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6 January 2021

Online at <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/105161/>
MPRA Paper No. 105161, posted 07 Jan 2021 10:45 UTC

Togo 2020

Domestic politics, foreign affairs, socio-economic development

Dirk Kohnert ¹



'Curfew: elements of the 'EKPOVID-19' force claim another victim'
[Donisen Donald](#), Cartoon, 2020

Abstract : Controversial constitutional and institutional reforms voted in May 2019 in parliament opened the way for President Gnassingbé to stand for a fourth and fifth term because the law does not apply retroactively. In February 2020, the President won again the disputed presidential elections and thus consolidated his power, assisted by the loyal army and security services. The outbreak of the Corona epidemic in Togo in March and the subsequent economic recession may have contributed to limit popular protest against the Gnassingbé regime. The human rights record of the government has improved, but remains poor. Yet, the international community followed a 'laissez faire' approach in the interests of regional stability. The economy dropped into recession due to the world-wide economic negative effects of the corona-crisis. The democracy index of the Economic Intelligence Unit, London, still rated Togo as an 'authoritarian regime'.

Keywords: countrywide study, Togo, West Africa, domestic politics, foreign affairs, socio-economic development, African Studies, ECOWAS, WAEMU, UEMOA

JEL-codes: F35, N97, O17, O55, Z13

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Domestic Politics

The contested presidential elections dominated the domestic political scene in Togo right from the start of the year. The government had fixed the date for the elections only shortly before, on 6 December 2019, for 22 February 2020. Thus it paved the way for a fourth and eventually fifth five-year mandate for Faure Gnassingbé in 2020 and 2025. This contradicted the limitation of presidential mandates to two consecutive terms in the 1992 constitution. The latter, however, had been changed in a ‘constitutional coup’ of 2002 and again by the controversial constitutional and institutional reforms of May 2019 that opened the way for President Gnassingbé to stand for a fourth and fifth term because the law did not apply retroactively. Also, the 2019 reform changed the electoral system for the presidency to the two-round system, replacing the previous first-past-the-post system and granted the President lifetime immunity for actions taken during his tenure.

Altogether ten candidates had been accepted for the presidential elections by the Constitutional Court as released on January 17. Apart from the incumbent Faure Gnassingbé and the leader of the biggest opposition party, Alliance nationale pour le changement (ANC), Jean-Pierre Fabre, this included also [Agbéyomé Kodjo](#), from the Mouvement Patriotique pour la Démocratie et le Développement (MPDD). He had been prime minister already under late Eyadéma Gnassingbé. Capitalizing from the disunity of the opposition, Kodjo, backed by some of the parties of the oppositional C14-coalition as well as by the retired archbishop of Lomé Mgr [Phillippe Kpodzro](#), contested the leadership of the opposition by Jean-Pierre Fabre. Kpodzro still had a high standing in the Togolese civil society because of his mediating role during the democratic renewal of Togo in the early 1990s. The candidacy of Kodjo dived the opposition further up to the point of arousing suspicion of acting in the interest of the ruling powers.

Therefore, a new oppositional political movement, ‘Dynamique Mgr Kpodzro’ (DMK), an association of opposition parties and civil society organizations was formed by supporters of archbishop Kpodzro, to back Kodjo for the presidentials on 22 February.

On February 1, 2020, civil rights organizations and opposition groups demonstrated and demanded that regional and local results of the constituencies would be published directly and no longer centrally by the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) to reduce the possibility of election fraud. Yet, the minister for human rights, Christian Trimua, announced that the government did not approve this demand and only aggregated results would be published. The CENI was considered biased by the opposition because among others only two out of its 19 members were bestowed by the opposition and because the regional election commissions, responsible for submitting the results to the CENI, were headed by judges selected by the ruling party.

The electoral campaign started on February 6, two weeks ahead of the polls and ended 24 hours before the opening of the polling centres. About 10,000 troops were deployed to secure the elections, a prospect which according to activists of the opposition amounted to intimidation.

The election was monitored by 315 international election observers, mainly from the UN, the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Besides, each candidate was allowed to send representatives to the almost 9,400 polling stations. But on January 17, the government cancelled the election observer credentials of the largest independent civil society organization, Concertation Nationale de la Société Civile, as well as that of the Catholic Church monitors. Besides, the National Democratic Institute (NDI, Washington), internationally renowned for its support of democratic elections in Africa for decades, had its accreditation retired and one of its staff members expelled from Togo without warning. Moreover, access to the NDI website and WhatsApp was blocked by the government. The EU did not monitor the elections, last but not least because the government in Lomé had not honoured the recommendations of the EU election monitoring missions in the past. An electronic system specially created for recording the election results was reversed by the electoral authority two days before the election. On election day, internet access was restricted and social networks, as well as critical media websites, was blocked.

The new electoral code of May 2019 and the endorsement of diaspora votes by parliament on 5 November 2019 made it possible for Togolese from the diaspora (estimated at 2 m people) to vote, the first time in the countries' history. However, the CENI had registered just 212,538 Togolese citizens in the diaspora entitled to vote. On 13 November 2019 the government had decided that the Togolese diaspora, represented by the newly created 77 members of the Togolese High Council for Foreign Affairs (HCTE), organized by the government in Lomé, could only vote in six selected countries: France, United States, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Gabon, Nigeria and Morocco. The numerous Togolese refugees living in Germany for example, who had developed an especially critical stance against the ruling regime because most of them had been politically persecuted by the Gnassingbé dictatorship in the 1990s, were denied the right to vote. Moreover, implementing provision assured that hardly any oppositional voter would dare to register for voting at his embassy. Finally, just 348 citizens from the diaspora participated.

According to the National Election Commission (CENI), there were 3,738,786 registered voters of which 2,769,286 went to the polls according to the preliminary results. The CENI counted 983,413 blank and invalid votes. According to the official final results, confirmed on March 3 by the one-sided Constitutional Court, who's notorious president Abdou Assouma, had been re-appointed shortly before on 30 December 2019, incumbent President Faure Gnassingbé won the elections with 70.78 % or 1,760,309 votes already in the first round, against 19.46 % or 483,926 votes for his contender [Agbeyome Kodjo](#) who came second.

Former opposition leader Jean-Pierre Fabre of the ANC ended far behind on the third place with 4.68 % or 116,336 votes. The contested high voter turnout of 76,62 %, i.e. 15 points more than in 2015, seemingly proved to the ongoing interest of the general public in multi-party elections despite the biased organization of the electoral process.

Kodjo, supported by the opposition, declared already the preliminary election results as a forgery. Backed by two other less important candidates, Gogué and Wolou, he maintained that he had gained the majority of votes. They called on President Gnassingbé to resign because of attempts at intimidation and serious election fraud.

Bishop Kpodzro, who supported Kodja, called the provisional result a farce and appealed on the population to demonstrate. However, Kodjo's appeal against the results to the Constitutional Court was dismissed. To the contrary, the AU and ECOWAS observers congratulated the Togolese people to the good conduct and peaceful course of the elections. In March, the immunity of former Prime Minister [Agbeyome Kodjo](#) was lifted by the parliament because he still maintained his victory. Shortly afterwards he was arrested for failing to appear before the country's intelligence and security police ('Service central de recherches et d'investigations criminelles de la gendarmerie') after proclaiming himself 'elected president' of Togo on April 21.

Togo's Catholic Bishops condemned the arrest of opposition leader in a move that inspired continuing post-election tensions in the country. However, the outbreak of the Corona epidemic in Togo in March 2020 with 3,604 confirmed cases and 68 death up to 29 December and the subsequent economic recession – mostly due to external shocks - may have contributed to limit popular protest against the Gnassingbé regime.

Because DMK was perceived as a potential threat to the ruling powers it was targeted by the security services of the regime. Some of its leading members, including the lawyer and human right activist Brigitte Kafui Adjamagbo-Johnson, the first woman to stand for presidential elections in Togo in 2010, and Gérard Yaovi Djossou (alternative spelling, Djoussou) were imprisoned because of an alleged attack on the internal security of the state on 27 and 30 November. Djossou, responsible for human rights and social issues within the DMK, had been arrested on the street in Hanoukopé, Lomé, after meeting with ambassadors of the so-called Group of Five -- the United States, France, Germany, the EU and the United Nations Development Program. He was reportedly beaten violently and suffered many hours of interrogation, handcuffed and without access to his lawyer. Adjamagbo-Johnson was arrested in turn when she went to visit him. On December 4, both accused were charged with "criminal conspiracy and undermining internal security". They were provisionally released on 17 December after almost three weeks of detention. Already before, on April 21, around 16 DMK members who had protested against the arrest of the opposition politician Agbéyomé Kodjo on the same day, were arrested and later found guilty of "rebellion" and "complicity in the rebellion" and sentenced to one year in prison, eight months of which were suspended. They were released on August 25th.

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, various civic rights had been restricted. The pandemic started on 6 March, triggered by a Togolese living in Lomé, who had stayed in France, Turkey and Benin (11 days) before the confirmation of her contamination with Covid-19. In an attempt to control the spread of the virus in Togo, all borders to the country were closed and a quarantine applied to the cities of Lomé, Tsévié, Kpalimé, and Sokodé on 20 March for two weeks. Until September there were 1,795 confirmed cases. The death toll rose to 48. On March 16, the government announced an F CFA 2 billion fund to fight the pandemic. It also suspended flights from Italy, France, Germany, and Spain and cancelled all international events for three weeks; requiring people who were recently in a high-risk country to self-isolate. From September 14, 2020, all travellers to Togo must install the 'Togo Safe' application on their arrival in the territory.

The Covid-19 pandemic severely affected CSO activities too. The most common challenges had been the loss of funding, bringing operations to a stand-still. Reduced funding led also to major operational and structural changes and the inability to implement program activities because of the government's preventive measures against the pandemic.

In the [municipal elections of June 2019](#), which had been repeatedly postponed since 1987, new majors had been elected in 117 newly designated cities and municipalities, among them 20 lady mayors. Because there were no subsidies and therefore no compensation for mayors after ten months in office; in some prefectures relations between prefects and mayors were knife-drawn ². On September 7, 2020, the Minister of Territorial Administration Payadowa BoukpeSSI announced that the State would proceed in the coming weeks to the payment of allocations under the Support Fund for Local Authorities (FACT), estimated at around 3 billion FCFA.

On September 28, 2020, a new prime minister, [Victoire Tomegah Dogbe](#) (61 years, born December 23, 1959) was nominated as Prime Minister. She was the first woman to hold the office. Educated as an economist, Mrs Dogbe had been Minister of Grassroots Development, Handicrafts, Youth and Youth Employment as well as Cabinet Director of President Gnassingbé since 2010. She appointed a new government with a record 30% of the 33 ministerial positions given to women, including Essozimna Marguerite Gnakade as defence minister - the first time a woman has held that role. In general, the prime minister needs the president's support more so than that of parliament if he or she wants to implement important public policies.

On October 19, 2020, the president reorganized his team of close collaborators. The '[Kitchen Cabinet](#)' of a new guard of young and dynamic councillors, including a liaison-officer of the army, was formed to assist the prime minister. It was meant to complement the president's old guard of special advisers ³. Members of the new 'Kitchen Cabinet' included the following new councillors:

- First, Ablamba Sandra Johnson, she has the rank of a minister as new Secretary-General of the Presidency and replaced Patrick Daté Tévi-Benissan, who died on September 2. She also heads the civil cabinet of the Head of State since [Victoire Tomegah Dogbe](#) was promoted to the prime minister's office. Thus, she was rewarded for having contributed to the successful completion of the reforms that have enabled Togo's spectacular progress in the 2019 and 2020 rankings of the World Bank's 'Doing Business' reports. The latter had been reinforced by the

² Dogbe, Peter (2020): [Togo: quel bilan de la première année de mandat pour les maires?](#) rfi, 09/07/2020

³The 'old guard' of special advisers included Faure's brother Amah Gnassingbé, the former party's Second Vice-President of the oppositional [UFC](#), who had accepted in 2006 a post in the government as Minister of State, but also the notorious French lawyer [Charles Debbasch](#), who allegedly had played a crucial role in the "constitutional coup d'État" by which Faure Gnassingbé succeeded his father Eyadéma, as well as [Barry Moussa Barqué](#) and [Koffi Sama](#). In October 2020, [Carlos Lopes](#), said to be one of the principal architects of Togo's National Development Plan (PND) joint the crew of retired senior advisors of international standing of Faure Gnassingbé, like [Tony Blair](#), [Dominique Strauss-Khan](#) and [Lionel Zinsou](#). Lopes, is a Bissau-Guinean development economist and former executive secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA, 2012–2016). In addition, in June 2020, [Lotfi Bel Hadj](#), a French-Tunisian essayist, economist, and businessman, became Togo's communicator. Having seen part of his online political marketing operations unveiled last month by the renowned American think-tank [Atlantic Council](#), the Franco-Tunisian communicator signed communication and influence contracts with the Togolese presidency.

[Ibrahim Index of African Governance 2020](#) that counted Togo among the top five best improvers over the past decade for overall governance (rank 30 out of 54 in 2019; score 49.1, +5.2, since 2008).

- Second, Kouessan Joseph Yovodevi. New director of communication to the presidency, this journalist trained at the Higher Institute of Press, in Lomé, is expected on the site of the restructuring of government communication.
- Third, Komlan Adjitowou took over as head of the military cabinet of the Palace. He was formerly deputy chief of staff of the Togolese Armed Forces, raised to the rank of general in 2018. He succeeds Colonel Awoki Panassa appointed, in January 2020, Ambassador of Togo to Ghana. In this post, Adjitowou will serve as an interface between the president and the defence forces.
- Fourth, Djibril Mohaman Awalou, as national coordinator for the management of the response to Covid-19. He is a university professor and central director of the army health service and of the medical and surgical clinic (allegedly close to the Military) of the Sylvanus-Olympio CHU clinic in Lomé. Awalou reports daily to Faure Gnassingbé, who is the head of the crisis committee fighting the pandemic ([Togo-tribune, Oct. 19, 2020](#)).

Simmering unrest within the security services alarmed the government as well as the general public. After an unprecedented wave of desertions of officers of Togo's armed forces (FAT) already in early 2018, and three other militaries committing suicide in April and June 2018, a phenomenon that was hardly unknown until then, there followed another disturbing incidence in 2020. On May 4, 2020, Colonel Bitala Madjoulba, Commander of the 1st Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR) was murdered, shot with his proper revolver in his office. The fact that this crime concerned a senior officer responsible for the protection of senior state officials, turned this assassination into a state affair. Only one day after the assassination, Faure Gnassingbé nominated Lieutenant-Colonel Atafai Tchangani to replace him. The latter was head of a section at the [Special Military School of Saint-Cyr](#) (École spéciale militaire de Saint-Cyr, ESM, the foremost French military academy) and Commander of the [United Nations operation in Côte d'Ivoire, UNOCI](#) Battalion. On May 7, three human rights organizations - the Togolese Human Rights League (LTDH), the Association of Victims of Impunity in Togo (Asvito) and the Ligue des consommateurs du Togo (LCT) - had called on the family of Lieutenant-Colonel Bitala Madjoulba to file a complaint against the Togolese state, which is supposed to guarantee the security and integrity of people on its territory. Also, a group of lawyers seized the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva on July 10 to put "the international pressure" on the Togolese State, so that "justice is done". The commission of inquiry set up by the government in May, headed by the Minister of Security and Civil Protection, Brigadier General [Yark Damehame](#), did not reveal any results.

Until the end of the year, the government did not issue any official statement on this murder. However, on October 3, President Gnassingbé made several appointments by decree, within the Togolese Armed Forces (FAT). Brigadier General Komlan Adjitowou was appointed Chief of Staff of the President of the Republic. His former

post of Chief of Staff of the FAT will now be held by Colonel Kodjo Ekpe Apedo. Colonel Kassawa Kolémaga, previously Director of Operations of the FAT and former head of the National Intelligence Agency (ANR) was promoted to Chief of Staff of the Army. Colonel Tassounti Djato, until then commander of the Niamtougou Hunting Base (BCN, 350 personnel) in Niamtougou, the capital of Doufelgou prefecture in the Kara region, the homeland and fief of the Gnassingbé family, was appointed Chief of Staff of the Air Force. Finally, the Air Force will have Colonel Toussounti Djato as its new boss; he was in charge of the Niamtougou airbase (north). As a reminder, the General Chief of Staff of the Togolese Armed Forces is Brigadier General Félix Abalo Kadhanga, whereas the Ministry of Defences remains in the hands of Faure Gnassingbé to prevent any coup attempts.

The continuing violation of Human Rights in Togo remained a special concern of the international community. According to a report of Amnesty International on the human rights situation in Togo, presented at the UN-Human-Rights-Committee (from 2 to 27 March), the human rights situation in Togo sharply deteriorated due to growing political and social tensions related to the prospects of the head of state running for a fourth and fifth term and the contested 2019 constitutional reforms. Furthermore, Togo still ranked among the most corrupt states worldwide (rank 130 of 180 countries (Score: 29, out of 100; [CPI-2020](#)). Finally, the high level of illicit financial flows (IFF) which strongly correlates with money-laundering attracted the concern of the international donor community.

Increasing encroaching on internet media freedom, took various forms, ranging from subtly increasing regulatory powers over social media to country-wide internet shutdowns. In June the HAAC suspended the bi-monthly '*Panorama*' for violating the professional rules of journalism and a critical report on the Head of State in May. On 25 March, the HAAC withdrew the license of the newspaper '*La Nouvelle*' for publishing "unverified information", incitement of ethnic and religious hatred. On 4 November, the director of the oppositional journal *L'Alternative*, Ferdinand Ayité, as well as the journal itself were condemned each to a fine of two million F CFA for defamation in the 'Pétrolegat-affaire', because Ayité had accused the manager of the Committee to monitor the petroleum product price fluctuations, Fabrice Adjakly, to be responsible for the diversion of F CFA 500 Mrd. On 29 December night, Carlos Kétohou from the *L'Indépendant Express* was arrested by heavily armed men of the Central Criminal Investigation and Investigation Service (SCRIC), a special unit of the national gendarmerie. Two days later, Togo press organizations like OTM, CONAPP, PPT, URATEL, ATOPPEL, UJIT and SYNJIT condemn the arrest that according to them amounted to a "kidnapping".

Also, Government interference with the internet and mobile phones was of special concern in the context of participatory development approaches of international donor agencies given the growing reliance on digital information and communication technologies (ITCs). Therefore, the EIU democracy index 2019 (published 31 January 2019) ranked Togo medias all in all as '*unfree*', whereas Freedom House (2020) to the contrary had upgraded Togo's overall status, including freedom of press status, since 2014 from "*not free*" to "*partly free*", with an aggregate status of 47 (of 100) already in 2018.

Furthermore, the government had to speed up the implementation of the recommendations of the Truth, Justice, Reconciliation Commission (CVJR, Plateforme citoyenne justice et vérité, PCJV) created to compensate for the impunity of members of the security services during the Eyadéma dictatorship. In 2020, the HCRRUN contacted people who had suffered damage during the 1990s in the context of wildlife-protection, and the Barkoissi incident between Anoufo and Moba, to implement the reparations recommended by the CVJR whose goal was to achieve better living together between communities. The implementation of the recommendations of the CVJR in this part of Togo was spread over several days in different localities (Tône, Cinkassé, Mandouri, Kpendjal etc) to respect the precautionary measures in the context of the fight against Covid-19. Nearly 35,000 people, victims of socio-political violence from 1958 to 2005, have been identified throughout Togo.

Togo's overall status in the Freedom House's 2020 Freedom in the World rating, remained 'partly free' as in the previous two years. In the Economist Intelligence Unit's democracy index 2019, Togo was upgraded from rank 130 (2015, 3.32 of 10 points) to rank 126 (2019; 3.30) out of 167 countries, mainly due to its political culture (5 of 10) (see Q2.1). For the rest, EIU classified Togo as an 'authoritarian regime' as before.

Foreign Affairs

In January (17. Jan) the five heads of state of Congo-Brazzaville, Uganda, Senegal, Gambia and Togo met in Lomé for a summit against drug trafficking. Trafficking in false drugs is said to kill about 900,000 Africans every year, among them 120,000 children of less than five years. Thus, more African die because of false drugs than by malaria. The summit had been organized in partnership with the NGO *Brazzaville*, a foundation focussing on conflict resolution and environmental protection. Two other countries concerned were Niger and Ghana. The president of Niger, Mahamadou Issoufou, did not participate given the precarious security situation in his country, whereas his Ghanaian counterpart Nana Akoufo-Addo was represented by his minister of health.

Although cannabis production in Togo is illegal, Togo counts among the ten African countries with significant cannabis production, i.e. CAR, DRC, Gambia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Togo and Uganda according to the Africa Organized Crime Index (OCI) Togo. On 17 May, the Togolese customs intercepted in Tchalo (south of [Sokodé](#)), 1,042 loaves of cannabis hidden in a banana car. Most cannabis is for trade, the local population consumed just 1%.

In February, Microsoft representatives revealed during a Cyber Africa Summit in Lagos (25 to 26 February) that the financial sector of African countries had become one of the privileged targets of hackers. Therefore, the [Cyber Defense Africa](#), a public-private partnership of the Polish Asseco Data Systems SA (ADS) and the Togolese cybersecurity agency (Ancy) had been created already in February 2019, as announced during the last Africa CEO forum in Kigali in March 2019.

On 26 February the US government released a remarkably frank criticism of the conduct of the 2020 presidential elections in Togo. Particularly it disapproved little

efforts for independent election observation, notably the decision of the CENI to revoke the accreditation of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in Washington D.C. and the expulsion of its observers three days before the election. Washington called on Lomé to publish the election results per the polling stations and not just the aggregated results to allow for cross-checks.

Because of the economic burden of the Corona pandemic, the Heads of States of the West-African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU / UEMOA) declared a temporary suspension of the WAEMU growth and stability pact (setting six convergence criteria, including a 3% of GDP fiscal deficit limit). As a result, member countries were allowed to raise their overall fiscal deficit temporarily and to use any additional external support that donors might provide in response to the Covid-crisis. Also, a National and Economic Solidarity Fund of F CFA 400 billion (11.8% of GDP) was created on April 1 to be financed by the government, international partners, and private citizens. Shortly before, on March 20, the WAEMU announced an action plan heavily reliant on development partner financing. The overall financing needed is estimated at F CFA 70 billion (about USD 130 million or 2% of GDP). Nevertheless, the CFA currency has not yet been affected due to a pandemic-driven withdrawal of foreign capital, an increase of the current account deficit or the growth of monetary aggregates due to preferential loans, nor have significant inflationary tendencies been discerned.

The Covid-pandemic affected among others also the deeply rooted informal cross-border trade of small scale traders. On 8 April, about 90 Beninese and Togolese citizens, made up of 68 males and 22 females, were arrested in the Ghanaian Ashanti Region because they had tried to enter the country illegally by bypassing the Corona-lockdown measures. They were subsequently put for isolation at the Atonsu Agogo Hospital. The authorities alerted the local population in the frontier regions to watch for other illegal migrants from neighbouring states. Only one month later, on 7 May, the Ghana Immigration Service (GIS) revealed that he had nabbed more than 100 mostly women traders from Accra in the past three weeks who travelled to Aflao at the Ghanaian border, where they stayed at various locations, waiting their turn for 'okada' operators to assist them to cross into Togo through unapproved routes, in violation of the closure of the border in the hope of crossing to Lomé.

On April 24, the Government announced the completion of the country's membership in the [African Trade Insurance Agency](#) (ATI), becoming the 8th African sovereign shareholder of currently 18 member countries. ATI was founded in 2001 by the African States, mostly from the [COMESA](#) and corporate shareholders like the [African Development Bank](#), [Trade Development Bank](#), [UK Export Finance](#) (UKEF), to cover the trade and investment risks of companies doing business in Africa. The current move had been backed by the [European Investment Bank](#) (EIB) and reflects a trend that has seen a record number of West African countries join Africa's multilateral guarantee agency, with Ghana, Niger and Nigeria all completing membership in the last nine months. This trend is expected to continue as countries seek support to ensure investment and trade flows on the continent to manage the economic fall-out from the Coronavirus. Sani Yaya, Minister of Economy and Finance explained that membership in ATI was a necessary component in Togo's ability to shore up the economy and to weather the Corona storm. Reflecting the important role that ATI plays in the region's

economic growth, the EIB provided a US\$12.5 million concessional loan to cover Togo's shareholding in ATI. Membership of ATI opens a path for countries to reduce their debt levels, it equally provides global investors and financiers with comfort that sovereign transactions and other investments are back-stopped by a highly rated and reputable insurance guarantee agency.

The regional concern of African pairs about the autocratic regime in Togo was confirmed by a decision of the [ECOWAS court of justice](#) that judged on 26 June that the internet closure during Togo's big demonstrations of the opposition against the modification of the constitution to allow for another presidency of Faure Gnassingbé in 2017 was illegal. This had repercussions on the international evaluation of additional internet closures during the 2020 presidentials. Shortly before, on 11 June, the 14th ed. of the [Global Peace Index 2020](#), produced by the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP, Sydney, New York), had revealed that Togo was at the bottom of regions' peacefulness, ranking Togo the 108th nation out of 163 in the international ranking of peaceful countries in 2020, and 24th in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Nevertheless, the intimidation of the opposition continued with all means. According to a survey conducted by *Le Monde* (Paris) and *The Guardian* (London), published on 3 August, based on the research of the renowned [Citizen Lab](#) (Toronto), the government in Lomé had used a highly sophisticated Israeli software 'Pegasus' to target Catholic clerics and Civil Society militants to spy on mobile phones and internet traffic of the oppositional DMK. Officially, the software had been sold to the government in Lomé to fight terrorism and serious crime. The long-standing close collaboration of Israel and Togo in African politics, military cooperation and espionage, based on mutual benefit since the time of late dictator Eyadéma, had aroused protest of HR organizations and the opposition already in the past.

On 9 September, [ECOWAS](#) announced that it would gradually withdraw its intervention force in Guinea-Bissau. A first group consisting of 130 men mainly from the Togolese Special Forces who arrived in [Guinea-Bissau](#) in November 2019 to reinforce the sub-regional contingent stationed in Bissau since 2012, had already left Bissau on August 27. The other ECOWAS troops, notably Nigerians, Senegalese and Burkinabe, will gradually leave by December 2020, handing over to the army.

In early November (4 November) Lomé was preparing to ratify the convention with neighbouring Benin on the status of the Mono river bordering the two countries and the creation of the [Mono Basin Authority](#) (ABM). The preliminary draft law authorized Togo to ratify the Mono convention that would bind Togo and Benin on their border river had been signed on December 30, 2014, in Cotonou. The bill aimed to ensure integrated and sustainable development of the Mono basin in close collaboration between Benin and Togo.

On 1 December, the National Assembly adopted a bill authorizing the Togolese state to ratify the agreement establishing the [African Intellectual Property Organization](#) (OAPI), headquartered in [Yaoundé](#), which embraced 17 mostly francophone African states. The ratification of this agreement adopted in December 2015 in [Bamako](#) will allow Togo to better protect the inventions and creations of its citizens and to fight effectively against counterfeiting. The agreement represented also a step forward in strengthening the

modernization of the private sector and the Togolese legal arsenal for controlling pharmaceutical products at the borders.

The EU and its member states, notably France and Germany, continued to aid Togo. The EU announced on 15 January its budget support of more than 10.5 billion FCFA (16 m €) for the "consolidation of the State, phase 3 (CCET 3)" for the year 2019. Germany's [KfW](#) provided 5 m € on 18 May to reinforce the decentralization process. Since 2012, Germany had disbursed more than F CFA 30 mrd (45,7 m €) to support decentralization in Togo.

On 10 September 2020 experts from the UNODC Terrorism Prevention Branch held an initial consultative meeting with the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Preventing and Combating Violent Extremism (CIPLEV) of Togo, within the framework of the [Global Counter-Terrorism Forum \(GCTF\)](#) project on capacity building in the West African region. Fake drugs kill people and fund terror. African leaders hope to do something about it.

Also, France extended in August its support to Togo and Ghana for anti-jihadist aerial surveillance: Already committed to Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Guinea, Paris will expand its support program for West African air forces in Togo and Ghana, threatened by terrorist groups from the Sahel within the framework of its West African light observation aviation development program to Togo and Ghana. As part of the Defense Forces Enabling Development (DEFEND) cooperation project led by the Department of Security and Defense Cooperation (DCSD) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris had already committed itself to supply ultralight aircraft (ULMs) CS *Grouse* observation in Benin and Burkina Faso. Bamako currently had six copies of *Tétrás* and Conakry three. Moreover, on November 16, Paris supported the Togolese navy for the combat of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea with *Sillinger* sea hunters of the same type already intended for the Libyan coast guard.

In November, Lomé was also involved in mediation efforts in the Malian crisis. In the August coup of the Malian Armed Forces, President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta had been forced to resign and the government had been dissolved. Several countries like France, the United States and representatives of the AU, EU and the United Nations Security Council, as well as Amnesty International, unanimously condemned the coup, calling on the soldiers to return to their barracks. The Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) even suspended Mali from membership. On September 7, the ECOWAS gave the Malian military rulers a deadline of 15 September to appoint a new civilian President and Prime Minister. Lomé, on the other side, remained open for negotiations and assumed a mediation role to save the junta. On November 13, the transitional president in Bamako, Bah N'Daw, visited Lomé for negotiations. But behind the scenes, contacts had been made in the greatest secrecy already the day after the putsch, including an exchange of visits in private jets and clandestine meetings

In recent years a growing number of foreigners who were generally passing through Togo on their way elsewhere were arrested for trafficking. On 19 January seven African leaders from the Republic of Congo, Gambia, Ghana, Niger, Senegal, Uganda and Togo signed an agreement for stronger legislation to criminalize the sale of fake drugs at the two-day France-Africa summit on counterfeit medicines, a deadly trade that claims

hundreds of thousands of lives every year in Africa and funds transnational crime and terrorism.

In November 2019, the Nigerian multinational Dangote Industries and the Togolese Government had agreed to develop and transform Togolese phosphate and cement industry. In January 2020 the first contract of a 2.5 million tpa cement grinding plant with VRM from the Cimenterie de Côte Ouest-Africaine (CimCo) was awarded to the Intercem Group (Cimfaso & Cimasso /Burkina Faso and CimIvoire/Ivory Coast) by the CimMetal Group. The start of production was scheduled for the first quarter of 2021. For its establishment and expansion in Togo, CimCo will receive a CFA20 billion loan from the BOAD. The long-term facility was approved on 28 September by the Bank's board of directors. The new facility, named Cimco SA, will be strategically situated at the port of Lomé and become the country's largest grinding plant by capacity. HeidelbergCement announced to expand its Togolese subsidiary, Cimtogo, spending more than \$30 million in the process which would create 30% more direct jobs in addition to nearly 4,000 direct and indirect jobs in Togo already provided. Heidelberg had already a grinding station in Kara and an integrated clinker plant in Tabligbo. In January, HeidelbergCement group and the German Cooperation in Togo (GIZ) announced the co-financing the training of 200 residents of the Tabligbo clinker mining area (80 km northeast of Lome) with no experience to become carpenters and bricklayers.

Given Togo's huge Chinese debt's, and the habitually excellent foreign relations between Lomé and Peking, Togo was also likely to profit from Chinese banks debt write-offs for certain African countries from interest-free loans due by the end of the year, as envisaged by Peking in September. However, President [Xi Jinping](#), who held out the prospects of a debt write-off at a summit about how China and Africa could fight the Covid-19 pandemic together, did not say which African countries would be exempt or how much debt would be erased outright.

Moreover, [Alassane Ouattara](#), President of Côte d'Ivoire, announced in September to proceed with the implementation of the proposed West-African common currency [ECO](#) "within three to five years". The controversial subject was originally to be treated on the long-delayed successor to the [Cotonou Agreement](#) between the EU and African, Caribbean and Pacific ([ACP](#)) community expiring end of 2020. Re-negotiations appeared to be approaching the finish line with a '99%' chance of success this year', according to ACP and EU sources ([EURACTIV-sources](#)) on September 2. However, on the eve of the pandemic in mid-February, the EU and the ACP's negotiating teams, led by EU International Partnerships Commissioner [Jutta Urpilainen](#) and Togolese foreign minister [Robert Dussey](#), agreed to extend the existing agreement until the 6th EU-Africa summit, projected for December 2020, in case the summit would not be postponed because of the Corona-pandemic

The auto-evaluation of the [African Peer Review Mechanism](#) (APRM; MAEP, in French) of the [NEPAD](#), meant to enhance good governance in the sub-region and directed by the national APRM commission, dragged on. The first efforts to initiate a nationwide evaluation structure in Togo had only reluctantly begun in 2011. There exists a national APRM commission, composed of 37 CSOs, hand-selected by the government, and members of the public administration. Platform members reviewed the

Togo State report in the period between May and August 2018, the results were still pending.

On December 1, 2020, the National Assembly adopted a law authorizing the Togolese state to ratify the treaty of 2015 to join the [African Regional Intellectual Property Organization \(ARIPO\)](#) . One month before (November 4) Togo had ratified another convention with neighbouring Benin on the statute of the Mono-river and the creation of the Mono-Basin-Authority which had been signed already on 30 December 2014 in Cotonou.

Socioeconomic Development

In April, the World Bank and IMF envisaged considerable additional support for Togo to counteract the economic impact of the Corona-crisis. On April 29, the World Bank approved \$ 8.1 m in financing from the International Development Association (IDA) to help Togo combat Covid-19 and better respond to public health emergencies. One day before, the World Bank had approved already \$ 273 m in International Development Association (IDA) financing for Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso and Niger to facilitate access to services for vulnerable people (especially women and the poorest segments of society), through the West Africa Unique Identification for Regional Integration and Inclusion (WURI) Program. And on April 3, the IMF had authorised already an immediate disbursement of \$ 131.1 m to Togo in line with the completion of the 6th and final review of the country's economic performance under the program supported by the Extended Credit Facility (ECF) agreement. The disbursement was four times greater than what was initially planned (\$ 35 m) due to the human and economic implications of Covid-19. After three years of implementation of the Fund-supported program, the IMF saw the performance of the government as satisfactory in most sectors. Only in the financial sector reforms encountered delays.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic economic prospects for Togo's economy had been encouraging, with growth expected to reach 5.3% in 2020 and 5.5% in 2021, on the back of good performance in agriculture and sound monetary management. However, under the COVID-19 shock, Togo was likely to record a loss of growth of between 4.6% and 6.8 % points in 2020. At least, it would probably avert a recession. Real GDP in 2020 would grow by just 0.9% if the pandemic subsided by July (baseline), and contract by 1.3% if it continued through December (worst case). In the worst-case scenario, the fiscal deficit, initially forecast at 1.5% of GDP in 2020, would widen to up to 6.4% due to the increase in health expenditure and the fall in tax revenues caused by the fall in the general level of economic activity.

The production of cereals for the domestic market was satisfactory, however, problems of outlets could discourage farmers, according to a statement of Ouro-Koura Agadazi, director-general of the National Food Security Agency (ANSAT) on May 3. On average 70,000 tons of grain surplus were recorded in the 2019-2020 crop year, however, several production zones displayed quantities of unsold cereals, like the region Northeast of Sokode (more than 4,200 tons) and Elavagnon in East Mono (more than 5,000 tons of corn). The prefectures of Bassar, Dankpen, Mo, Sotouboua, Blitta, Tchamba, Doufelgou, Binah, Keran, South Oti, Kpendjal, Tandjoare, Tone were also

affected. Agadazi warned that there was a risk that farmers could be demotivated if there were no measures to make it easier for them to market their products, which could have harmful implications for food security. To loosen up the speculative trading attitude of some traders due to the Corona-crisis, ANSAT opened its reserves and in five weeks, 91.5 tons of cereals were placed on the local market on more than 13,000 tons of national security stock. Thereby the price of 2.5 kg corn, which had risen from 400 F CFA to 700 or even 800 relapsed to the normal price. ANSAT announced to increase the security stock from 13,000 to 15,000 tons and to help farmers to export their surpluses if requested, as it had done already in the past ten years, to countries in the subregion and even to Europe, Asia and the US.

The current account deficit was expected to follow a similar trajectory. Forecast at 3.2% of GDP, it was projected to worsen to 5.7% or possibly 7% of GDP in 2020 under the effect of lower exports, declining migrant remittances and FDI in the main economic sectors. Togo's main exports, including re-exports, cotton, phosphates, coffee, and cocoa would also be affected negatively. High rates of underemployment in general (estimated 28% to 33%), notably among recent school leavers (65%), remained alarming.

All in all, the economy and government budget remain volatile and prone to external shocks. On December 18, 2020, the parliament voted on the financial law for 2021. According to the provisions, the budget 2021 the budget will be balanced in resources with expenses at 1 521.6 billion FCFA, or 2.84 billion \$. The budget revenue stands at CFAF 839.6 billion (\$ 1.57 billion), lower than the budget expenditure of CFA 1120.4 billion (\$ 2.09 billion), showing a budget deficit of 280.8 billion CFA (\$ 524.78 million). The deficit represents 6.1% of GDP and would be 'entirely financed by the surplus balance of treasury operations' according to the Minister of Finance, Sani Yaya. The budget devotes 445.1 billion CFA (\$ 831.83 million) to the social sectors, up 10.8% compared to 401.7 billion CFA (\$ 750.73 million) in 2020. CFA 65.9 billion (\$ 123.16 million), or 8.2% of the budget, is allocated to the water sector, to achieve an average service rate of at least 80% in urban and rural areas. Agriculture will benefit from 65.7 billion CFA (\$ 122.78 million), while 77.9 billion CFA (\$ 145.58 million) will be reserved for the health sector, i.e. 10%, and education is allocated 195.5 billion CFA (\$ 365.36 million), or 25.1% of the allocation of the 2021 budget.

The privatization of the two remaining state-owned banks, the Bank for Trade and Industry (BTIC) and, the Union of Togolese Banks (UTB), which had been opposed by the government for years, still dragged on. In October, five possible candidates had been selected for the takeover of the banks. The selection will be done in one batch. Slowed down by the Covid-19 pandemic, the process of selling the two public banks had been relaunched by the Privatization Commission led by the Minister of Finance, [Sani Yaya](#), with the opening of the 'data room'. It was up to the prequalified candidates to make their offers now.

In the past, the government pursued stability-oriented monetary and fiscal policy. According to the IMF Togo complied with the [WAEMU convergence criterion](#) of a fiscal deficit not exceeding 3% of GDP. For 2020, the fiscal deficit and the balance of payments financing gap were forecast to widen due to additional healthcare spending and other impacts of COVID-19 on the economy. However, fiscal consolidation and public debt reduction continued in 2019. Reforms are being pursued to boost domestic

resource mobilization, strengthen the PFM system, and improve the business environment. Growth projections for 2020 were lowered from 5.5% to 3%. The fiscal deficit was expected to widen from an initial projection of 1.9% of GDP to 3.6%, due to higher healthcare spending and revenue loss. The balance of payments showed a financing gap of 1.7% of GDP. The government requested in 2020 an augmentation of access of 48.7% of quota ([SDR](#) 71.49 m) to address the urgent financing need stemming from their plan to control the spread of the COVID-19 and mitigate its economic implications.

Togo's welfare system is underdeveloped. It is available only to government employees and those employed in the formal sector. On October 9, 2020, the government announced that the Togolese minimum wage (guaranteed minimum wage, [SMIG](#)) could soon be revised upwards. In force since 2012, the minimum wage, which hovered around 35,000-38,000 F CFA (€ 64.03), is not always applied everywhere. Workers complained regularly about precarious working conditions characterized by bad hygienic and security conditions and non-payment of the minimum wage.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a discernible effect on the level of social exclusion too, notably of people employed in the informal sector. The pandemic could wipe out four-fifths of Togo's projected growth in 2020 according to a WB-report. Roughly 62% of jobs are at risk, 49% in the service sector and 13% in the industrial sector. Small and medium enterprises have been particularly hard hit. Poverty rates, inequality and human development will most likely be additionally aggravated. To counteract the negative effects on the poor and vulnerable, the African Financier of Micro-Projects (Financière Africaine de Micro-Projets, FINAM), the first public limited company for microfinance, embarked on the digitalization of its services by creating "Finam Mobile" in response to the Covid crisis. The App allows managing ones account at home, including making deposits and withdrawals starting on September 11, 2020.

According to official data presented by the government in 2020, the (official) unemployment rate ranged between was 1.7%. and 1.9% during the past ten years (2010-2020, see table). That of youth unemployed (total, 15 to 24 years old) at about 3.4% in 2020 before the economic impact of the Corona-pandemic. For comparison, the world average in 2020 based on 182 countries before Corona was 15.90% (WB; [Global Economy.com](#)). However, the rate of under-employment had increased from 22.8% (2011) to 24.9% (2015; INSEED; no update available as of Nov. 2020), making a total of at least 28.3% un- and under-employed, mostly young people who represented about 35% of the population. The government tried to counteract this tendency with limited success by its National Agency of Volunteers in Togo (Agence Nationale de Volontariat au Togo, ANVT). Since 2011 more than 43,000 candidates have been registered. Overall, 8,989 people, i.e. 4,610 women and 4,348 men, including 31 disabled people, were affected in 2020.

On September 11, the African Financier of Micro-Projects ([Financière Africaine de Micro-Projets, FINAM](#)), embarked on the digitalization of its services by creating "Finam Mobile" in response to the Covid crisis. The App allows you to manage your account at home, including making deposits and withdrawals. FINAM was the first public limited company for microfinance, founded in 2015. It had launched the first edition of its 1,000 micro-projects campaign to combat youth unemployment. These can

benefit, without prior deposits, but with simple guarantees from members of FINAM, loans up to 600,000 F CFA for the realization of their micro-projects.

The coronavirus-crisis accelerated the establishment of a universal solidarity income, called '*Novissi*' (meaning 'brotherhood' and 'living together' in Ewe language) by the National Solidarity and Economic Fund in April. It was paid twice a month and mainly intended for people living on daily earnings, without social security and affected by a decline in activity, as explained by Cina Lawson, the Minister for Digital Economy. *Novissi* was a 100% digital device that reached nearly 570,000 of the deserving poor between 8 April and 6 June 2020, the date of the lifting of curfews in Grand Lomé and the prefecture of [Tchaoudjo](#) in the [Centrale Region](#). The program was extended to the rural canton of [Soudou](#) in the [Kara Region](#) of north-eastern [Togo](#) when the circulation of the coronavirus forced a drastic reduction in activities. To support individuals and households that had been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, a mobile-based cash transfer program for labourers from the informal sector was introduced. By dialling a three-digit mobile number, e.g. street vendors, roadside cooking parlours and other people of the informal sector whose activities vanished during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic were able to generate an electronic wallet of beneficiaries via their smartphone and thus created a minimum income to guarantee their survival. Women received a higher allowance per month (12,250 CFA F or 18.60 €) than men (10,500 CFA F or 16 €). In total, 11.3 Mrd. CFA F (17.2 m €) were distributed, financed by Togo's National Solidarity and Economic Recovery Fund and by aid-partners such as the French Development Agency (AFD) and private donations. Those entitled were to receive directly, through mobile enrolment, a state grant of at least 30% of the minimum wage, with payouts ranging from F CFA 10 500 million (USD 18 million) to CFA 20 000 million (USD 34 million). As of May 5, 1.3 million individuals had registered, of whom 500.000 received a *Novissi* payment. Based on program data, 65% of the beneficiaries were women. The cash transfer program was expected to last 3 months at a cost of F CFA 36 billion (USD 61 million; 1.1% of GDP). The *Novissi* program was revised in late June with eligibility limited to workers in specific districts recording a high contagion rate. In total, 1.4 million individuals had registered and close to 600.000 received a *Novissi* payment at a total cost of F CFA 11.4 billion (USD 19 million; 0.3% of GDP) so far. The government intended to continue on this path, relying on its mobile coverage to move forward and to ensure that every citizen would have three essential things: a digital biometric identity, a cell phone and a mobile bank account. This innovative emergency measure was the first to be employed on this scale in SSA and could inspire other universal income programs on the continent. The government intended to continue on this path, relying on its mobile coverage to move forward and wanted to ensure that every citizen would have three essential things: a digital biometric identity, a cell phone and a mobile bank account. Similar programs had been tested also in South Africa and Kenya.

On 24 October, Togo entered the first time the public securities market of the West African Monetary Union (UMOA), for the first exit under the last semester of 2020. The country collected 27.5 billion CFA francs from investors, according to the [Agence UMOA-Titres](#). The operation consisted of a simultaneous issue of Assimilable Treasury Bonds (OATs) with a maturity of 5 and 7 years, raised FCfa 27.5 billion. At the respective annual interest rates of 6.4% and 6.5%, the 5-year OAT collected 3.3 billion CFA francs, the last 7-year maturity retained 24.2 billion CFA francs. For the 4th

quarter, Togo plans to mobilize 60 billion CFA francs from investors in the UMOA zone. The country has already collected 573.43 billion CFA francs on the regional financial market for the first three quarters of the year.

Cotton production for the 2019-2020 season gave a poor yield of 116,000 tons, against the forecast of 150,000 tons, according to the New Cotton Company of Togo (NSCT). An increase in the area of land under cultivation triggered by government efforts to boost efficiency in this sector by the extension service propagating best-practice techniques and improved co-ordination of producers are meant to result in the cotton output to grow, although cotton prices will probably be lower in the 2020-21 season than in 2019. The new cotton campaign 2020-2021 was officially launched in Kara on May 19. The price of seed cotton was fixed at 225 F / kg for the first choice.

In April Togo reported the outbreak of African swine fever in a farm northwest of Lomé, where 44 pigs died of the disease since April 18. The government took a series of prevention and disinfection measures to curb the spread of the disease, including the slaughter of all pigs in the farm area.

In August, Togo announced the eradication of a scourge, the African trypanosomiasis, better known as "sleeping sickness", a public health problem and disease, endemic in 36 countries in sub-Saharan Africa where tsetse flies are found. It affects both humans and animals, especially livestock. Thanks to the actions of the Togolese government, local communities, and the World Health Organization (WHO), the disease had been eradicated. Sustained controls had reduced the number of cases by 95% from 10,000 in 2009 to 977 in 2018. However, estimates were that 300 000 cases in SSA were undiagnosed and therefore untreated. The estimated population at risk was 65 m people. Togo had not reported any new cases for over a decade. The most recent epidemic in SSA started in 1970 and lasted until the late 1990s. Trypanosomiasis did not pose a public health problem by 2020 and interruption of transmission (zero cases) was envisaged for 2030.

Environmental damage had negative serious effects on the economy too, e.g. concerning Coastal erosion. In June, the village of Doevikope on Baguida beach, to the east of Lomé, three-quarters of residents have moved away since the ocean swallowed precious agricultural land, the school's playing field and the cemetery. Coastal erosion that affected the ocean coastline and its adjacent Lake Togo and Lake Boko during the period 1988-2018, resulted in the Lake Togo widening on average by 1.55 m/year while the coastline of the Lake Boko shrank by 1.25 m/year. For the coastline of the Ocean, the regression ranged from 1.66 to 5.25 m/year. The barrier beach experienced an average immersion of 9.25 ha/year. Predictions based on the average rate of immersion of the barrier beach of 9.25 ha/year showed that the latter is exposed to a continuous immersion hazard that would affect more than 7% of its current area (6557.33 ha) by the year 2070. The waterside of the capital losses about 10-meter p.a. because of man-made erosion and smaller villages situated along the coast like Baguida, Gbodjomé, Agborrafo successively immerse in the sea.

Concerning deforestation Togo ranked at the bottom range (rank 165 of 190 countries). From 2001 to 2019, Togo lost 55.9 kha of tree cover, equivalent to a 10% decrease in tree cover since 2000, and 11.3Mt of CO₂ emissions. From 2002 to 2019, the country

lost 299 ha of humid primary forest, making up 0.56% of its total tree cover loss in the same period. The total area of humid primary forest in Togo decreased by 82% in this time ([Global Forest Watch, 2020](#)). The top regions in Plateau and Center regions were responsible for 58% of all tree cover loss between 2001 and 2019. This region had the most tree cover loss at 32.6 kha compared to an average of 11.2 kha. Forest loss was apparently particularly severe in the Western region of the woods between Atakpamé and Sokodé. ([interactive map, Global Forest Watch, 2020](#)).

According to [WHO guidelines, the air quality in Togo](#) is considered unsafe. The most recent data (April 2020) indicate the country's annual mean concentration of PM_{2.5} is 36 µg/m³, exceeding the recommended maximum of 10 µg/m³. Contributors to poor air quality in Togo include the mining and cement industries, vehicle emissions, and waste burning. The government noted an exponential growth of cars and motorcycles.

In February, the ECOWAS, including Togo, agreed to adopt a regional standard on imported gasoline and diesel fuels of 50 parts per million (ppm) starting in January of 2021, with local refineries given until January 2025 to comply. Four years before, in December 2016, Togo and four neighbouring countries (Nigeria, Ghana, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire) had already agreed in principle to ban imports of dirty fuels from Europe. The WHO ranked these health risks among the top global health risks, associated with heart disease, lung cancer and respiratory problems. In September, a new report of the international resource watchdog group Stakeholder Democracy Network (SDN) partly-funded by the UK Foreign Office's anti-corruption conflict, stability and security fund, revealed that even black market fuel made from stolen oil in rudimentary "bush" refineries hidden deep in the creeks and swamps of the Niger delta, was less polluting than the highly toxic diesel and petrol that Europe exports to Africa. Shell, Exxon, Chevron and other major oil companies extract and export up to 2 m barrels a day of high quality, low sulphur "[Bonny Light](#)" crude from the Niger delta. But only small amounts of this oil is refined in the own country because its [four state-owned refineries](#) are dysfunctional or have closed. Instead, international dealers export to Nigeria around 900,000 tons p.a. of low-grade, "dirty" fuel, made in Dutch, Belgian and other European refineries. Around 80% of Nigeria's petroleum products come from the Netherlands and Belgium. The average "unofficial" imported diesel tested exceeded the level of EU sulphur standards 152 times, and 40 times the level for gasoline. As consequence, Nigeria ranks fourth in the world for deaths caused by air pollution. It has been estimated that 114,000 people die prematurely from air pollution each year.

Lomé tried to counteract air pollution by its National Plan for the Reduction of Air Pollution and Short-Lived Climate Pollutants, adopted and published by the Minister of Environment in 2020. It included priority measures and actions which would significantly reduce [SLCPs](#). Thus, it would reap the multiple benefits of improving air quality, fighting climate change, and realizing co-benefits like improved health and agricultural productivity. Fully implementation would result in a 67 % reduction in black carbon, 70 % reduction in fine particulate matter, and 56 % methane reduction by 2040.

In February, three new actors joined the "*Cizo*" project that had already successfully met the challenge of electrifying 40,000 households in neighbouring Benin in 2019. These are off-grid suppliers, i.e the Ugandan-based company *Fenix International*,

Solergie and *Moon*, a subsidiary of the French energy giant *Engie*. Fenix will compete with *Solergie*, which operates in Togo under a partnership with French oil giant *Total*. A Belgian company offers a solution called *SolergieBox*. It is a mini-grid made up of solar panels, an inverter and a battery for storing electricity. This off-grid solar system can supply 8 households in rural areas. Households connected to the mini-grid can pay their bills via “mobile money”, a mobile phone payment system. The mobile phone is also a key piece of equipment in the service offered by *Moon*. This French company, which is also involved in the “*Cizo*” project, offers solar home kits. Its own is made up of solar panels, a storage system, and USB ports for recharging mobile phones. Unlike other suppliers of solar kits, its solution is accompanied by a smartphone (*Moonphone*) on which is installed an application that allows the payment of the solar kit in small amounts (in pay-as-you-go).

According to the Ministry in charge of Livestock, the [2019/2020 transhumance campaign](#) that came to an end on May 31, went off without a major incident. In total, some 30,000 head of cattle circulated in the territory during that period. Strong seasonal livestock cross-border movements originating primarily from Burkina Faso and Niger but also between Togo and Nigeria were reported during the survey period. Strong livestock cross-border trade ties were reported by the OECD in 2020.

On 10 September 2020 experts from the UNODC Terrorism Prevention Branch held an initial consultative meeting with the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Preventing and Combating Violent Extremism (CIPLEV) of Togo, within the framework of the [Global Counter-Terrorism Forum \(GCTF\)](#) project on capacity building in the West African region. Fake drugs kill people and fund terror. African leaders hope to do something about it. On 18 January 2020, it was reported that fake pills had been imported to Togo, coming surreptitiously from China, India and Nigeria. They were packaged like cures for fever and rashes and were distributed on street corners e.g. in Lomé promising to ease suffering at a fraction of the cost. But fake drugs kill tens of thousands of people each year in a global counterfeit trade worth an estimated \$200 billion, thwarting progress in the fight against malaria and other life-threatening diseases, experts say, while funding organized crime.

Togo continued to be a safe haven for money-laundering. On September 20, CENOZO, an investigative reporting unit in West Africa, revealed that ‘Kassoum Zombre, Sarl U’, a Togolese company in Lomé, had been identified in a suspicious transaction with Saber Pte Ltd, a company in Singapore, known as a tax haven for Asian giants that had its local head-office in [Atakpamé](#). The case was allegedly linked with an illegal financial transaction via Iran to finance terrorist networks in the frontier zone in the north of Togo, where the jihadist threat had increased in recent years on the border with Burkina-Faso. Cinkassé, on the borders with [Burkina Faso](#) and [Ghana](#), about 38km from [Dapaong](#), was renowned as the Dubai of the sub-region, an epicentre of wealthy traders (moguls) and a hub for contraband and obscure activities, e.g. of fighters of the dreaded [Ansaroul](#) group degrading the security situation. Even if Togo had been hitherto apparently spared actual terrorist acts, the risk of infiltration remained evident. Dapaong, Cinkassé, Yemboate and other localities in the Savannah region in northern Togo bordering Burkina Faso were classified as “Red Zone” where the presence of jihadists had been noticed by the population. On February 15, 2019, Father César Fernández, one of the first Spanish Salesian priests on a mission in Togo since 1982,

had been killed in a terrorist attack at the Nouhao customs checkpoint located between Cinkasse (Togo) and Bittou (Burkina Faso).

In January 2020 1.71 million Togolese were connected to the internet according to a study published by 'Hootsuite and We Are Social' on the use of the web and social networks in Togo. An increase of 7.8% compared with 2019. The overall internet penetration rate was now 21%, including 43.1% via mobile, 56.1% by computer, 0.7% by tablet. 650,000 subscribers were active on social networks (+ 14% between April 2019 and January 2020). 580,000 users regularly access Facebook (95.9% by mobile), 72,000 to Instagram, 170,000 to *LinkedIn*. There were 3 Instagram macro-influencers in Togo with an average following of 81 860 followers. The total reach of all Togolese Instagram macro-influencers combined is 245 581 followers. *TikTok* is said to be used increasingly by Togo's teenagers too. Influencers like the comedian influencer *#Roland_Tikena* allegedly count more than 12 Mio. views. Togo's Minister of Posts, Digital Economy & Technological Innovations, Cina Lawson, announced on February 28, 2020, that by 2022, 90% of the population will have access to fixed and mobile broadband internet services. The actual fixed/mobile broadband penetration was estimated at 35% at end-2019.

On October 21, the new Archbishop of Lomé [Yves Nicodème Anani Barrigah-Benissan](#) (appointed in 2019) was announced the winner of the 2020 Togolese Literature Grand Prix. He had been awarded the prize thanks to his work entitled "*The Royal Throne*". This is a play published by Nouvelles Editions Africaines du Togo (NEA-Togo) 1993. He also published several other books and was author and composer of several songs.

Togo's HDI trend progressed over the past three decades from 0.4 in 1990 to 0.51 for 2018 ([HDI-report, 2019](#), the most recent report in 2020), an increase of 26.6 %. which put the country in the low human development category, positioning it at 167 out of 189 countries. However, when the value is adjusted for inequality, the HDI falls to 0.350, a loss of 31.7 % due to inequality in the distribution of the HDI dimension indices. The 2018 female HDI value for Togo is 0.459 in contrast with 0.561 for males, resulting in a Gender Development Index (GDI) value of 0.818. The overall trend was reflected too by the [UN World Happiness Report of 2020](#) where Togo ranked still at the bottom (135) of 153 states evaluated for the period 2017 to 2019, although it counted, alongside neighbouring Benin, among the best performers in changes in happiness from 2008–2012 to 2017–2019.

In the World Bank 2020 index of trade- and business freedom, based on business regulations in 190 economies, the best improvers were Togo (rank 97 of 190 (Somalia at the bottom end), alongside with Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Bahrain, Tajikistan, Pakistan, Kuwait, China, India and Nigeria. However, the WB Doing Business Index came under severe critic in 2020 because of its alleged political and methodological (free trade) bias. The more regulations are slashed, the better a country does in the ranking. Therefore, on 27 August 2020, the World Bank announced that it will suspend the Doing Business Report over data irregularities until it conducts a review and audit. The halting of the report was welcomed by trade unions, academics and human rights groups. In fact, the Doing Business Report undermined social progress and promoted inequality. Since it was launched in 2003 it has generated outrage for its anti-regulation bias. Inspired by the "Index of Economic Freedom" at the conservative Heritage

Foundation, the report encouraged countries to take part in the “deregulation experience” including reductions in employment protection, lower social security contributions (denominated as “labour tax”) and lesser corporate taxation. Thus, a country ranks better when its social security contributions are low, that is when employees have lesser social protection benefits for their families and retire with low pensions. Countries also get better rankings if corporate tax is low, no matter if this will generate further inequality and starve resources for national sustainable development. Up to now, the lack of transparency and predictability and the high informal transaction costs inhibit robust FDI. The average applied tariff rate is 11.4%. However, multiple non-tariff barriers to trade impede foreign trade. Nevertheless, the 2020 index of trade- and business freedom improved, mainly due to improvements in starting a business, dealing with construction permits, getting electricity, property registration and getting credit. The reform of the investment code was inspired by Rwanda’s progress over the past 10 years in this respect. Several Togolese delegations visited Kigali to learn about successful reforms. President Faure Gnassingbé apparently held the vision to be number one in West Africa in Doing Business 2020. To achieve this target, Togo made significant reform efforts in the areas of starting a business, registering property, and getting credit. However, the [Heritage Foundation Index of Economic Freedom 2020](#) classified Togo still among the ‘mostly unfree’ countries (rank 140 of 100, score: 54.3, +3.8).

Author's extended and hyperlinked version of : Kohnert, D. (2021): Togo. In: Adetula & Kamski & Mehler & Melber (eds.), *Africa Yearbook. Vol. 17 – Politics, economy and society South of the Sahara in 2020*. Leiden & Boston: Brill.

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Abstract : Controversial constitutional and institutional reforms voted in May 2019 in parliament opened the way for President Gnassingbé to stand for a fourth and fifth term because the law does not apply retroactively. In February 2020, the President won again the disputed presidential elections and thus consolidated his power, assisted by the loyal army and security services. The outbreak of the Corona epidemic in Togo in March and the subsequent economic recession may have contributed to limit popular protest against the Gnassingbé regime. The human rights record of the government has improved, but remains poor. Yet, the international community followed a 'laissez faire' approach in the interests of regional stability. The economy dropped into recession due to the worldwide economic negative effects of the corona-crisis. The democracy index of the Economic Intelligence Unit, London, still rated Togo as an 'authoritarian regime'.

Résumé : Les réformes constitutionnelles et institutionnelles controversées votées en mai 2019 au Parlement ont ouvert la voie au président Gnassingbé pour se présenter pour un quatrième et un cinquième mandat parce que la loi ne s'applique pas rétroactivement. En février 2020, le président a remporté à nouveau les élections présidentielles disputées et a ainsi consolidé son pouvoir, assisté par l'armée fidèle et les services de sécurité. Le déclenchement de l'épidémie de Corona au Togo en mars et la récession économique qui a suivi a peut-être contribué à limiter les protestations populaires contre le régime de Gnassingbé. Le bilan du gouvernement en matière de droits de l'homme s'est amélioré, mais reste médiocre. Pourtant, la communauté internationale a suivi une approche de «laissez-faire» dans l'intérêt de la stabilité régionale. L'économie est entrée en récession en raison des effets négatifs économiques mondiaux de la crise corona. L'indice de démocratie de l'Economic Intelligence Unit, à Londres, classait toujours le Togo comme un «régime autoritaire».

Zusammenfassung : Umstrittene verfassungsrechtliche und institutionelle Reformen, die im Mai 2019 im Parlament verabschiedet wurden, eröffneten Präsident Gnassingbé den Weg für eine vierte und fünfte Amtszeit, da das Gesetz nicht rückwirkend gilt. Im Februar 2020 gewann der Präsident erneut die umstrittenen Präsidentschaftswahlen und festigte damit seine Macht, unterstützt von der loyalen Armee und den Sicherheitsdiensten. Der Ausbruch der Corona-Epidemie in Togo im März und die anschließende wirtschaftliche Rezession trugen dazu bei, den Protest der Bevölkerung gegen das Gnassingbé-Regime zu begrenzen. Die Menschenrechtsbilanz der Regierung hat sich verbessert, bleibt aber defizitär. Die internationale Gemeinschaft verfolgte trotzdem im Interesse der regionalen Stabilität einen Laissez-Faire-Ansatz. Die Wirtschaft geriet aufgrund der weltweiten wirtschaftlichen negativen Auswirkungen der Coronakrise in eine Rezession. Der Demokratieindex der Economic Intelligence Unit in London bewertete Togo weiterhin als "autoritäres Regime".