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**Book Part — Accepted Manuscript (Postprint)**

## Togo: Thorny transitions and misguided aid at the roots of economic misery

*Suggested Citation:* Kohnert, Dirk (2011) : Togo: Thorny transitions and misguided aid at the roots of economic misery, In: Saine, Abdoulaye N'Diaye, Boubacar Hounnikpo, Mathurin (Ed.): Elections and democratization in West Africa 1990 – 2009, ISBN 1-59221-773-7, Africa World Press, Trenton, NJ, pp. 179-210

This Version is available at:

<http://hdl.handle.net/10419/118654>

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**From:** Saine, Abdoulaye / N 'Diaye, Boubacar / Houngnikpoet, Mathurin (eds.) (2010): Elections and democratization in West Africa 1990 – 2009. Trenton: Africa World Press (AWP), 2011: 179-210

## **Chapter 8**

### **Togo: Thorny Transition and Misguided Aid at the Roots of Economic Misery**

By Dirk Kohnert

#### **Introduction**

When the longest-serving African dictator, Togo's Gnassingbé Eyadéma, died unexpectedly in February 2005 after 38 years of autocratic rule, Togo became a test case for indigenous democratization efforts of African states. However, it soon became clear that a change of regime through the ballot box was impossible, in view of the consolidation of this dictatorship, reinforced by decades of misrouted foreign assistance, as shown below. Political conflict flared up again. Eyadéma's son, Faure Gnassingbé, seized power in a coup with the backing of the army and the Barons of the ruling party RPT (*Rassemblement du Peuple Togolais; Rally of the Togolese People*). Violent protest at home and diplomatic pressure of major donors and African peers forced Gnassingbé to hold presidential elections in April 2005. But as the elections were rigged right from the beginning in order to preserve the power of the Gnassingbé-clan, it was no surprise that they confirmed the power of the incumbent as heir to the throne of his father.

In the interest of political stability in the sub-region, neighboring states, France, the former colonial power, and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) condoned the election results as well as gross violation of human rights, including the brutal political persecution of opponents. About 700 people died and some 40,000 fled to neighboring Benin and Ghana in fear of reprisals. On the comfortable base of his usurped power, the

president and his entourage reluctantly yielded to the request of the international donor community and the opposition for national reconciliation. The political accord between the government and major opposition parties in August 2006 was welcomed internationally as a major breakthrough in the aftermath of rigged presidential elections and subsequent political turmoil in 2005.

The formation of a transitional government of national unity under Yawovi Agboyibo (16.09.06), renowned opposition leader, gave rise to optimistic forecasts concerning the preparations for early free and fair legislative elections in October 2007. The parliamentary election of 14 October 2007 was meant to console the feuding political camps and end 14 years of political repression and gross human rights violations. Therefore, these elections were marked by high expectations on the part of the population, political parties and the international donor community. Notably the latter tended to turn a blind eye to the fact that the government and the ruling 'Rassemblement du Peuple Togolais' (RPT) acted on the comfortable basis of their superior political and military power, acquired through the coup d'état of Faure Gnassingbé, son and heir of late head of state Eyadéma, and the subsequent rigged presidential elections of April 2005. The EU played a major role in providing technical assistance, finance and election monitoring and was the source of most of the €18.3 m that the international donor community granted to co-finance total election expenses of €25 m. During the canvassing (28 September and 12 October 2007) all parties were able to act without encountering grave security problems. Even Gilchrist Olympio, who nearly died during the 1992 election campaign in an ambush laid by pro-Eyadéma soldiers, could freely address rallies, including in RPT strongholds. Thus, the legislative election of 14 October 2007 was probably the fairest and most peaceful in Togo's history. The massive turnout of voters (85%) pointed to a desire to take part, although a

remarkably high percentage (about 7%) of votes was annulled. Certainly there were still considerable shortcomings, such as vote buying, distribution of fake election cards, wilful annulment of votes, mostly to the detriment of UFC, as well as tampering with ballot boxes, notably in UFC's southern strongholds. However, these deficiencies did not affect the overall result. Judged by the distribution of votes, the two major parties, RPT and UFC, were very close, with 39.4% and 37% of valid votes respectively. The 'Comité d'Action pour le Renouveau' (CAR), led by veteran opposition leader and former prime minister Yawovi Agboyibo, trailed third with 8.2%. Other parties lagged far behind.

Yet, in view of the geographical bias in the electoral system, inherited from decades of autocratic rule, the RPT still won an absolute majority, with 50 of the 81 parliamentary seats, against 27 for the UFC and four for the CAR. The system discriminated against the densely populated constituencies and urban areas of the south – both opposition strongholds. Delimitation of constituency boundaries thus favoured the ruling party and reinforced the longstanding divide between northerners and southerners. The EU, which had played a major role in providing technical assistance, finance and election monitoring, requested revision of the delimitation of the constituency boundaries well in advance of the crucial presidential elections of 2010.

Nevertheless, the parties accepted the results and the UFC gained representation in parliament for the first time since the abortive democratic renewal 15 years earlier. However, it soon became clear that the head of state was not inclined to make major concessions which could endanger the power of the Gnassingbé Clan. Notwithstanding, the rivalry inside the ruling class between the 'modernisers' and stubborn traditionalist hardliners, personified by the fraternal strife between the head of state Faure and his junior half-brother and former Defense Minister

Kpatcha Gnassingbé, who had been dismissed from the new cabinet formed in December 2007, continued.

Nevertheless, the formal legitimization of democratic transition by free legislative elections in October 2007 was honoured by the international donor community. Generous aid and debt relief helped the ailing economy to recover. However, the litmus test for the sustainability of the transition process will be the presidential elections of 2010, the only process capable of correcting the remaining democratic deficit bequeathed by the coup by the ruling powers in 2005.

In the following sub-chapters I shall analyze the political background of the crucial 2005 presidential elections in Togo, against the long history of political repression in this country, which was renowned up to the end of the 1980s for its prosperity, and often labeled the Switzerland of Africa. A discussion of Togo's failed democratization and its impact on economic performance, including its aftermath for the poorest sections of the country will be followed by a summary of lessons learned. An outlook of the prospects for democratic renewal and economic consolidation will conclude the chapter.

## **Background**

The history of independent Togo is a showcase of the unholy alliance of misguided post-colonial Africa policy and the quest of African autocrats for unlimited personal power. The murder of the first president of the newly independent Togo, Sylvanus Olympio, on 13 January 1963 by a group of Togolese veterans of the French colonial army, led by Sergeant Etienne Gnassingbé (later called Eyadéma) and tolerated, if not instigated, by the former French colonial power,

opened up a Pandora's box (Toulabor 1986; Decalo 1987; Cornevin 1988; Kohnert 2005; Koffi 1998). It was the first violent coup in the history of independent sub-Saharan Africa. Although unanimously condemned by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in the beginning, the condemnation by African statesmen soon turned back to a state of acceptance and/or non-acknowledgement. Military coups, often backed by Cold War politics of Western powers, became a familiar solution of political contest in Africa up to date. The autocratic rule of Eyadéma, formally installed in 1967, was supported by major donors because of its unwavering backing of Western positions in East-West cleavages, like the Hallstein Doctrine, meant to prevent international recognition of East Germany. Over decades Togo was put on the drip of development aid, which represented 40% to 82% of real GDI.<sup>2</sup>

Although Togo was often labeled euphemistically up to the end of the 1980s the "Switzerland of Africa" Eyadéma's economic policy was neither development-oriented nor aiming at pro-poor growth. Nevertheless, Togo gained relative prosperity up to the early 1980s because of its role as a transit-economy for neighboring countries. This included not only landlocked Sahel-countries like Burkina Faso or Niger, but also Ghana, subdued by a severe economic crisis, as well as Nigeria which followed an import-substitution policy. Therefore, the effective demand for consumer goods, which could not be satisfied on the markets of Accra or Lagos, was redirected to the informal market networks at Lomé. The economic decline of the country, reinforced by growing political repression, started already about 1985 and continued up to date. Most Togolese citizens of today are poorer than they were twenty years ago (WB 1996; Lejeal/Agbessi 2004:2332-36).

Eyadéma's despotism was based on three pillars: First, an army (*Forces Armées Togolaises*, FAT), organized like a Praetorian guard, as well as security services and pro-

Eyadéma militias, dominated by members of the ethnic group of the president (Kabiyè). In 1991, for the first time ever, detailed data on the army was published during the hearings of the National Conference. They show that officers and troops belonged overwhelmingly to the Kabiyè; six of the officers were even from Pya, the home village of Eyadéma (nearby the provincial capital Kara, the headquarters of the Gnassingbé-clan), one of the reasons why the army was nicknamed in public as an “army of cousins” (Toulabor 2005). The military was systematically upgraded with foreign assistance, notably of France, within the framework of secret pacts of mutual assistance. In the reconstruction period, following the murder of Sylvanus Olympio (1963-67), Togo’s military expenditure topped the list of all African states, and still in 1991 it counted – per capita - among the largest armies of the world. Ethnic instrumentalization of the army and security services and the militarization of key-positions in the economy did not stop with mounting criticism of international donors since 1993. Quite to the contrary, Eyadéma promoted again four ‘*nordistes*’ to the rank of brigadiers in 1998, other high ranking pro-Eyadéma officers were promoted to key positions in the administration, including parastatals. Nevertheless, the army was no homogenous block, as the social and political differentiation between rank and file, between ‘*nordistes*’ and ‘*sudistes*’ showed, which also explained their differentiated sympathy for the democratization movement.

The second pillar was a centralized neo-patrimonial network of political and economic power, dominated by ethnicity and politics of xenophobia.<sup>3</sup> The third was the instrumentalization of African occult belief systems for political means (Kohnert 2005; 1998; Toulabor 1999; 1986; Ellis 1993). The latter was crucial, although much neglected in literature, and by no means restricted to the person of Eyadéma nor to the ideological underpinning and legitimization of the worldly power of the head of state. Public hearings and testimonies during the National

Conference of 1991 revealed the fabric of a well-structured system of occult despotism, including political motivated witch-hunts and ritual murder, on nearly all levels of public administration from the top, down to the level of simple district heads (Ellis 1993:472; Dovi 1992:14). It even did not stop short of accusing political dissidents from Eyadéma's own ethnic Kabyè (Kabre) group or his own extended family.<sup>4</sup> The informal rule of traditional chiefs was adapted to the needs of despotism by the politics of 'authenticity', i.e. the reference to (re-invented) traditional rules, and by the forced 'alignment' of chiefs in the National Confederation of traditional rulers of Togo (*L'Union Nationale des Chefs Traditionnels du Togo*, UNCTT) created in August 1969 (Decalo 1996). Autocratic rule was already formally legitimated by the introduction of a one-party state of the RPT in 1969, and ten years later consolidated by a redefinition of the constitution according to the requirements of one-party rule in 1979.

The 'second wind of change' in Africa strengthened political opposition in Togo, which called for democratic transition. Following the example of neighboring Benin, (discussed by Hounnikpo in chapter one of this volume and Hounnikpo 2001) representatives of major politically relevant social groups instituted a Sovereign National Conference in Lomé in July 1991, thereby encouraging a heated public debate about the nature of the Eyadéma regime (Seely 2005; Iwata 2000; Ellis 1993; Nwajiaku 1994; Heilbrunn 1993; 1996). It condemned the human rights violations of the Eyadéma regime and decided upon the repeal of much of the president's power, including the installation of a transitory government with Kokou Koffigoh, leader of the former Togolese Human Rights League (LTDH) as prime minister. A military coup of Eyadéma against the new transitional government (3 December 1991) and the brutal repression of anti-government demonstrations as well as political persecution of opponents in the following two years triggered a hitherto unknown wave of politically motivated migration of some 350.000



refugees to the neighboring countries of Benin and Ghana. Hideously rigged presidential elections in 1993 and 1998, as well as fraudulent parliamentary elections of 1994, 1999, and 2002, all strongly criticized by international election monitors, resulted in a consolidation of the power of the Eyadéma fiefdom. Since February 1993 all major donors suspended their aid programs with the Togolese government because of its gross human rights abuses. But then controversial discussions within the EU, notably the hardly veiled pro-Eyadéma stand of Paris, which wanted to safeguard its special relations with its former colony, prevented common decisions. Particularly the German and British governments pushed for more vigorous sanctions against Lomé, including a temporary removal of the EU's preferential trade regime within the framework of the Lomé IV and Cotonou agreement (CountryWatch 2002:17).

### **Run-up to the 2005 Presidential Election**

With the sudden death of president Eyadéma in February 2005, Togo became a test case for the viability of indigenous democratization efforts of African states under the newly instituted NEPAD regime (New Partnership for Africa's Development; including its key element, the African Peer Review Mechanism, APRM) of the African Union, adopted in July 2001 (Melber 2006a; Kanbur 2004; Abrahamsen 2004). However, the outcome of this test was rather disappointing. Although the longest-serving dictator of Africa had died, the despotic power structure of the Eyadéma Gnassingbé clan, deeply engrained in the political and social fabric of the society, was very much alive, and it acted like feudal European kingmakers.

Immediately after the death of the head of state, borders and radio stations were closed and demonstrations banned. Parliamentary President Fambaré Natchaba Ouattara, who hurried

back from a visit to Paris to take over the interim presidency, as stipulated by the constitution, was barred from entering the country. Backed by the army, the undemocratically elected parliament composed mainly of members of the ruling party (RPT), which held all but two of the parliamentary seats, deposed Natchaba. On 6 February 2005, it enthroned one of the sons of late Eyadéma, Faure Gnassingbé as his successor until the end of the mandate of the deceased in 2008, in blatant breach of relevant provisions of the constitution. The designated heir of his father had been first elected into parliament in 2002. At that time he was put in charge of the strategic important portfolio of the Ministry of Equipment, Mines, Post, and Telecommunications, which allowed him control of the phosphate mines, a major foreign exchange earner and a secret 'war chest' of the Eyadéma clan. Constitutional stipulations, demanding new elections within 60 days after the death of the president, were disregarded by the parliament as well under the pretext to prevent a political power vacuum. This flagrant violation of the constitution reminded one of another 'constitutional coup' of the Eyadéma regime in December 2002, the first since the advent of 'democratic renewal' in West Africa. At that time the three-quarter majority of the RPT in parliament had already voted for a change of the constitution in order to guarantee the continuity of the political power of the Eyadéma clan in three crucial domains. First, it changed article 59 of the constitution, which now allowed for a third term of office of the president. Second, it revised article 62, which in its new version reduced the minimum age of presidential candidates from 45 to 35 years, to allow the candidature of Faure Gnassingbé, the young heir to the throne of his father. Third, it effectively excluded the major opposition candidate, Gilchrist Olympio, the charismatic leader of the major opposition party 'Union des Forces du Changement' (UFC) from the electoral process, by stipulating that a precondition for the candidacy would be at least one year residence in Togo

before the elections. But Gilchrist Olympio, son of the murdered first Togolese head of state, Sylvanus Olympio, had been driven into political exile by various attempts on his life during previous electoral campaigns, notably in May 1992, when he was ambushed in nearby Soudou in the north of the country, presumably by a military unit led by Ernest Gnassingbé, eldest son of Eyadéma. Whereas four of Olympio's entourage died, he himself narrowly escaped, seriously wounded at the Benin border.

At first, the opposition as well as African peers of the Togolese head of state were unanimous in rejecting this second 'constitutional coup' of the Gnassingbé regime. Violent civil unrest in Lomé and other provincial capitals was accompanied by threats with sanctions by the international donor community, the ECOWAS and the AU. Both organizations imposed sanctions on Togo. The AU chairman, the former Malian president Alpha Oumar Konaré, branded the new rulers in Lomé as a 'new type of mercenaries called constitutionalists' who would never consent to free elections if remaining in power. The then-Nigerian head of state, Olusegun Obasanjo, even threatened military intervention. On February 25, Faure Gnassingbé yielded under the combined pressure of internal and external opposition. He resigned as head of state, and the parliament designated one of the loyalists of the RPT, the deputy speaker of the parliament, Abass Bonfoh, as new interim president.

Although the illegal constitutional changes of February were revised, those of the constitutional coup of December 2002 remained, thus excluding again the major contender of the power base of the Gnassingbés. Early presidential elections were set for April 24. An extraordinary party congress of the RPT voted unanimously for Faure Gnassingbé as its leader and candidate for the upcoming presidential election. His major contender Olympio being barred from candidacy, the opposition was at pains to agree upon a new candidate. The six major

opposition parties, disparagingly labeled 'radical opposition' by the ruling powers, agreed again on the 74 year old vice-president of the UFC, Emmanuel Bob Akintani as their common candidate for the presidential race, as during the fraudulent 2003 presidential elections. Political repression and civil unrest, instigated mainly by newly created armed militia in favor of the ruling party, created a climate of countrywide despair and distrust. This was even deplored by the established Christian churches. Guided by Archbishop Philippe Fanoko Kpodzro, they demonstrated once more their engagement for peaceful conflict resolution, like in the violent transition period of the early 1990s. In a public march of priests in full ordinate to the presidency they demanded to halt the violent conflicts, which had already resulted in the loss of many lives. In addition they appealed to end the instrumentalization of ethnicity and xenophobia for political ends and demanded the rescheduling of the election, because major preconditions of free and fair elections (like security and the revision of the heavily biased electoral list) could not be guaranteed in the short pre-election period. The Togolese Bar Association and national as well as international human rights NGOs supported these demands. These fell however on deaf ears, both on the side of the government and the ECOWAS, which had offered to supervise the electoral process. In view of growing violent conflicts all over West Africa the latter was mainly interested in political stability. Robust guarantees for free and fair elections, as demanded by the opposition with reference to the broken promises of the past, including military safeguards for the protection of voters, provided by international security forces, were denied by the ECOWAS or other relevant international bodies. The interim government, which had demonstrated already its partial stand during the run-up to the elections, and its so-called 'independent' national electoral commission (CENI), were commissioned with the organization of the elections, including the highly contested revision of the electoral roles. The leaders of the so-called 'radical

opposition', Gilchrist Olympio (UFC), Yawovi Agboyibo (*Comité d'Action pour le Renouveau*, CAR), Léopold Gnininvi (*Convention des Peuples Africaines*, CDPA), Tchessa Abi (*Pacte Socialiste pour le Renouveau*, PSR), Nagandja Kambatib (*Développement Intégral*, ADDI) and Antoine Folly (*Union des Démocrates Socialistes du Togo*, UDS-Togo) were barred from participating in the election organization by the interim government. They formed an electoral alliance and demanded (in-vain) from the government and the ECOWAS a postponement of the election date in order to create the preconditions for fair and free elections, notably an unbiased electoral role and viable election cards.

Three days before the polling day even Interior Minister François Boko from the northern Togo's Kabiyé ethnic group, a former ally of Eyadéma, pleaded without avail for a postponement. In view of the grossly flawed electoral preparations, including a highly contested electoral list, he recommended the appointment of a prime minister of a transitional government which would rule the country for one to two years while a new constitution was drawn up. Otherwise Togo was heading for a "suicidal electoral process", given the high levels of pre-electoral bloody confrontations threatening to escalate into a veritable civil war. The reaction of the interim government was as rapid as predictable. Boko was deposed with immediate effect, and had to apply for political asylum with the German embassy in view of threats against his life. Shortly afterwards the German Cultural Institute in Lomé (Goethe-Institute) got torched by unknown forces as a kind of advance warning, a scene very similar to Yahya Jammeh's Gambia that Saine discussed in chapter fifteen of this volume.

### *Political campaigning*

Campaigning and the elections itself, which took place on 24 April 2005 were marred by blatant irregularities and excesses of violence, notably in urban centers and in the South, like stuffing of ballot boxes on a large scale, theft of ballot boxes in opposition headquarters by military personnel, and some 700 polling stations destroyed. Parallel structures of the opposition and civic rights groups, like the National Council for Election Supervision (CONEL), created already during the 2003 presidential elections to counteract electoral fraud on all levels of public vote counting, were obstructed or destroyed. Armed raids of the headquarters of the opposition, seizure of computers meant to collate and check the poll results, a nationwide shutting down of telecommunication and internet gateways, including obstruction of the phone, fax and mobile phone net during the decisive three days (including polling day), were accompanied by a biased pro-government media policy. On April 26 the supposedly Independent National Election Commission (CENI) announced the preliminary results and the victory of Faure Gnassingbé with a doubtful 60% of votes. Thereupon, angry supporters of the opposition took to the streets and confronted the security forces and pro-government militia by acts of counter violence.

### ***Election results***

On June 3 the Constitutional Court in Lomé, dominated by Eyadéma-followers, which had already given their blessing for the questionable constitutional revisions of the past and who were known for their biased statements about foregoing elections, confirmed the official election results reported by the CENI: they accorded 60.1% of votes for the incumbent, and 38.3% for the major opposition candidate Bob Akitani; they official acknowledged the number of registered voters was 3,599,306, and voter turnout 2,288,279 or 63,6% (invalid votes: 88,005). Just one day

later Faure Gnassingbé was sworn in as new president. His occult initiation was effected secretly already before in Kara, the seat of the Gnassingbé family, to honor the tradition of occult politics of the father.

However, calculations of the opposition and of independent international NGOs, which had followed up the voting process by its own monitoring system, revealed a completely different result. According to extrapolations by the French NGO *Survie France*, the candidate Akitani won the election with 72%, against 26% for his adversary, even if one would consider only part of electoral cheating committed by pro-Eyadéma forces. The ‘radical opposition’ protested in vain against the ‘stolen elections,’ and Akitani declared himself the true president on 27 April 2005.

The ECOWAS, which nominated 120 of the total of 230 accredited election observers meant to supervise the elections, maintained the general creditability of the election results, although it admitted some abnormalities and incidences,<sup>5</sup> a position, which was shared immediately by the French government. Most of the election observers, who arrived the day before polling and left before the counting was finished, confirmed uncritically the validity of the count and the general credibility of the electoral process. Diplomatic observers of the EU as well as international NGOs, like the *Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme* (FIDH), doubted the official results. A confidential report of four high ranking EU diplomats launched to the public on 6 June 2005 listed the following indicators of massive electoral fraud: inflated number of registered voters by 34% or 900,000 ghost voters on the ‘revised’ electoral list,<sup>6</sup> most of them in RPT strongholds, whereas the opposition complained that many of their members were denied registration.<sup>7</sup> Another creditability gap existed in the official statistics

concerning the rate of electoral participation, reported with 80% to 90% in the (pro-Eyadéma) North, and 35% in the opposition strongholds.

### ***Post-election issues***

According to a report of the Togolese Human Rights Organization '*Ligue Togolaise de Droit de l'Homme*' (LTDH), published on May 13, excesses of violence since the passing of Eyadéma, notably during the electoral process, resulted in more than 800 death and 4,500 injured. Although the frontiers to the neighboring Ghana and Benin remained closed from April 22 to 6 May 2005, continuing political persecution triggered a mass exodus of political refugees. The UNHCR counted more than 34,000 refugees in Benin and Ghana until end of May 2005.

Mediation efforts of the AU and ECOWAS to solve the post-election crisis by proposing a government of national unity started immediately after the elections. But they failed, due to the uncompromising attitude of Faure Gnassingbé, who acted from a position of strength and, although formally agreeing on limited power sharing, insisted on his newly gained legitimacy as elected head of state. AU president and Nigerian leader Olusegun Obasanjo, who brokered two meetings between Gnassingbé and his contender, Gilchrist Olympio, invited the bitterly divided parties to the Nigerian capital Abuja for reconciliation talks. But neither he nor the acting head of ECOWAS, Niger's president Mamadou Tandja, succeeded in resolving the dangerous stalemate between the political adversaries.

Instead, Gnassingbé continued successfully the policy of divide and rule of his father in splitting the opposition. He convinced the 67 year old ambitious veteran politician Edem Kodjo to act as Prime Minister of a new 30 member cabinet in May 2005. Since the early 1990s the former economist, founding member of the RPT and secretary general of the OAU, was the



leader of a small ‘moderate’ opposition party named ‘*Convergence Patriotique Panafricaine*’ (CPP). Thus Faure copied the same procedure, which his father already had employed successfully in 1994, when Kodjo entered the government of the late Eyadéma as Prime Minister, sidelining his stronger rivals in the opposition coalition against established parliamentary procedures, which reserved the seat of the prime minister for representatives of the largest opposition party.

However, the strategic posts in the new government, labeled government of ‘national coalition,’ remained in the hands of relatives and hardline loyalists of the Gnassingbé clan. Kpatcha Gnassingbé, elder half-brother of the head of state, was appointed defense minister, assisted by his younger brother, Rock Gnassingbé, chief of an elite unit of the army. A close friend of the family, a Kabiyé from Kara as well, Colonel Pitalouna-Ani Laokpessi, commander of the paramilitary gendarmerie in the 1990s, frequently accused by the opposition of torturing political prisoners, became Security Minister. Payadowa Boukpessi, former minister for Telecommunication in the Eyadéma government, also close to the Gnassingbés, was appointed Minister of the Economy, Finance, and Privatization. The position of Minister of Telecommunications was given to another friend of Faure, Koukouvi Dogbé, assisted by the young brother of the president, May Gnassingbé (25 years), as Deputy Director General of ‘*Togotélécom*’. Apart from Zarifou Ayéva, leader of the small opposition party ‘*Parti pour la Démocratie et le Renouveau*’ (PDR), who was rewarded with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, only four members of the opposition could be convinced to enter minor cabinet posts. Thus the government of stalwarts of the RPT and a handful of opposition defectors consolidated the power base of the Gnassingbé regime, which continued to rule the country like its personal fiefdom to the detriment of national reconciliation. The scope of maneuver of Kodjo’s cabinet became

further restricted by an informal ‘kitchen cabinet’ of the president, composed of his defense minister and senior brother Kpatcha, labeled ‘vice president’ by the population, his cabinet director Pascal Bodjona, former leader of the militant pro-government student movement HACAME, later appointed ambassador in Washington by Eyadéma, and two powerful personal counselors, Pitang Tchalla, former Minister of Communication under Eyadéma, and the opaque French lawyer Charles Debbasch, wanted by an international warrant of the French justice, who had already advised Eyadéma in the previous years in staging his constitutional coup.

Once the grip on power was assured, the government tried to come to terms with the opposition, as this was one of the preconditions of resuming EU aid, which insisted on the 22 commitments made by the Eyadéma government to the EU in April 2004 in order to promote democratization. In July Gnassingbé and Olympio held talks under the auspices of the ‘Sant’Egidio’ Community in Rome and pledged to end violence, to secure the return of the refugees and to free political prisoners. A follow-up meeting was held in Rome in November to evaluate the implementation of the forgoing recommendations. One week later the head of state started a new phase of national dialogue, including representatives of the three major parties of the ‘radical opposition’ (UFC, CAR, PDR), to agree upon a framework for early local and parliamentary elections and a revised electoral code. Although the president showed formal signs of flexibility, e.g. in offering talks with or without external mediators at a place even outside of the country, sustainable reconciliation was unlikely in foreseeable future. Whereas the major opposition parties called for a repetition of the rigged presidential election as well as a return to the 1992 constitution and to the electoral code of 2000, the RPT majority in parliament persevered the amendments of the 2002 ‘constitutional coup’ and of the code, as these favored

the ruling party and of course both the government and the parliament underlined the legitimacy of the elected president.

The Defense Minister Kpatcha Gnassingbé started at the end of August to replace a number of army commanders, following recommendations of the ‘Sant’Egidio’ dialogue, which proposed to reorganize the military in order to render it more accountable. Whether these measures would enhance accountability was open to question, as he installed the key positions of the army, overwhelmingly composed of *Kabiyé* (about 7,000 of a total of 13,000), again with similar loyalists; the majority of the commanders of the operational units were born in Pya. This tradition was preserved with the nomination of Béréna Gnankoudè as chief of the general staff of the army, which commanded also elite corps directed by other brothers of the Gnassingbés. The brother-in-law of the president, Félix Abalo Kadanga, became commander of the Rapid Intervention Force (FIR); according to a confidential UN-report he was implicated in several atrocities committed during the electoral process earlier in this year. The new commander of the presidential guard (RCGP, the renowned *Bérets verts*, i.e. ‘green berets’), Bali Wiyao, originated equally from Pya. The Kabiyé Lemou Tchalo replaced Ernest Gnassingbé, the eldest son of Eyadéma, who retired because of chronic illness, as chief of the parachutist regiment (RPC, ‘red berets’) of Kara, notorious for its human rights violations in the past. Thus, the army, together with reinforced or newly formed paramilitary militias (originating mostly from student organizations like the HACAME) and private policing units and security firms (including the Security Advisory and Services, SAS-Togo, owned by the notorious French businessman and arms dealer Robert Montoya, former member of an anti-terrorist unit of the Elysée, Paris), both closely interwoven with the army structure, continued to be the major pillars of power of the Gnassingbé clan.

Although civic unrest died down in the second half of the year, and 460 political prisoners were freed in early November, the political climate remained tense. Despite repeated assurances of the government that the refugees could return without being persecuted or victimized, the number of people fleeing Togo in the aftermath of election violence still increased up to August, when the UNHCR counted 24,500 refugees in Benin and 15,500 in Ghana. The World Food Program (WFP, Rome) called on July 15 for urgent help for over 66,500 people forced from their homes, including 18,500 displaced, scattered over local host communities in Benin and Ghana and 10,000 internal refugees. The majority of refugees were young men from the south, the region held to be the heartland of the opposition. While some of them went home during the following month, still more than 19,000 preferred to live in the refugee camps of Benin (10,960 in Come and Agame camps and 8,130 in Cotonou) at the end of the year, in fear of their safety at home. In the Ghanaian Krisan refugee camp conditions deteriorated because of seeming lack of protection against Togolese *agents-provocateurs* or spies, in view of the alleged ambiguous attitude of the Ghanaian security forces and of the government in Accra, accused of collaboration with Lomé. This caused nearly half of the population, about 800 refugees mostly from Togo, to leave the camp in November for Elubo, further west on the Ivorian border. Between 300 and 500 of these 'double refugees', including families with young children, hid in groups of 60 or 70 in the wild swamplands surrounding the Krishan camp still in December 2005 in fear of persecution.

Following up accusations of grave human rights violations in the aftermath of the *coup d'état* and the fraudulent electoral process, first made by the LTDH in collaboration with the '*Fédération Internationale des Droits de l'Homme*' (FIDH, Paris) in May, other international human rights bodies were at least as critical. Based on numerous eye-witness reports, collected in

the refugee camps of Benin, *Amnesty International* published in July 2005 a scathing critique of atrocities and impunity of their perpetrators, condoned by the new Gnassingbé regime in its report entitled “Togo – will history repeat itself?”. The report compared the situation with the brutal repression during the presidential elections of 1998, and underlined the special responsibility of Paris, because of its long-standing ties of military aid and cooperation with Lomé. Following appeals of the AU and the international donor community the UN also dispatched a team of investigators to probe allegations of widespread killings, torture, abductions and political repression. In its report released in August 2005, the UN estimated that more than 400 people had been killed during the electoral violence, putting most of the blame on the security forces and pro-government militia, instigated by the military to act with outmost brutality against suspected opponents and providing state-owned vehicles for transport of armed militia. The cutting of telephone lines made it impossible for the victims to call for help. But also opposition activists were severely blamed for their “strategy of conquering power by deliberate violence” disregarding the disastrous consequences. The FIDH followed with its own report in November, deploring once again the impunity of perpetrators, the lack of human rights commitment of the new regime in general and of the judicial system in particular. Apparently, the much-awaited report of the “independent” National Special Commission of Inquiry (CNSEI), set up in May as the official Togolese response to the growing critique of the regime, chaired by former Prime Minister Joseph Koffigoh did not meet the expectations of the international community. Published in November after more than a four-months-long inquiry, it pretended that only 154 people were killed and 654 hurt, but it castigated the active complicity of the RPT with the perpetrators of excessive violence and called on the government to charge and try the guilty; a list of suspects was handed over to the government.

In the following year the inter-Togolese dialogue resumed, sponsored by the EU to overcome the political crisis. The talks constituted one of the preconditions for continuing development cooperation with the EU and other major donors, suspended in 1993. Yawovi Agboyibo, leader of the opposition party 'Comité d'Action pour le Renouveau' (CAR), was on April 22 elected as chairman of the resumed dialogue, in which all major political parties as well as delegates from two women's organizations (traditionally in favor of Eyadéma) were meant to participate. However, two of the largest opposition parties, the 'Union des Forces du Changement' (UFC) led by Gilchrist Olympio and the 'Convention des Peuples Africains' (CDPA), presided over by Léopold Gnininvi, boycotted the reopening of the dialogue because they had vainly demanded the presence of an impartial foreign mediator, as already conceded by the president in 2005. The major aim of the negotiations was the preparation for early legislative elections. To guarantee an impartial poll, additional items placed on the agenda were: the revision of the electoral code, the voters' register and the constitution, the reorganization of the independent electoral commission ('Commission Électorale Nationale Indépendante' – CENI), the constitutional court and the army, all biased in favor of the ruling 'Rassemblement du Peuple Togolais' (RPT) party and the Gnassingbé clan, and last but not least, an end to impunity for perpetrators of violence and politically motivated killings.

The deadlock between the government and opposition was finally broken by the mediation of President Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso, a dictator who used similar strategies to keep himself in power. After a ten-day meeting in Ouagadougou, all parties signed a comprehensive political agreement on 20 August 2006. This "Ouagadougou accord" provided for a transitional government of national unity and the organization of early free and fair parliamentary elections by a truly independent CENI before the October 2007 elections

mentioned above, i.e., before the mandate of parliament, based on an undemocratic election in 2002 that had been boycotted by the opposition, ran out. It remained unclear, however, whether the agreement on credible legislative elections would also apply to the next presidential elections. This would have been of special importance to the UFC in view of another key part of the Ouagadougou accord, namely the abolition of the rigid residence requirement and of the exclusion of dual nationality for eligible candidates, imposed in the election law and the constitutional amendments of December 2002 in order to prevent the election of Gilchrist Olympio as president.

The deal opened the way for the formation of a new transitional government of national reconciliation headed by Yawovi Agboyibo, the veteran leader of CAR, the second largest opposition party. His appointment as prime minister by the head of state in September 2006 was strongly contested by the UFC, which believed it had the rightful claim to the post, being the largest opposition party. Again, Faure Gnassingbé had fallen back on the tactics of his father, who had split the opposition with a similar trick in 1994 when, in violation of the parliamentary rules, he had nominated Edem Kodjo, head of a minority opposition party, as prime minister, instead of Agboyibo, the leader of what was then the largest opposition party, CAR. Agboyibo now replaced Kodjo, who had been reappointed as head of the first nominal government of national unity (boycotted by the major opposition parties) in June 2005. The national press lauded Agboyibo's appointment as a positive measure to seal the Ouagadougou deal.

The new transitional government, nominated by the prime minister on 20 September 2006, comprised 39 members (five more than the old cabinet), with representatives of all major players in the Ouagadougou accord, apart from the UFC, which again refused to take part, although it participated in the new CENI set up in October. However, the most powerful

portfolios remained in the hands of the RPT and the Gnassingbé clan. Kpatcha Gnassingbé, elder half-brother of the head of state and head of the militia that had contributed to the bloody conflicts of April 2005, was appointed Defense Minister. Col. Atcha Titikpina (RPT), former head of the presidential guard (the so-called “Green Berets”) and equally accused of masterminding the atrocities of April 2005, became Minister of Security. Payadowa Boukpassi (RPT) remained Finance Minister and Kokouvi Dogbé (RPT) Minister of Telecommunications. The latter was of particular importance in the organization and monitoring of the forthcoming elections, as shown by the crucial role of telecommunications in rigging the last presidential elections of 2005. To guard his rear, the head of state formed a sort of parallel cabinet directed by Pascal Bodjona (RPT), former Togolese ambassador in Washington. Other members were the former Minister of Security and RPT hardliner, Col. Pitalouna-Ani Laokpassi, who was compensated for the loss of his portfolio by his appointment on December 16 as special advisor for security at the presidency, where he rejoined other old hands like Edem Kodjo, appointed as minister of state at the presidency, and former Minister of Foreign Affairs Kokou Tozoun, promoted to the post of rapporteur of CENI, a position of some strategic importance in view of the upcoming elections.

The most important, yet unresolved point of the Ouagadougou accord remained the reform of the army, at the heart of the empire around the Gnassingbé clan. In view of its clouded image, the army chief, General Zakary Nandja, on August 28 assured both the head of state and the international community that he backed the Ouagadougou accord and would abstain from interfering in the political arena. Nothing was less certain, however. Apparently, there was a fragile equilibrium between different factions within the Gnassingbé family and among competing clans in the army, all of them jealously guarding their prerogatives. It remained to be



seen whether the head of state had sufficient authority and determination to effect the required changes. In April, the draft code of conduct for the armed forces and security services of West African states, a joint project of ECOWAS and the Center for the Control of the Armed Forces in Geneva, was approved during a meeting in Lomé, serving as a reminder to the army about its supposed new role.

The human rights situation remained precarious up to early 2007. According to UNHCR, up until October 2006 less than half the 40,000 refugees who had fled the post-electoral violence and persecution in 2005 had voluntarily returned or been repatriated from neighboring Benin and Ghana. A total of 16,500 remained in exile, fearing political reprisal. In spring 2006, the eastern and Volta regions of Ghana were “invaded” by a second wave of migrants. Despite assurances from the Togolese government, several returning refugees had been arrested or harassed and were forced to flee a second time, now in the company of additional relatives. They remained in the transit and refugee camps of Abotase, Digya and Manchere or scattered across 114 villages in the Volta region, where they faced acute shortages of food, water and shelter. In December 2006, the EU granted Togo €14.6 m to assist in the strengthening of reception and reintegration facilities.

## **Democratization and economic performance**

### ***Economic performance and general well-being***

Economic performance in the aftermath of the political unrest of 2005 was mixed due to counteracting factors, notably the vulnerability of Togo’s economy to external shocks in general and to the side effects of the continuing Ivorian crisis in particular. The tertiary sector grew by

about 7%, probably as a side effect of the trade diversion from Abidjan to the port of Lomé. However, in general, economic growth still lagged behind regional averages, both of the UEMOA (WEAMU) and total Sub-Saharan Africa. On average real per capita GDP in Togo declined by almost 1% per year since 1990 (cf. IMF 2007:4). Its human development index worsened as well in the past decade. In 2005, the government failed again to meet major UEMOA convergence criteria, e.g. concerning public debt and the non-accumulation of debt arrears. In view of the continuing political crisis and the subsequent suspension of development cooperation of major donors, fundamental changes in the foreseeable future were unlikely. The remedy, i.e. access to the HIPC initiative for heavily indebted poor countries, for which Togo would be eligible in principle, was linked with the fulfillment of the political conditions for aid, imposed by the EU and other donors.

Export performance was generally hampered by a real effective exchange rate appreciation of the Franc CFA (pegged to the Euro), due to an overvaluation of the CFA *vis à vis* the US dollar of over 35% since 2000, as well as terms of trade deterioration (cf. IMF 2007:4). Provisions for the key foreign currency earning sectors deteriorated with a sharp decline in cotton and phosphate exports (up to -50% for cotton and -21.5% for phosphate in the first 10 months of 2005). This was due to lack of incentives for cotton farmers caused by delays in payment during the past two seasons on the one hand, and the withdrawal of private management from the joint venture fertilizer production (IFG-Togo), linked to differences between the government and the foreign private managers on the misappropriation of funds two years ago, on the other.

In addition, the problem of unsustainable public debt, caused by decades of corrupt and inefficient governance, continued and was all the more aggravated by the cutoff of donor

support. Total public debt was almost 115% of GDP in 2005, a quarter of which was domestic (IMF 2007:5). The state-owned banking sector suffered from the highest share of non-performing loans (NPLs) in the UEMOA, reflecting dubious direct lending to the phosphate and cotton sector in the past (IMF 2007:6). Public sector salary arrears persisted and, with it, strike threats by Togo's major labor union, the '*Intersyndical des Travailleurs de Togo*' (ISTT) during the whole year of 2006. To mitigate labor unrest, parliament adopted a new labor code in December. Its stipulations offered, at least formally, greater protection and better employment conditions, including a 40-hour week and equal pay for equal work. The stock of external debt increased to US \$1.8 billion at the end of 2006, overwhelmingly due to the accumulation of repayment arrears (some \$ 100 million).

In September 2005 Togo was rated as the seventh most strenuous nation of 155 countries worldwide to do business in, according to the "Doing Business in 2006" report of the World Bank. As in the case of five other members of UEMOA, which equally ranked at the bottom 11, its political and administrative operating environment constituted a barrier to the growth of private direct investment and private sector activities. In a similar vein, Togo was for the first time ever included in the annual Corruption Perception Index of the international NGO Transparency International one year later, and being ranked the third most corrupt UEMOA state, at the bottom end (rank 130) of 163 countries worldwide.

Deteriorating public finance and wrong political priorities eroded the financial base of public health service and education even further (IMF 2007:29). The decline of the education system had started already in the 1980s. Whereas Togo could boast one of the highest rates of primary school enrolment up to 1980 with 72%, things changed when the public sector stopped to guarantee the employment of the students after 1981. Enrollment went down to 52% in 1984

(Lange 1987) and staggered around 60% in 1994 (WB 1996). In addition there existed a significant and persistent gender difference.

The economic decline, mainly caused by severe and enduring governance problems, affected not only opponents of the regime but also large segments of the population. Poverty has worsened in the past decades, both in depth and severity. It was most pronounced in the rural areas and in the Northern Regions, affecting over 70% of households in the Savannas and almost 60% in the Kara region (WB 1996: ii). But growing pockets of extreme poverty exist in the urban areas as well, including Lomé. Although this was not peculiar to Togo but to be observed in other African LDCs too, there existed one vulnerable group specific to Togo: displaced families, including those forcibly evicted by the government for the purpose of the creation of national parks without compensation,<sup>8</sup> as well as for the exploitation of the phosphate mines (Vo district in the South) and victims of the civic unrest in the pre-election period of the 1993 presidential elections (WB 1996).

For the dependents of the some 60,000 thousand political refugees, only reluctantly returning from neighboring countries in 2006, i.e. the elderly, women and children left behind, life became even more difficult. Still, five month after the violent electoral conflicts, many homes and property destroyed still lacked repair, there was no money to pay the school fees, and the price for maize, the major staple crops of the poor, rocketed in July because of lack of supply for local markets. Apparently there was considerable trafficking of foodstuff to neighboring drought-ridden Sahelian countries, as well as to Ghana and Gabon, where wholesalers could earn larger profits.

### *Limits and prospects for democratic consolidation*

Although the political environment has improved with the implementation of the national dialogue on reconciliation in 2006 as required by the EU, the installation of an interim prime minister and a national unity government, and most notably the free parliamentary elections on 14 October 2007, the perspectives of sustainable democratization are still rather bleak. Whether the established power elite will agree to hand over their cherished semi-feudal privileges to freely elected representatives of the people is doubtful. The international donor community will probably be satisfied with formal steps of democratization, like transparent parliamentary elections, and continue to resume aid, although it is doubtful whether this will enhance self-determination and empowerment of the people. The increasing competition with new global players, notably China and other Asian powers, for Africa's natural resources, renders the implementation of Western donor's policy of aid conditionality including 'good governance' and respect for basic human rights, increasingly illusory. Western donor countries and international aid agencies complain about the negative impact of China's and India's mounting economic and political influence on Sub-Saharan Africa. It allegedly counteracted the Western donor's development-orientated foreign and development policy by neo-mercantilist trade strategies, thereby displacing African local production and fostering other Dutch disease implications (Zafar 2007; Umbach 2007:1; Broadman 2007). But Chinese aid and foreign trade policy only honored established international norms of non-interference in internal politics. And with respect to development cooperation, Peking and New Delhi promoted Smithsonian ethics, cherished over centuries by European (colonial) governments, i.e. the growth of the wealth of nations, notwithstanding the accumulation of wealth by governing elites to the detriment of the poor.

Under these conditions, geo-political considerations and tactics of the Cold War area will be honored increasingly even by the more critical EU members like Germany. In addition, the internal opposition is still divided, and the civil society weakened by decades of resistance to the oppression. The most important to the larger share of the population will be the improvement of their economic situation and of individual well-being.

In this respect the perspectives for the Togolese state are promising. Even small countries like Togo profited from the newly gained independence in international relations, and increased bargaining power, provided by the quest of Asian super powers for African resources and emerging markets. Sub-Saharan Africa actually experienced its longest growth phase for 35 years: On average, Africa will grow with about 6% in 2007, well above the long-term trend for the fifth consecutive year. This will have spread effects to Togo as well, independently of its advances in the democratization process, although Togo still lags behind with a moderate growth of estimated 2% in 2006. But broad money supply grew already by 22% in the same year, because of a surge in remittances and trade-related capital inflows, probably due to the improved political situation (African Research Bulletin, May 16<sup>th</sup> to June 15<sup>th</sup> 2007).

The growing competition between China and Western powers, all of them keen to enlarge their resource base in Africa, was also felt in relations with Togo, notably by the shuttle diplomacy of the head of state and the confirmation of strong ties of economic cooperation between Togo and China. Faure Gnassingbé visited Beijing in January 2006. He and Chinese President Hu Jintao vowed to enhance their long-standing bilateral ties in such fields as agriculture, trade, telecommunications, and infrastructure. In April 2006, the new multimillion-dollar presidential palace in Lomé, with over 40 offices and banqueting halls and already contracted and built by the Chinese under the late President Eyadéma, was inaugurated. The

cordial relationship was confirmed by his son's attendance of the Beijing Sino-African summit on November 3-5. On July 22, Chinese Vice-President Zeng Qinghong signed a number of technical cooperation agreements in Kara, including grants and interest-free loans from the Chinese government for funding projects and a framework agreement on preferential loans for the realization of the Adjarala hydroelectric project. During the China Business Days in Lomé in November, organized by the 'Banque Ouest Africaine de Développement' (BOAD) with the help of UEMOA and the BCEAO, BOAD signed two cooperation agreements. The first on Chinese technical assistance with BOAD (approx. €1 million) and another for a credit line of €70 million between BOAD and the Chinese Exim Bank for development of infrastructure, exploitation of energy resources and construction projects in West Africa, including Togo. In August of the same year an Indian investment holding company signed an agreement with the government in Lomé for investments worth €40 m in the mining sector. In particular, this covered iron ore deposits at Bassar in the Kara region (estimated at 600 million tonnes), besides chromium ore (1 million tonnes) at Farendè (Kara) and Mont Ayito in Plateau region and manganese (13 million tonnes) at Naéga (Savannes region). The agreement would also involve the construction of a 100 km railway and development of energy and water supplies.

The EU, which had resumed development cooperation already in November 2007 after a 15 years suspension due to the so-called "democratic deficit," honoured the 'modernizing' approach of the Lomé government in March 2008. On top of €80m provided already in 2007, it granted F CFA 80.68bn (€123m) within the framework of the 10<sup>th</sup> European Development Fund (EDF) for the period 2008 to 2013, the overall aim of which was to improve governance, economic growth and poverty reduction. The good-will measures of the Lomé government were well noted by EU development Commissioner Louis Michel. He went as far as recommending

the three years rule of Faure Gnassingbé as 'good example', to be followed by other African countries, when he announced additional EU-budget aid for Togo to the tune of €15m in a national television speech of October 4. Apparently, the coup of the incumbent president and the rigged presidential elections of 2005 with its bloody aftermath of political persecution which consolidated the power of the Gnassingbé clan got lost to the EU out of overriding geo-political reasons. However, within the EU cleavages continued between Paris, pursuing its partisan politics in francophone Africa with its barely veiled sympathy for the maintenance of the status quo in Togo on the one hand, and Berlin, backed by the British government, on the other. The latter two insisted on guarantees for a level playing field for all major political forces.

The resumption of EU aid was the more important, as it was considered as a precondition for continuation of IMF negotiations on poverty reduction and growth facilities, which, in turn, would allow for seeking debt relief with the Paris Club under the HIPC scheme and the new multilateral debt relief initiative. The IMF followed suit in resuming aid in April 2008. Fiscal engagements of the government within the framework of the poverty reduction and growth facility (PRGF) program, accompanied by a credit of US \$108.4 million for the next three years, were meant to open the way for future public debt relief under the heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) and multilateral debt relief (MDRI) initiative to the tune of US \$2 billion. Togo reached decision point of the HIPC program in November, thus allowing for interim debt relief. 41 percent of the debt was due to bilateral engagements with members of the Paris Club. The latter approved in June 2008 immediate cancellation of US \$347 million, and additional \$393 million to be restructured according to Naples terms, i.e. repayment stretched over the next 40 years with a 16 years grace period. This was crucial, as just about 75 percent total external debt arrear payments of \$689 million (in 2006, almost 30% of GDP) belonged to members of the



Paris Club. The World Bank assisted by granting another \$168 million, most of it assigned for the repayment of government's arrears to the bank.

Bilateral development cooperation tuned in as well. France announced in September 2008 the doubling of its budget aid (overall €5 million in 2008) to help the successful transition to democracy and to overcome the external shocks of the global rise in food and oil prices as well as the cost of the heavy flooding in July 2008. France accorded a grant aid of about €140 million for the period 2008 to 2012 in September 2008. Joint military exercises 'Zio 2008' of several thousand troops of Togo, Benin and France in February underlined these strong links. Germany, which had resumed aid already in early December 2007 as well, documented its renewed interest by the visit of the German vice chancellor and Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier in Lomé for discussions with the head of state as well as opposition leaders (11.2.08). He was accompanied by a delegation of about 60 German businessmen and journalists and reopened the Goethe Institute, which was burnt down during the 2005 political upheaval, shortly after the German embassy had granted asylum to the then interior minister François Boko, who had in vain cautioned against large scale election rigging and the ensuing bloody confrontations. This was the first high ranking German visit since 1993. A delegation of German parliamentarians followed suit in mid November for the celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the work of the German Development Service (DED) in Togo.

On occasion of an official visit by a delegation of the Chinese Communist Party in Lomé (from February 16 to February 18, 2008) President Gnassingbé lauded the long-standing ties with China. China and Togo signed two economic and aid agreement in Lomé (28.11.08) for about US \$6 million. A first meeting of the China-Togo Mixed Commission on Economy and Trade was held in Lomé on 24 February 2008 China became Togo's first trading partner (31

percent of Togo's imports in 2006). The volume of external trade between both countries reached \$570m already in 2005 with an upward trend. About 70 small and medium size Chinese enterprises (textiles, shoes, kitchenware, mechanic and electric consumer goods, bikes etc.) with an estimated turn-over of US \$40m invested already some \$20m in their establishments in Togo.

At the African Union Summit in Egypt (1 July 2008), Togo joined the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) of the NEPAD as 29<sup>th</sup> member. The newly established APRM centre of excellence in neighbouring Ghana, assisted by the World Bank, Canada and Germany to enhance good governance in the sub-region, agreed to share its experience with its peer review exercise. Ghana was the first country to reach this final stage of the APRM process.

**Theoretical implications: *failed democratization is worse than no democratization***

According to recent literature on the linkage of democratization on growth in Sub-Saharan Africa, the emergent democratic institutions have had a negligible direct effect on economic growth.<sup>9</sup> The case study on Togo presented, would confirm this hypothesis at first sight. Yet, it will be challenged out of methodological reasons.

Since the early 1990s political development in Togo has been closely watched, not only by African peers and their regional organizations (ECOWAS and AU), but also by the international donor community, notably by the EU. The latter was deeply engaged in electoral assistance as well as in the observation of the past presidential elections, which nevertheless utterly failed to meet even the most basic requirements of multi-party rule, at least up to 2007 (cf. above). The 22 democratic commitments made by the Togolese government to the EU within the framework of the Brussels accord of April 2004 formed the base of a lengthy and

controversial process of national reconciliation which recommenced in April last year. Possibly because of its small size and lack of importance in international politics, Western donors took Togo as model to test their approach of political conditionality of aid, which had been emphasized as corner stone of the joint EU-Africa strategy adopted in December 2005 to ensure peace, security, and good governance.

Without any doubt the economic and political sanctions imposed on Togo within the framework of aid conditionality since 1993, and that more consequently than in most other African states, were felt by the regime in Lomé and by the Togolese population. The economic decline within the past decade was last, but not least, due to the disengagement of major donors (cf. IMF 2007). Government and opposition alike repeatedly complained that the population was most likely to suffer should donor support be cut off. Therefore, both requested the resumption of aid, although with different institutions, partners and methods (Kohnert/Mönikes 1996). The opponents of the regime maintained that failed democratization, notably if punished with ill-applied aid conditionality, is worse than no democratization (Kohnert 2005). Yet, the results of aid conditionality cannot provide answers to the controversial discussion of the scholarly question on possible linkages between the form of government and economic growth.

In view of the relevance of informal politics and economies in West African countries in general, and in Togo in particular,<sup>10</sup> available data on economic development, income distribution, or growth are highly unreliable. Therefore, systematic quantitative analyses of the linkage between democratization and economic performance or well-being of the people lack the required robust empirical database to arrive at reliable results. In countries dominated by informal institutions, where more than half of economic activities are unrecorded (55% in the case of Togo), hidden by the shadow economy of the informal sector, the variance of many

relevant variables due to (unknown) data errors can be – and most probably often is - more important than the variance due to the anticipated influence of other variables.<sup>11</sup> Heroic assumptions that the variance of the unrecorded data would be similar to that of registered data (and therefore negligible), is based on little evidence. Quite to the contrary, there are strong indicators that there exist significant, sometimes even antagonistic differences between the political and economic performance of actors involved in the informal sector, according their resource endowment and class position (Kohnert 2007b). This applies even to the most basic economic data, like the per capita income.

As long as more reliable data on the informal sector are not available, research on these topics should focus on in-depth case studies and holistic qualitative analyses with “thick description” (C. Geertz) instead of sophisticated but unviable large-n econometric cross-country or panel analyses. Besides, one should take into account the age-old controversial debate in economics, on the impact of political regimes and governance on economic growth, which is characterized by a deep divide between different schools of thought up to date. Correspondingly, differing results of analyses on the linkage between democratization and development in low-income countries reflect in many cases rather the ideological stance of the author than reality, notably if applied to African conditions.

Because of the high vulnerability of African LDCs to external shocks and the predominance of external political and economic conditions on domestic growth, a possible positive impact of democratization on economic prosperity may be overlaid or counteracted by a change in these external conditions. The dubious reputation of Togo as “Switzerland of Africa” under the dictatorship of Eyadéma mentioned above may serve as example.

In addition, one has to take due account of the possible trade off between general growth, accompanied by increased income inequality, and pro-poor growth. This trade off is likely to occur in cases of high power concentration, the hegemony of national power elites, and pronounced income inequality (McKay et al 2004; Nel 2005). That is, it is likely to occur in Togo too, if not prevented by a rigorous supervision of a sustainable pro-poor policy within the framework of IMF sponsored PRSP-programs (IMF 2007). Finally, growth is not the only solution; In some African countries, notably in those with high inequality, like the former ‘settler economies’ of Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe, even small changes in income distribution, enforceable politically without civic conflict, could have a significant larger poverty reducing impact than growth (Bigsten/Shimeles (2007). Besides, it is likely to have positive effects on democratic transition. But the merits of democratization on growth (and vice versa) will be seen only in the long run (Papaioannou & Siourounis 2005).

## **Conclusion**

In summary, the particular conditions of Togo’s development over the past three decades do not confirm any close relationship between the form and methods of governance and the economic well-being of the people. Certainly, other things being equal, the repression by the corrupt Eyadéma regime has had strong negative effects on the majority of the opposition, which suffered increasing hardship over decades, notably because of the enduring political crisis in the aftermath of the abortive democratic transition, initiated by the National Conference of 1991. The Eyadéma regime was never really a development-oriented dictatorship like that of Singapore or Uganda. The relative economic success of Togo in the 1970s and 1980s was due to favorable external conditions, both in international politics (Cold War bias of development cooperation)

and international economics (Togo's role as transit economy) as explained above. Even more than a decade of aid conditionality and disengagement of major donors (1993-2006), failed to bring the desired results. In view of Togo's hegemonic power structure, it mostly affected the opposition and the poorer sections of the population. Only if the international donor community is ready to learn from its past errors and willing to take responsibility for it, a sustainable democratic transition can succeed. This requires first of all continuing close supervision of the process by the EU, i.e. substantial security, organizational and financial intervention for the support of the democratic forces of Togo to guarantee fair and free presidential elections in 2010. Afterwards, long-term reconstruction assistance is indispensable.

## Notes

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2. Cf. Worldbank: African Development Indicators 2004; WB, Washington/D.C., 2005:296. – The real Gross Domestic Income is in this case a better standard of comparison as the GDP, because it takes account income losses due to unfavorable development of terms of trade, too. – Compared with public revenue, excluding grants of other governments or international aid organizations, Official Development Aid (ODA) to Togo amounted to 62% between 1985 to 1992; in the following years (1993 to 2002) it decreased only slightly to 57% (World Bank: African Development Indicators, various years, Washington/DC: World Bank). Alone bilateral ODA of the Federal Republic of Germany (Western Germany) amounted to DM 600 Mio. between 1960 to 1989, supplemented by debt cancellation of DM 295.5 Mio. Even the disengagement of ODA starting from 1993, because of gross human rights violation and bad government of the Eyadéma Regime, was not as radical as might be supposed in view of official declarations on aid conditionality. Even Germany, which increasingly fell apart with France over continuing aid to Lomé, paid between 1998 and 2003 between €8 and 10 million of bilateral aid to Togo.
3. An example of political instrumentalized xenophobia concerns the politics of *Togolité'*, as codified by the revision of the constitution of 2002. Thereby, exiled opponents and refugees were treated as 'foreigners', who could not any more qualify for public offices. Another example is

the differentiation between ‘authentic’, ‘original’, or ‘true’ Togolese, propagated by government media vis à vis the so called ‘Southern immigrants’, i.e. the Ewé ethnic group, which immigrated centuries ago from neighboring Ghana; many of its members belonged to the opposition, and were therefore labeled ‘stateless vagabonds’ or ‘traitors’ (cf. Toulabour 2003). Already in the 1970s the government in Lomé blamed the so-called ‘Brazilians’, i.e. Togolese of Latin American-African descent, notably the descendants of returned ex-slaves and slave dealers from Brazil, like the wealthy families of Da Zouza, Olympio or d’Almeida, and re-immigrants from Sierra Leone or Nigeria, like the Lawsons, living in Southern Togo, of preparing a coup (cf. Decalo 1996:50, 73-74).

4. Interestingly enough, there existed at least four Togolese concentration camps for political detainees, situated near Kazaboua, Agombio, Mandouri and Otadi in the northern parts of the country. Kazaboua, at the outskirts of the village of Kaza, about 12 km from Kazaboua, was notorious because of the imprisonment of so-called “witches,” where also political dissidents accused of occult practices, were imprisoned, tortured or murdered. It was constructed under dubious circumstances with assistance of a pioneer unit of the German Army, under the cover of bilateral military co-operation and armament grant in the early 1980s (cf. Kohnert 1997: 43; Codjie, 1991).

A deep and rewarding insight into the occult aspects of informal politics in Africa, taking the (veiled) example of Eyadéma, offers the satiric novel of the late Ivorian writer Ahmadou Kourouma, (2003) “Waiting for wild beasts to vote,” (“En attendant le vote des bêtes sauvages”). Although presented in form of fiction, it is based on painstaking research of the author into the fabric of informal politics in Togo and other francophone countries of sub-Saharan Africa, putting the pertinent questions by means of an African praise singer (*griot*); cf. the detailed book



reviews of this oeuvre by C. Toulabor and others, published in *Politique Africaine* 75 (1999): 171-77, and the complementing interview with Kourouma, pp. 178-83.

5. ECOWAS/CEDEAO: "Ce scrutin a globalement répondu aux critères et principes universellement admis en matière d'élections," quoted in: ai (2005): Togo – Une élection à hauts risques. *Amnesty International*, Lomé, 20.05.05:4.

6. The Demographer Thérèse Locoh, director of research of the I'INED (Paris), retained in an unpublished contribution "Démographie, démocratie au Togo", an even more blatant fraud of over 1,100,000 Phantom- voters ([http://www.surveie-france.org/article.php3?id\\_article=485](http://www.surveie-france.org/article.php3?id_article=485); accessed 7 June 2005).

7. allAfrica.com: 'Togo – Diplomatic documents surface citing fraud in April poll', 6.6.2005; ufctogo.com: 'Présidentielle 2005 – les mécanismes de la fraude'. 5 May 2005).

8. e.g. gross human rights violations during the imposition of the Kéran natural reserve in the North, as revealed during the National Conference of 1991 and condemned by different reports of amnesty international.

9. For recent examples of studies on the linkage of democratization and economic development with a focus on Africa cf. Bratton 2006; Persson & Tabellini. 2006; Rodrik & Wacziarg 2005; Papaioannou 2005; Nel 2005, McKay et al 2004; Nulu & O'Connell 1999; Collier&Gunning 1999; Iheduru 1999; Barro 1996; Helliwell 1994.

10. In the 1990s, the informal economic sector contributed on average 41% to the non-agricultural GDP in sub-Saharan Africa (Benin: 41% (1993); Ghana: 58% (1988); Togo: 55% (1995), and 29% in Latin America, according to estimates of the ILO (ILO 2002:24). According to Chen et. al (2004), about 72% of total employed outside the agricultural sector were employed in the informal sector in SSA (51% in Latin America).

11. Some authors tend to assume that informal social capital and formal organizations interact in ways that have rather positive outcomes, e.g. that innovative informal networks are the base for creating true democratic formal institutions of civil society (cf. Rose 1997, n. p; World Bank 2001:171). This might be true in some cases, but the opposite is true as well, informal networks can be anti-democratic, insofar as they are used to corrupt formal institutions, the role of West African's so-called "traditional" secret societies like the Okija-cult of the Igbo, the Yoruba 'Ogboni Society' in Nigeria (cf. Kohnert 2007a), or the Mafia in Southern Italy or Russia are outstanding examples.

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N.B.: For an excellent current political-administrative map of Togo, cf. CountryWatch 2002: 3 (© Magellan Geographix SM Santa Barbara, CA (800) 929-4627).