



Politics

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Togo Analysis: Wave of nationwide anti-government protests reflects entrenched grievances against long-lasting rule of Gnassingbe, unlikely to result in significant political change

Executive Summary:

- Since August, Togo has witnessed at least 21 protests denouncing the long lasting rule of the Gnassingbe family over the country. More precisely, protesters demand the immediate reinstatement of the 1992 constitution limiting the presidential mandate to two terms and the immediate departure of current president Faure Gnassingbe.
- In contrast with previous waves of anti government protests, the recent wave is taking place both in the south and north of the country, the latter of which has historically been supportive of the Gnassingbe rule despite the region's economic underdevelopment.
- The opposition has witnessed the emergence of a new charismatic leader, Tikpi Atchadam, appearing more suitable to challenge president Faure Gnassingbe. Atchadam contrasts with historical opposition leader Jean Pierre Fabre who, despite his commitment to the protest movement, is perceived as softer as he gave signs that he would accept entering into a national dialogue with the power in place.
- As the wave of protests is likely to continue over the coming weeks, President Faure Gnassingbe will likely adopt a passive stance, betting that the opposition's momentum will decrease over time, while intermittently calling for dialogue, thus attempting to embolden rifts within the opposition to serve his interest.
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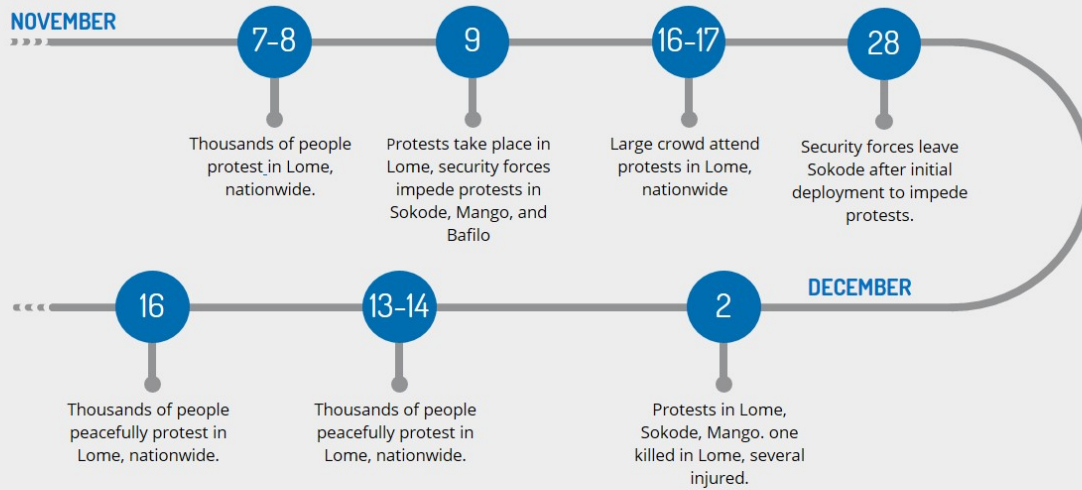
Current Situation:

- On August 19, the Pan-African National Party (PNP) organized protests in several cities of Togo, including Lome, Sokode and Mango, demanding the reinstatement of the 1992 constitution limiting the presidential mandate to two terms, as well as the introduction of voting rights for Togolese in the diaspora and the revision of the electoral framework. The demonstrations were forcefully dispersed by security forces resulting in two protesters being killed and several injured.
- Since then, multiple nationwide protests have been taking place repeatedly, some turning _____
- On September 5, the government initiated a process to amend the constitution, limiting the presidential mandate to two terms starting from the 2020 presidential elections, as well as limiting parliament members to two terms in office. The opposition has continuously opposed such propositions, demanding that the two terms limit of the presidential mandate would apply immediately and retroactively, thus entailing the immediate departure of Faure Gnassingbe from power. Following the reforms' September 19 failure to meet the needed 80 percent parliamentary

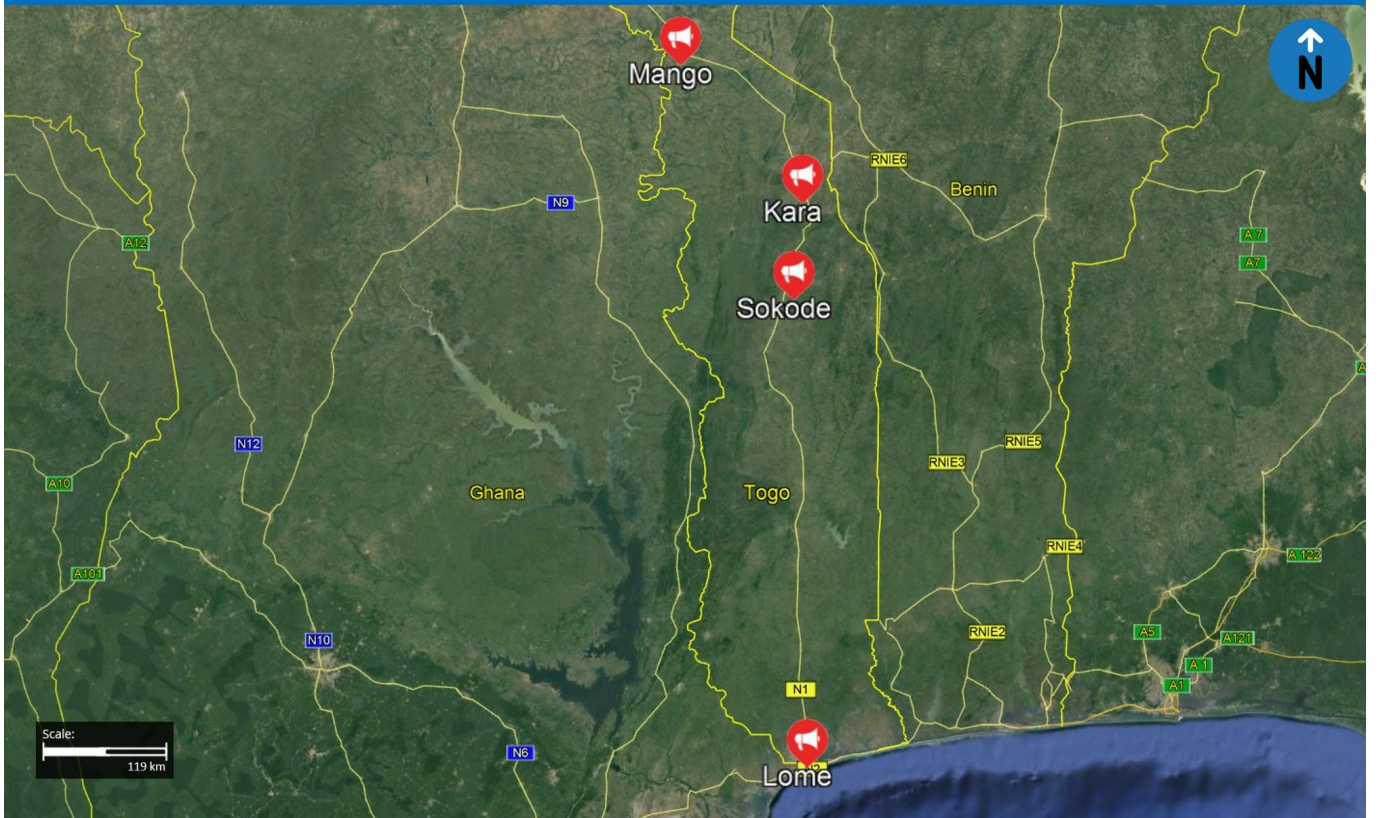
vote, the President announced that the reforms would be submitted to a referendum, without providing a potential date.

- The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) made efforts to solve the ongoing political crisis in Togo, including ECOWAS Commission's President, Marcel De Souza visit to Togo on September 12.

Timeline of recent prominent protests in Togo



Main focal points of protests in Togo since August 2017



Background:

- Following a coup, Gnassingbe Eyadema took power in 1967 and banned other political parties from the Togolese political landscape, thus enabling his long-lasting rule over the country. Pressured by international actors such as the European Union, he later initiated the vote of a new constitution in 1992, authorizing a multiparty system in Togo and limiting the presidential mandate to two terms. However, in 2002, ahead of the elections and in a will to cling to power, Gnassingbe Eyadema lifted the two terms limit on the presidential mandate.
- Following Gnassingbe Eyadema's death in February 2005, the army installed in power his son, Faure Gnassingbe, in violation of the terms of the constitution. This move elicited wide international criticism that drove Faure Gnassingbe to subsequently leave power. Two months after, he was elected president in a process that was regarded as fraudulent by the opposition. In reaction, the opposition organized multiple protests that were heavily cracked down upon by security forces, resulting in the killing of approximately 400 protesters.
- Re-elected in 2010 and 2015, Faure Gnassingbe remained vague regarding the reinstatement of the initial two terms. The opposition conducted multiple waves of protests, among others in 2014 and 2015, to demand the reinstatement of the 1992 constitution and of the presidential two terms limitation.



Faure Gnassingbe

Title:
President of Togo

Term of office:
2005-Present

Background:
Son of former president Eyadema Gnassingbe who was in power from 1967 to 2005



Jean Pierre Fabre

Title:
Head of main opposition party
National Alliance for Change (ANC)

Background:
Ran against Faure Gnassingbe during 2010 and 2015 presidential elections



Tikpi Atchadam

Title:
Head of opposition Panafrican
National Party (PNP)

Background:
From the Northern part of the country, with a wide support base in Sokode

Assessments & Forecast:

1. The ongoing wave of anti-government protests is the latest in a series of similar demonstrations that have regularly taken place in Togo since Faure Gnassingbe's accession to power. The recent wave is notable given its scale and extent, as well as the emergence of grassroots opposition in

northern Togo. Furthermore, the opposition has been able to maintain the protests' momentum over time, with protests taking place approximately every week since August, and managed to attract large crowds, numbering in the tens of thousands. As such, this underscores the long-lasting grievances held by the opposition against the rule of the Gnassingbe family who has been in power for 50 years. Additionally, it highlights the protesters' entrenched will to voice these grievances despite security forces recurrent crackdowns on the protests.

2. These grievances are aggravated by the high poverty rate in the country, with 60 percent of the total population living off less than 2 USD a day, a figure that reaches 81 percent when measuring only the rural areas of the country. These figures contrast with the recent economic improvement of the country itself, underscored by a GDP growth rate of 5.3 and 5.1 Percent in 2015 and 2016 respectively. Indeed, while the president introduced several economic reforms, which led, among others, to the increase in foreign aid, said reforms were not directed to enhance the Togolese people's standard of living. This is particularly evident in northern Togo, which has been traditionally characterized by low economic development compared to the south, an area situated closer to the capital. In the same vein, Togo has been repeatedly criticized by international organizations for the widespread corruption affecting the country, which has hindered the optimal functioning of government institutions, thus exacerbating grievances held by the people against the government.
3. That the protests have taken place both in southern and northern Togo is significant, particularly as the latter has historically been supportive of the Gnassingbe rule despite the region's economic underdevelopment. The north's historical support of the government is largely due to the fact that the Gnassingbe family is rooted there, originally from the village of Piya, located less than 100 km from Sokode. In that context, the recent wave of protests witnessed the emergence of a new opposition leader, Tipki Atchadam, who presides the PNP party, thus highlighting, in contrast with the past, the surfacing of a political force in northern Togo that opposes the power in place. As such, Atchadam's leadership has renewed the opposition's momentum, who had appeared rather weak for the past years after its historical leader and founder of the ANC, Jean Pierre Fabre, lost against Faure Gnassingbe in the 2010 and 2015 presidential elections. As Fabre comes from the south, his opposing stance was perceived as falling into the traditional rifts between the two parts of the country and did not succeed in appearing as a credible force able to effectively challenge the government. Additionally, while Atchadam remains strict on his demand to obtain the immediate reinstatement of the 1992 constitution, refusing any preliminary dialogue with the government, Fabre has a more conciliatory stance, thus appearing more accommodative of other opposition elements' interests.
4. In tandem, the army's support usually plays a pivotal role in whether social pressure on a longstanding ruler succeeds or not. Indeed, it usually constitutes the shifting element enabling the protesters to obtain satisfaction of their demands by siding with them and forcing the contested president to relinquish power. In Togo, the army is dominated by the Kabiye ethnic group, which represent approximately 60 percent of its forces, and to which the Gnassingbes' belongs. Furthermore, former president Gnassingbe Eyadema and later Faure Gnassingbe intentionally appointed a large number of army officers from their hometown, Piya, thus ensuring that the army would remain loyal to them. Indeed, the army has traditionally constituted a determinant ally of the Gnassingbe clan, as evident in Faure Gnassingbe's ascension to power in 2005. **FORECAST:** As such, given their symbiotic relationship, the army is expected to remain loyal to the government despite the mounting and continuous pressure from the opposition calling the president to relinquish power.
5. From a regional perspective, ECOWAS attempts to solve the crisis fall in line with the organization's traditional stance as a conciliatory and legitimate platform to solve impasses on a regional level. In the past, ECOWAS successfully intervened in The Gambia in [January 2017](#), when it pressured longstanding leader Yahya Jammeh to relinquish power after he lost the elections. **FORECAST:** That being said, it is unlikely that the organization's attempts will bear significant fruits as the Togolese opposition fails to perceive ECOWAS as a neutral mediator. Indeed, these suspicions stem not only from the fact that ECOWAS is currently presided by Faure Gnassingbe himself but also given that the community's commission is headed by Faure Gnassingbe's son in law, Marcel de Souza, thus inducing the idea that any of the body's initiatives will be biased. In the same vein, suspicions against ECOWAS are reinforced by the organization's

repeated findings that Togo's last elections were held freely and transparently, in contradiction with the opposition's perceptions.

6. **FORECAST:** Under these circumstances, it is likely that the ongoing wave of protests will continue over the coming weeks and months given the entrenched anti-government feeling that has spread throughout the country, particularly considering the more hardline stance taken by emerging opposition figures like Atchadam. This stance is highlighted by the opposition's refusal to approve the president's constitutional amendment, as the two terms limit promoted therein would apply for the future mandate, thus allowing Faure Gnassingbe to run for two more terms from the upcoming 2020 presidential elections. As such, the president may adopt a passive stance, betting that the opposition's momentum will decrease over time, while intermittently calling for dialogue, thus attempting to embolden rifts within the opposition. Furthermore, article 2 of the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance recommends that no substantial electoral reform should be passed within six months before elections unless a wide majority adheres to it. Given that Togo will see parliamentary elections in July 2018, it is possible that Gnassingbe will aim to reach this deadline, subsequently finding a legal pretext to postpone or dismiss any eventual reform. The government's lack of initiative to move forward with the announced referendum further sheds light on this strategy. In any case, the political situation is likely to remain tense in the near future, with further protest taking place nationwide, which carry a distinct potential for unrest, particularly in northern Togo.

Recommendations

1. Travel to Lome can continue while adhering to heightened security precautions regarding the potential for unrest associated with ongoing protests.
2. Those operating or residing in Lome and throughout Togo are advised to avoid nonessential travel to the vicinity of any protests, given the distinct risk of unrest and forcible dispersal measures, including the potential use of live fire by security forces.