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# Democratization in Africa: Double Standards in Benin and Togo

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## INTRODUCTION

Following decades of economic and political strife in Africa, a process of general democratization in several nations has generated hope that a genuine economic revival on the continent could be taking root.<sup>1</sup> In Western aid policy circles, the apparent link between democratic reform and development is reflected in a new orthodoxy asserting that the negative consequences of structural adjustment in Africa have come about because of state weakness in the areas of good governance, respect for human rights, and democratic institutions. While many Western nations have reassessed their development policies in light of the growing evidence of the benefits of these democratic indicators,<sup>2</sup> the fine print of the North's development policies toward the South in general, and Africa in particular, reveals a more complex and often less benevolent pattern of behavior.

Since the end of colonialism, many African nations, particularly in Francophone Africa, have struggled to achieve a "second liberation"<sup>3</sup> from the policies and institutions imposed by the West. Although France has finally succumbed to the winds of reform, its policies have not always supported democratic renewal. In a "better-the-devil-you-know" attitude, France's policies until recently have revolved around the support of various autocrats.<sup>4</sup> The result is that culturally, economically, militarily, and politically, the newly independent Francophone states remain bound to the metropolis. Now, however, Africa's corrupt and autocratic regimes face strong pressures from an indigenous civil society that France regards with suspicion, resulting in French policy that has grown inconsistent and dependent on the particular economic and political interests that France has at stake in the countries involved.<sup>5</sup>

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The upshot is that while France has supported democratic reforms in some countries it has turned a blind eye as reforms have stagnated in others. This contradictory policy betrays itself most clearly in Benin and Togo. While France has put considerable pressure on Benin to open up its political system, it also seems to have given Togo complete permission to resist any internal democratic change. Despite its expressed elation at the reforms, France wanted, and got, democratization at different speeds in these two countries.<sup>6</sup> The resulting policy is reminiscent of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, where some animals are "more equal" than others. Clearly, while the stated French policy has been to treat African nations equally, France has preferred that some nations be more equal than others.

### FRANCE'S HISTORICAL TIES TO AFRICA

An appreciation of France's current relationship with its former African colonies requires an understanding of the colonial relationship that began in the seventeenth century, when circumstances encouraged substantial and sustained interaction with the continent to the south. The primary driver for colonization was economics, as Paris sought new markets and access to raw materials. Each colony was made to specialize in a particular cash crop according to its comparative advantage. Colonies with more lucrative crops, such as Senegal, which produced peanuts, received more attention in terms of infrastructure development.<sup>7</sup> Others, like Sudan, which produced the less profitable crop of cotton, did not benefit as much from such investment.

Relations with France were governed by a "colonial pact"<sup>8</sup> whereby the interests of the "mother country" and its companies operating on the continent were put before all else. The mother country's interests dictated that traditional economies be replaced with cash crop production designed for creating profit to be sent back to France. At the same time, tariffs and subsidies allowed French companies to operate in the colonies without foreign competition. Overall, development and the general welfare of the African people were low on the French agenda.<sup>9</sup> Such was the one sided link built by Paris between its colonies in Africa and the European economy.

After several centuries of commercially motivated colonialism, DeGaulle realized that the status of the colonies would have to be greatly altered. In 1956, the *Loi-Cadre* gave semi-autonomous status to African territories.<sup>10</sup> African dissatisfaction with this scheme prompted the formation of the Franco-African Community. This arrangement gave some powers of self-government to the colonies but retained the prerogative of foreign affairs for France.<sup>11</sup> Independence movements within the colonies rejected the Franco-African Community and it dissolved after 18 months. No concrete framework was implemented to take its place and relations between France and its colonies took the form of vague coop-

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eration agreements. Through all of these changes France maintained its cultural and economic dominance.

The most effective tool for exerting control, still used by the French today, is control of the currency. France has compelled Francophone African states to hold most of their reserves in francs and to execute their exchanges on the Paris market. Today the CFA is pegged to the French franc, giving Paris a high degree of control over its former colonies' economies. It exerted this control in 1994 when it executed a 100 percent devaluation of the CFA against the franc. Along with bilateral aid, France used control of the CFA franc and its political influence to impose order on otherwise unpredictable African economies in the wake of independence. In effect, the newly independent countries purchased order at the price of economic and political dependence.<sup>12</sup>

Contrary to expectations, independence did little to alter the lopsided relations France established with its colonies.<sup>13</sup> Through a web of connections and links, France granted a dependent freedom to its territories. A host of agreements and pacts<sup>14</sup> prevented African countries from finding *Uhuru*.<sup>15</sup> Like children who refuse to grow up, African nations continued to be controlled by their former master.<sup>16</sup> Clapham describes the relationship between France and its former colonies as an unprecedented mechanism for controlling the newly independent African states. Though formally independent, African countries can hardly make any decision without consulting with the French government.<sup>17</sup> The tight control that France wields over former colonies casts doubt on the sincerity of its sudden interest in democratization on the continent.<sup>18</sup> In this context the democracy initiative of the La Baule Conference, discussed below, is nothing more than a political stratagem.

#### LA BAULE CONFERENCE ON DEMOCRATIZATION IN AFRICA

In order to appreciate the meaning of La Baule one must understand France's policies towards Africa from de Gaulle to Mitterrand. De Gaulle's concept of *La Grandeur de la France* steered France into maintaining close ties with African countries to insure a reliable source of crucial raw materials and markets for goods and investments. Thanks to his charisma and skills, General de Gaulle created personal relationships with most Francophone African leaders. In addition, de Gaulle was directly involved in some internal African politics. He "suggested" candidates for high-level political positions, encouraged several African leaders to have European secretaries in order to assure their loyalty, and created the Ministry of Cooperation and Development to oversee relations between France and Africa.

Georges Pompidou and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing continued the Gaullist tradition by expanding France's sphere of influence in Africa. Pompidou introduced the Franco-African summit, which proved crucial to setting up the French agenda on the continent, and was an important control mechanism. Giscard

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made his mark by proving to be quicker to intervene in internal African conflicts than his predecessors. He enlarged the Franco-African family and revived proposals of an Afro-European solidarity pact and a pan-African intervention force.

French concern for African democracy or democratization began to emerge when François Mitterand became president in 1981. This new interest in democratization can be explained, in part, by the Cold War's thaw. The new state of international affairs introduced issues such as human rights and democracy to the development debate and gave these topics unusual importance. The World Bank, the IMF, and donor countries made clear that future aid would depend on good governance and respect for human rights. However, donor states and organizations had very different understandings of good governance and democracy as well as divergent implementation mechanisms.

Mitterand joined the universal call for democracy on the continent and, based on the election manifesto of the French socialist party, he intended to establish an egalitarian relationship between France and Africa. The Franco-African summit at *La Baule*, in France, gave Mitterand the opportunity to make progress toward democratization. However, while democracy was a new item on France's political agenda in Africa, the French position on the continent remained unchanged. Both Mitterand and the Socialists realized that, due to France's internal politics and national interests, France could not relinquish its hold on former French colonies.

When Jacques Chirac succeeded Mitterand as president he maintained the tension between official commitment to democratization in Africa and quiet tolerance of a wide range of regimes, including some distinctly anti-democratic governments. In February 1990, while Benin's national conference was in session, Chirac, who was attending the conference of Francophone mayors in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, conveyed an astonishing message to Africa. In remarks that sent shock waves through three continents, Chirac characterized multi-partyism as a "political error" for developing countries. To him, poor countries could ill afford the luxury of democracy that, in his opinion, distracted them from economic growth. While the French president made this statement in part to support his "friend" Houphouët-Boigny, who suggested democracy within the one-party system, Chirac's views also exposed the true nature of French hegemony.

Democracy in Africa appears to also be a priority for the European Union, with the issue featuring prominently in both the Maastricht Treaty and the Lomé IV Convention between Europe and the African-Caribbean-Pacific (ACP). The European powers intend to promote democracy but a question remains about what this means in reality. From the acceptance of the political situation in Algeria to dubious support for democratization in Sub-Saharan Africa, it is difficult to credit Europe in general, and France in particular, with a genuine desire to see a democratic Africa. What seems to matter is rather political stability as defined by donor countries.

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History has proven that as long as African leaders maintained “good and loyal” relationships with France, they remained in power, even if their regimes were undemocratic. France’s contradictory position towards democratization in Benin and Togo confirms the argument that international behavior of states is still based on national interests, irrespective of rhetoric. The fact that socialist or totalitarian Benin was forced to democratize while authoritarian Togo could merely “reform” proves this point.

### DEMOCRATIC REFORMS AS A “REQUIREMENT” IN BENIN

French authorities since de Gaulle have always been adamant about their right to install and remove leaders in former African colonies. They were, therefore, seriously frustrated when Benin’s October 1972 revolution occurred with no or little input from France.<sup>19</sup> At first, the 1972 coup seemed to be nothing more than Dahomey’s most recent military interruption,<sup>20</sup> and France accepted the *fait accompli*. But soon, it became clear that this military takeover was far from ordinary. The new government set out to revise the *Accords de Coopération* between France and Benin. The military regime viewed the April 1961 accords as the fundamental expression of Benin’s bondage to France.<sup>21</sup> The desire to loosen ties with France became apparent.

The army in Africa was not known for taking ideological stances, or having the capacity to stage a coup for purely political reasons. The literature on military coups in Africa always cited reasons other than politics to justify military interventions on the continent.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, France expected the new military in Dahomey to simply list their grievances against the civilian regime, and to promise a return to normalcy within months.<sup>23</sup>

However, at the outset of the 1972 revolution, the new leaders revealed a program that gave a clear sense of things to come. In addition to law and order issues, the military emphasized radical change.<sup>24</sup> In their program, the military squarely put the blame for Benin’s misfortunes on foreign domination.<sup>25</sup> Even after the new leaders’ program became known, France still hoped to curb the military leadership’s ideological trend. Soon after assuming the presidency, Mathieu Kérékou expressed hope that Dahomey’s revolution, and the resulting social and cultural system, would be authentic rather than driven by foreign ideology.<sup>26</sup>

This statement did not, however, quell France’s anxiety. The Marxist Republic of Congo remained fresh in the French authorities’ minds, and made them determined to prevent radical revolution in another former French colony.<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, their apprehensions were justified when, on November 30, 1974, the new leader proclaimed socialism for Dahomey. In an apparent reversal, Kérékou proclaimed Marxist-Leninist universal laws consistent with authentic political development.<sup>28</sup>

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To add insult to injury, the revolutionary government outlined an eight-point program clearly intended to remove Dahomey from France's sphere of influence.<sup>29</sup> The measures that were intended to eradicate foreign domination included the revival of Dahomey's culture, languages, and traditions. When, in November 1975, Dahomey was re-christened the People's Republic of Benin, the military leadership had completed the process of radicalization.<sup>30</sup> By June 1975 the educational system had been profoundly altered to bring about a new society devoid of French influence.<sup>31</sup> Through the *Ecole Nouvelle*, new authorities intended to create an educational environment conducive to deeper knowledge about Benin and its peoples. The mass media under government control served as propaganda instruments in creating a truly independent Benin.<sup>32</sup>

In its zeal to transform society, the government also enacted administrative and economic changes. The administrative reform broke with the old French style system and granted greater social, economic, and cultural autonomy to local units, which were run by elected bodies and revolutionary committees.<sup>33</sup> On the economic front, several foreign, mainly French, companies were nationalized, further destabilizing relations between France and Benin. The last blow came when the new authorities openly denounced France as the "foreign domination" they had alluded to all along.

The junta described its new diplomacy as one of rupture and independence.<sup>34</sup> Despite the non-alignment rhetoric, the new foreign policy was deliberately oriented towards socialist countries such as the Soviet Union, Cuba, China, Vietnam, North Korea, and East Germany.<sup>35</sup> Benin managed to antagonize France on several issues, from creating new relationships with the Soviet Union to denouncing France's animosity vis-à-vis revolutionary Guinea. While it proclaimed solidarity with "progressive states and peoples engaged in the struggle for liberation," Benin distanced itself from traditional allies of regional groups such as OCAM, the CEAO, and the *Conseil de l'Entente*.<sup>36</sup> In fact, a commission was appointed to review the agreements of economic, cultural, and military cooperation "with certain friendly countries," specifically France.<sup>37</sup>

By displaying open antagonism toward France, Benin alienated itself from the "mother country." So when Kérékou's regime broke down and was forced to turn to imperialistic France, his request was welcomed.<sup>38</sup> The French authorities used all means necessary to assure his departure. The involvement of the French ambassador in Cotonou, Guy Azaïs, in the democratic movement in Benin was common knowledge to Benin's authorities.<sup>39</sup> On behalf of President Mitterand, Azaïs clearly conditioned financial support on fundamental political and economic reforms. He presented the Kérékou regime with concrete proposals and steps to transform Benin into a democracy.<sup>40</sup>

Obviously, Kérékou would have preferred to resolve his economic problems without being asked to engage in political reforms. He consequently turned

to the socialist camp for help. Having failed to secure any financial assistance from that end, he turned back to Paris, agreeing, albeit reluctantly, to the terms of France's assistance. Benin's request for assistance, which followed Kérékou's scathing criticism, presented an opportunity for France to demand democratic reforms that would certainly dislodge Kérékou's regime.<sup>41</sup>

After several heated debates within the political bureau of the single party, the only choice left for Benin was to swallow the bitter pill France was prescribing, although neither Kérékou nor his cronies envisioned such a radical change.<sup>42</sup> Benin, the *enfant terrible*, was clearly forced by France to democratize. In the meantime, Togo the reliable former French colony, continued to resist democratization, defying civil society with the implicit, but unwavering, support of France.<sup>43</sup>

### POLITICAL REFORMS AS A "RECOMMENDATION" IN TOGO

Despite the vibrancy of civil society in Togo, democracy remains elusive. France, the only power capable of inducing reforms, lacks incentive to do so, simply because of its strong and sustained relationship with Togo.<sup>44</sup> While France is forcing democratization elsewhere, fear of the unknown motivates France to support a loyal but undemocratic ally in Togo. The history of the relationship between France and Togo explains France's wishes to maintain Gnassingbé Eyadéma's regime.

After World War II, the colonial territories of British and French Togo saw a political movement led by intellectuals who made use of youth movements, political parties, and the press to convey their views. Along with the movements for national unity<sup>45</sup> emerged other groups pressing for the unification of Togo. Among the activists for unification was a certain Sylvanus Olympio, who strongly opposed French intervention in Togo.<sup>46</sup>

Olympio hoped for a unified Togo until British Togo dashed that hope by joining the Gold Coast following a U.N.-supervised plebiscite in 1956. In the meantime, the territory known as French Togo received additional autonomy from France.<sup>47</sup> In 1955, the introduction of a new statute and subsequent transfer of nearly all powers to a new government gave French Togo a large measure of internal autonomy.<sup>48</sup> France maintained control of defense, foreign affairs, and monetary policy.

Although, France strove to accommodate the wishes of the population of Togo by relaxing policies towards the country, Olympio and others still called for Togo's independence.<sup>49</sup> So when the April 1958 elections for a new legislative assembly, held under U.N. supervision, gave victory to Olympio's party, the Comité de l'Unité Togolaise (CUT), France viewed the results with apprehension.<sup>50</sup> A new era had been ushered in, and independence, or *ablode*, became the new leitmotiv. Two years later, on April 27, 1960, Togo was granted independence with Olympio as the new president, much to France's displeasure.<sup>51</sup>

Once in power, Olympio did very little to hide his feelings towards France. One of his first official acts was to start paying back Togo's debts to France, regardless of the short-term hardships for the populations.<sup>52</sup> Very early on, it became obvious that Olympio's eagerness to pay back France resulted from animosity towards the mother country.<sup>53</sup> Olympio became a challenge that France had to defy, by all means. On the other hand, Olympio unwillingly assisted France by antagonizing his former allies in Togo, imposing an austerity program on his compatriots, and denying former French servicemen an opportunity to be reintegrated into the Togolese military.<sup>54</sup>

Olympio's presidential style clearly undermined his abilities to govern effectively, and his economic measures, while keeping the budget within its limits, made the population miss the mandate era. But the refusal to take in ex-soldiers discharged by France made Olympio a prime target in France's struggle to keep control over its former empire.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, having been forced to grant independence to former colonies, and with a clear desire to maintain close relationships with them, the last thing France wanted was a rebellious African leader openly displaying his disdain for Paris.<sup>56</sup> Olympio's death in 1963 came then as a relief to France. His successor, Nicolas Grunitzky, while lukewarm in his relations with British authorities, revived Togo's links with other European powers, especially Germany and France. But the advent of Gnassingbé Eyadéma clearly gave a new momentum to the Franco-Togolese relationships.<sup>57</sup>

Unlike Olympio, Eyadéma had joined the French army and fought in Indochina and Algeria. His loyalty to France never wavered, and France welcomed his coups. After the first one, in January 1963, France wanted him to take control of Togo.<sup>58</sup> But the conditions were not yet ripe for Eyadéma to become president. He would have to wait for his second coup in January 1967 to fulfill France's wish. Until a suspicious plane crash in 1974, France and Togo maintained exceptional relations marked by mutual respect.<sup>59</sup>

The Sara Kawa airplane accident coincided with ongoing delicate negotiations about the phosphate trade between France and Togo, and almost turned the exceptional relationships upside down. Upset by that event, Eyadéma nationalized the phosphate company and embarked on the *authenticité* (return to roots) path taken by Mobutu.<sup>60</sup> Since France could not afford to lose Eyadéma and vice-versa, other loyal African leaders such as Bongo of Gabon and Houphouët-Boigny of Cote d'Ivoire intervened to settle the differences between the Togolese President and French officials.<sup>61</sup> The renewed friendship between the two countries has been strengthened since then, and France refused to allow the new wave of democratization to damage several years of solid links. Eyadéma's position vis-à-vis democracy was well known to French authorities. His plan, similar to that of many other African leaders, was to create pluralism within the one-party system, and France raised no objection to that.<sup>62</sup> But when democracy became the new buzzword in

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international politics, France did not want to appear to be left behind. As a country where democratic revolution occurred in 1789, France wanted to be seen as a pro-democracy power. However, the real goal was rather to force rebellious countries to democratize while permitting loyal ones to simply reform.<sup>63</sup>

According to Bayart,<sup>64</sup> Mitterand's first Minister of Cooperation, Mr. Cot, was asked to resign over his insistence on exposing Éyadéma's human rights violations. Cot's departure sent a clear message to those who still ignored the special character of Franco-Togolese relationship. On the eve of the democratization process in Africa, and after *La Baule*, France could no longer remain silent vis-à-vis the political situation in Togo.<sup>65</sup> Taking its cue from La Baule, the opposition movement in Togo increased its pressure on the government, taking any opportunity to raise the stakes. In a very deceptive move, Mitterand recalled his ambassador to Togo, Georges-Marie Chenu, apparently because of his closeness to Éyadéma, and replaced him with a more neutral and energetic Bruno Delaye<sup>66</sup>.

Many perceived that move to reflect France's desire to force Togo to democratize. But, what most observers ignored was the influence of Mitterand's advisor on African affairs, who happened to be his own son, and a very close friend of Éyadéma's.<sup>67</sup> Neither father nor son wanted a truly democratic Togo, given the uncertainty of who might emerge as a new leader through democratic means. Despite that underlying position, Mitterand officially asked Ambassador Delaye to undertake the transformation of the political scene in Togo. However, *perestroika*<sup>68</sup> never materialized in Togo. According to several informants, Delaye's role in Lomé, unlike that of Azaïs in Cotonou, was to help Éyadéma more effectively silence the opposition, a task at which he succeeded very successfully.<sup>69</sup>

After intense negotiations, Ambassador Delaye managed to bring the government and the opposition to an agreement about reforms and how they should come about. On June 12, 1991, both parties agreed on a national forum, which would suggest new measures for Togo's political and economic renewal.<sup>70</sup> But there was a catch in the agreement that the opposition failed to detect. The gathering should proceed, according to Éyadéma's and France's wishes, through a "quiet" conference that would reconcile the entire nation rather than divide it by digging up old dirt. The hard-liners within the opposition called for a real national conference to redress Togo's misfortunes. The debate began in earnest when Mitterand sent a clearer, if still ambiguous, message about his new conception of democracy.<sup>71</sup> In June 1990, Mitterand praised democratic changes in Benin as a model for reform in Francophone Africa and tied French aid to "movement towards democracy" at La Baule. However, his views changed unexpectedly the following year at Chaillot Palace in Paris, when Mitterand declared that France would no longer interfere in the political affairs of African states. He further stated that each African country must find its own "rhythm" for reform and political change.<sup>72</sup> By a bizarre coincidence, in Lomé, the dissolved former single

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party of Togo, the RPT, was holding its congress. Both the newly elected Prime Minister, Koffigoh, who was at the Chaillot conference, and the chairman of the national conference in Togo, Monsignor Fanoko Kpodzro, were shocked. As a matter of fact, the latter felt compelled to reiterate the dissolution of the RPT.<sup>73</sup>

Outraged by that second death of the RPT, young members of the party and some security forces took over the offices of national television and radio. In every corner of Lomé, they harassed the opposition and its supporters.<sup>74</sup> Using Mitterand's fresh declarations, Éyadéma's activists created a chaotic situation that would require strong intervention by the army. Informed about his country's internal state, Koffigoh returned to see what could still be salvaged.<sup>75</sup> Upon his return, he was taken hostage by a group of soldiers who claimed to be acting on behalf of Éyadéma, and demanded both the end of the transition, and Koffigoh's resignation.<sup>76</sup> Confused and angry, Koffigoh, with Delaye's assistance, called on Mitterand to send troops, under the framework of the defense agreement between France and Togo. However, Koffigoh's request was denied on the basis that only Éyadéma, as president, could make it. That position, also taken by the French Ministers of Defense, Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, and Ambassador Delaye, allowed the mutineers to capture Koffigoh and take him to Éyadéma for consultation.<sup>77</sup>

Lomé erupted in violence and terror, forcing the French president to send French paratroopers to "protect French citizens" in the city. But once again, France's strategy became evident, if not awkward, when the troops supposed to be safeguarding French citizens living in Lomé were deployed to Cotonou, in Benin.<sup>78</sup> Although the official reason cited was the security of the Lomé airport, it became difficult to convince anyone that the troops were ever meant to be sent to Lomé. The very fact that they never set foot in Togo until the end of hostilities in Lomé speaks volumes about the undisclosed agenda.<sup>79</sup> After a terror campaign, Éyadéma reasserted his full control over Togo. By September 12, 1992, when Koffigoh announced his new cabinet, influential members of the defunct RPT reemerged in prominent ministries, which confirmed the return of Éyadéma's stewardship.<sup>80</sup>

Frustrated, vulnerable, betrayed, divided, and powerless, the opposition in Togo was left with only one choice: to negotiate with Éyadéma as though there had never been a national conference. Scheduled for February 5, 1993 in Strasbourg, France, the first attempt at resolving the political crisis in Togo finally happened on February 8 in Colmar, Germany, under the co-aegis of Germany and France.<sup>81</sup> Right from the beginning, Éyadéma's representative, Foreign Minister Ouattara Natchaba, challenged the modalities of the meeting, and blocked any genuine discussion. The German envoy, Minister of Cooperation Carl-Dieter Spranger, grew frustrated, blaming France for a lack of enthusiasm for a peaceful resolution of the crisis. What Spranger did not realize, or was not prepared to state, was that France never intended to see any progress on that front. But the failure of Colmar did not end France's pretence to halt political chaos in Togo.<sup>82</sup>

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Mitterrand solicited Benin's help and a high level delegation went to Lomé, with the hope of making a difference.<sup>83</sup> However, both parties to Togo's crisis held onto their position and foiled Benin's efforts. By that time, Mitterrand faced more pressure from within and outside Togo to keep his La Baule promise. In the meantime, legislative elections in France brought to power the right wing, which had traditionally been a stronger supporter of Éyadéma.<sup>84</sup>

With new Minister of Cooperation Michel Roussin, Mitterrand looked for ways to end the stalemate in Togo. Mitterrand approached the president of Burkina Faso, Blaise Compaoré, to serve as an intermediary, and the latter was pleased to be given a golden opportunity to alter his regional and international status. After his election victory despite controversial voting irregularities in his country, Compaoré had been looking for ways to remake his image, and could not have asked for a better occasion. Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina, was therefore chosen for the next round of dialogue between Éyadéma's cronies and the opposition. For reasons still unknown, but easily imaginable, Germany and the U.S. were given observer status, and did not participate in the negotiations.<sup>85</sup>

After several days of discussions, France made it known to the opposition that its only option was to cooperate with Éyadéma, and the agreements reached at Ouagadougou set up presidential elections for August 1993. But besides France's desire to force Éyadéma's victory through ballots, nothing had been resolved in Burkina.<sup>86</sup> Despite the Ouagadougou gathering, harassment of the opposition and human rights violations continued unabated and tension within Togo rose. Several opposition leaders remained at bay. Under these circumstances the Éyadéma regime proceeded with presidential elections despite the opposition's boycott.<sup>87</sup> Two token candidates, Adani Ife and Jacques Amouzou, served as opposition for Éyadéma's "competitive" re-election. With more than 96 percent of the vote, Éyadéma was easily confirmed. Several observers, including former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and the European Union's representatives, expressed shock that the results of the elections were even proclaimed, given the alleged irregularities.<sup>88</sup>

Despite these objections, Éyadéma took office, in defiance of the opposition and foreign observers. Worse, he continued to use the divided opposition to his advantage. After several feeble attempts at resolving Togo's political dilemma, France gave up, placing, interestingly, blame on the opposition for its intransigence. Guaranteed by France's position, Éyadéma now had no incentive to see the crisis resolved.<sup>89</sup> In fact, he became so comfortable with the situation that he organized another presidential election following his controversial 1993 election. He managed to "win" again in the June 1998 election, though the opposition claimed that candidate Gilchrist Olympio, one of Sylvanus' sons, was the real winner.<sup>90</sup>

Once again, France's support made a huge difference. By endorsing the results of the election, France demonstrated that La Baule was more empty preaching than a genuine intention to place Africa on a democratic path.<sup>91</sup> In

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addition to French political backing, Éyadéma continues to enjoy the support of international lenders. For example, in May 1998, the World Bank made a \$17 million loan to the government of Togo, and the IMF announced plans for further financial assistance.<sup>92</sup>

There was a great deal of expectation that France, the country that gave birth to a vitally important democratic revolution in 1789, would take advantage of the winds of change blowing on the continent to help finally bring about a new era in Africa. That belief was so strong that France's declaration at La Baule was interpreted as a genuine intent to contribute to the restoration of democracy on the continent.<sup>93</sup> Unfortunately, a year later, African leaders had to face a reality check, when France brought a very important nuance to its position.

Having linked any further aid to democratization a year earlier, France later recommended that African countries follow their own pace of democratization. In other words, the first injunction to reform was replaced with a tremendous amount of flexibility, creating a great deal of confusion to this date. France's efforts at keeping other members of its closed circle, such as Gabon, Cote d'Ivoire, and Togo under its control, by dictating the nature and the speed of their political reforms, are also noticeable. France has not made the promotion of democracy a high priority in Africa because it has historically been an imperial master with hegemonic influence on the continent. In Kagan's words, "France seems to have retained its traditional approach, remaining largely unconcerned about the promotion of democracy."<sup>94</sup> Although the promotion of democracy remains, in theory, a cardinal principle of France's aid policy, there is a simple realization that it will be inconvenient to tread on the toes of "friendly" governments such as Togo's. Therefore France's national interests and goals continue to prevail over democratization. However, in the long run, France's attitude towards Togo will have to change to reflect democratic aspirations in Africa in general, and in neighboring Benin in particular.

## CONCLUSION

Foreign influence in the democratization process in Africa, as with elsewhere in the world, has played various roles, ranging from open pressure for democratization to defense of vested interests. In many cases, foreign patrons who had supported authoritarian regimes in the past, either actively assisted in their removal, or at least allowed their removal by benign inaction at the crucial moment.<sup>95</sup> However, depending on the importance of the relationship between the patrons and their puppets, foreign powers also chose to do everything in their power to openly derail the democratization process, and the two cases studied here demonstrate a clear contradiction in France's position.<sup>96</sup>

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While two former French colonies, Benin and Togo, were forced to alter their political systems after several years of poor performance, they took different paths. Owing to the resilience of civil society and also to the critical role played by the army, democracy became a reality in Benin, while it is still marking time in Togo. This difference results from France's control over the process.<sup>97</sup> The totalitarian regime of Kérékou was forced to give up power, while the authoritarian one of Éyadéma, a close ally of France, remained in power, raising a disturbing question: whether France is willing to promote democracy for democracy's sake.<sup>98</sup>

Although the international community seems to be rejoicing in Africa's emerging democracies, its sincerity remains to be seen. Until the gap between some Western powers' vested interests and the desire for a global democratic society narrows, the rhetoric of universal democratization might not match the reality on the ground, requiring Africans to take matters into their own hands. ■

#### NOTES

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