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TOGO: AFTER EYADÉMA?

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1 Executive Summary

Togo's transition to multiparty representative politics rapidly went off course in the early 1990s, due to a combination of state terror under veteran dictator General Gnassingbé Eyadéma and incoherence on the part of a largely southern-based opposition. Eyadéma's armed forces launched a policy of savage repression of southerners, resulting in mass population flight and economic collapse. By the mid-1990s Eyadéma was back in full control and opposition leaders either in exile or demoralised. Largely boycotted by the outside world, Togo's position was worsened still by major atrocities around the rigged presidential election of 1998.

The central characteristics of Eyadéma's rule have intensified in the past decade. A reliance upon a largely mono-ethnic army, made up of the northern Kabyé ethnic group and tightly controlled by Eyadéma relatives, is matched by a policy of pillaging the remains of the economy for individual benefit at the highest levels. Family members occupy most key positions in politics and the economy, leaving the ruling RPT looking irrelevant as anything but a vehicle for personal rule. It is against this background that the run up to the next presidential election, scheduled for June 2003, will occur. The human rights situation remains grim. Deepening repression of journalists and opposition politicians is already occurring, against a background of popular fear and demoralisation. This scenario was confirmed by the modification of the Constitution on 30 December 2002, which allows Eyadéma to present himself again as a presidential candidate.

Scenarios for the near future

- Delay or cancellation of the 2003 polls. Domestic responses may be less violent than in the early 1990s, due to popular demoralisation in the south and the continuing grip of the armed forces. Outside reactions would vary according to the country and organisation, unless mass bloodshed occurred.
- Eyadéma stands down, possibly in favor of one of his two most prominent sons, and the bargaining process between government and opposition revives. The consequences of this would be unpredictable in any but the short term.
- A genuine election is held. This would entail Eyadéma conceding real power and the effective disarmament of the armed forces. This is implausible, especially given that the constitutional revision specifically disbars the only credible opposition candidate, Gilchrist Olympio, on grounds of residence.
- Eyadéma "runs" again and "wins" in what is now to be a single-round poll. The consequences in the south would depend largely on the behaviour of security forces towards civilians. A mass population flight, or unsuccessful attempts to flee, is possible.
- Successful popular revolution. This is unlikely, especially given the relatively quiescent state of the countryside and the demoralisation of urban populations. Were widespread insurrections to occur, bloodshed would be massive and the country would implode.

2 Introduction

Since the late 1980s Togo has seen a transition to attempted multiparty government which has been accompanied by widespread ethnic violence, security force repression, mass population exoduses into neighbouring countries and the effective hijacking of the “democratisation” process by one of West Africa’s most militaristic presidencies. The army and the Rassemblement du Peuple Togolais (RPT) – the ruling party – have been the key vehicles of the veteran president, General Gnassingbé Eyadéma: he has carefully constructed both along highly personalised lines since his accession to the presidency in 1967. Commentators are virtually unanimous that Eyadéma never had any intention of liberalising the political system, and relied upon a combination of political manoeuvring and both overt and covert repression to divide and demoralise an already fractured opposition, in the years running up to the legislative elections of 1994.¹ The confiscation of the electoral process was completed in the legislative elections of 1998, which also saw purges and political killings that were to result in condemnation by Amnesty International, the United Nations and the Organisation of African Unity. By a historical irony, Eyadéma occupied the presidency of the OAU at the time.

Meanwhile, the country’s formal economy, previously characterised by relatively high skill and education levels, French and German foreign investment and good infrastructure in regional terms, virtually imploded during the height of the crisis in 1990-1993. Some estimates put shrinkage in real GDP as high as 15%.² Economic collapse affected the south, centred upon the capital, Lomé, and the phosphates sector in the Hahoté-Kpémé zone. This was in part a deliberate strategy by the presidency, to undermine the opposition’s power base among southern populations. As this sequence of events unfolded, aid donors and the international financial organisations increasingly pulled out of their relations with a highly indebted and depressed economy. Meanwhile, the presidency concentrated upon securing other, less formal inflows of income. This involved often very dubious economic and business relationships with French, other African, Arab and Far Eastern interests.³

Throughout the decade, French officials maintained close relations with Eyadéma and his key officials, attempting to limit the effects of Togo’s isolation in international circles, and in particular the deepening hostility of European parliamentarians who were swift to implement an aid boycott after a particularly violent episode in 1993. French radical critics have been constant in their denunciation of these often highly opaque relationships, which have included sophisticated media lobbying on Eyadéma’s behalf by, among others, Thierry Saussez’ Paris-based group, Image et Stratégie.⁴ The generation of generally Gaullist French officials who had covertly helped Eyadéma to power in the 1960s still regarded the Togolese leader as demonstrating “deep-rooted Francophilia, one might even call it French

¹ At the Helm, *Africa Confidential*, vol. 38, no. 4, 31 January 1997; Last of the Dinosaurs, *Africa Confidential*, vol. 43, no. 14, 12 July 2002

² Economist Intelligence Unit, *Togo: Country Report Third Quarter 1994*, London, 1994, p. 7

³ Verschave, F-X, *Noir Silence: Qui arrêtera la Francophonie*, Paris: Les Arènes, 2001, pp.184ff.

⁴ Smith, S., and Antoine Glaser, *Ces Messieurs Afrique: Tome 2: Des Réseaux aux Lobbies*, Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1997, chapter 5

patriotism”.⁵ Other, younger officials took a different view, regarding him as a political embarrassment.

By the turn of the millennium, Eyadéma appeared to have survived the democratisation period relatively unscathed, despite controversy over allegations by Amnesty International, including an attack of rare virulence by Amnesty’s then secretary general, the Senegalese Pierre Sané.⁶ The bulk of refugees had returned to the country, although many were mistreated. Meanwhile, the principal opposition party, the Union des Forces de Changement (UFC), led from exile in Accra and London by Gilchrist Olympio, remained the object of repression and infiltration by the security forces, including death squads known as *les pigeons*.⁷ The future remained highly uncertain, despite the seeming solidity of Eyadéma’s continuing grip on power, which was confirmed by constitutional revisions rubberstamped by the Assemblée Nationale on 30 December 2002. The modification of Article 59 of the existing (1992) Constitution was the key alteration, removing the two-term limit on heads of state in office. The logical conclusion to be drawn from this move was that Eyadéma intends to remain in power indefinitely. Meanwhile, the possibility of Eyadéma being pursued under international law for crimes against humanity was becoming increasingly real.⁸

2001-2002 saw deepening tensions within the RPT reflecting the varying views of party barons over Eyadéma’s future. These have potentially serious consequences for the conduct of the 2003 election. Former RPT figureheads who have recently defected, or – in the case of former prime minister Agbéyomé – have declared themselves “*en maquis*” [“underground”], present a more enigmatic profile. However, Agbéyomé and former veteran Dahuku Péré, in the vehemence of their denunciations of both the RPT system and by extension the Eyadéma family networks themselves, have signalled the level of malaise in the political establishment. Perhaps opportunistically, having been marginalized on presidential orders, both men have claimed leadership of a reformist wing within the RPT, although Agbéyomé, in exile in France, is considerably more outspoken as the election approaches over the need for Eyadéma to step down. An interview in September with the sacked premier on Radio France International led to the radio station being jammed in Lomé.⁹ However, by December dissent within the RPT appeared to have been crushed, with a government reshuffle on 3 December seeing the departure of several relative liberals, but also of foreign minister Koffi Panou, previously viewed as one of the pillars of the regime.¹⁰

The constitutional changes of December 2002 were co-ordinated by the president of the Assemblée, the Eyadéma ultra-loyalist Fambaré Natchaba. It is inconceivable that this

⁵ “*une profonde francophilie, un patriotisme français, pourrait-on dire*”, Gaillard, P., *Foccart parle: entretiens avec Philippe Gaillard*, Paris: Fayard, 1997, vol. 2, p.152

⁶ Amnesty International, *Togo: Etat de Terreur*, Paris, 1999

⁷ Verschave, *Noir Silence*, pp.184-5

⁸ The Chile Factor, *Africa Confidential*, vol. 42, no. 18, 14 September 2001; Togo: Eyadema Likely to Seek Controversial Further Term, *Oxford Analytica*, 2 November 2001; Africa: International Law Brings Bad Leaders to Book, *Oxford Analytica*, 22 November 2001

⁹ L’ancien Premier Ministre togolais, Messan Agbéyomé Kodjo s’entretient avec Carine Frank [transcript of radio interview], *Radio France International*, 17 September 2002, <http://www.togoforum.com/Ap/Interviews/InterviewMakRFi091702.htm> (accessed December 2002)

¹⁰ New Government Claims Casualties, *Ghanaian Chronicle*, 9 December 2002, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200212100349.html> (accessed December 2002)

process would have occurred without explicit direction from Eyadéma's office. This is the clearest indication yet of Eyadéma's intention to achieve re-election in June 2003. Under the unamended 1992 constitution's Article 59, the president is limited to two terms only. This was preceded by the legislative elections of 27 October, where the RPT won a landslide majority in the face of a near-total boycott of the polls by opposition parties now grouped in the Coalition des Forces Démocratiques.¹¹ These developments appear to signal the final breakdown of the 1999 Lomé accords. Earlier in 2002, the Lomé accords mediators, who had been backed by the EU, ended their presence in Lomé when Brussels failed to renew their budget.¹²

3 The 1993 Crisis in Perspective

The crisis of the early 1990s – resulting in political deadlock, extreme levels of violence and the flight of up to 350,000 southern Togolese into neighbouring countries – was largely the result of regional economic decline coinciding with the end of the Cold War. Togo was among the worst victims of the wider continental upheaval. It rapidly became clear that the ruling RPT party and its veteran military dictator leader had no answers to this situation. Events moved swiftly from the first pro-democracy outburst, a march and rioting in Lomé on 5 October 1990 by intellectuals and students who demanded the release of two imprisoned activists. Civilian opposition to Eyadéma's manoeuvring was hardened by the brutality of the security forces, especially an incident in April 1991 when approximately 30 protestors were drowned in Bé lagoon, in Lomé's most anti-government district.¹³ Negotiations between the government and the opposition groups, acting under the umbrella of the Collectif pour l'Opposition Démocratique (COD), failed to resolve the tensions and Eyadéma decided to hold on, relying increasingly on the army and paramilitaries.

Pressure was also coming from France. In June 1990 President François Mitterrand had addressed the La Baule summit of Franco-African heads of state, linking future French development aid to democratisation in France's former African colonies. In Togo this played into the hands of southern intellectuals and politicians, who attempted to join forces under the banner of what became the COD. However, the opposition was badly divided and it was only after heavy pressure from France, via the newly-arrived ambassador, Bruno Delaye, that an accord between government and the COD was reached in June 1991 and a national conference was scheduled along similar lines to those elsewhere in francophone Africa in the period.¹⁴

By this stage economic decline was turning into paralysis, worsening the situation. However, Eyadéma had no intention of giving up power, fearing retribution from southern elites. Oppositionists at the national conference (8 July 1991-28 August 1991) reneged on the

¹¹ United Nations, Integrated Regional Information Networks, Landslide Win for Ruling Party at Legislative Polls, 30 October 2002

¹² Soudan, F., Togo. Les médiateurs plient bagage, *Jeune Afrique L'Intelligent*, 3-9 June 2002, pp.16-17

¹³ Heillbrunn, J.R, Togo: The National Conference and Stalled Reform, in Clark, J.F. and David E. Gardinier (eds), *Political Reform in Francophone Africa*, Boulder CO: Lynne Reiner, 1997, p. 233; Amnesty International, The Time has Come to See Justice Done [press statement by AI secretary general Pierre Sané], Paris, 20 July 1999

¹⁴ Robinson, P. T., The National Conference Phenomenon in Francophone Africa, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 36, no 3, July 1994, pp. 588-9; Heillbrunn, J.R and Comi Toulabor, Une si petite démocratisation pour le Togo..., *Politique Africaine* [Paris], vol. 58, 1995, p. 88-90

accords, and the conference declared itself sovereign, setting up a Haut Conseil de la République. This gave Eyadéma the chance “to bounce back all the more effectively, given that much of the opposition was steadily losing credibility”,¹⁵ due to infighting and political naiveté among his opponents. Ambiguous signals from France, after the previous year’s strong message, gave Eyadéma further encouragement, and an army coup was staged against the nascent civilian institutions in November-December 1991.¹⁶ This launched a period of shifting half-reform, civil unrest among the southern populations and state terror.

Southerners began fleeing to Benin and Ghana in significant numbers from December 1991. By this time the conference had imposed human rights activist Joseph Kokou Koffigoh as Prime Minister and the break between the southern oppositionists and the RPT had become complete. The first action by rampaging soldiers was to arrest Koffigoh, abolish the conference and launch terror attacks. Real power on the governmental side was now with the army.

Individual opposition politicians were hounded into exile: several were killed. The highest-profile oppositionist, Gilchrist Olympio, was the subject of an assassination attempt in July 1992, also fled the country. The military backed terror campaign intensified in late 1992, culminating in the massacre of hundreds of civilians in Lomé in January 1993, and a mass exodus of Ewé, the main southern ethnic group, estimated at 300,000.¹⁷ In the meantime, Eyadéma had redesigned the constitution to suit him and proclaimed it passed by a virtual 100% vote. This effectively turned the Haut Conseil into an empty shell. Following further accords in Ouagadougou between the RPT hierarchy and an increasingly pressurised and disorganised opposition,¹⁸ presidential elections in August saw Eyadéma elected unopposed amid scenes of grim farce.¹⁹

Refugee numbers were estimated at the time at approximately 300,000, mostly from the Lomé area. In the 1994-1997 period, as the Eyadéma regime stabilised, they began returning, both spontaneously and with UNHCR assistance.²⁰ On 27 November 1997 the UNHCR announced that “[t]he repatriation programme is now successfully completed”. The UNHCR had been working on water and sanitation facilities in Togo itself, and microeconomic projects. According to the US Committee for Refugees, approximately 5,000 Togolese refugees remained in Ghana and 1,000 in Benin at the end of 1997. The organisation estimates that up to 150,000 had originally fled into Benin, a similar number to that in Ghana. Of those remaining in 1997 (not counting those registered with the Beninese authorities but not the UNHCR), the majority were reported as staying with relatives.²¹

¹⁵ “de rebondir avec beaucoup plus d’à-propos qu’une grande partie de l’opposition s’égare de plus en plus sur la voie de décrédibilisation”, Heillbrunn and Toulabor. p. 92

¹⁶ Heillbrunn, p. 229

¹⁷ Economist Intelligence Unit *Togo: Country Report Second Quarter 1993*, London, 1993, p. 12

¹⁸ Pilon, M., *L’Observation des processus électoraux: enseignements de l’élection présidentielle au Togo, Politique Africaine* [Paris], vol. 56, 1994

¹⁹ Von Trotha, T., ‘C’est la pagaille’: Quelques remarques sur l’élection présidentielle et observation internationale au Togo, *Politique Africaine* [Paris], vol. 52, 1994, pp. 137-43; Verdet, H., Le triomphe sanglant d’Eyadéma, *Le Quotidien de Paris*, 29-30 August 1993

²⁰ Overall UNHCR statistics available on the website of the European Migration Center in Berlin, at <http://www.emz-berlin.de/Statistik/weflu017.htm> (accessed December 2002)

²¹ US Committee for Refugees, *Country Report: Benin and Ghana: 1998*, Washington, 1998, <http://www.refugees.org/world/countryrpt/africa/1998.htm> (accessed December 2002)

The 1994 legislative elections, held against a background of declining but still real army violence, saw Yao Agboyebor's Comité d'Action pour le Renouveau (CAR) gain 36 seats of 78 contested, in a hung parliament. Eyadéma nonetheless appointed as Prime Minister the distinguished but politically marginal former secretary general of the OAU, Edem Kodjo. The “*restauration autoritaire*” was all but complete: most of the capable opposition figures remained in exile. The Ewé and other southern populations still in Togo were increasingly cowed and apathetic as the 1990s continued. Via a series of dubious by-elections, the RPT was in control of the legislature by mid-1996. At this point, Eyadéma replaced the relatively neutral Kodjo with RPT loyalist Kwassi Klutse, prompting opposition parties to suspend participation in formal politics.

4 The Army-Party Relationship in the 1990s

Far more than the RPT, the Forces Armées Togolaises (FAT) are situated at the heart of President Eyadéma's domestic power, as has been the case since his accession to the presidency. The FAT have played a determinant role since the mid-1970s, functioning according to many domestic and foreign critics as a force of domestic repression rather than as an instrument of national defence. The army was specifically kept out of the national conference process, a decision taken by Eyadéma himself as well as close relatives. As a result it has never been accountable either to civil society or the formal political class. After the national conference period, Eyadéma clan control of the key units appeared to have tightened: several opponents and human rights activists asserted this at the time.

During the 1970s, the FAT complement expanded swiftly to an estimated 13,500. According to one of the most acute of Togolese analysts, the exiled political scientist Comi Toulabor, selection methods for FAT conventional forces are idiosyncratic. Of the total strength, approximately 80% are recruited from northern ethnic groups, mostly from Eyadéma's own Kabyé identity.²² Until very recently, the recruitment process was based upon the “traditional” wrestling tournaments, known as *evala*, held in Eyadéma's natal area of Pya. Toulabor notes that, as a result, the army is largely composed of virtually illiterate recruits, born into a tradition of physical violence as the solution to all problems, with mistrust and contempt for all coastal and other southern political and ethnic groupings, above all the Ewé. In return, as has been seen, Ewé and others in the South have little but fear and contempt for the northerners who dominate the armed forces, the *gendarmérie* and other security organs. In Lomé and other southern centres the FAT and associated organs are referred to as “*une armée des cousins*”.²³

At officer level, a similar picture, possibly even more pronounced, prevails. Since 1974, Eyadéma has personally supervised the training of senior FAT personnel. Until the purges of 1998-1999, the FAT's officer corps – which included several individuals tasked with covert action conflicting with both the Togolese constitution and international human rights norms – numbered approximately 300. Of these, 250 were of northern origin, including 200 Kabyé, many with geographical and clan links to Eyadéma himself. A “hard core” of these were from Pya, Eyadéma's natal village. An informal ceiling of 50 southern officers has generally

²² Toulabor, C., La ‘bataille finale’ du général Eyadéma au Togo, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, March 1993, p. 18

²³ *Ibid.*, pp.18-19; personal interviews with opposition journalists and representatives of the French military mission, Lomé, December 1996

existed. These are largely recruited and promoted to give the FAT a presence in southern centres, where northerners are feared and reviled by local populations. However, these officers have historically been kept away from the key commands. In particular, before and above all after the political crisis of 1990-1993, southerners have largely been excluded from command positions in the *garde présidentielle*. Shock units led by the para-commandos, fighter command in Togo's tiny air force, and arms depots, which have themselves been unusually well provisioned either directly by France or via third countries such as Chad.²⁴

According to Toulabor, and leading specialist on the FAT, opposition intellectual Ayayi Apedo-Amah, no key unit of the FAT since the beginning of the crisis has been commanded by a southerner, although ethnic balancing and a degree of decentralisation of the high command was seen in the late 1990s. In particular, the chief of the defence staff and current defence minister, Colonel Assani Tidjani, was promoted due to his half-Nigerian nationality, although both the air force and the gendarmerie remained firmly under Kabyé control.²⁵ In addition, it was reported in 1994 that a French security firm was to train a specialised political intelligence service along the lines of the French DGSE (Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure) to monitor and possibly carry out actions against political opponents in neighbouring countries.²⁶ This is answerable to Eyadéma personally. Informal predecessors of this unit were presumed to have been behind the assassination attempt against Gilchrist Olympio before the 1993 presidential election. At this point (mid-1992) Lomé had become frenetic with rumour and counter-rumour over the responsibility for each terrorist act. However, anti-Olympio southerners were not thought at the time capable of mounting such attacks on their own.²⁷

The syndrome of priority recruitment from the Kabyé is also seen in the customs services, the fire service and above all in the gendarmerie and other branches of the national police services. This syndrome is at the heart of the tension between the security forces and urban and rural dwellers throughout the South (and indeed much of the North), since the mid-1980s – and above all since the politico-economic crisis of the 1990s – although regional specialists describe the security forces as a source of terror since the beginning of Eyadéma's formal rule as president.²⁸ In Lomé, but also in other southern centres, the *gendarmerie* is seen as a daily manifestation of Kabyé rule of force: the local population, to the extent that individuals will even discuss this question, has no confidence in the “civilian” security personnel.

Through much of the 1990s, Eyadéma was also advised on security matters by often very high-ranking retired French military personnel. Other influential French figures who have acted as counsellors include former prime minister Michel Rocard, former co-operation minister Bernard Debré (Eyadéma's personal physician) and former president of the French Conseil constitutionnel Roland Dumas. Rocard in particular was vociferous in Eyadéma's defence in the wake of the 1999 Amnesty International report, and also attacked the European Union's election observation mission to the 1998 presidential elections as biased in favour of

²⁴ Toulabor, La ‘bataille finale’...; Amnesty International, *Etat de terreur*, chapter 12

²⁵ Choppy Waters, *Africa Confidential*, vol. 40, no. 7, 2 April 1999

²⁶ Une DGSE togolaise, *La Lettre du Continent*, 29 December 1994

²⁷ Personal communication from exiled Togolese opposition activist. Accra, December 1993

²⁸ Verschave, F-X, *La Françafrique. Le plus long scandale de la République*, Paris: Les Arènes, 1998

Olympio, whose connections are strongly Anglophone.²⁹ Before his death in 1997, former president Charles de Gaulle's "Monsieur Afrique", Jacques Foccart, was a constant influence on Eyadéma. It was Foccart who effectively propelled the latter into power in 1967. Eyadéma has also kept close relations with Chirac since the latter's election, and above all since the French president's re-election in May 2002, which saw the end of "cohabitation" with a socialist administration which was hostile to the Togolese leader. Recent "private" visits by Eyadéma to Paris have involved personal contact with ministerial and presidential figures.³⁰

Despite Eyadéma's reluctant decision to tolerate the semblance of an independent press from 1991-1992, with Lomé-based titles including *La Tribune des Démocrates* and the satirical *Le Kpakpa Désenchanté*, all journalists were warned, often via violence or explicit symbolic threats, including the use of voodoo, to stay away from any form of coverage involving discussion of security force activities.³¹ This policy towards the independent press has since intensified, with arrests and threats an everyday feature of the period since 1998. Addressing the Kabyé-dominated officer corps in January 1993, Eyadéma was quoted as follows.

There is no question of giving in: we will show [the opposition] that we remain a united army. We are prepared to retake command, but not to abandon it until we have decided to do so for the honour of our corps, for our children, and to avoid future suffering... Think of your promotion, your peace of mind and your retirement... The democratic process is currently capsized... The army has rediscovered its unity and strength... Everything is ready for the final battle... In collaboration with the police, some of our members are already mopping up... Intimidation is part of our plan. But try to shed as little blood as possible. Pillaging may occur, but it is not a good idea to set things ablaze, even when useful. I don't want to hear about rapes or acts against women and children. That could work against us. No random kidnappings, that's also a double edged sword.³²

These remarks, which appear authentic, provide the key to an analytical understanding of the Eyadéma government in the 1993-1994 period, when the "*restauration autoritaire*" was being implemented. It appears certain that the President did not seriously consider the possibility of political retirement at this point. Equally, there was no potential pole of

²⁹ Michel Rocard, l'Ancien premier ministre français, à pieds joints dans la gadoue togolaise, *Afrique-Express* [Paris], May 1999, <http://www.afrique-express.com/archive/OUEST/togo/togopol/rocardtogo.htm> (accessed December 2002)

³⁰ Gnassingbé Eyadéma demande la reprise de la coopération militaire française, *La Lettre du Continent*, no 403, 4 July 2002

³¹ Personal interviews with Togolese independent journalists, Lomé, December 1996

³² "Il n'est pas question de se laisser faire, quitte à leur [les opposants] montrer que nous demeurons une armée solidaire. Nous acceptons de reprendre les commandes, mais de ne les laisser que quand nous aurons décidé pour l'honneur de notre corps, pour nos enfants, et pour éviter les souffrances à venir. ... Pensez à votre avancement, à votre tranquillité et à votre retraite... Le processus démocratique à l'heure actuelle a capoté L'armée a retrouvé son unité et sa force Tout est prêt pour la bataille finale En collaboration avec la police, le nettoyage a bien commencé avec certains de nos éléments Des actes d'intimidation font partie de nos plans. Mais essayez d'être le moins sanglants possible. Il peut y avoir des mises à sac, mais les mises à feu sont peu recommandables, même si utiles. Je ne voudrais pas entendre parler de viols ni d'actes perpétrés contre les enfants ou les femmes. Cela peut se retourner contre nous. Pas d'enlèvements à tort et à travers, c'est aussi un couteau à deux tranchants." Toulabor, *La bataille....*, p.19, citing a secretly recorded speech by Eyadéma to the officer corps, at the head quarters of Adidogomé, 14 January 1993

competition within the RPT's elite, a key consideration for a head of state otherwise universally considered to be a waning force.³³

5 Dynastic Influences

The Eyadéma clan is well cemented at the core of the Togolese State, and has been since the coup attempts of the 1970s, which appeared to have concentrated Eyadéma's mind, while deepening his relationship with elements of the French security services. The overlap between family and state networks has been achieved by the classic process of appointing sons to key positions, while producing and marrying off daughters on polygamous lines to key or potential regime players. According to several regional observers, it is the first of these two groups who monopolise the "real" networks of political and security-force power, while it is the second who operate at the more informal levels of political influence and family intelligence gathering which characterise the RPT's recent history. Thus, daughters of Eyadéma were married (generally as second wives) to senior figures including ex-prime minister Agbéyomé Kodjo and former foreign minister and veteran RPT apparatchik Koffi Panou.

The role of Eyadéma's sons is considerably more visible and pronounced. The best known, Ernest, is thought to play a similar role in both the security and economic spheres to that of Saddam Hussein's son Uday in Iraq. Ranked as a lieutenant colonel and commanding both the para-commandos and the Forces d'Intervention Rapide, Ernest is conventionally viewed as a possible successor to his father on Eyadéma's retirement, especially were this to occur before scheduled elections in 2003. According to opponents in exile, Ernest has for the past decade maintained day-to-day control over northern Togo, while Eyadéma himself administers events in Lomé and the south.

Another son, Faure, is RPT *député* for Sokodé, a vital regime stronghold in the North. For several months since the start of 2002, Faure, who enjoys a technocratic profile thanks to a business administration degree from a United States university, has also been mentioned as a possible successor, with a less controversial reputation than Ernest.³⁴ The possible election of Faure as secretary general of the RPT, before the next presidential election, would be a clear signal that a dynastic succession will occur unless the country collapses into anarchy.

Among other Eyadéma family members "Rock" Gnassingbé Eyadéma has long been the commander of the armoured division, a unit with long and close links to the French military co-operation apparatus. Another son, Kpatcha, is highly influential at the Port Autonome de Lomé.³⁵ Critics allege that the extended Eyadéma clan also has a controlling interest in both the customs and taxation systems, and the Office Togolais des Phosphates (OTP), the backbone of the formal economy and most difficult of all privatisation targets. In particular, economists allege that the OTP has been effectively ransacked through over or double invoicing and physical skimming of output to the benefit to figures at the highest levels of government.³⁶

³³ Personal observations, Togo, 1994, 1996

³⁴ Faure Gnassingbé for President?, *La Lettre du Continent* [Paris], 18 July 2002

³⁵ Paret, L., Famille quand tu nous tiens!, *Le Marabout* [Burkina Faso], no 1, October 1991

³⁶ Personal interviews with French and international cooperation officials, 1994, 1996, 2000, 2002

6 The Human Rights Situation

The issue of human rights and their abuse has been central to relations between Togo and the international community since the early 1990s. The country's political and diplomatic obscurity has minimised the impact of campaigns by organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Togo's lack of economic weight, along with an effective use of Paris-based political lobbyists, has tended to damp international criticism in all but the most high profile of cases. However, the best known human rights bodies have been steadily critical of abuses: this criticism has increased since 1995.

In particular, Amnesty's annual report for 1998 noted continuing extrajudicial executions of returnees from exile and that "the security forces ... continued to enjoy total impunity for widespread human rights violations", including the detention and torture of journalists and opposition supporters.³⁷ This was followed by the wide ranging, detailed and damning report *Togo: Etat de Terreur*, which provoked considerable polemic between the human rights organisation, then under the leadership of Senegal's Pierre Sané, and the Eyadéma government. The publication covered the entire period from the demonstration of 5 October 1990, to the end of 1998, including such episodes as the discovery of bodies in Bé lagoon in April 1991, and the waves of extrajudicial executions of civilians and dissident military personnel in 1993 and 1994. It also noted that "[because they are] regarded as potentially dangerous, Togolese in temporary exile have frequently been extra-judicially executed on their return".³⁸

This report was unusually explicit in its allegations, including the dumping of hundreds of corpses from low-flying aircraft at night in the Bight of Benin, in June 1998.³⁹ This drew a surprisingly strong response from Lomé and Paris. The story of the report's compilation is relatively straightforward, that of the Togolese and African response to its publication less so.⁴⁰

The report excited controversy in France, with several prominent politicians coming to Eyadéma's defence. The European deputy Jean-Antoine Giansily, president of the Groupe d'Amitié Europe-Togo, dismissed the report as the product of a British and German plot against French interests in the region. Chirac, visiting Lomé in July 1999, himself speculated that "this might, to a large extent, be an exercise in manipulation".⁴¹ Former Prime Minister Michel Rocard also spoke out, as did the Grande Loge Nationale de France, which has ten Masonic lodges in Togo. Eyadéma himself made a legal complaint and engaged advocates including Jacques Vergès.⁴²

³⁷ Amnesty International, *Annual Report 1998: Togo (the Togolese Republic)*, London, 1998

³⁸ "Considérés comme un danger potentiel, les Togolais ayant trouvé un refuge temporaire à l'étranger ont fréquemment, après leur retour, été l'objet d'exécutions extrajudiciaires", Amnesty International, *Togo: Etat...*, p. 27

³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 29

⁴⁰ For Amnesty International documentation, including press releases from this era, see www.amnesty.org (English) or www.ifrance.com/efai/DOC/AFR/AFR57.HTM (French); Ligue des Droits de l'Homme du Bénin, *Rapport d'enquête de la L.D.H. sur le dossier des "cadavres" togolais*, Cotonou, 1999

⁴¹ "peut-être, s'agit-il là, dans une large mesure, d'une opération de manipulation", Verschave, *Noir Silence*, p. 192

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.193

Amnesty International received support from a detailed subsequent report from the main Beninese human rights organisation, devoted entirely to the corpses issue and taking detailed testimony from Beninese fishermen who had discovered some of the corpses floating off the coast. By this time Amnesty was breaking new ground in its methodology, openly criticising France's role in Togo and calling for a suspension of the few remaining co-operation arrangements. Following further research, Amnesty felt it was in a position to refute a key criticism of its original report that the existence of hundreds of floating corpses could not have stayed a secret for so long. In particular, Togolese clandestine journalists were quoted as saying:

Of course we knew [at the time] about the bodies thrown up on the beach, but given the daily threats against us we had to censor ourselves by refraining from investigating the affair.⁴³

The row persisted to the extent that a joint OAU-UN enquiry was called. This published its report on 22 February 2001 and was perhaps surprisingly critical of Lomé. The precise number of those killed in June 1998 will never be known although there is considerable evidence that they included a large number of soldiers, presumably as a purge of dissidents in the FAT in connection with the 1998 presidential election. Eyadéma has survived numerous coup attempts since 1967: the killings may have been carried out by security services on a pre-emptive basis. The publication of this report was a severe political embarrassment for Eyadéma, who was already heavily occupied managing other pressures, mainly surrounding the continuing aid boycott, resulting from his 1998 re-election. Legal action against Amnesty was quietly shelved.

Human rights abuses continue including alleged extrajudicial executions and many documented instances of the detention of journalists and political opponents, most notably the imprisonment for much of 2001-2002 of leading opponent Yao Agboyibor of the CAR. He was finally released, as a supposed goodwill gesture on presidential orders when the Inter-Togolese Dialogue, initiated under the "Lomé Accords" brokered between government and opposition in late 1999 by EU-backed mediators, appeared finally to be moribund.

7 Conclusion: Short-term Scenarios and Medium-term Risks

The next flashpoint in Togo's continuing politico-economic crisis will be the presidential elections scheduled for June 2003. A range of potential outcomes can be envisaged, none of which can be discounted, even the complete collapse of the country amid population flight and mass bloodshed.

- The first possibility is that the elections do not occur at all. This depends upon the balance of pressure between Eyadéma and outside powers, and whether Eyadéma or relatives feel that they can defy the outside world in the face of the continuing delinquency of Togo's real domestic economy outside the food-producing and barter sectors. December 2002's constitutional amendments would appear to signal that Eyadéma has discounted outside

⁴³ "Nous avons bel et bien été informés [à l'époque] de ce que les corps ont été rejetés sur la plage, mais compte tenu des menaces dont nous sommes quotidiennement l'objet nous étions obligés de nous auto-censurer en nous abstenant de toute investigation sur cette affaire." Anonymous Togolese journalist, quoted in Amnesty International, *Togo. Il est temps de rendre des comptes. L'urgence d'une commission d'enquête*, Paris, 1999, p.

influences. This in turn suggests that Eyadéma will be relatively unconcerned by outside protests over likely blatant abuses of human rights – including the right to life – during the electoral period. Outside formal budgetary circuits, resources certainly exist to retain one or more of the many Paris-based political consultancies used during the past decade. The non-Francophone international media would pay little attention to a delay or “manufactured emergency” in the Togolese electoral process, except in the case of very large-scale massacres by security operatives.

- A dynastic outcome is possible, in which one of Eyadéma’s sons – either Faure or Ernest – is imposed as a candidate upon a purged RPT and elected in a dubious election. A different version of the same scenario would be that Eyadéma, having been “re-elected”, then retired in favor of one of the above. This would necessitate guarantees for Gnassingbé Eyadéma himself from other domestic players, including the opposition UFC, and more informally from several of his own colleagues at the apex of the military-security establishment. The attitude of Paris would be crucial. Indications are that French officials at the Quai d’Orsay would be quietly relieved at any peaceful departure from power of Eyadéma, especially if the family member succeeding him were to adopt a more liberal approach to domestic opponents.⁴⁴ How stable such an arrangement would prove in anything but the shortest of terms, given the underlying structural and regional tensions in Togolese society, is unpredictable. An Eyadéma family succession, combined with an attempt to reform the system, which has evolved since the 1970s, would risk triggering social forces that have been kept dormant since 1993.
- In the event that a “genuine” election is held, the UFC’s Gilchrist Olympio would almost certainly win for reasons of ethnic and demographic balance. However, one of the alterations to the 1992 Constitution requires candidates to have spent the twelve months before the opening of the campaign resident in the country. This clearly rules out the exiled Olympio. The possibility of any other member of the fractured opposition winning is implausible. For any such process to play out the FAT and associated militias would have to be disarmed, something that neither Eyadéma nor his key lieutenants would tolerate. Negotiations between the various parties in an increasingly messy domestic political process would be exceptionally complex, and would of necessity also involve actors from across the French political spectrum. These individuals would possess diverse and often conflicting agendas with no relevance to the day-to-day realities faced by the Togolese electorate.
- The almost certain self-succession of Eyadéma will trigger a definitive international boycott of the country, running beyond the current heavy aid restrictions, and will result in formal national bankruptcy. Eyadéma appears to judge that he and close associates can survive such a scenario, which would itself confirm Togo’s pariah status. The societal consequences of such a development are unpredictable. Repression of individuals, including those both politically and journalistically prominent, and at neighbourhood level in Lomé and other southern opposition strongholds including Kpalimé, would be guaranteed. Whether this in itself would trigger a mass flight towards either the Ghanaian

⁴⁴ As far ago as 1994, French officials at top level were wondering aloud about what they “could do” about Eyadéma. Personal communication, commanding official at the Caisse Française de Développement (now the Agence Française de Développement), late 1994. Personal communications, French and Togolese journalists and communications consultants including individuals with direct relationships with Togolese government personnel, 1996, 1998, 2002

or Beninese borders is uncertain. Two factors are difficult to gauge. The first is the degree to which the FAT and paramilitary proxies are prepared publicly to kill Togolese civilians *en masse* under a policy of terror co-ordinated by a regime in which elements of the former may be losing their own confidence. The second is the willingness of predominantly Ewé southerners to “vote with their feet” as they did at the height of the 1990-1994 crisis, by mass exodus over the Ghanaian and Beninese borders. Major population movements out of northern Togo into northern Ghana, northern Benin and southern Burkina Faso are considerably less likely.

- The possibility of popular revolution in response to violence associated with the candidacy of any member of the Eyadéma family must be considered. However, given the scale and nature of the Togolese security apparatus, including communications surveillance, human intelligence and armed capacity, relative to the resources available to civil society in what is a relatively small urban population, such a development is less than certain. Rural society could be expected to stay resolutely neutral were Lomé to explode into insurrection. The rural areas are probably more regulated than is generally assumed via the control of mostly centrally appointed traditional leaders. A claimed 3,000 such leaders were among the social groups supposedly demanding the change to the Constitution. Most independent observers regard Togo as having at most 1,000 traditional leaders at local level.⁴⁵ In the south, occult forces remain a powerful factor for obedience among ordinary citizens.⁴⁶

On balance, it seems overwhelmingly likely that Eyadéma will be “re-elected”. The process will surely be boycotted by all outside observers or monitors, including those from the Francophone commonwealth, which avoided involvement in the legislative elections of late 2002 after the failure of its role in mediation efforts. The dispatch of an observer mission from the African Union would be the subject of disquiet in many African capitals, including regional neighbors such as Dakar, Bamako, and Abuja. It is possible that the bulk of the population would acquiesce in an effective dynastic succession, through fear. It is to be expected that there would be a continuation, and possibly an increase, in Togolese citizens claiming asylum in certain neighbouring countries and in Europe, particularly the United Kingdom and Scandinavia. Especially considering the likelihood that France and Germany would maintain their semi-formal policy of refusing asylum to all but the most prominent and diplomatically significant of individuals.

A mass flight of southern populations would appear uncertain in any but the worst circumstances. Any refugee (as opposed to asylum) flows would almost inevitably head for the Volta region of Ghana, where family and ethnic ties remain strong. In the eventuality of a major exodus the Accra government would be reluctant to extend a welcome and would probably fail to co-operate whole-heartedly with organisations such as the UNHCR and the ICRC. Since the election of John Kuffour as Jerry Rawlings’ successor, the Ghanaian government has maintained a policy of studied neutrality towards Togo. The Ghanaian security services would appear also to be following this line, which – according to some local observers – was not always the case in the 1990s.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Forcing à l’Assemblée Nationale pour modifier la Constitution, 27 December 2002, <http://www.togo-confidentiel.com> (accessed January 2003)

⁴⁶ Communications from two Togolese political exiles, Western Europe, September-October 2002

⁴⁷ Contacts with specialist journalists in both the state-owned and independent Ghanaian media, Accra and London, November 2002

Overall, the “*restauration autoritaire*”, defined by Toulabor, and other political scientists, as the signal characteristic of several Franc Zone economies after the ferment of the early 1990s, appears to have succeeded in Togo to a greater extent than in neighbouring Benin and in an increasingly chaotic Côte d’Ivoire, but arguably to a lesser extent than in Cameroon and the Republic of Congo. Barring completely unexpected short-term circumstances, the immediate position is likely to be one of continuing selective repression amid economic stagnation which is belied by the headline figures on the economy as formally defined. However, it appears unlikely that the system built by Eyadéma, one of the most personalised in postcolonial African history, will survive him. He is now 67 years old. In this, Togo most closely resembles Gabon and, especially, Zimbabwe.

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