

REPUBLICS OF BENIN AND TOGO'S LEVEL OF ADHERENCE TO TOCQUEVILLE POLITICAL LIBERTY

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Abstract

Alexis de Tocqueville, the nineteenth century French thinker of liberal democracy, claimed that political liberty expressed in the freedom of the press, freedom of association, the rule of law and decentralization are the bulwarks against despotism, individualism and the tyranny of the majority which are obstacles to democratic growth in any country. This paper discusses Tocqueville's psychology by surveying the level of adherence of citizens of Francophone West African countries of Benin and Togo to his generalization. Two emerging multiparty liberal democracies which are practicing the semi-presidential systems and the French bureaucratic model in francophone West Africa, Republic of Benin, Republic of Togo and Niger Republic, were purposively selected for the survey. In each country five hundred copies of the questionnaire were administered to purposively selected members of the civil society in order to seek their opinion on the rule of law, press freedom, freedom of association and decentralization in their respective countries. Data were content analyzed and simple percentage used for the questionnaire administered.

Keywords:

Alexis de Tocqueville, Decentralization, Democracy, Francophone West Africa, Liberty and Rights

INTRODUCTION

"In his book *Democracy in America* Tocqueville aims at depicting democratic institutions and the psychology of democratic citizens as they can be observed when democratic society is firmly established... democratic institutions are shown to generate beliefs and aspirations that in turn, support those same institutions. Although Tocqueville points to some possible sources of instability in democratic societies, his central assumption is very clearly is that the America he observed around 1830 was equilibrium" Jon E. (101-102)

Known as French colonial territory in Western Africa from 1895 to 1958, the present day Francophone West Africa consists of the following countries: Benin, Burkina Fasso, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Guinée, Mali,

Mauritania, Niger and Sénégal. During colonisation, the French placed emphasis on cultural assimilation. Even after independence France has continued to show interest in the politics of its former colonies.

In 1990 when president Mitterrand of France warned African leaders at the sixteenth Franco-African congress that "France will link its contributions to efforts designed to lead to greater liberty and democracy", most of these countries were either under military rule or one party-system. (Smith, 2009:199) For fear of being abandoned by the colonial master and pressure from a coalition of civil societies within their countries, leaders of francophone West African countries decided to embrace democracy. Two of the francophone West African countries that transitioned to democracy through national conference were selected for this research. They are Benin Republic and Republic of Togo.

SURVEY RESULT

Benin Republic

S/ N	Item	Strongly Agree	Partially Disagree	Disagree
1.	There is freedom of association in this country. / il y a de la liberté d'association dans ce pays	250 (50)	200 (40)	50 (10)
2	The current democratic government tolerates constructive criticisms from the opposition. / le gouvernement démocratique actuel prend en compte les critiques constructives de l'opposition	250 (50)	150 (30)	100 (20)
3	The current government manipulate the Civil Societies against the masses. / le gouvernement actuel manipule la société civile contre le peuple	150 (30)	150 (30)	200 (40)
	Press Freedom / liberté de presse	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)

1	There is freedom of press in this country. / Il y a de la liberté de presse dans ce pays	250 (49.9)	200 (40)	50 (10.1)
2	The public media are totally free from government manipulation. / Les media publiques sont indépendantes des manipulations du gouvernement	275 (55)	50 (10)	175 (35)
3	The current democratic government tolerates criticism from opposition. / Le gouvernement démocratique actuel tolère la critique de la presse.	200 (40)	100 (20)	200 (40)
	Rule of the Law / la primauté du droit	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)
1	The judiciary in this country is independent. / Dans ce pays le secteur judiciaire est indépendant.	150 (30.1)	200 (40)	150 (29.9)
2	The Judiciary is still the last hope of the common man. / La justice défend toujours les droits de l'Homme.	150 (30)	75 (15)	275 (55)
3	Human right violations is now low in this country. / Le niveau de violation des droits de l'Homme est maintenant bas dans ce pays.	200 (40)	250 (50)	150 (30)
	Decentralization / décentralisation	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)
1	Administration in this country is decentralised. / Dans ce pays l'administration est décentralisée.	111 (22.1)	250 (50)	139 (27.9)
2	The three tiers of government are independent. / Il y a une séparation des pouvoirs dans ce pays.	160 (32)	150 (30)	190 (38)
3	Decentralisation is contributing positively to the democratization process in this country. / La décentralisation contribue positivement à la consolidation du processus démocratique	150 (30)	200 (40)	150 (30)

Togo

S/N	Item	Strongly Agree Freq (%)	Partially Disagree Freq (%)	Disagree Freq (%)
	Freedom of association / liberté d'association	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)
1.	There is freedom of Association in this country. / il y a de la liberté d'association dans ce pays	9 (1.9)	50 (10)	441 (88.1)
2	The current democratic government tolerates constructive criticisms from the opposition. / le gouvernement démocratique actuel prend en compte les critiques constructives de l'opposition	250 (50)	200 (40)	50 (10)
3	The current government manipulates the Civil Societies against the masses. / le gouvernement actuel manipule la société civile contre le peuple	350 (70)	100 (20)	50 (10)
	press freedom / liberté de presse	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)
1	There is freedom of press in this country. / Il y a de la liberté de presse dans ce pays	50 (9.9)	200 (40)	250 (50.1)
2	The public media are totally free from government manipulation. / Les media publiques sont indépendantes des manipulations du gouvernement	200 (40)	200 (40)	100 (20)
3	The current democratic government tolerates criticism from opposition. / Le gouvernement démocratique actuel tolère la critique de la presse.	25 (5)	50 (10)	425 (85)
	Rule of the law / la primauté du droit	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)
1	The judiciary in this country is independent. / Dans ce pays le secteur judiciaire est indépendant.	50 (10)	150 (30)	300 (60)
2	The Judiciary is still the last hope of the common man. / La justice défend toujours	225 (50)	225 (45)	50 (10)

	les droits de l'Homme.			
3	Humanrights violations arenowlow in this country. / Le niveau de violation des droits de l'Homme est maintenant bas dans ce pays.	25 (5)	50 (10)	425 (85)
	Decentralisation/ Decentralisation	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)
1	Administration in this country is decentralised. /Dansce pays l'administrationestdéce ntralisée.	76 (15.2)	70 (14)	354 (70.8)
2	The three tiers of government are independent. / Il y a separation des pouvoirs dans ce pays.	50 (10)	100 (20)	350 (70)
3	Decentralisation is contributing positively to the democratization process in this country. / La decentralization contribue positivement à la consolidation du processusdémocratique	50 (10)	50 (10)	400 (80)

Data Interpretation

The research makes use of (Likert scale, 1932), where numbers are ranked so the coding frame follows the same numerical approach. On each graph:

No1 represents the first opinion under each variable.

No 2 represents the second opinion under each variable.

No 3 represents the third opinion under each variable.

The Package Used: SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 17)

Method Used: Simple Percentage Frequency under Descriptive Statistics.

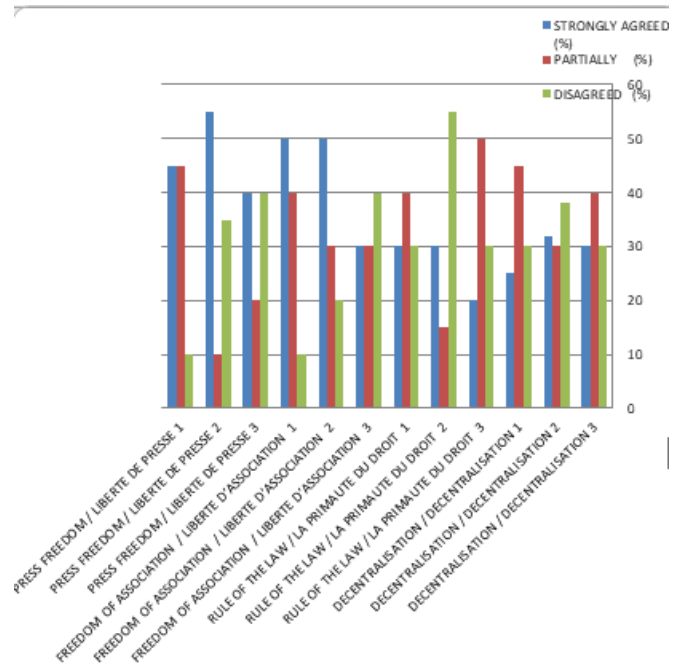
The multiple bar chart graph representing the percentage frequency of the respondents considered the four variable items: (Freedom of association, press freedom, rule of the Law and decentralization) in Benin Republic.

Benin Republic

The Table Below Shows the Percentage Frequency of Respondents under the Four Variables Considered in Benin Republic

Variable	Strongly Agree	Partially Disagree	Disagree
Press freedom / liberte de presse 1	49.9	40	10.1
Press freedom / liberte de presse 2	55	10	35
Press freedom / liberte de presse 3	40	20	40

Freedom of association / liberted'association 1	50	40	10
Freedom of association / liberted'association 2	50	30	20
Freedom of association / liberted'association 3	30	30	40
Rule of the law / la primaute du droit 1	30.1	40	29.9
Rule of the law / la primaute du droit 2	30	15	55
Rule of the law / la primaute du droit 3	20	50	30
Decentralisation / decentralisation 1	22.1	50	27.9
Decentralisation / decentralisation 2	32	30	38
Decentralisation / decentralisation 3	30	40	30



Benin Republic

The table below shows the percentage frequency of respondents under the four variables considered in Benin Republic

Scale:

The multiple bar chart; the variables (items considered) would be on the horizontal axis and (the percentage frequency of the respondents on the vertical axis. (Note that n =500)

Press Freedom

From the multiple bar chart;

The percentage frequency of the respondents with (49.9%) strongly agreed and 40% partially agreed that there is freedom of press in Benin Republic while only (10.1%) of the respondents disagreed with the opinion.

The percentage frequency of the respondents has (55%) strongly agreed unit the opinion that the public media are totally free from government manipulation and (10%) partially agreed while (35%) of the respondents disagreed with the opinion.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

From the multiple bar chart;

The percentage frequency of the respondents with (50%) strongly agreed with the opinion that there is freedom of association in Benin Republic and (40%) partially agreed with the opinion while (10%) of the respondents disagreed with the opinion.

The percentage frequency of the respondents, (50%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the current democratic government tolerates constructive criticisms from the opposition and (30%) partially agreed with the opinion while (20%) of the respondents disagreed with the opinion. The percentage frequency of the respondents has (30%) of the respondents that strongly agreed that the current government manipulates the civil societies against the masses, (30%) partially agreed with the opinion and (40%) of the respondents disagreed with the opinion.

RULE OF THE LAW

From the multiple bar chart graph; the percentage of the respondents has (30.1%) of the respondents who strongly agreed with the opinion that the judiciary in Benin Republic is independent, (40%) of the respondents partially agreed and (29.9%) of the respondents disagreed with the opinion.

(30%) of the respondents strongly agreed with the opinion that the judiciary is still the last hope of the common man in Benin Republic, also (15%) of the respondents partially agreed while (55%) disagree with the opinion.

Also, (40%) of the respondents strongly agreed with the opinion that human right violations is now low in Benin Republic, (50%) partially agreed and (30%) of the respondents disagreed with the opinion.

Decentralization

Also the percentage of the respondents with (22.1%) of the respondents strongly agreed that administration in Benin Republic is decentralized also (50%) of the respondents partially agreed and (27.9%) of the respondents disagreed with the opinion.

The (32%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the three tiers of government are independent and (30%)

Togo

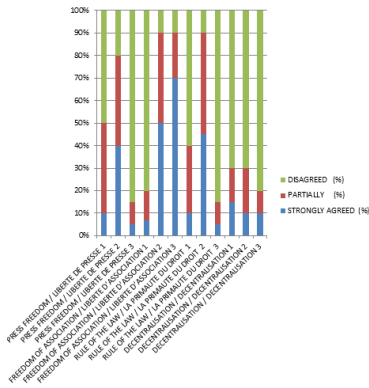
Title: The component bar chart/ graph representing the percentage frequency of the respondents considered the four variable items (Freedom of Association, press freedom, Rule of the Law and Decentralization) in Togo.

Scale: The component bar chart of the variable items considered would be on the horizontal axis and the percentage frequency of the Respondents on the vertical axis. n=500 i.e. number of respondents.

The Table Below Shows the Percentage Frequency of Respondents Under the four Variables in Republic of Togo.

Variable	Strongly Agree	Partially Disagree	Disagree
Press freedom / liberté de presse 1	9.9	40	50.1
Press freedom / liberté de presse 2	40	40	20
Press freedom / liberté de presse 3	5	10	85
Freedom of association / liberted'association 1	1.9	10	88.1
Freedom of association / liberted'association 2	50	40	10
Freedom of association / liberted'association 3	70	20	10
Rule of the law / la primaute du droit 1	10	30	60
Rule of the law / la primaute du droit 2	45	45	10
Rule of the law / la primaute du droit 3	5	10	85
Decentralisation / decentralisation 1	15.2	14	70.8
Decentralisation / decentralisation 2	10	20	70
Decentralisation / decentralisation 3	10	10	80

The Graph Represented the Number of Respondents in Togo



Freedom of Association

The percentage frequency of the respondents of (1.9%) of the respondent’s strongly agreed with the opinion that there is freedom of Association in Togo, (10%) of the respondent’s partially agreed with the opinion and (88.1%) of the respondents disagreed.

The (50%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the current democratic government tolerate constructive criticisms from the opposition in Togo and (40%) of the respondents partially agreed while (10%) of the respondents disagreed with the opinion.

The (70%) of the respondents strongly agreed with the opinion the current government manipulate the civil societies against the masses, and (20%) partially agreed while (10%) of the respondents disagreed.

Press Freedom

From the component chart graph; the percentage of the respondents has (9.9%) of the respondents who strongly agreed that there is freedom of press in Togo and (40%) partially agreed while (50.1%) disagreed with the opinion. The (40%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the public media are totally free from government manipulation and (40%) were partially agreed while (20%) of the respondents disagreed with the opinion.

Rule of the Law

The percentage frequency of the respondents; (10%) strongly agreed with the opinion that the Judiciary in Togo county is independent and (30%) partially agreed and (60%) of the respondent disagreed with the opinion.

(50%) of the respondents strongly agreed with the opinion that the judiciary is still the last hope of the common man, (45%) of the respondents partially agreed and (10%) disagreed with the opinion.

(5%) of the respondents strongly agreed in the opinion that human right violations is now low in Togo,(10%) of the total respondents partially agreed and (85%) disagreed with the opinion.

Decentralization

The percentage frequency of the respondents shows that (15.2%) of the respondents strongly agreed that

Administration in Togo country is decentralized and also (14%) partially agreed while (70.8%) of the respondents disagreed with the opinion.

(10%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the three tiers of government are independent. Also (20%) of the respondents partially agreed and (70%) choose to disagree with the opinion.

(10%) of the respondents strongly agreed and also partially agreed with the opinion that Decentralization is contributing positively to the democratic process in Togo, while (80%) of the respondents of the total disagreed.

Summary

On Press Freedom

	Items	Agreed Freq %	Disagreed Free %
Benin	There is press freedom this country	69.9	30.1
Togo	There is press freedom this country	29.9	70.1

On Freedom of Association

	Items	Agreed Freq %	Disagreed Freq %
Benin	There is press freedom of Association in this country	70	30
Togo	There is press freedom of Association in this country	6.9	93.1

On The Rule of Law

	Items	Agreed Freq %	Disagreed Free%
Benin	On the independence of the Judiciary	50.1	49.9
Togo	On the independence of the Judiciary	25.0	75.0

On Decentralization

	Items	Agreed Freq %	Disagreed Free%
Benin	On Administrative decentralization	47.1	52.9
Togo	On Administrative decentralization	22.2	77.8

Conclusion

The level of adherence of the democratic experience of francophone West Africa to Tocqueville's generalization is abysmally low. Republic of Benin when compared to Togo Niger Republic was better off in her democratic disposition. The democratic process of countries studied is characterized by violation of Human Rights and absence of decentralization.

Democratic process in Benin and Niger is stifled by suppression of the press and the civil society, benevolent manipulation of the judiciary and politicization and

centralization of the administration. In Togo, the president controlled the three tiers of government, the press and the civil society except the opposition parties whose demonstrations are frequently emasculated, and their leaders arrested and jailed. Although these countries have adopted democratic constitutions, ratified laws on freedom of press and association, enacted laws on decentralization, inequality, lack of local government autonomy are still prevalent in the society.

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