

Kohnert, Dirk

Book Part — Accepted Manuscript (Postprint)

Togo: Politics, economy and society in 2006

Suggested Citation: Kohnert, Dirk (2007) : Togo: Politics, economy and society in 2006, In: Melber, Henning Mehler, Andreas Walraven, Klaas (Ed.): Africa Yearbook Volume 3: Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara in 2006, Brill, Leiden, pp. 133-138

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/301793>

Standard-Nutzungsbedingungen:

Die Dokumente auf EconStor dürfen zu eigenen wissenschaftlichen Zwecken und zum Privatgebrauch gespeichert und kopiert werden.

Sie dürfen die Dokumente nicht für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, öffentlich zugänglich machen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Sofern die Verfasser die Dokumente unter Open-Content-Lizenzen (insbesondere CC-Lizenzen) zur Verfügung gestellt haben sollten, gelten abweichend von diesen Nutzungsbedingungen die in der dort genannten Lizenz gewährten Nutzungsrechte.

Terms of use:

Documents in EconStor may be saved and copied for your personal and scholarly purposes.

You are not to copy documents for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the documents publicly, to make them publicly available on the internet, or to distribute or otherwise use the documents in public.

If the documents have been made available under an Open Content Licence (especially Creative Commons Licences), you may exercise further usage rights as specified in the indicated licence.



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Togo

Politics, economy and society in 2006

Dirk Kohnert ¹

Abstract: The political accord between the government and major opposition parties in August was welcomed internationally as a major breakthrough, in view of the aftermath of rigged presidential elections and subsequent political turmoil in 2005. The formation of a transitional government of national unity under Yawovi Agboyibo, renowned opposition leader, gave rise to optimistic forecasts concerning the preparations for early free and fair parliamentary elections in June 2007, which would be the first after decades of autocratic rule

Résumé: L'accord politique entre le gouvernement et les principaux partis d'opposition en août a été salué internationalement comme une avancée majeure, compte tenu des élections présidentielles truquées et des troubles politiques qui ont suivi en 2005. La formation d'un gouvernement de transition de l'unité nationale sous Yawovi Agboyibo, leader de l'opposition, a donné lieu à des prévisions optimistes concernant les préparatifs d'élections parlementaires libres et équitables en juin 2007, qui seraient les premières après des décennies de régime autocratique.

Keywords: countrywide study, Togo, West Africa, domestic politics, foreign affairs, socio-economic development

JEL-code: A14, F35, N97, O17, O55, Z13

¹ Associated research fellow at the Institute of African Affairs (IAA) at the German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA), Hamburg.

The political accord between the government and major opposition parties in August was welcomed internationally as a major breakthrough, in view of the aftermath of rigged presidential elections and subsequent political turmoil in 2005. The formation of a transitional government of national unity under Yawovi Agboyibo, renowned opposition leader, gave rise to optimistic forecasts concerning the preparations for early free and fair parliamentary elections in June 2007, which would be the first after decades of autocratic rule.

Domestic Politics

The **inter-Togolese dialogue**, sponsored by the EU to overcome the political crisis, recommenced in Lomé on 21 April, after lengthy discussions, dogged by controversy, over the agenda, the venue and presence of an external mediator. The political dialogue, which had already commenced in May 2004, had been interrupted by the illegitimate usurpation of power by Faure Gnassingbé in the aftermath of the death of his father President Eyadéma on 5 February 2005 and the ensuing bloody suppression of political opposition. The resumption of the talks was in line with the 22 democratic commitments made by the Togolese government to the EU within the framework of the accord of April 2004. 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 22 April elected as chairman of the resumed dialogue, in which all major political parties, as well as delegates from two women's organisations (traditionally in favour 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 Africaines' (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 preparations 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 reorganisation of the independent electoral commission ('Commission Électorale Nationale Indépendante' – CENI), the constitutional court and the army – all biased in favour 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.

As a sign of compromise, the head of state consented to the celebration of the anniversary of Togolese independence (27 April) for the first time in decades, instead of his father's coup d'état on 13 January 1967. On the eve of independence day, a coalition of international human rights organisations (among them Amnesty International and the 'Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme', FIDH) denounced the blatant impunity that had reigned in the country since the accession to power of

Gnassingbé Eyadéma in 1967 until the violent conflicts in the aftermath of the rigged presidential elections of 2005. Week-long negotiations behind closed doors resulted in a **compromise** by seven of the nine parties engaged in the dialogue, involving a political draft agreement to hold free and fair elections before October 2007. The settlement was rejected by the leading opposition groups, UFC and CDP, because it was limited to the immediate aim of organising legislative elections and achieving the resumption of aid, rather than addressing the major undemocratic features of four decades of despotic rule.

The deadlock was finally broken by the mediation of President Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso. After a ten-day meeting in Ouagadougou, all parties signed a comprehensive political agreement on 20 August. This **Ouagadougou accord** provided for a transitional government of national unity and the organisation of early free and fair parliamentary elections by a truly independent CENI before October 2007, i.e., before the mandate of parliament, based on an undemocratic election in 2002 that had been boycotted by the opposition, ran out. CENI proposed 24 June 2007 as the provisional polling date. 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. These had been imposed in the election law and the constitutional amendments of December 2002 in order to prevent the election of Gilchrist Olympio as president. The government and ruling RPT for the first time accepted a minority position of nine within CENI, which was composed of 19 members from all major parties, the cabinet and civic groups.

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 nomination as prime minister by the head of state on 16 September 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, 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. The government was more balanced than the old one, with 19 ministers from the ruling RPT, ten from

opposition parties and four from civil society groups. The number of **women** in the new cabinet increased to six, compared with four in the old cabinet. Zarifou Ayéva of the opposition 'Parti pour la Démocratie et le Renouveau' (PDR) remained foreign minister; Léopold Gnininvi, leader of the CDPA, was given the ministry of mines and energy; while the second vice-president from the UFC, Amah Gnassingbé – who had defected from his party – became minister of state.

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 defence 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 Boukpepsi (RPT) remained finance minister and Kokouvi Dogbé (RPT) minister of telecommunications. The latter was of particular importance in the organisation 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 Laokpepsi, who was compensated for the loss of his portfolio by his nomination on 16 December as special counsellor for security at the presidency, where he rejoined other old hands like Edem Kodjo, nominated as minister of state at the presidency, and former minister of foreign affairs Kokou Tozoun, promoted to the post of rapporteur of CENI, a post 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** ('Forces Armées Togolaises'), at the heart of the empire around the Gnassingbé clan, to which it was bound by family and ethnic ties and personal loyalties. It has acted more as a praetorian guard and been responsible for gross human rights violations and has been protected by a long-standing culture of impunity, as demonstrated most recently in the 2005 turmoil. In view of this clouded image, the army chief, General Zakary Nandja, on 28 August 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 Centre 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.

While the code of conduct was intended to improve civilian control of the army within a framework of regional protocols on good governance, democratisation and conflict resolution, it remained a dead letter. At the end of November, retired Gen. Assani Tidjani, a Muslim from northern Togo, former army chief and ex-defence minister under Eyadéma, **challenged the authority** of the head of state by openly supporting the rebel ‘Forces Nouvelles’ of Guillaume Soro in northern Côte d’Ivoire against the country’s President Laurent Gbagbo. He thus undermined the cordial relationship between the Togolese and Ivorian heads of state. The acting army chief, Kpatcha Gnassingbé, went on an urgent mission to Abidjan on 11 December to reassure President Gbagbo, who had declared that the presence of the Togolese contingent in the United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI) was now undesirable. Five days later, Tidjani was given a two-month prison sentence.

The human rights situation remained precarious. According to UNHCR, up till October 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 neighbouring Benin and Ghana. A total of 16,500 remained in exile, fearing political reprisal. About 6,500 were in Ghana and 10,000 in Benin, among whom 6,000 in the Agmé refugee camp near the Togolese border, with the remaining 4,000 staying with relatives or host families in Cotonou. The influx of such considerable numbers of migrants caused stresses and strains in some host communities, not least because locals resented the fact that ‘foreigners’ were provided with better amenities than nationals. Thus, the Lokossa camp in Benin, where some 9,300 **refugees** had originally been accommodated, appeared to be almost deserted after fierce clashes between refugees and residents of neighbouring villages in February. In spring, 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, the EU granted Togo € 14.6 m to assist in the strengthening of reception and reintegration facilities.

On 18 May, the FIDH, based in Paris, and ‘Comité Contre la Torture’ (Geneva) published a **human rights** report denouncing the generalised culture of impunity, notably for acts of torture, disappearance, rape and arbitrary arrest by military and security personnel. In addition, Amnesty International drafted a report entitled “Togo: I Want to Know Why my Son was Killed”, containing the testimony of victims of the 2005 turmoil. The report, based on a research mission in July, was originally to be published in November but was delayed because the government demanded time to prepare an adequate response. Nevertheless, by December the draft report was circulating among the opposition in Lomé and abroad and attracted international attention.

On 22 December, parliament liberalised the restrictive abortion law of 1920, which allowed **abortion** only to save the life of the pregnant woman. Under the revised law, termination was now also possible in cases of rape, incest or a severely handicapped foetus. With this law, Togo adopted the most liberal abortion regime in Francophone Africa, although it still fell short of the more progressive stands taken by other African countries such as Tunisia, Cape Verde or Zambia.

Foreign Affairs

The EU welcomed the resumption of the national dialogue for reconciliation and kept a close watch on the process. Filiberto Ceriani Sebergondi, who headed the EU delegation meant to assess its progress in the first weeks of May, backed the demands of the ‘radical opposition’. He recommended an external facilitator to prevent setbacks, which would endanger the badly needed resumption of **EU development aid**. It was envisaged that the latter would involve up to € 60 m. The Ouagadougou accord triggered the clearance of € 15 m of previously allocated Stabex funds, thus extending EU aid for the current year to over € 36 m. A further € 41.6 m was promised if a date for the legislative elections was fixed. EU Development Commissioner Louis Michel again reminded President Faure Gnassingbé, during the latter’s official visit to the EU in early September that took him to Brussels, Rome and Paris, that development cooperation would not be normalised without the establishment of a legitimate National Assembly. However, EU and ACP monitoring missions in October and November reported considerable progress. On 15 November, the EU council of ministers dangled the clearance of € 40 m of the 9th EDF as well as the inclusion of a further € 110 m in the programming for the 10th EDF (2008-12).

The resumption of EU aid was most important, as it was considered as a precondition for the 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. **France’s President** Jacques Chirac, who still regarded himself as a personal friend of the family of late Eyadéma Gnassingbé, rewarded the progress made in the national dialogue with an additional € 5 m of French aid. In November, the signatories of the Ouagadougou accord established a nine-member international monitoring committee to evaluate the progress of the democratisation process. It was composed of one delegate from each of the major political parties, in addition to representatives of the EU, ECOWAS and the Burkinabé presidency. The committee met for the first time in Lomé on 16 December and was meant to have monthly meetings up to the elections in June 2007.

President Blaise Compaoré of **Burkina Faso** played a decisive role in mediating the national dialogue. On 26 July, he accepted the renewed request of the protagonists to act as a facilitator. This was also welcomed by Paris, which considered Compaoré as an advocate of its policies in Francophone Africa. He had already mediated in the

Togolese crisis before – though in vain – during the crucial transition phase in 1992-93 and the ensuing Ouagadougou I, II and III accords. After prolonged quarrelling between the government and opposition about other possible candidates, Prime Minister Edem Kodjo solicited the help of Compaoré in February. Both heads of state met in the hometown of the Gnassingbé clan, Kara, in northern Togo, on 21 March to confirm the deal. The leaders of the opposition UFC, CAR and CDPA first opposed Compaoré, whom they considered too close to the Lomé government. They endorsed him after further consultations in the Burkinabé capital. On 15 August, President Faure Gnassingbé completed his own consultations with Compaoré, who had previously held talks with representatives of the Togolese political parties, civil society, traditional chiefs and religious authorities. The results of these deliberations were presented in Ouagadougou on 17 August.

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. Faure Gnassingbé visited Beijing in January. He and Chinese President Hu Jintao vowed to enhance their long-standing bilateral ties in such fields as agriculture, trade, telecommunications and infrastructure on 13 January. In April, 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 3-5 November. On 22 July, 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 realisation of the Adjarala hydro-electric project. During the China Business Days in Lomé in November, organised by the 'Banque Ouest Africaine de Développement' (BOAD) with the help of UEMOA and the BCEAO, BOAD signed two cooperation agreements, one on Chinese technical assistance with BOAD (approx. € 1 m) and another for a credit line of € 70 m 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 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 m tonnes), besides chromite ore (1 m tonnes) at Farendè (Kara) and Mont Ayito in Plateau region and manganese (13 m tonnes) at Naéga (Savannes region). The agreement would also involve the construction of a 100 km railway and development of energy and water supplies.

Socio-economic Developments

In view of the economic crisis triggered by the political turmoil and decades of bad government, in 2005 Togo had met only one of UEMOA's eight convergence criteria, namely the share of wages in total domestic revenue, which fell to 30.4%. In 2006, the problem of public sector salary arrears persisted and, with it, strike threats by Togo's major labour union, the 'Intersyndical des Travailleurs de Togo' (ISTT). To mitigate labour unrest, parliament adopted a new labour 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 \$ 1.8 bn at the end of 2006[?], overwhelmingly due to the accumulation of repayment arrears (some \$ 100 m). For the first time ever, Togo was included in the **Corruption** Perception Index of Transparency International, being ranked the third most corrupt UEMOA state or 130th of 163 countries worldwide. In December, the council of ministers proposed the budget for 2007 with a deficit of CFAfr 13 bn (about 1.6% of GDP), despite optimistic forecasts of increased revenue. Improvement in the budget situation depended to a great extent on the resumption of development assistance, conditioned by success in the democratisation process.

Togo's participation in the world **football** cup in Germany in June had mixed results. It aroused national pride, but also bitter feelings among the Togolese team and population, which attributed the defeat of its heroes at least partially to mismanagement and allegedly gross corruption by officials of the country's football association, notably its president, Rock Gnassingbé, brother of the head of state.

Zusammenfassung: Die politische Einigung zwischen der Regierung und großen Oppositionsparteien im August wurde international als wichtiger Durchbruch angesichts der manipulierten Präsidentschaftswahlen und der nachfolgenden politischen Unruhen im Jahr 2005 begrüßt. Die Bildung einer Übergangsregierung der nationalen Einheit unter Yawovi Agboyibo, international bekannter Oppositionsführer, gab Anlass zu optimistischen Prognosen hinsichtlich der Vorbereitungen auf vorgezogene freie und faire Parlamentswahlen im Juni 2007, die nach jahrzehntelanger autokratischer Herrschaft die ersten freien Wahlen gewesen wären.