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# *Togo*

## *Politics, economy and society in 2007*

Dirk Kohnert <sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT & RÉSUMÉ & ZUSAMMENFASSUNG:** - Togo's national reconciliation process initiated in 2006 continued in 2007. Largely free and fair parliamentary elections in October paved the way for the resumption of development aid after 14 years of interruption because of serious human rights violations and bad governance. The economic situation gradually improved in line with the resolution of the political crisis and the positive effects of the growing competition among global players for Africa's natural resources. 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.

**RÉSUMÉ:** - Le processus de réconciliation nationale entamé en 2006 s'est poursuivi en 2007. Des élections législatives en octobre, qui étaient largement libres et équitables, ont ouvert la voie à la reprise de l'aide au développement après 14 ans d'interruption en raison de violations graves des droits de l'homme et de mauvaise gouvernance. La situation économique s'est progressivement améliorée avec la résolution de la crise politique et les effets positifs de la concurrence croissante entre les acteurs mondiaux pour les ressources naturelles de l'Afrique. Cependant, le test décisif pour la durabilité du processus de transition sera les élections présidentielles de 2010, le seul processus capable de corriger le déficit démocratique restant légué par le coup d'état par les puissances au pouvoir depuis 2005.

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

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

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The national reconciliation process initiated in 2006 continued. Largely free and fair parliamentary elections in October paved the way for the resumption of development aid after a 14-year of interruption because of serious human rights violations and bad governance. The economic situation gradually improved in line with the resolution of the political crisis and the positive effects of the growing competition among global players for Africa's natural resources. 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.

## **Domestic Politics**

The early **legislative elections**, originally scheduled for 24 June, were marked by high expectations on the part of the population, political parties and the international donor community. The election of a new parliament was meant to console the feuding political camps and end 14 years of political repression and gross human rights violations. 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 the late head of state Eyadéma, and the subsequent rigged presidential elections of April 2005.

Nevertheless, continuing external pressure from the EU and other major donors, reinforced by unrest within the ruling party and the military, forced the head of state to make concessions. These were in line with the 22 democratic commitments already made by the Togolese government to the EU in April 2004, and with the comprehensive political agreement on national reconciliation ('Accord Politique Global', APG), mediated by Burkina's President Blaise Compaoré, in Ouagadougou on 20 August 2006. Although the two major opposition parties, 'Union des Forces du Changement' (UFC) and the 'Convention des Peuples Africaines' (CDPA) remained outside the transitional government of national unity, they exerted a strong influence on the negotiation process for the preparations for the coming elections. On 1 February, parliament amended the **electoral code**. The revisions allowed for the organisation and supervision of the elections by an independent electoral commission ('Commission Électorale Nationale Indépendante', CENI) composed of representatives of all major parties. Thus, the ministry of interior, castigated in the past for its bias, was sidelined. The new code also provided for a system of proportional representation with medium and small constituencies. Although it was definitely tailored to meet the interests of the ruling party, it was not openly contested by the opposition. This later proved to be a strategic mistake, but the UFC apparently was too confident of victory under free and fair elections.

In February, parliament also passed a new armed forces law restricting the military to a non-political role, in order to prevent the infamous partisan deployment of the security forces in favour of the Gnassingbé clan, as had happened during past elections. In addition, it opened the services to women. In June, Security Minister Atacha Titikpiana set up a special force of over 6,000 gendarmes and policemen, trained by the Red Cross and the UN Regional Centre for Disarmament and Peace in Lomé. The force was to be deployed throughout the country to guarantee a peaceful electoral campaign and voting process and to replace the military forces, which were meant to stay in barracks. Disagreements over voter registration were settled in March by the unanimous decision of the CENI to provide electronic voter-registration kits, used before in DR Congo. The loan of 3,000 computers to the 279 local CENI bureaus greatly assisted the registration process in the country's 31 prefectures. In addition, the kits allowed for biometric electronic registration and the printing of forgery-proof voters' cards with digital ID photos and fingerprints. These steps significantly reduced the possibilities for fraud of the sort observed in previous elections. 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. The first exploratory EU mission arrived in March, followed by other technical and observer missions meant to guarantee observation of the electoral process.

During the following months, the government and ruling party at least formally tried to honour other APG obligations concerning electoral **reforms**. On 24 May, the National Assembly, dominated by the RPT, designated six new members of the constitutional court. Three others were appointed by the head of state as provided for in the constitution. However, the opposition was quick to point out that half the elected members, including the new court president, Abdou Assouma, did not match up to the criteria of credibility and impartiality demanded by article 1.2.9 of the APG. On the contrary, the appointees belonged to the outgoing court that sanctioned the putsch of the Gnassingbé dynasty, including the attendant illegal revisions of the constitution, and, finally, the outcome of the rigged presidential elections of 2005. The replacement of discredited prefects, stalwarts of the RPT regime and instigators of past repression, was effected in a similar vein (20 June). The military prefects of Middle Mono and Oti, as well as the prefects of Blitta, Soutouboua, Kéran and Zio, accused by the opposition and human rights organisations of massive involvement in fraud and violence, remained in place. Nevertheless, for the first time in history parliament adopted a law on the **funding** of political parties (27 June). It provided that all parties must obtain at least 5% in national elections and have a minimum of five elected members of parliament, or 10% of votes in local elections, in order to benefit from state funding. However, this did not apply to the upcoming parliamentary election. The results of the latter would be the basis for the allocation of funds in future polls.

In the run-up to the elections, a total of 412 electoral lists, including 32 parties, were endorsed by the constitutional court to take part in the 31 electoral constituencies. There were 5,913 polling stations and 2,150 candidates (only 142 women) for the 81 parliamentary seats in contention. Voter registration in July and August, unanimously commended by all stakeholders, yielded a total of 2,974,718 voters. This was considerably lower than the 3.5 million voters in the 2005 presidential contest, confirming suspicions of gross inflation of the electoral lists at the time. Some of the 3,500 **observers** arrived well in advance to ensure the transparency of voting, which was delayed twice until 14 October – nearly the last possible date, as the mandate of the Assembly expired on 22 October. The monitors included 794 international observers, 104 of whom were attached to the EU election monitoring mission. ECOWAS sent a force of 140 monitors, 100 of whom were drawn from military ranks.

Canvassing took place between 28 September and 12 October. All parties were able to campaign 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. The **election** of 14 October 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.

However, in view of the geographical **bias** in the **electoral system**, 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. 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.

After confirmation of the election results (30 October), the major rivals, Gnassingbé and Olympio, met their mediator, Burkina's President Blaise Compaoré, in Ouagadougou on 2 November for consultations on a government of national unity. Olympio set two major preconditions. The first was the revision of the constitutional coup of December 2002, instigated to exclude Olympio from standing in presidential elections. The second was his insistence that the UFC be consulted on all legislative procedures by RPT and

the government. However, it soon became clear that the head of state was not inclined to make these concessions. On 3 December, he appointed Komlan Mally (RPT) as prime minister in succession to the interim premier, Agboyibo. Mally, former prefect of Wawa and Golf (south), aged 47 and originating from Atakpamé (the president's hometown), was a member of the RPT central committee. The **new government** did not include members of the UFC or CAR. It was considerably reduced in size from 37 members (including five women) in the previous cabinet to 22 (including two women) in the present. Fourteen ministers belonged to RPT, among others the controversial security minister, Colonel Atcha Titikpina, former chief of Eyadéma's presidential guard. In addition, three other parties gained cabinet seats, especially the 'Convention des Peuples Africaines' (CDPA), whose chairman, Léopold Gnininvi, became foreign minister. The 13 ministers who left the cabinet included Defence Minister Kpatcha Gnassingbé, a hardliner and junior half-brother of the head of state, and his post was attached directly to the presidency. This was the outcome of the longstanding rivalry between the 'moderniser' and 'traditionalist' wings inside the RPT.

## **Foreign Affairs**

On 29 November, the EU announced the full resumption of cooperation in view of the elections, considered to be largely free and fair by all international observers, including the EU, the Francophonie, ECOWAS and AU. On 16 November, Brussels unblocked the remaining funds of the 9th European Development Fund (EDF, € 40 m). Two days earlier, it granted two non-refundable subsidies amounting to € 26 m for institutional and urban development projects. A further € 123 m would be available under the 10th EDF in line with progress in the political arena. On 5 December, the EU requested revision of the delimitation of the constituency boundaries well in advance of the crucial presidential elections of 2010. According to the final report of the EU election observation mission released in December, actual boundaries were seriously unbalanced. In addition, a revision of the electoral code was called for.

In the context of negotiations on Economic Partnership Agreements (**EPAs**) with the EU, called for by a ruling of the WTO, Togo and Côte d'Ivoire were deemed to be among the hardest hit, standing to lose \$ 11.5 m and \$ 8.9 m respectively. In Togo, the drop in government revenue from trade liberalisation under an EPA was estimated to be nearly equivalent to government expenditure on education. On 27 September, the fifth anniversary of the start of EPA negotiations, 20 Togolese NGOs backed the so-called 'EPAs Day' organised by international NGOs to protest against the allegedly unfair treatment of African states by the EU, including the devastation expected from EU imports and obstacles to sub-regional integration.

The changing attitude of the EU vis-à-vis Lomé paved the way for other donors. Talks with the **IMF** in New York in November led to the review in December of structural

reforms under the three-year PRGF by a joint IMF-World Bank mission. This could trigger additional and substantial debt relief within the framework of the HIPC initiative and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI).

**France**, which maintained its special relationship with the Eyadéma dictatorship, was also prominent among bilateral donors. In July, it granted € 3 m for the organisation of the forthcoming elections, while in April € 2.5 m was given to modernise the justice system and for micro-projects. In February, Faure Gnassingbé attended the 24th Franco-African summit in Cannes, together with 29 other African heads of state.

**Germany** resumed bilateral cooperation in the wake of the Africa-Europe summit in Lisbon in early December, where Chancellor Angela Merkel met with Faure Gnassingbé. Despite its critical evaluation of Togo's human rights record, Germany's development aid never completely halted – ranging from € 7 m to € 12 m annually over the preceding six years, mostly for grassroots projects and promotion of the democratisation process.

In November, Lomé announced it would participate in the AU/UN African Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) by committing 800 troops.

### **Socioeconomic Developments**

Western powers felt the competition from Asian newcomers. In 2004, **China** became Togo's **major partner** in consumer and capital goods imports, followed by France, with a share of 31% and 11% in 2006 respectively. Trade between China and Togo reached a volume of \$ 570 m in 2005, growing by 27% within just one year, relegating traditional trading partners such as the UK and Germany to the second rank. In December 2007, China inaugurated a hospital project in Lomé, to be completed by a Chinese company in 2009. However, not everybody in Togo was pleased about these developments, which apparently had ambiguous effects. The Togolese trading elite of the famous 'Nana-Benz' (the politically influential cloth-trading women, who during the 1970s earned more revenue than the phosphate industry), expressed mixed opinions about the influx of cheap Chinese merchandise on African markets. This notably involved the central market in Lomé, a major hub not only for textiles but also informal trans-border trade in a wide range of consumer goods with Nigeria, Ghana and the Sahelian countries. A recent study revealed that Togolese business associations, which in the late 1990s invited Chinese entrepreneurs to produce low-priced copies of African wax cloth for the West African market, now wanted to protect themselves against these same imports. They called on the government to intervene and restrict Chinese dumping strategies, a demand that was explicitly backed by Togolese trade unions.

On 7 February the heads of state of **Nigeria** and **Benin** signed a memorandum of understanding with Togo envisaging the socioeconomic integration of the three nations, called the 'Nigeria-Benin-Togo Co-Prosperity Partnership'. However, the tangible objectives behind this exercise – beyond those of the ECOWAS structures – remained unclear. Shortly afterwards, the presidents inaugurated the long-awaited power grid linking Ikeja (Lagos, Nigeria) and Lomé and including a power transformer unit at Sakété (Benin) with a maximum capacity of 600MW. This was expected to augment the chronically poor capacity of the Togolese grid by an annual average of 80MW. The grid was connected to a wider existing network linking Benin, Togo, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso and thus formed a crucial step towards the creation of a West African Power Pool (WAPP), a project supported by ECOWAS. However, the new system suffered problems owing to technical difficulties and power failures in Nigeria. The West African Gas Pipeline (WAGP) meant to become operational in July, encountered technical difficulties as well. An American enterprise, ContourGlobal, invested \$100 m to construct a 100MW gas turbine in Lomé, scheduled to be operational by mid-2008.

On 19 September, Togo was finally linked to the SAT3 overseas submarine cable via a connection point in Cotonou (Benin), an occasion marked by a solemn ceremony at the border between the two countries. SAT3 connects Europe, Africa and Asia through a high capacity submarine network of 120 Gigabit/sec. The fibre optic cable linking Benin and Togo has a capacity of 11,240 simultaneous communications. Its implementation took 18 months, cost \$ 33 m and boosted the performance of Togo's **communications network** even further. Mobile phone subscribers grew by 60% in 2006 to 708,000 and fixed-line connections by 31% to 82,100.

Despite the improvements in the country's political system and the upsurge in natural resource-induced terms of trade, the economy faced severe challenges after 25 years of decline and deterioration of infrastructure. Accumulation of debt and arrears reached unsustainably high levels. The real **exchange rate appreciation** of the CFAfr (pegged to the Euro) against the US dollar further weakened Togo's global competitiveness. The UEMOA finance ministers who met in Paris on 16 October voiced their concern about the state of the economy of the joint currency union. At the end of 2006, Togo had developed intolerable payment arrears of \$ 105 m, rising by \$ 2m a month, according to the World Bank. An IMF staff-monitored recovery programme (SMP), which ran for nine months until June, brought some improvement. A joint World Bank and IMF mission that toured the country in early December, however, urged the government to improve economic governance. Much depended on the solution of problems surrounding the privatisation of parastatals – which were of strategic importance to the Gnassingbé dynasty – and debt rescheduling or cancellation within the HIPC initiative.

Nevertheless, the normalisation of political relations with the EU opened the way for the negotiation in the first half of 2008 of the PRGF for the next three years. On 31 December, the **2008 budget** was voted in by parliament. It envisaged a deficit of CFAfr



42.4 bn and expenditures of CFAfr 307.6 bn (€ 469 m), which meant an 18.5% increase over the 2007 budget. This the government hoped to finance through the inflow of increased development aid. Besides, the budget proposed a 3% increase in salaries in the public sector as well as the recruitment of more than 1,000 additional public employees.

**Phosphate production**, Togo's major export (about 40% of state revenue), while having halved during the preceding decade because of mismanagement and adverse terms of trade, recovered on soaring global demand. Yet, at 800,000 tonnes of processed phosphate, it still fell short of the 1.1 m tonnes in 2006. The retail price grew by 100% from \$ 35 to \$ 70 at year's end and allowed for optimistic forecasts. Although **cotton** production, another major foreign exchange earner, increased by 55% since 2006 to about 65,000 tonnes, this was essentially due to improved payment by the state-owned marketing board ('Société Togolaise du Coton' – Sotoco). Production still fell short of the 2004 level.

Despite the continent's overall high growth rate, Togo still lagged behind with a **moderate growth** of an estimated 2% in 2006. Broad money supply grew by 22% in the same year because of an upsurge in remittances and trade-related capital inflows. This was probably due to the improved political situation. Private transfers sharply increased by 17% in 2005 and 15% in 2006. The overall invisible account surplus doubled from CFAfr 36 bn to CFAfr 84 bn in 2006. Togo also profited from the continuing Ivorian crisis. The informal trade (smuggling) in cocoa from the 2007 growing season in northern Côte d'Ivoire to the ports of Tema and Takoradi in Ghana and to Lomé was estimated at about CFAfr 8 bn.

The **human rights** situation improved in line with the decrease in political tension. Of the 25,000 Togolese refugees that fled to Benin in the aftermath of the 2005 presidential elections, only 4,700 remained. Compatriots who fled to Ghana were more reluctant to return. In April, the UNHCR signed a tripartite agreement with the governments of Togo and Ghana for the repatriation of refugees in Ghana, still estimated at 12,326 (63% women) at that time. However, by the end of September, only 176 had returned home, although each of the returnees was granted \$ 120 in cash per adult and \$ 60 per child plus equipment in kind as reintegration assistance.

According to the **Corruption** Perceptions Index of Transparency International, Togo's rating fell from 2.4 in 2006 (the first time Togo was included) to 2.3, indicating rampant corruption. This position the country shared with most other UEMOA members, with the exception of Senegal.

**Zusammenfassung:** Der im Jahr 2006 eingeleitete nationale Aussöhnungsprozess Togo's setzte sich 2007 fort. Weitgehend freie und faire Parlamentswahlen im Oktober ebneten den Weg für die Wiederaufnahme der Entwicklungshilfe nach 14 Jahren Unterbrechung wegen schwerer Menschenrechtsverletzungen und schlechter Regierungsführung. Die wirtschaftliche Situation hat sich im Zuge der Bewältigung der politischen Krise und der positiven Auswirkungen des zunehmenden Wettbewerbs der Global Player um die natürlichen Ressourcen Afrikas allmählich verbessert. Der Lackmustest für die Nachhaltigkeit des Übergangsprozesses wird jedoch die Präsidentschaftswahl 2010 sein, der einzige Prozess, der in der Lage ist, das verbleibende Demokratiedefizit zu korrigieren, das der Putsch 2005 durch die gegenwärtigen Machthaber hinterlassen hat.