugs" for the sick and not democracy. He refuted the allegations that party competition was a prerequisite for democracy, and ultimately praised African countries such as Cote d'Ivoire, where "democracy is respected" within the single party system.[23]

Chirac's shocking remarks moved like lightening across the continent. It was regrettable, that such retrogressive comments should emanate from one of the highest ranking French politicians. For those who knew French hegemony in francophone Africa Jacque Chirac's remarks were not a surprise. What mattered to him was French interest and old Felix Houphouet-Boigny as its imperial agent since for economic reasons France could not do without her former African colonies. The consolation to pro-democrats was that, the wind of change could not be totally blocked. From the old school of thoughts there were still those who argued vis-à-vis African democratisation that "people must be educated, fed before they can appreciate democracy, for there is no choice in ignorance and there are no possibilities for self-fulfillment in extreme poverty."[24] Claude Ake points out that;

> This claim is as seductive as it is misguided. Even if it were true that democracy is competitive with development, it does not follow that people must be more concerned with improving nutrition than casting votes, or more concerned with health than with political participation. The primary issues is not whether it is more important to eat well than to vote, but who is entitled to decide which is more important. Once this is understood, the argument that democracy must be sacrificed to development collapses into the arbitrary insistence that we ought to decide for the peasants of Botswana and Burkina Faso whether they should prefer better health or the freedom to vote.[25]

XIV. REGIMES WAGED WAR ON THE PRESS

As the struggle intensified, Africa No.1 Radio based in Gobon became very instrumental in informing the pro-democracy advocates all over the region of the situation in each country

.*Radio France Interne*(RFI),British Broadcasting cooperation (BBC) and the Voice of America (VOA) were in no little way vehicles of daily information. The monolithic governments unable to subdue the people by force of arms went on diplomatic offensives. They negotiated with Africa No.1 and France Radio Interne (FRI), obviously with the help of France not to be giving detail reports of the pro-democracy movements in the various countries. Africa No1, before then had on the spot reporters that gave minute by minute account of the political developments in each country particularly in francophone countries. The governments in power to tempo democratic movements, banned critical private newspapers from circulation or entering the country. Censorship became reinforced and in Cameroon,newspaper manuscripts had to be sent to the minister of territorial administration for approval before printing.

This gave rise to an interesting but regrettable phenomenon, editors-in-chief of radical newspapers in Cameroon like: Cameroon *Post*;*Le Messanger,*Al'ecoute du **peuple,***La Nouvelle Expression and **Challenge Hedbo** resorted to print their newspapers in Calabar ,a town in Nigeria and transported to Cameroon by canoe to avoid seizure.In other countries governments bought over some political leaders like in Gabon and Cote d'Ivoire and in others like Togo and Cameroon prominent political leaders became victims of assassination attempts. In Cameroon, May 1991, Mr. Samuel Eboua led a five man delegation to France and European Economic Community (EEC) countries to explain the case of the opposition and appealed to the European leaders to put pressure on President Paul Biya to accept a democratic transition of power through a Sovereign National Conference.[26]

XV. VIOLENT CONFRONTATIONS

On the home front as governments became recalcitrant, demonstrators adopted a more radical and violent approach. They chose confrontation with the forces of law and order. They burnt public buildings and destroyed government property such as vehicles. In Cameroon Biya's regime used both the military and psychological warfare to the forces of change .His ruling party the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) mobilised and organised demonstrations systematically throughout the ten Provinces. They denounced multypartism, and descried it as "imported ideology".President PaulBiya initially was an ardent apostle of the one party system, who continued to argue that multypartism was irrelevant in the Cameroon context.[27]

XVI. RE-INTRODUCTION OF ONE SYSTEM MECHANISM

Incumbent presidents of the sub-region reintroduced the one party system mechanism. The opposition was seen as an enemy and not as an ultimate force. They createdelectoral commissions and organize elections with no independent electoral commissions.They tacitly made the public service

agents, forces of law and order and Traditional Rulers organ of the ruling party. The Legislator and the Judiciary are controlled by the president as members of these organs are faithful militants of the ruling party. Teams ofpresidential mandates have been scrapped off from the constitutions adopted at Sovereign National Conferences. Political Parties have been legalized but legalization of political party is no democracy as one of the highest values is the alternation of powers, good governance and respect for human rights. There is still a need for a revolution for second independence like during the Arab Spring.

The vices of the one party dictatorship of bad governance, corruption, tribalism, nepotism and abuse of human rights remained in place. Apart from the situation in a few Francophone African countries, the opposition has neither come to power nor won substantial seats in any parliament. On the contrary, most opposition leaders have been tortured and imprisoned. The incumbent Presidents are those who sponsor political parties, choose those who will run for elections with them and give them the number of seats they want and the percentage at presidential elections. Their constitutions do not give the opposition its constitutional rights

XVII. WHAT IS NEW?

The essence of this work is to argue the fact that democracy is not determined automatically by the multiplicity of political parties or organising numerous elections. This is the new issue.President Umar Bongo of Gabon proposed that by 2005, when his second 7 year mandate will be over, the constitution should be modified to read that the term of presidential mandate was to be unlimited in so far as elections are free and fair. Having 282 political parties like in Cameroon does not make Cameroon more free and democratic than the UK or USA each with two solid political parties. There are set standards or inherent ingredients that prove democracy is a way of life of the people.

Democracy is not only for elections; elections are one of the facets. It should become a way of life of the people. In one party police state, people lived in perpetual fear. People do not say what they want and they do not believe in what they say. By perceiving that democracy is the legalisation of political parties and organisingelections, democracy in the sub-region has been reduced to nothingness. A large numbers of small parties legalised by decrees are quickly absorbed into the ruling party called presidential majority.In all elections the regime in power ensures it takes 2/3 and 1/3 is distributed to small parties annexed to the presidential party. Hard-core opposition parties that threatens the capture of state power are not tolerated (e.g. Olympio's UFC Party in Togo and Ni John FruNdi's SDF party in Cameroon).

The ex-single party regimes in power have politicised the civil service. To be appointed to a post of responsibility you must be from the ruling party or presidential majority. The judiciary and the legislative arms of

government, the police and the army have all become auxiliary wings of the ruling party. Having control of state resources and state machinery the presidents survive by skillful combination of electoral fraud, manipulating of the opposition and repression. Therefore, the existence of political parties and regular organisation of elections is not democracy.

XVIII. WHY IS IT WORTH KNOWING?

There has been a misconception of democracy, when people perceive democracy in the context of competition. They assess the authenticity of democracy in the context of free and fair election. **But the question of who organises, sponsors and proclaims election result is not asked.** The ex-single party presidents in power in the absence of democratic institutions cannot organise elections and fail. Thus it is utterly wrong to conclude that the presence of political parties and programming of elections is democracy. When multipartysm re-emerged on the political arena in 1990, the people acclaimed the re-birth of democracy. That was misconception because democracy demands far more than that.It embodied among other things the devolution of powers, good governance, and alternation of power and freedom of speech.

In the absence of democratic institutions the presidents function like LouisXIV *L'Etatc'estMoi, i.e. (*the state is me). The president is the one individual who has the Sovereign right by decree to legalise political parties, he was the one that blocked democracy yesterday, by force he opened it, he is the one who determines and regulates the functioning of political parties. Thus he is permanently on the driver's seat. The leaders have made democracy a window dressing and have transformed it to African chieftaincy institution.On the other hand when in the 1990s political parties were legalised, people thought that was the end of dictatorship and nobody has been worried to find out the inherent values that makes democracy a motive force of social transformation, which is the end value of democracy**.** The masses are not involved in the democratic process, the elite continue to teleguide and brain wash them.

XIX. ALTERNATIVE VIEWS ON DEMOCRATIC STAGNATION IN FRANCOPHONE AFRICA

Since 1990 when democracy was re-introduced in the sub region, the various stakeholders in the process have reassessed and made their views unequivocally clear on the matter. The perception of ex-single party presidents in power is that democracy must be guided. They argued that since the majority of their people are illiterates they know what is good for them; Peace, National Unity and Development. The opposition leaders hold that French colonial and post-colonial policies are responsible for the democratic failures, because of their economic interest, they have since independence systematically maintained dictators in powers toguarantee their exploitative interest in the sub-region.Because of the prevailing circumstances these nations' future and existence

rest on individual and not institutions**.** Thus there are always uncertainties.[28]

Most francophone political scientists strongly argued that Francophones of the sub-region are responsible for the democratic failures since 1990. In their perception, they do not see why people of the former British colonies like Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Lesotho and South Africa have made steady process in the democratisation progress and Francophones have failed. They concluded that the Francophobes are weak to enforce democratic reforms and that France was not behind the blockage. But with French Post-Colonial links to what extend is this accession valid?[29]

The Traditional Rulers (Chiefs, Fons and Lamidos) hold that their ruling elite had betrayed the course of independence, whose objectives was to establish sovereign states free from French imperial paternalism and domination. They hold that if the Anglophones have advanced in democracy, it is because the British colonial system was different and after independence, British neo-colonialism was not so entrenched or intensified as that of the French in francophone Africa.[30]

The masses and the civil societies hold that in-so-far as there are no institutions that guarantee free and fair elections they no longer see a need to register and vote. That in the absence of the later, election results are known in advance and thus it is not participatory democracy, but dictatorship, which they hold must be destroyed because it cannot be democratised because democratising a dictatorship means its self-destruction. Thus, popular force was needed by the people to chase away dictators and install democracy as was the case in Eastern Europe after the fall of communism and of recent by the Arab Spring.[31]

Democratic Performance since 1990

Nations with established Democratic Institution following S.N.C. (05/14), 28%	Nations with Ex-single party structures still in place (09/14), 72%
Mali	Burkina Faso
Niger	Cameroon
Benin	CAR
Senegal	Chad
Ivory Coast	Congo
	Gabon
	Guinea
	Mauritania
	Togo

Source: Compiled by Simon Tata Ngenge, 2017

XX. CONCLUSION

In the early 1990s, under popular pressure the dictators legalised dozens of political parties and engaged in elections

and competitions. Close to three decades democratic performance in the sub-region in terms of alternation of power at the helm of the state, good governance, respect of the law and Human Rightsis just 28 %as per the above table.What prevails is that (if death does not come) the incumbents are permanently in place as the two terms mandates non-renewable in their self-made constitutions havebeen changed. They continue to stay in power as long as they live and can easily be succeeded by their children as was the case in Togo and Gabon. This vividly elucidates the concept African leaders have about democracy which is worse than African Chieftaincy Institution.[32]

In Cameroon, Gabon and Ivory Cost under the stewardship of presidents Paul Biya, Omar El Hadji Bongo and Houphouet-Boigny, did no bow to the pressure of transition to multiparty democracy through the holding of a Sovereign National Conference as elsewhere in Francophone Africa. Many people wondered and continued to ponder why the French president could mandate the presidents of the above countries to hold Sovereign National Conferences? In place of the Sovereign National Conference they resorted to organising anticipated elections,still based on the monolithic fashioned electoral code as embodied in their single party constitutions.[29] Political forces in these countries struggled in vain to secure the holding of a Sovereign National Conference.

The transitional model, although not as popular in Anglophone countries as in francophone African countries, by its acuity and strategies it proved a unique model of transition from the single party system to multiparty. The Sovereign National Conference, inter alias, did not only put in place democratic structures but reconciled *les forces vives de la nation*, for the progress and general good of the entire nation.

As should be noted when the upheavals for political change began, as said earlier governments in power perceived the political change through multiparty democracy via the Sovereign National Conferences as civil coup d'etats, inspired by foreign ideologies to over throw their legitimate governments. They saw advocates of transition through Sovereign National Conferences as unconstitutional by elements who sought an easy way to get to the helm of state affairs, without the mandate of the people. These people the regimes "ironically" referred to as the silent majority. Their perceptions and propaganda vis-à-vis the Sovereign National Conference was invariably a desperate attempt to hold back the rising tides of democracy. But as JaramogiOgingaOdinga observed with regards to the situation in Kenya where president Daniel ArapMoi was reluctant to effect political pluralism and democracy was that" the clock cannot be tuned backward; democratic changes will be home-grown."[33]

The popular demand for political liberalization that began in 1989 in francophone Africa in particular and in other part of the continent in general, coincided with the celebration of the bicentenary of the French revolution of 1789. It also coincided with then bicentenary of the declaration of the Bill of Rights in the United States. These Declarations guaranteed fundamental Human Rights, such as freedom of speech, freedom of worship among others, all of which were later codified in their constitutions. Unfortunately, as history passed by, it revealed that most African countries after independence did not adopt democratic principles that guaranteed fundamental human rights. Francophone African countries remained politically and economically to a large extend under French control.[34]

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