

**A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF SUCCESSION CRISIS AND POST-EYADEMA
POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN TOGO**

Adewale Banjo
University of Zululand

Abstract

The politics of succession in West Africa in the immediate 'post-third wave era has left much to be desired and, by extension, has affected the quality of democracy in the sub-region. By means of descriptive approach and content-analysis of primal) documentary sources as well as data collected from fieldwork in Lome, the article describe the geo-political setting of Togo, process of constitutional summersault, the transitional politics and election that legitimize the Faure Eyadema regime against the background of a sustained opposition from political as well as civil rights movement. The article concludes by observing that the crisis is not over yet as the struggle straddles the continuing manipulation of geo-ethnic divide in Togo.

Introduction

Succession is broadly understood to mean the process of changing leadership. It basically involves three stages: the vacating of power by the older ruler; the selection of the new and the legitimization of the new leader. Succession times are often tense times for all types of regimes, even where there are established procedures and easy legitimization, but even more precarious for authoritarian regimes. With reference to West African sub-region no country has been spared the tensions and pressures associated with the succession process since the annulment of 12 June 1993 presidential election in Nigeria.

Articulated in different ways and at different inter-locking levels in each of the countries of West Africa, the politics of succession has, for two basic reasons, clearly

become worthy of closer scrutiny both from a policy dimension and in terms of the kinds of follow-up research work that would need to be undertaken. The first reason centers on the fact that succession politics is, by definition, central to the quality of civil rule and its long-term sustainability. Secondly, the ramifications of the succession process are integral to the apparent disconnect between the actual practice of democracy as experienced across West Africa and the democratic aspirations of the bulk of citizenry.

As eloquently put by Council for Development and Social Research in Africa[CODESRIA] and Open Society for West Africa[OSIWA], to focus on the politics of succession at this point in the history of efforts at extending the frontiers of political reforms and citizen rights in West Africa represents a concrete contribution to on-going reflections on the long-term health of the polities that make up a sub-region that has only recently begun to recover from a history of post independence instability and violent conflicts [CODESRIA-OSIWA, 2007].¹ Furthermore, viewed in a longer historical perspective, it would be difficult not to recall the struggles over succession between and among military officers and civilian politicians that represented a key feature of the politics of governance in West Africa. The transition to electoral pluralism which marked the end of single party and military rule foreclosed certain types of succession politics whilst legitimating others. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the management of the multifaceted succession process brought about by the new context has been an issue of growing discontent which will be as critical to the prospects of the democratic project and the overall well-being of the political system as anything else.

Background & Context

Beginning from Benin Republic where citizen mobilization against the ancient regime of Matthew Kerekou resulted in the convening of a sovereign national conference that paved the way for a new constitutional order, single party and military regimes in the sub-region mostly unraveled, replaced by various types of electoral pluralism. That process, structured within a multi-party framework, produced a variety of elected governments and generalized realignments in politics whose dynamics have been the main stuff of democratization in West Africa. Most countries have had repeat elections involving transitions from one elected government to another even if the transitions mostly meant the return of incumbents and/or ruling parties to power.

CODESRIA-OSIWA concept note reveals that the transformation that occurred on the West African political topography from the early 1990s were broadly received as representing a new era in the political development of the sub-region. After all, West Africa, with its succession of military coups d'état and the political violence associated with the single party systems that proliferated had developed a reputation as one of the more volatile and unstable belts on the African continent. While de jure and de facto, rules of succession were clearly in operation and there were a number of outstanding examples of legal succession, the unpredictability of change, the rate at which it happened, and the resort to illegalities that accompanied it constituted the foundation on which West Africa's reputation for instability was anchored.

Furthermore the re-birth of electoral pluralism was embraced as offering a possibility for a new start in the political development of the sub-region. However, more than a decade after the first reforms were introduced, and in spite of the varying degrees of progress registered, there have been many discontents thrown up both by the practice

of the democratic project and the impact it has registered in the lives of the generality of the populace. A central element of the discontents is connected to the organization and conduct of the politics of succession in the sub-region.

Arguably CODESRIA-OSIW A paper suggests that succession politics in West Africa's democracies has played itself out in at least six levels. One level has involved the scope which has emerged for the alternation of power within and between political parties/coalitions of parties. Another level has centered upon inter-generational shifts in power crystallized into discourses about the need for the old guard to make way for a younger generation of politicians within political parties and the administrative system. At a third level, the process of governing the succession process between the military and elected civilian government was not always given in all of the countries where prolonged military rule formed a part of the old order of things or where politics had become intensely militarized as a result of prolonged armed conflicts.

Fourthly, the case has also been made for an engendering of politics in order both to increase the participation of women and assure a role for them in the succession process. Fifthly, concern has been focused too on the role of electoral agencies and the judiciary as credible arbiters in and governors of the succession process. But a sixth and much more contested issue in the succession process has been the push on the part of incumbents to amend existing constitutional provisions, alter party rules and procedures, and engage in generalized gerrymandering in order either to perpetuate themselves in office or anoint a successor whom they hope they would be able to remote control. In some instances, incumbents have positioned their own sons to succeed them in power and have undertaken repeated reshufflings of the political system in order to have a better

chance of securing that end. This latter component of the politics of succession in West Africa merits closer attention as it has played itself out in different ways across West Africa with all the adverse consequences for the health of the political order. It is within this context and against this background that we take on the specific case study of the Republic of Togo.

Togo: The Geo-Political Setting

The Republic of Togo is located between Ghana and Republic of Benin in West Africa with a population of 5.5 million. After attaining independence from France in 1960, Sylvanus Olympio ruled the country until Gnassingbe Eyadema seized power in a bloodless coup in 1967. Following the coup, he dissolved all political parties and governed unchallenged through the military, which he kept loyal through a system of patronage, for almost three decades. Torture and extra-judicial killings were common under Eyadema, and an estimated one million Togolese left the country since he came to power in 1967. On the crest of 'Huntingtonian' third wave of democratization, political parties were legalized in 1991, and Eyadema won landslide victories in all three Togo's post-1991 Presidential elections. But accusations of political repression and electoral fraud were alleged to have characterized Togo's weak and corruption-ridden democracy. Human rights activists also estimated that '...Eyadema salted a personal fortune approaching \$3billion in foreign banks' [www.afrol.com. 2005].²

However Togo's poor human and political rights records did not all go unnoticed. This in 1993 forced the European Union [EU] to halt its cooperation with Eyadema regime and canceled its bilateral engagements with the country in response to the ailing

human rights situation and violent crackdown on the opposition. The EU did not warm up to Togo until Eyadema agreed to invite the EU for negotiation and a resumption of aid, on the primary condition of improved human rights profile and political reforms [*West African Bulletin* June 1995:17].³ But the EU Mission that visited Togo from the 3 to 6 June 2004 to follow on these engagements only noted after the visit that 'it was yet too early to make an assessment of development in Togo' [*West African Bulletin* June 1995: 17].⁴ The EU skepticisms delayed the total lifting of sanctions placed on Togo, which in turn has denied Togo's access to over euro 40 million in investments from the European Development Fund [EDF]. The insistence of EU on reforms and the Togo's hurting economy forced the Togolese authority to accept holding elections early in 2005 [*Punch Newspaper* 6 May, 2005:1].⁵ This was the state of affairs in Togo until the death of Eyadema in February 2005.

Constitutional Crisis after Gnassingbe Eyadema

Precisely on 5 February 2005, Gnassingbe Eyadema, 69 years old, Africa's longest ruler reportedly suffered a major heart attack. According to Barry Moussa, Special Adviser to the President, he latter died of cardiac arrest, as he was being rushed to France for medical attention [afrol.com, 2005].⁶ There can be no doubt that Eyadema refracted the trajectories of the destinies of at least two generations of Togolese. Gnassingbe Eyadema's short profile revealed that, he assumed power on the 13th of January 1967; proclaimed president 14 April 1967; elected president 30th December 1979; re-elected 21 December 1986; 25 August 1993, 21 June 1998, and 1 June 2003 [Pierre Englebert 2005:1176].⁷ But at death, Gnassingbe left 5 million Togolese people

deeply impoverished, and with little experience with either opposition politics or true democracy. However, regardless of Eyadema's credential as a dictator, he may have been mourned or celebrated even in death by the majority of the oppressed Togolese people. This was not to be, primarily because of the crude politics and manipulation of the constitution, that characterized the process which led to the emergence of his thirty-nine year old, second son, Mr. Faure Gnassingbe as his successor.

Gnassingbe Eyadema seemed to have chiseled a well-oiled path to continue the domination and subjugation of the Togolese people even in death. Though Eyadema's son, Faure, was part of his government as a Minister in charge of Equipment, Mines, Posts and Telecommunications, and on this account may be described as an actor in Togo's national politics, it was constitutionally impossible for Faure to have succeeded his father.

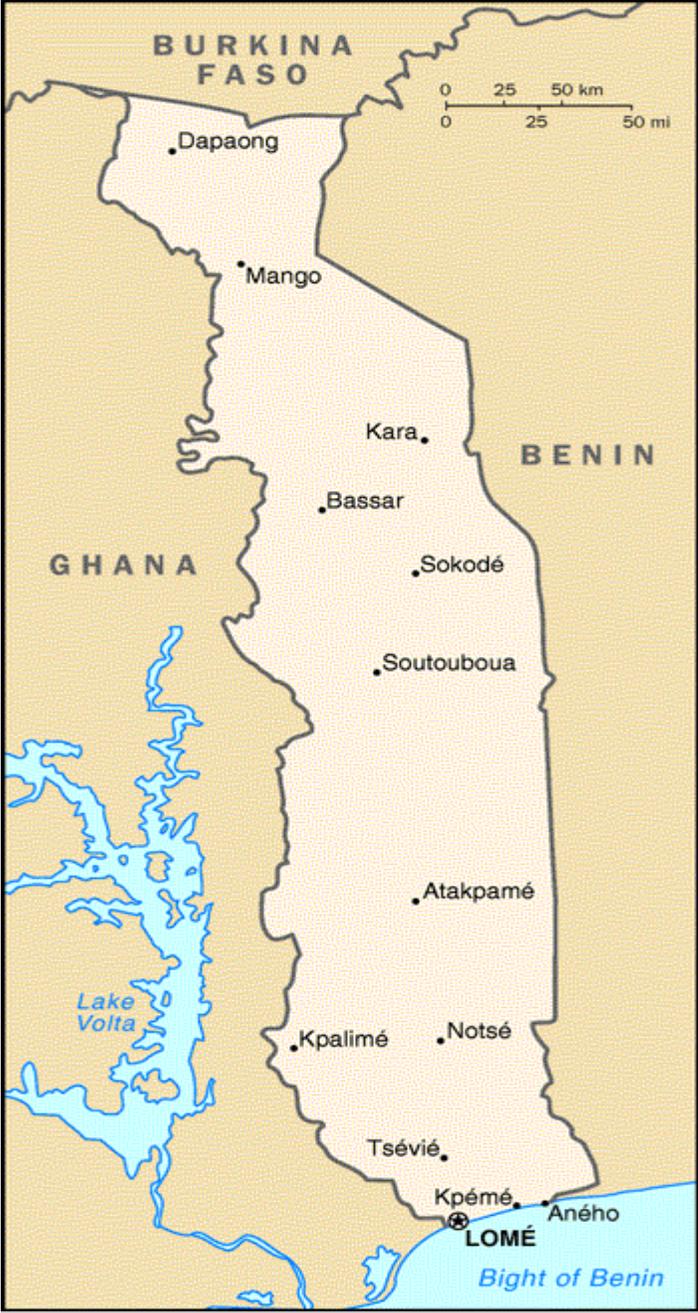
But in most contriving circumstances, as soon as Gnassingbe Eyadema was confirmed dead, Togo's military high command reportedly announced Faure as his father's successor as new president of the Republic. The military elite, led by Gen. Zakari Nandja achieved this feat by immediately suspending the constitution and swearing allegiance to Faure as the president. Army Chief of Staff Gen Zakari Nandja claimed that the decision had been taken to 'avoid a power vacuum'. Furthermore, and in a quick move to undercut diplomatic pressure and to give their illegal political maneuverings a semblance of fair political game, efforts were made to 'legitimize' the process. Probably worried by the thought that military intervention in African politics has become old fashioned and unacceptable to the African Union, the Togolese National Assembly

suddenly convened and began the process of retroactively legitimizing the installation of Faure Gnassingbe.

The Togolese Parliament, made up of 81 deputies, of which 72 were members of Eyadema's political party, Rally for the Togolese People [RPT] during its extraordinary sitting on 7th February passed an extraordinary resolution to the effect that the President of the Parliament, Mr. Fambare Natchaba Quatarra be dismissed with immediate effect. Curiously and going by the profile of Natchaba it seemed he did not to have deserved such act of political betrayal. Fambare Quatarra Natchaba, who was a prominent member of the ruling Rally of the Togolese [RPT] party, has held many positions in the government of Togo prior to his election as speaker of the National Assembly. Natchaba was a RPT delegate to the Togolese National Conference [1991], Foreign Affairs Minister [14 September 1992-20 March 1994] and president of RPT parliamentary group. He was first elected to the National Assembly in 1994 representing the Oti prefecture [Savanes region] and was re-elected in 1999 and 2002. He served as its speaker from 3 September 2000 to 6 February 2005[www.global.factiva.com, 2005].⁸

However, by a vote of 67-14, having satisfied the constitutional requirements for simple majority, the deputies also moved quickly to change Article 65 of the constitution. In its old version the Article 65 provided that, 'In case of vacancy in the presidency of the republic by death the president's function is exerted temporarily by the president of the National Assembly and the organization of a presidential election within sixty days of opening of the vacancy' [europarl.europe.eu, 2005].⁹ But the new Article 65 removed the word "temporarily" and does not make any mention of organizing presidential election.

After this move, the legal heir to the throne by constitutional specifications suddenly became exiled in the neighboring Benin, capital city of Cotonou. The Speaker of Parliament, Fambare Natchaba Quatarra, who had been returning to Togo from Paris, where he was discussing efforts to unfreeze European Union aid money by making pledges for democratic reform, was not allowed into the country. As if to confirm the conflict generating role of Africa's extractive elite, the Prime Minister, Koffi Sama, kept the airwaves and television screens busy with warning to all the country's political, social and religious groups and leaders to avoid act likely to plunge the country into anarchy and confusion. Ironically it was the National Assembly itself that has acted against the spirit and the letter of the Togolese constitution when it disregarded Article 76, which states that 'the office of member of the government shall be incompatible with the performance of parliamentary duties.' Further the National Assembly erred in law when it discountenanced Article of the constitution which states that 'no revision procedure may be initiated or continued during an interim period.'



Map of Togo

Source: <http://geography.about.com/library/cia/blctogo.htm>

Principled Condemnation from the International Community

Regardless of Prime Minister Koffi Sama's threat at home, regional and international actors condemned in an unmistakable terms the constitutional summersault in Togo.

At the continental level the *African Union* [AU], immediately declared the imposition of Faure Gnassingbe on Togolese as a coup, and by implication will not tolerate the attendance of the new leader in any of its Summits. The leaders of *ECOWAS* had to issue various statements of strong disapproval, and demanded re-establishment of constitutional order. The West African leaders also threatened to apply sub-regional sanctions, including travel ban and freezing of assets of the new leaders, if the changes in Togo's constitution aimed at legalizing military appointment of Faure was not reversed.

The European Union urged Togolese authority to comply with the country constitution, and warned that any other initiative may undermine stability, political dialogue and prospects to improve relations with European Union.

Togo's former colonial ruler, *France*, also demanded respect for democratic/constitutional power transfer in Togo. The United States on its part endorsed a call by the African Union and Economic Community of West African States to bring about peaceful resolution in Togo which will lead to free and fair elections to select a new president. The British Foreign & Commonwealth Office also denounced the handover of power to Faure, urging Togolese authorities to arrange for early, credible and democratic presidential elections. The francophonie, an organization of French-speaking states, instantly suspended Togo for its 'repeated violations' of the constitution's provisions.

However in all these it should be noted that the focus of regional and international disapproval was on the method of transition and not necessarily about the particulars or the candidature of the man- Faure. Efforts were made to indicate that the attack on the unorthodox method of regime change [with the character of a coup] which attended the succession politics was not an evidence of hate for the Eyademas [both Gnassingbe and Faure], but as hallmark of respect for due constitutional process, in an emerging democracy like Togo. In fact, the international/regional rejection of Faure has nothing to do with his personality, qualifications or age, but everything with the method and process of ascension to power.

Arguably the local opposition, regional and international condemnation of the constitutional illegality seem to be apt and timely, more so that the new man [Faure] within few days in power was already showing evidence that, the new government may not offer anything better than the experiences of Togolese people under Gnassingbe Eyadema. A closer scrutiny of his first (21) days in power which preceded his election has thus become imperative in the next section of the article.

As It Has Been, So It Is: New Man, Old Style

Rather than seeing the local and international opposition to post-Eyadema development in Togo as a genuine concern for Togolese and the future of his people, the new government thought otherwise. Faure's first twenty-one days as president was characterized by one step forward, two steps backward in relation to how the regime handled the opposition. Faure's profile and style seem not to be different from his father's approach to democratic governance, with specific reference to freedom of expression and

alternative views from civic associations. The promise of an open door policy toward all Togolese opposition for consultation soon became a plastic promise. There was neither space for holding of national dialogue to move Togo forward, nor evidence of upholding human rights and individual liberties. It is against this background that, Faure's relations with the media and the broader spectrum of opposition are given closer scrutiny, in the next segment.

Faure versus The media: Under Gnassingbe Eyadema independent newspaper and electronic media were not allowed to operate freely, if permitted to operate at all. In fact, the Republic of Togo has only one national television station, [*Television Togolaise*] which operates under strict state control. As noted by Pierre Englebert, [2005] 'legislation providing for the liberalization of radio broadcasting was ratified in November 1990. However, no definitive licenses for radio stations had been issued by mid-2002, when 11 private stations were, nevertheless, in operation [Pierre Englebert: 1176].¹⁰

In the footsteps of Eyadema, on February 11, 2005, Togolese authorities shut four media stations that have protested the military appointment of Faure. By the 15th of February two more had been shut. Few days latter the Faure government shut two more media houses, Radio Carre Jeunes and Television Zion, citing alleged unpaid administrative fees [allafrica.com, 2005].¹¹

Media sources reported that security forces accompanied by representatives of Togo's Telecommunication and Postal Services regulatory agency went to the offices of private radio stations *Nana FM*, *Kanal FM*, and *Radio Nostalgie*, as well as to the private television station *TV7* and *Frequence 1*, a radio station with the same owner, and ordered them off the air. The regulatory agency claimed that the stations owed the equivalent of

thousands of dollars in unpaid broadcasting fees [www.allafrica.com].¹²

Faure versus opposition/civic associations: Though the opposition in Togo was expected to take up the gauntlet and confront the state over the illegal assumption of office of the president by Faure, yet it was initially doubtful if the opposition alone could do the job. A cursory reflection on the State-opposition relations in Togo shows clearly that the opposition has virtually been decimated over the years. More so, the opposition-state relations had assumed the character of inter-ethnic and intra-elite contestation for power since the 1960s.

This reality is deeply rooted in the political history of the country. Togo under Eyadema can simply be described as a 'police state', where disagreement with the incumbent has always been seen as political vice or crime since the country's flag independence. This has made violence omnipresent in Eyadema's Togo and, by implication, succeeded in undercutting the activities of groups and individuals with anti-establishment or alternative views. But to give a semblance of legitimacy to his dictatorial regime, the late leader had attempted to placate opposition by offering cabinet positions to a few prominent civilians.

Under Faure civil society-state relations deteriorated rapidly as soon as *Pan African* press reported that Francis Akila Eso-Boko [Interior Minister] energetically condemned the demonstrations, 'which brought innocent people into the streets at the time when Togo was involved in the morning of the passing away of the father of the nation' [*Mail & Guardian online* 21 February, 2005].¹³ The opposition, which includes a number of political parties led by Union of forces for Change [UFC], called a sit at home strike, otherwise known as 'ghost town operation' in the week following the

unconstitutional take over of government by Faure. But the general strike that was called thereafter was met with maximum state violence. The Minister also praised police professionalism, which had averted tragedy. And while acknowledging instances of police brutality, which led to the death of only three, the Minister insisted that these cases happened when protesters attempted seizing the weapons of security forces and had to fight back in self defense [*Mail & Guardian online* 21 February, 2005].¹⁴

Most observers actually believe the Togolese police and the army will not hesitate to use force to support Faure Gnassingbe, in order to maintain the dominance of his father's minority Kabiye ethnic group. As the *Associated Press'* Ebow Godwin reported, 'the army move and the parliament's endorsement reflected the determination of Eyadema's minority Kabiye ethnic group, which dominates the army, to hold onto power along with ruling party members who have benefited from decades of Eyadema's patronage' [*The Independent* 14 February, 2005].¹⁵

Faure Steps Aside: From Regional Sanctions to Presidential Elections

In addition to strong statements of disapproval, ECOWAS leaders during an emergency summit quickly appointed Nigeria and four other states [Benin, Niger, Ghana and Mali] to meet with Togolese delegation in Niamey. But to show its contempt for the ECOWAS pressure on the need for Togo to revert back to the path of honor, the Togolese authorities allowed Togo to slip into diplomatic row with regional powerhouse, Nigeria, by refusing to grant landing rights to the plane bearing President Olusegun Obasanjo's advance party for an ECOWAS delegation's meeting with Faure. Following another *ECOWAS Mission to Lome*, Faure Gnassingbe in a brief broadcast on state television and

radio, agreed that, it was in the best interest of the nation, to hold elections within 60 days as stipulated in the country's constitution, and to guarantee the transparency of the election fixed for 24 April 2005 he decided to renounce the post of president of National Assembly.

His decision to step down paved the way for the appointment of Mr. Abass Bonfoh, the vice president of the National Assembly as the interim president. The choice of Abass Bonfoh was contested by the opposition, arguing that the return of the ex-speaker was relevant to the process of restoration of the constitutional order. The opposition leaders, led by Professor Leopold Messan Gnininvi of the Africa Peoples Democratic Convention, [CDPA] actually protested to the visiting ECOWAS Chair, Nigerien President Mamadou Tanja and the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, Mohammed Chambas, insisting on the desirability of an erstwhile speaker to take up the position vacated by Faure instead of Abass Bonfoh [*ThisDay newspaper* 6 March 2005: 1].¹⁶

Chambas however stressed the need to advance the electoral process forward in order to have presidential elections within 60 days as required by the Togo constitution. The opposition feared that the refusal to reabsorb Natchaba and the installation of Mr. Abass Bonfoh as the interim president was orchestrated by the RPT, with the intention of manipulating the process to the advantage of Faure *Gnassingbe* [*www.ghanaweb.org* 7 March, 2005].¹⁷

But Faure's decision to step aside was not anyway indicative of the end of his political ambition to succeed his father as well as rule Togo. In yet another contriving circumstances Faure in tandem with Togolese elite quickly engineered a special congress

of the ruling Rally of the Togolese People [RPT]. During the congress in Lome, he emphasized the need to silence the quarrels between the older members of the party, known as barons and the youth. He warned that 'a great party like the RPT cannot cope with electoral setbacks; therefore RPT must not be dislocated' [*The New York Times*, 19 February 2005].¹⁸ He also ensured that the over 3,000 delegates also endorsed him unanimously, by a show of hands as the party's candidate during the presidential election.

The Fears of Togolese Opposition: Evidences from Previous Elections

At this point it is important to note that the opposition were not just crying wolf. The history of previous elections in Togo provides enough insights into how the 'Eyadema syndrome' has impacted negatively on electoral process and outcomes. As Victor Oshisada points out, 'elections in Togo since 1990 have been a charade, a farce and sham, designed to emasculate true democracy' [*www.odili.net/news* 11 May, 2005].¹⁹ For example, the 1998 presidential election would have been lost by Eyadema to Gilchrist Olympio but for manipulation during counting process and direct violent intimidation of the opposition. Again, in 1999 during the legislative election, which was announced in January to take place on 21 March 1999, the opposition had reasons also to complain. Opposition had invited the government to a dialogue on the disputed presidential election, stressing the need to resolve the crisis generated by the presidential election of 1999. But the government insisted on the need to hold the election, taking constitutional provision into consideration. The government rejected the opposition's suggestion and the elections took place on 21 March 1999. The 2002 legislative election was also held without the participation of main opposition parties. 126 candidates,

comprising 118 candidates nominated by 15 parties and eighteen independents candidates, although RPT was the sole party to contest every seat, contested the 81 seats of the *Assemblée Nationale* [Pierre Englebert 2005: 1176].²⁰

From the fore-going it has become obvious that the main opposition in Togo have not been actively involved in electoral contest since late-1990s. The reasons for the boycott range from state-induced violence, to intimidation and fraudulent handling of the entire processes. The opposition and many of the defeated candidates complained that the 2003 presidential election, in particular, had been conducted fraudulently. Media report also indicated that the election was a one-sided contest, and was stage-managed with president Eyadema deploying a combination of constitutional subterfuge, black-mail and intimidation to impose himself on the people of Togo. Eyadema's re-election in 2003 was also described as an assault on the integrity of the democratic process, a sham of an election, an embarrassment. His victory lends credence to critics of African democratic practice who are wont to dismiss the system as an institution of traditional rulers where sit-tight is a normal syndrome [*The Guardian* 13 June 2003: 16].²¹ It is against this background that the opposition's struggle to ensure level-playing field should be understood *vis-à-vis* the April 24, 2005 presidential election in Togo.

Election 2005: The Dossier of Principal Contenders

Before a detailed analysis of the conduct and outcomes of the election, it is pertinent to briefly examine the profile of the principal candidates and how this relates to the root of the succession crisis in Togo.

[i] **Faure Gnassingbe** was born in Kara, Northern Togo and is reportedly to be a

man of few words, like his father. After his university studies in France and United States, Faure soon became his father's financial adviser and formally found his way into politics in 2002. He won an election into the country's parliament and before long and probably creating easy ride to the presidency, his father appointed him to head of the most lucrative ministry as the Minister for Mines, Telecommunication and Equipment. It should be noted that since independence from France, Togo's major sources of revenue have been phosphate mineral exports and the transit trade to and from the West African hinterland through the relatively efficient port of Lome.

However, it is very doubtful if the foundation of the February 2005 transitional crisis was not laid few years earlier due to the fundamental constitutional restructuring that took place in December 2002. Pierre Englebert observed that; 'at the end of December 2002 the *Assemblée Nationale* approved several constitutional amendments regarding the eligibility of presidential candidates. The restriction that had limited the president to serving two terms of office was to be removed, and the age of eligibility was to be reduced from 45 to 35. It was widely believed that these measures were intended to permit Eyadema, to serve a further term of office, and also to permit the possible presidential candidacy of Eyadema's son, Faure Essozima Gnassingbe.' Local and international condemnation of the development was however discountenanced. According to a political commentator, 'December 30, 2002 has been regarded as a black Monday in Togo for all believers in democracy. It was the day the Togolese parliament, dominated by Eyadema's party, Rally for the Togolese people [RPT], changed the two five year term provision in the constitution to allow Eyadema to rule for life... it is wrong to build the image of indispensability around one man whose rule since 1967 has not

necessarily moved Togo forward any bit' [*Daily Champion* 7 January 2003: 10].²² Thus it is possible to conclude that the agenda for 'Eyadema Dynasty' may have been in the pipeline longer than the political events and succession tension of February 2005.

[ii] Emmanuel Bob-Akitani: He was born in Aneho, in the South of Togo and comes from the Mina ethnic group. He studied Petroleum Engineering in France and between 1961 and 1969 served as deputy Managing Director of Togo's Department of Mines and Geology. It was during his active days in France in the 1950s that he emerged as an active force that pivoted the Black African Student's Union. He joined the Unity Party of Togo's independence leader, Sylvanus Olympio in 1961. Bob-Akitani is regarded as a veteran of Togo's opposition politics. Until he picked the coalition ticket mid-April 2005, he was the vice-president of Olympio's Union of Forces for Change [UFC] party. He had earlier braved the odds and contested against late Gnassingbe Eyadema in 2003 elections, coming second with 34.1 percent of the vote [*www. irinnews.org*, 20 June 2005].²³

The Pre-election Ecology

There was tension and political uncertainty; in addition to fear of violence in the days preceding the presidential election fixed for April 24 2005. As expected, street violence and politically motivated killings were reported in many parts of the country before the election, especially in the south, the stronghold of the opposition. The campaign period saw to the escalation of violent confrontations between the ruling elites and their supporters as led by Faure and the opposition, led by Emmanuel Bob-Akitani.

The stage was therefore set for campaign and sensitization of the electorate. With reference to campaign, much of Togo's five regions [Maritime, Plateaux, Central, Kara and Savanes] were festooned with billboards and posters of Faure Gnassingbe, except for Maritime region, where his posters were defaced. But reverse was the case for the opposition candidate, who enjoyed scant presence in most areas except for the opposition strong-holds in the South. The opposition campaign messages focused on reconciliation, freedom, while the Faure's messages tilted toward nationalism and stability with messages such as *Nord or Suid C'est Faure* [North or South is Faure].

Closely associated with this has been the pro-Faure camp insistence on national security, which arguably can only be guaranteed with Faure as president. On why the son should mount the saddle soon after the father, pro-Faure were quick to make reference to George W. Bush, the U.S. President, the country regarded as bastion of democracy. They also noted that, even in India, the world's largest democracy, the Gandhi family has produced a number of Prime Ministers. Therefore, what should be of interest to everyone according to Togolese Ambassador to the U.S. is whether Faure can deliver? Is he capable of leading the country to the Promised Land? What is the general disposition of the people towards him? Is the security of the Togolese people sure under his leadership? The ambassador insisted that these are the questions that should bother those who love Togo and not what his father did, or fail to do [*Daily Champion* 7 March, 2005:8].²⁴

From Ballot to Riot

The election finally got on the way on April 24, 2005 and on April 26, provisional results were announced: Gnassingbe won with 60.22% of the vote, with Bob-Akitani

coming second with 38.6%. Harry Olympio received only 0.55% of the vote, while Lawson took 1.04%, despite having withdrawn from the race. The Electoral Commission announced that 63.6% of registered voters participated in the election. The constitutional court confirmed Gnassingbe's victory on 3 May 2005, when official results were released [Mail& Guardian on line, 4 May 2005].²⁵

Official Results: Presidential Election, 24 April 2005

Election Data

Registered Voters	3,599,306
Total Votes.....	2,288,279
Invalid/Bank	88,005
Total Valid Votes.....	2,200,274

Election Results

<u>Candidate/Party</u>	<u>% of votes</u>
Faure Gnassingbe [RPT]	60.15%
*Emmanuel Bob-Akitani-Coalition Parties	38.25%
Nicolas Lawson [PRR]	1.04%
Harry Olympio [RSDD]	0.55 %

- * Member parties of the coalition supporting Emmanuel Bob-Akitani are:
- Union of Forces for Change [UFC]
 - Alliance of Democrats for Integral Development [ADDI]
 - Action Committee for Renewal [CAR]
 - Democratic Convention of African Peoples [CDPA]
 - Socialist Party for Renewal [PSR]
 - Union of Socialist Democrats of Togo [UDS- Togo]

Source: National Independent Electoral Commission, April 2005

However, the opposition insisted that Faure cannot win any free and fair election

in Togo. Bob Akitani rejected the results, declared himself president and called for an armed insurrection against the RPT government. As expected, Bob-Akitani's treasonable action led to the escalation of violence in the Togolese capital of Lome and other opposition strongholds, from Be, to Atakpame and Aneho. Although obviously aggrieved, the opposition initially remained recalcitrant and some what implacable. It insisted, ironically, on a *loser-takes-all* stance rather than accepting the ruling party's olive branch [*Daily Trust*, 8 May 2008].²⁶ The reaction of regional actors, Nigeria in particular, to Akitani's declaration must have been very disappointing to the opposition. Nigeria's Foreign Affairs Minister's rejection was unequivocal; Ambassador Olu Adeniji stated that 'It cannot stand... because an election has been held and someone has been declared winner' [*The Punch* April 28, 2005].²⁷ Thus in the interest of political stability in the sub-region, ECOWAS condoned the election results and the associated brutal persecution of opponents. About 700 people died and some 40,000 fled to neighboring Benin and Ghana in fear of reprisals [Dirk Kohnert, 2005].²⁸ But Togo temporarily avoided sliding into the level of chaos already seen in some other West African states with similar successions crisis: Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra-Leone and Liberia.

As a way of breaking the political logjam, Faure offered to re-appoint Ambassador Edem Kodjo, as his Prime Minister, a former senior member of Eyadema's RPT, who left the party to form the Togolese Union for Democracy in 1991. On Edem Kodje, it is important to note that he served once served as Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity and in the Government of Togo as Foreign Minister and Prime Minister before falling out with Gnassingbe Eyadema. But to Faure, Kodjo represent a credible choice within the ranks of the opposition, while to the six-party

coalition of the 2005 election opined that Kodjo has to be rejected for several reasons: first, Edem Kodjo has always been part of the establishment led by the Eyademas and does not represent the popular choice, nor an offer of olive branch to the opposition and other aggrieved actors. Second, the mainstream opposition rejected the type of olive branch offered in the appointment of Kodjo because they claimed they cannot be a junior partner in an illegitimate and fraudulent government. Thirdly, the opposition sees Faure as a political green-horn, with no experience in democratic governance. The tendency is that within a short term, power may corrupt him and cause the state to falter. The fourth reason was that the opposition fears that if it coalesces with the Faure government, it will share in the blame of eventual misrule. Fifth, the opposition may have thought that a government of national unity, with derelict political institutions of nearly 40 years as inherited by President Faure Eyadema, tends to emasculate the opposition, and worse still, a government of national unity promotes one party system and dictatorship in which Togo is already enmeshed.

From the foregoing, the end of the presidential election of April 24, 2005 rather than signaling the end of a succession crisis, it actually marked the beginning of a low-level, non-violent battle of attrition over the soul of national politics in Togo, which has all the trappings of an intra-elite contestation for power and manifesting through the manipulation of ethnicity and north-south dichotomy as in many West African states.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, this study did reflect on the need to push the concerns about politics of succession to the front burner in West Africa, and after a brief analysis

of the historical root of the post-Eyadema succession crisis in Togo, the article highlighted the constitutional summersaults which bear all the hallmarks of what ridicules Africa before the world. Thus, in death as in life, Eyadema still controls the affairs of Togo. This is because the seeds of lawlessness and military adventurism which he sowed have sprouted yet again to truncate orderly succession. Regardless of intense pressure from regional and international actors as well as resolute opposition from within the ranks of the civil society, the Eyadema dynasty is in the making in Togo Kingdom. Thus Togo, in the new millennium, typifies the poverty of quality democratic leadership in the West African sub-region with specific reference to peaceful transfer of power and consolidation of democratic process.

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