

**Togo**

# *Ethnicity in Togo*

## *Group selection*

Although Togo's ethnic landscape is much more complicated, the list of politically relevant groups can be reduced to two big clusters (Ewe and Kabré). This aggregation is also proposed by other scholars (<sup>5204</sup>; <sup>5205</sup>). There are, of course, more ethnic groups than two such big clusters; however, there is no evidence suggesting that any of these groups has ever been politically relevant in the sense that they were discriminated or politically represented by any ethnic interest group.

<sup>5204</sup> [Brown, 1983]

<sup>5205</sup> [Decalo, 1996]

Group sizes according to Decalo (<sup>5206</sup>).

<sup>5206</sup> [Decalo, 1996]

## *Power relations*

*1960-1962: rule of Sylvanus Olympio and his CUT.* The CUT is an Ewe-based party (<sup>5207</sup>). The Ewe and other southern ethnic groups were the privileged groups during the colonial period. Accordingly, they dominate the country's political life after independence and the new state's civil service. Moreover, the Ewe south is also much more developed economically than the north, the home region of the Kabré and affiliated groups (<sup>5208</sup>; <sup>5209</sup>).

<sup>5207</sup> [Barbier, 1987]

<sup>5208</sup> [Brown, 1983]

<sup>5209</sup> [Decalo, 1996]

Olympio's government is mainly composed of Ewe although there are also northerners included (also Kabré) (<sup>5210</sup>; <sup>5211</sup>). In fact, the CUT received significant electoral support from the north in the 1958 elections (<sup>5212</sup>; <sup>5213</sup>). The increasing discontent with Olympio's rule, moreover, came not least from the south and the Ewe (<sup>5214</sup>; <sup>5215</sup>). It also seems that the military coup conducted by Eyadéma in Jan. 1963 was mainly driven by other factors than ethnic rivalry (<sup>5216</sup>). However, it is a fact that the CUT leadership was overwhelmingly composed of Ewe and the government dominated by Ewe, too. Therefore, the Ewe and affiliated groups are coded as "dominant", and the northern Kabré cluster as mostly "powerless".

<sup>5210</sup> [Barbier, 1987]

<sup>5211</sup> [Brown, 1983]

<sup>5212</sup> [Barbier, 1987]

<sup>5213</sup> [Brown, 1983]

<sup>5214</sup> [Brown, 1983]

<sup>5215</sup> [Decalo, 1996]

<sup>5216</sup> [Brown, 1983]

*1963-1966:* Nicolas Grunitzky - an Ewe like Olympio - is installed as new president by the military. He forms a government that includes all political parties. Antoine Méatchi, a northerner, is elected vice-president. There is at least one more northerner in the cabinet. Hence, there is political inclusiveness, but also stalemate and instability.

In this de-facto power-sharing arrangement, the Ewe are still the

“senior partner”, but the Kabré can now be regarded as “junior partner”.

*1967-1990: new coup by Eyadéma in Jan. 1967 and subsequent rise to power.* The military dictatorial regime of Eyadéma rests upon the repressive force of the army. Political power becomes increasingly concentrated in the hands of members of his own Kabré group, which dominates the army and benefits from Eyadéma’s favoritism (5217, 5218; 5219). Important positions in the single party, the army, and in public enterprises are also given to family members or close personal cronies (5220; 5221, 5222; 5223). Even among students, “northerners” are favored by Eyadéma’s stipend system which leads to a militia of southern students that supports the opposition (5224).

There is a clear ethno-political cleavage between southern Ewe and northern Kabré. Opposition organizations are predominantly composed of Ewe and other southern groups (5225; 5226), while the only city that does not participate in the general strike in June 1991 is Kara, a northern city mainly populated by Kabré (5227). Eyadéma repeatedly labels opposition to his regime as Ewe-tribalism that intends to promote Ewe dominance in the country (5228; 5229). The regime also uses attempted (or staged?) “plots” to launch a campaign of harassment and coercion against the old CUT-Ewe elite (5230).

The ongoing resistance of these opposition groups becomes increasingly violent, especially from the mid-1980s on. There are rising interethnic hostilities in Lomé and the countryside - exaggerated and used by the regime for its propaganda (5231, 5232). Brutal suppression of all opposition by the army, which is still overwhelmingly composed of members of the Kabré group and completely loyal to Eyadéma (5233; 5234, 5235, 5236, 5237). Eyadéma’s Kabré-army is described as behaving like an occupation-army in the south and centre of the country, and that the only reason why the country did not experience any civil war in this period was because the southern opposition did not have any arms (5238). Thus, the Kabré cluster is coded as “dominant” and the Ewe and affiliated groups as “powerless” during the whole period from 1967 to 1990.

*1991: failed “democratization process” with national conference, new constitution providing for a multi-party system, elections etc.* Eyadéma never really loses power. The prime ministers, selected by himself, remain subordinated to him (and the military forces behind him), the parliament also intimidated by the military is not able to constitute a countervailing power. Nevertheless, the aborted democratization process does lead to more ethnic inclusion in the higher circles of executive state power, for which reason a power-sharing regime is coded in this one-year period, with the Kabré as “senior partner”, and the Ewe as “junior partner”.

5217 [Heilbrunn, 1993]

5218 [Heilbrunn, 1997]

5219 [Nwajiaku, 1994]

5220 [Decalo, 1996]

5221 [Heilbrunn, 1993]

5222 [Heilbrunn, 1997]

5223 [Nwajiaku, 1994]

5224 [Heilbrunn, 1997]

5225 [Decalo, 1996]

5226 [Nwajiaku, 1994]

5227 [Heilbrunn, 1997]

5228 [Brown, 1983]

5229 [Heilbrunn, 1997]

5230 [Brown, 1983]

5231 [Heilbrunn, 1993]

5232 [Heilbrunn, 1997]

5233 [Brown, 1983]

5234 [Decalo, 1996]

5235 [Heilbrunn, 1993]

5236 [Heilbrunn, 1997]

5237 [Nwajiaku, 1994]

5238 [Decalo, 1996]

*1992-2005:* Return to “business as usual” as Eyadéma consolidates his tight grip on power again, thanks to the loyal support of his Kabré-dominated army. Meanwhile, ethno-regional cleavages deepen increasingly. Eyadéma’s party RPT is now a clearly regionalist northern party. Opposition parties (Agboyibor’s CAR and the UTD of Edem Kodjo) receive their support from the south (<sup>5239</sup>). The fraudulent presidential election in 1993 that Eyadéma wins without rival candidates is essentially a “regional vote” with a national turnout of about 35% - mainly from the north. Turnout in the south ranges from 4 to 18% (<sup>5240</sup>, <sup>5241</sup>).

<sup>5239</sup> [Decalo, 1996]

<sup>5240</sup> [Decalo, 1996]

<sup>5241</sup> [Heilbrunn, 1997]

Eyadéma holds a firm grip on power until his death in Feb. 2005. The fact that the army arbitrarily named his son, Faure Gnassingbé, as successor and subsequently supported him to win the so-called “elections” later in April 2005 shows that the system of political power in Togo has not significantly changed with Eyadéma’s death. (The interim president which was named by the parliament for the two months before the elections was also a northerner and firm supporter of Gnassingbé.) The opposition accused the military of stealing ballot boxes from polling stations in the south. The riots and civilian protests which, especially in the capital Lomé, accompanied this “military coup” (so called by the African Union) were violently put down by the armed forces, resulting in tens of thousands of people fleeing to neighboring Benin and Ghana. There was significant interethnic violence between the two ethnic groups during the electoral conflict, with the Kabré-dominated army responsible for many of the committed human rights abuses (<sup>5242</sup>, 2007, 2008).

<sup>5242</sup> [Freedom House, 1999-2017]

In sum, in this period, like in the period from 1967 to 1990, the Kabré (and related groups) need to be coded as “dominant”, whereas the Ewe (and related groups) are mostly “powerless”.

(Note, however, that the bulk of the northern population has not benefited economically from the northern-based military regime of the late Eyadéma. In 2006, 90% of families in the north and 77% in central Togo could not cover their basic needs (<sup>5243</sup>).

<sup>5243</sup> [IRIN, 2009a]

*2006-2015: Faure Gnassingbé as president.* Gnassingbé has inherited his father’s reign, based on a small circle of military associates. The armed forces are also the main base of support for the dominant party RTP (<sup>5244</sup>). Importantly, the Kabré still constituted about 80% of the army’s officers and soldiers in 2008 (<sup>5245</sup>, 2009). Moreover, the southern ethnic groups are still underrepresented in the government(<sup>5246</sup>, 2006-2009).

<sup>5244</sup> [Polity IV Country Report, 2010]

<sup>5245</sup> [US State Department, 1999-2019]

<sup>5246</sup> [US State Department, 1999-2019]

However, there seem to be some slow improvements occurring, as Gnassingbé’s regime is less repressive than his father’s (<sup>5247</sup>). As a consequence of a “peace agreement” with the opposition in August 2006, Gnassingbé has named several southern prime ministers (e.g. Edem Kodjo and Yawovi Agboyibo) who appointed somewhat more inclusive “unity governments” (<sup>5248</sup>). In April 2009, Faure Gnassingbé had his younger half-brother Kpatcha Gnassingbé, former Defense minister, arrested on coup-plotting charges. Kpatcha

<sup>5247</sup> [IRIN, 2006]

<sup>5248</sup> [IRIN, 2009b]

was viewed as a conservative and hard-liner in line with the former regime of his father, whereas Faure's rule was characterized by more openness and better relations with the opposition - differences which resulted in a rift between the two brothers after their father's death (<sup>5249</sup>).

<sup>5249</sup> [AFP, 2009]

Overall, it is difficult to exactly determine the Ewe's (and related southern groups') power status under Faure Gnassingbé's regime. It is clear that the Kabré - through their dominance of the still extremely powerful army - are still the leading group within Togo's state (see also <sup>5250</sup>, 2008). Yet, it seems that Gnassingbé's rule is markedly more (ethnically) inclusive than his father's, as mirrored also in an upgrade of Freedom House values from 2008 on (<sup>5251</sup>, 2008); see also <sup>5252</sup>. The balance of power seems to be similar to the year of 1991 when Eyadéma and his closest collaborators temporarily lost their iron grip on power. Therefore, a new period of ethno-political power-sharing is coded in Togo from 2006 onwards, with the Kabré (and related groups) as "senior partner" and the Ewe (and related groups) as "junior partner".

<sup>5250</sup> [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2003-2020]

<sup>5251</sup> [Freedom House, 1999-2017]

<sup>5252</sup> [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2003-2020]

In the presidential election in March 2010, the incumbent Faure Gnassingbé received over 60 % of the vote and won another term in office. Quite surprisingly, Jean-Pierre Fabre and not Gilchrist Olympio ran as candidate of the main opposition party, the Ewe-dominated Union de Forces pour le Changement (UFC). Shortly after the elections, Olympio, apparently acting on his own account, negotiated a power-sharing deal with Faure securing the Ewe-leaning UFC seven cabinet seats (<sup>5253</sup>). This deal led to a split of the Ewe opposition: Fabre and a majority of other (former) UFC politicians founded the Alliance nationale pour le changement (ANC), whereas Olympio was left with a minority rump of the 'old' UFC. The ANC quickly emerged as the main opposition force sidelining its 'mother party' UFC (<sup>5254</sup>). Generally speaking, Ewe continue to be under-represented in the Togolese state apparatus, both in its civil and in its military branches, according to the U.S. State Department's Human Rights Report from 2012 (<sup>5255</sup>). The 2010 elections apparently marked a slight departure from previously established patterns of ethnic voting. While Faure's regime party RPT/UNIR still won all northern districts and the Ewe-dominated UFC prevailed in the south, both parties secured more votes outside of their traditional constituencies than it had been the case in previous elections (<sup>5256</sup>, 2014). This might indicate that ethnicity has become a somewhat less salient cleavage in Togolese politics. However, it is still highly politically relevant.

<sup>5253</sup> [Seely, 2010]

<sup>5254</sup> [Tobolka, 2014]

<sup>5255</sup> [US State Department, 1999-2019]

<sup>5256</sup> [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2003-2020]

*2016-2021:* During this period, Faure Gnassingbé is still president of Togo.

In the presidential elections in 2015, Gnassingbé won against his opponent Jean-Pierre Fabre, who is a member of the opposition party ANC (<sup>5257</sup>). The UFC, which collaborated with the government after the elections in 2010, experienced a heavy loss in support

<sup>5257</sup> [BBC, 2015]

amongst the population. In the legislative elections of 2013, for example, the party lost 24 of their 27 seats. This indicates that previous supporters of the oppositional party UFC did not support its collaboration with the government. Even though the UFC/UNIR accord still persists (<sup>5258</sup>, thus, it is hard to conclude that the southern groups are effectively represented in government. According to the Freedom House Report of 2017 (<sup>5259</sup>, 2017), “The Éwé, Togo’s largest ethnic group, are persistently excluded from influential government positions, but are prominent within the opposition.” Northern Kabré still hold an unduly high number of relevant public offices compared to their counterparts in the south (<sup>5260</sup>, 2016). Furthermore, it is observed that the Kabré dominate the military and political spheres, while the Ewe dominate economic activity (<sup>5261</sup>, 2016; <sup>5262</sup>, 2017). The premier minister appointed after the presidential elections in 2015 has a southern origin. Nevertheless, he is a member of the northern-dominated governmental party UNIR, which indicates that he does in fact not represent the southern ethnic groups (<sup>5263</sup>).

The efforts to achieve a power-sharing system, which were taken between the political parties in 2010, could not be observed anymore during and after the presidential elections in 2015. Thus, as of 2016 (after the elections in 2015 and according to the January 1st-rule), the Kabré are coded “Dominant” again, while the Ewe are coded “Powerless”.

It should also be mentioned that, based on the sources consulted, it seems that ethnic cleavages are not as salient as they were in earlier years. Rather has the Togolese nationality developed and become stronger (<sup>5264</sup>, 2016). Since the elections of 2015, opposition parties have motivated their voters to demonstrate against the Gnassingbé regime, a regime of one single family that has dominated the Togolese politics for 50 years. The protesters demand a constitutional amendment limiting the presidential terms to two. The government, however, is not willing to accept this amendment retrospectively, which indicates that the president would still have two terms from now in which he can hold his office (<sup>5265</sup>). These demonstrations do however not seem to be motivated primarily by concerns about the ethnic dominance of the Kabré. Rather is it the dominance of one single family over the whole population in Togo.

Large civil protests against the Gnassingbé-regime continued in 2017 and 2018. As many as 800’000 people have been reported to turn to the streets to call for Gnassingbé’s resignation (<sup>5266</sup>). In response to the protests, the government reconsidered the introduction of a presidential term limit of two four-year terms, but insisted that the count should only start at the 2020 election. A coalition of opposition parties (C14) collectively rejected the proposition, boycotted the 2018 parliamentary elections, and demanded Gnassingbé to step down (<sup>5267</sup>). The widespread discontent also showed during the boycotted parliamentary elections. Although UNIR won a majority of 59 of the 91 available seats, it lost 3 of the 62 seats it held in parlia-

<sup>5258</sup> [Republic, 2017]

<sup>5259</sup> [Freedom House, 1999-2017]

<sup>5260</sup> [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2003-2020]

<sup>5261</sup> [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2003-2020]

<sup>5262</sup> [US State Department, 1999-2019]

<sup>5263</sup> [Primature, 2017]

<sup>5264</sup> [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2003-2020]

<sup>5265</sup> [Signer, 2017]

<sup>5266</sup> [BBC, 2017]

<sup>5267</sup> [The Washington Post, 2019]

ment before (<sup>5268</sup>). However, in May 2019, the parliament accepted the proposed constitutional reform making Gnassingbé eligible to run in the 2020 presidential elections (<sup>5269</sup>).

Irrespective of the civil and political unrest in the country, no significant changes took place in the Togolese executive body. In contrast, the presidential elections of May 2020 saw Gnassingbé being reelected as president with 71% of the votes (<sup>5270</sup>). In this respect, UNIR is expected to continue its dominance in Togolese executive power for another term.

<sup>5268</sup> [The Economist, 2019]

<sup>5269</sup> [Al Jazeera, 2019]

<sup>5270</sup> [BBC, 2020]

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## Political status of ethnic groups in Togo

*From 1960 until 1962*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Ewe (and related groups)	0.44	DOMINANT
Kabré (and related groups)	0.27	POWERLESS

*From 1963 until 1966*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Ewe (and related groups)	0.44	SENIOR PARTNER
Kabré (and related groups)	0.27	JUNIOR PARTNER

*From 1967 until 1990*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Ewe (and related groups)	0.44	POWERLESS
Kabré (and related groups)	0.27	DOMINANT

*From 1991 until 1991*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Ewe (and related groups)	0.44	JUNIOR PARTNER
Kabré (and related groups)	0.27	SENIOR PARTNER

*From 1992 until 2005*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Ewe (and related groups)	0.44	POWERLESS
Kabré (and related groups)	0.27	DOMINANT

*From 2006 until 2015*



Figure 1034: Political status of ethnic groups in Togo during 1960-1962.



Figure 1035: Political status of ethnic groups in Togo during 1963-1966.

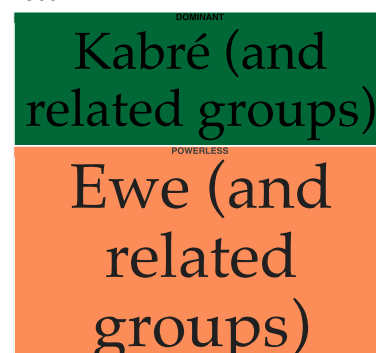


Figure 1036: Political status of ethnic groups in Togo during 1967-1990.

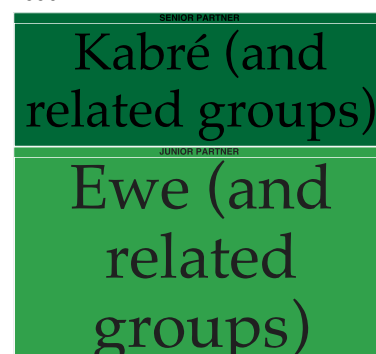


Figure 1037: Political status of ethnic groups in Togo during 1991-1991.



Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Ewe (and related groups)	0.44	JUNIOR PARTNER
Kabré (and related groups)	0.27	SENIOR PARTNER

*From 2016 until 2021*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Ewe (and related groups)	0.44	POWERLESS
Kabré (and related groups)	0.27	DOMINANT



Figure 1040: Political status of ethnic groups in Togo during 2016-2021.

# Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Togo

From 1960 until 1960



Figure 1041: Map of ethnic groups in Togo during 1960-1960.

	Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
■	Ewe (and related groups)	14 109	Regionally based
■	Kabré (and related groups)	12 728	Regionally based

Table 375: List of ethnic groups in Togo during 1960-1960.

From 1961 until 2021



Figure 1042: Map of ethnic groups in Togo during 1961-2021.

Group name		Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
<span style="color: orange;">■</span>	Ewe (and related groups)	14 109	Regionally based
<span style="color: green;">■</span>	Kabré (and related groups)	12 728	Regionally based

Table 376: List of ethnic groups in Togo during 1961-2021.

## *Conflicts in Togo*

*Starting on 1986-09-22*

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Togo	MTD	Ewe (and related groups)	1986-09-22	Presumed	Yes	Yes