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A Different Kind of Union:
An assassination, diplomatic recognition, and competing visions of
African unity in Ghana-Togo relations (1956-63)
by Kate Skinner

Introduction

Over the past decade, there has been a concerted effort to move beyond hagiographies and hatchet jobs in the scholarship on Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah. Re-evaluations of Nkrumah's political thought, achievements, and legacies have been made possible through the recovery and close reading of archival sources hitherto unavailable or under-utilised.¹ The papers of the Bureau of African Affairs have been particularly important to scholars seeking to understand the nature, mechanisms, and impact of Nkrumah's strategies for liberation and unity in Africa.²

W. Scott Thompson's indictment of Ghana's foreign policy has come thus come under renewed scrutiny.³ Published in 1969, Thompson's text bore the imprint of Cold War-era North American perspectives on international relations. It also drew heavily from accounts that Thompson solicited from Ghanaian diplomats, civil servants, and politicians in the aftermath of the coup that toppled Nkrumah in February 1966.⁴ Thompson (like many of his interlocutors) was concerned to document and explain "failure".⁵

¹ Most relevant to this chapter are: Ama Biney, *The Political and Social Thought of Kwame Nkrumah* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Jean Allman, 'Phantoms of the Archive: Kwame Nkrumah, a Nazi Pilot named Hanna, and the contingencies of post-colonial history writing', *American Historical Review* 118 (1) (2013), pp. 104-29; Frank Gerits, 'The ideological scramble for Africa: the US, Ghanaian, French and British competition for Africa's future. 1953-1963' (PhD dissertation, European University Institution, Florence, 2014); Jeffrey Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism: nation, state and pan-Africanism in Ghana* (Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2017); Matteo Grilli, *Nkrumahism and African Nationalism: Ghana's pan-African foreign policy in the age of decolonization* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). However, this is not an exhaustive list. Recent studies of consumption, performance, and symbolism are of great methodological interest, and have much to teach us about nationalism and nation-building in Nkrumah's Ghana. See, for example, Harcourt Fuller, *Building the Ghanaian Nation-State: Kwame Nkrumah's Symbolic Nationalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Paul Schauert, *Staging Ghana: Artistry and Nationalism in State Dance Ensembles* (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 2015); Jesse Weaver Shipley, *Trickster Theatre: The Poetics of Freedom in Urban Africa* (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 2015). Leslie James' biography of George Padmore illuminates the trajectories of pan-African politics in the Atlantic world - *George Padmore and Decolonization from Below: Pan-Africanism, the Cold War, and the End of Empire* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

² Matteo Grilli, 'Nkrumah, Nationalism, and Pan-Africanism: the Bureau of African Affairs collection,' *History in Africa* 44 (2017), pp. 295-307.

³ W. Scott Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy 1957-1966: Diplomacy, Ideology, and the New State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).

⁴ See description of sources in Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy* pp. 41-3; see critique of Thompson's sources in Grilli, *Nkrumahism and African Nationalism*, p. 21-4.

⁵ This point is developed at greater length in Grilli, *Nkrumahism and African Nationalism*, p. 5 and pp. 333-9.

Acknowledging the acute difficulties faced by newly independent countries as they embarked on a world stage from which they had long been marginalised, Thompson argued that Nkrumah's real "failure" was in Africa itself. Here, Nkrumah had enjoyed admiration and renown – not only as the leader of sub-Saharan Africa's first victorious nationalist movement, but as a man committed to the "total liberation" of the continent.⁶ Yet between 1957 and 1966, this translated into a diminishing ability to influence the policies of other independent African states or to co-operate with their leaders in pursuit of shared strategic goals.

In Thompson's story of Nkrumah's diminishing influence, the first meeting of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) loomed large. The delegations of 32 African governments convened in Addis Ababa in May 1963 in order to commit themselves to unity, and establish basic working principles for its achievement. The charter that was agreed at Addis placed a clear emphasis on the OAU as an organisation of equal and sovereign nation-states. Member-states agreed to respect "the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each State" and "its inalienable right to independent existence".⁷ The charter also included a commitment to the principle of "non-interference in the internal affairs of States" and an "Unreserved condemnation, in all its forms, of political assassination as well as of subversive activities on the part of neighbouring States or any other States".⁸

Nkrumah signed the charter, but it was a far cry from the vision of continental union government that he had set out in his book *Africa Must Unite*, and disseminated in the build-up to the key meetings in Addis.⁹ The leaders of the great majority of OAU member-states were unwilling to cede control over their foreign policies, armed forces, or economic plans to a continental body. Nor was Ghana included in the OAU "committee of nine", which was to be headquartered in Dar-es-Salaam and support liberation struggles in African territories still under colonial or white minority rule.

Recent re-assessments have critiqued Thompson's definitions and explanations of Nkrumah's "failure" in Africa. Where Thompson saw failures of statesmanship and weak linkages between "components of statecraft", Matteo Grilli saw Nkrumah's effort to combine "orthodox" foreign policy machinery derived from colonial models with new "unorthodox" institutions, such as the Bureau of African Affairs, in order to achieve radical liberatory aims against the odds.¹⁰ Where Thompson saw only the marginalisation of Ghana from liberation

⁶ As stated Nkrumah's Independence Day speech in Accra on 6 March 1957.

⁷ See article 3 of the charter ("principles"), particularly clauses 1 and 3.

https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/7759-file-oau_charter_1963.pdf

⁸ See article 3 of the charter ("principles"), particularly clauses 2 and 5.

⁹ Kwame Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963).

¹⁰ Grilli, *Nkrumalism and African Nationalism*, p. 15 and p. 339.

struggles, Grilli identified continuing support to a surprising range of movements, right to the final days of the Nkrumah government.¹¹

In this chapter, I will start with a specific point on which Thompson and Grilli agree: that Ghana's relations with its smaller neighbour, Togo, were of some significance in shaping the outcome of competing visions of African unity in 1963.¹² I will then explore in detail why this was the case – first by highlighting the acute dilemma posed by the assassination of Togolese president Sylvanus Olympio in a coup in January 1963; then by contextualising the coup in a longer account of troubled relations between Ghana and Togo; and finally by examining new evidence of Ghanaian policy vis-à-vis Togo, found in the papers of the Bureau of African Affairs. On the face it, this is an unedifying tale. But it is also a concrete case study that demonstrates why African unity was so very difficult to achieve in the context of contested colonial borders, and multiple and competing nationalisms. Paradoxically, then, this chapter speaks to some key elements in Nkrumah's analysis of colonialism and neo-colonialism, even as it problematises the ways in which he pursued liberation and unity.

An assassination and a diplomatic dilemma

President Sylvanus Olympio of the Republic of Togo was assassinated in the Togolese capital, Lomé, early in the morning of 13 January 1963, and his government was overthrown. The Insurrectionary Committee that claimed leadership of the coup quickly made Olympio's long-time political opponent, Nicolas Grunitzky, provisional president of Togo, and tasked him with establishing a new civilian government. In the five-month period between the Togo coup and the signing of the OAU charter, African governments had to decide whether to grant or withhold formal diplomatic recognition of the provisional Togo government, and whether to endorse or resist Togo's participation in meetings of African states.

The Ghana government moved immediately and unilaterally to recognise the provisional Togo government. Other African leaders and politicians, however, were reluctant to grant recognition to a provisional government that had come into being via an assassination and a coup d'état. As we shall see, they emphasised the need for an investigation, which could establish whether the soldiers who assassinated Olympio and overthrew his government were acting alone; or whether they had been instructed, encouraged, or materially supported by any other government. The distinction was important because, if the Togo coup was an internal affair, led by discontented soldiers, it was an unfortunate means of effecting a change of government; but if events in Togo had been shaped by foreign intervention, then this had undermined Togo's national

¹¹ Grilli's book documents support to the Pan-Africanist Congress, the Bechuanaland People's Party, the Basutoland Congress Party, the Ngwane National Liberatory Congress, the Zimbabwe African National Union, the Uganda People's Congress, the United National Independence party (Zambia); and the clear influence of Nkrumahist thought, symbols, and organisational methods – for example, in the Malawi Congress Party.

¹² Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, p. 10; Grilli, *Nkrumaism and African Nationalism*, pp. 265-8.

sovereignty, and was thus a cause for alarm among all newly independent African nations.

An emergency meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Inter-African and Malagasy African States was held in Lagos between 22 and 26 January.¹³ That meeting culminated in a series of resolutions, which demanded Togolese cooperation with an investigation into the assassination, and posited free and democratic elections as a condition for Togo's participation in the upcoming meeting of African states at Addis Ababa. The Lagos meeting also warned that "internal subversion" and "foreign aggression" posed a risk to the "territorial integrity and national independence" of all its member states. It therefore proposed that the upcoming meeting at Addis Ababa should discuss the advisability of all Inter-African and Malagasy States "breaking off diplomatic relations with any state proved to be engaging in internal subversion in another state".¹⁴

Whilst elections were held in Togo at the start of May 1963, alongside a constitutional referendum, there was no proper investigation into the assassination, and thus suspicions of foreign involvement had not been disproven. When African foreign ministers and heads of state convened in Addis Ababa, the Ghana delegation advocated for the participation of the new Togo government, but it was vigorously opposed by the delegations of several other states, particularly Nigeria and Guinea.¹⁵

These responses to the Olympio assassination and the Togo coup highlight some of the fundamental questions of African unity in the early 1960s. These questions included: the status of national borders that had been inherited from the colonial era; the meaning of national sovereignty and its relative importance in situations where many new African states were still tied to their former colonial powers through currency, trade, budgetary, and defence arrangements; whether the intervention of one African state in the affairs of another could be justified as a means of giving expression to "the will of the people"; and whether the diplomatic recognition of individual African governments should be a matter for each African state, or the subject of collective decision-making.

In order to explore these underlying questions through a concrete case study, this chapter will outline the context of colonisation and recolonisation in Togo, which gave rise to multiple and competing nationalisms. It argues that the Togolese nation-state and its national borders were contingent outcomes of a prolonged and bitter contest between different visions of political community, and were thus very fragile. The nature and extent of Togo's sovereignty was also a contingent outcome of Olympio's difficult negotiations with France on the precise terms of independence from France in period between April 1958 and April 1960.

¹³ *West Africa* 26 Jan 1963, p. 103.

¹⁴ *Africa Report* 1 Feb 1963, p. 10.

¹⁵ Public Records and Administration Department (hereafter PRAAD), Accra, PG 17/1/131 Togoland, letter from Kwame Nkrumah to Nicolas Grunitzky, dated 28 May 1963, describing the "fierce struggle that took place at Addis Ababa over the presentation of Togo at the Conference".

According to the analysis set out by Nkrumah in *Africa Must Unite*, the national sovereignty of small and economically weak territories was not merely fragile or contingent. For Nkrumah, it was a façade, in which African politicians had taken up positions in the institutional framework bequeathed by the former French administration, without breaking their underlying economic dependency on France.¹⁶ In *Africa Must Unite*, Nkrumah made the case for union government across the continent. But we shall see, in other forums, Nkrumah argued in very specific terms that political and economic union offered a solution to Togo's dilemma. By giving up on the façade of national sovereignty, the people of Togo could join hands with other African peoples to break out of the trap of economic dependency and defend themselves against neo-colonial interests.

And yet, perhaps precisely because it was indeed so very fragile, Togo's national sovereignty was vigorously defended – first by Olympio and his Togolese supporters; and then by the other African leaders, on both sides of the Monrovia / Casablanca divide, who demanded an investigation into any possible foreign involvement in Olympio's death; refused to recognise the new Togo government delegation to Addis Ababa; and insisted that the principles of national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and “non-interference” should be enshrined in the OAU charter.

Investigating a “hideous plot”

In the immediate aftermath of the Olympio assassination and Togo coup, three different explanations circulated between African heads of state and foreign ministers; through the embassies of the various other nations with diplomatic representation in Togo, and back to their respective home governments; and in the local and international media.¹⁷ The first, “military / non-ideological”, explanation emphasised the role of the discontented but fundamentally a-political Togolese soldiers and ex-servicemen, who toppled the Olympio regime in order to secure better conditions from a more nervous and thus more accommodating successor government. The second, “neo-colonial”, explanation pointed to discreet but calculated French complicity in the actions of the soldiers and ex-servicemen, and invoked France's longstanding preference for Grunitzky over Olympio. The third explanation located the key causes not in Lomé or in Paris, but in the neighbouring country, Ghana, and the agendas of President Nkrumah. Proponents of this explanation invoked the hostile public communication between the two presidents, and Nkrumah's statement that Togo could become the “seventh region” of Ghana.¹⁸

Elsewhere, I have reviewed each of these explanations and argued that, regardless of its accuracy or validity, the “military / non-ideological”

¹⁶ Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite*, particularly chapter 13 on ‘Neo-Colonialism’.

¹⁷ Kate Skinner, ‘West Africa's First Coup: neo-colonial and pan-African projects in Togo's shadow archives’ (forthcoming in *African Studies Review*).

¹⁸ Nkrumah made this statement in a speech at Keta, near the Ghana-Togo border, on 29 Oct 1959.

interpretation of the assassination and the coup was very convenient.¹⁹ By emphasising that the soldiers had their own means and motive for action against Olympio and his government, the “military / non-ideological” explanation also implied that an international investigation was unnecessary. This was convenient for the provisional Togo government, whose tenuous hold on power had been conferred by the very same soldiers on whom any international investigation would surely focus, and perhaps also seek to hold accountable for murder. But the “military / non-ideological” explanation was also very convenient to both the French and Ghanaian governments, which wished to shut down accusations of their complicity in the assassination and coup.²⁰

At the meeting of Inter-African and Malagasy States in Lagos, Togo’s former minister of the interior, Théophile Mally, claimed that *both* the Ghanaians *and* the French had played a part in the coup. According to Mally, the Ghanaians had actively conspired, by distributing money and providing arms to those willing to partake in an insurrection; the French had “taken advantage of the situation”, by failing to prevent the distribution of arms or to warn Olympio about it, and by promising soldiers that they would receive better conditions from a new Togo government.²¹

Precisely because *both* the French *and* the Ghana government were under suspicion, demands for an investigation came from various quarters and cut across the division between the more radical, left-leaning Casablanca bloc of African states, and the more “moderate” or “conservative” Monrovia bloc. President Sekou Touré of Guinea appealed directly to the United Nations Secretary General for an international investigation into this “hideous plot knowingly hatched from outside”.²² Nigerian prime minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, defended calls for an investigation in the following terms:

I can swear to anybody that there is no political motive behind it [i.e. behind the call for an investigation]. It is a matter that concerns us all, because if we allow such a method to continue, I do not know who will remain. For a head of state to be murdered and for nobody to say anything will be too grievous.²³

The governments of France and Ghana, whose interests were so clearly opposed in most other respects, apparently held in common an animosity vis-à-vis the Olympio government in Togo. This does not necessarily mean that they had acted upon this animosity – either separately or in a combined strategy – to topple Olympio in January 1963. But in order to understand why many African heads of state and foreign ministers insisted upon an investigation into all the

¹⁹ Skinner, ‘West Africa’s First Coup’.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland (hereafter NARA). RG 59, Box 1948, file 770D.00 22 Jan 1963: Telegram from US embassy, Lagos, to State Department, dated 25 Jan 1963.

²² *Africa Report* 1 Feb 1963, p. 8.

²³ As quoted in a Reuters wire of 22 Jan 1963, copy available in the George Padmore House Research Library, Bureau of African Affairs papers, file BAA/RLAA/915 Togoland.

possibilities, why they resisted recognition of the provisional or new Togo government in the absence of such an investigation, and the impact of this on the founding principles of the OAU, we must understand the peculiar nature of Togo's colonisation and recolonisation. This is the essential context for the multiple and competing visions of political community that emerged in the era of decolonisation, and thus for different understandings of the nature and significance of Togo's national sovereignty in its relations with other African states in the first half of the 1960s.

Reunification versus union

Carved out of a gap between British and French spheres of interest along the West African coast, Togo was first colonised by Germany in the final two decades of the nineteenth century.²⁴ At the outbreak of the First World War, British troops advanced into Togo from their base in the Gold Coast, to the west, whilst French troops advanced from their base in Dahomey, to the east. Thus German Togo was divided into a British-administered zone and a French-administered zone. At the end of the war, the fate of the former German colonies was debated between the Allied powers. On 10 July 1919, the Milner-Simon agreement adjusted the border between British-administered and French-administered Togo, so as to place the coastal trading centre of Lome in the French zone, along with the fertile agricultural land on the slopes and foothills of Mount Agu, and the administrative and marketing centre at Kpalime. The "two Togolands" were to be administered under international oversight – first as League of Nations mandated territories, and after the Second World War, as trust territories of the United Nations.²⁵

Nationalism in the two Togolands arose in multiple and competing forms. The All-Ewe Conference envisaged an Ewe homeland, for all the Ewe-speaking peoples living in the south-eastern Gold Coast, southern British Togoland, and southern French Togoland.²⁶ This project, however, was quickly cross-cut by several others. In British Togoland, the Togoland Congress, led by S. G. Antor, envisaged a reunified Togoland – that is, an independent nation-state whose borders would mirror those of the old German colony, bringing together all Togoland (Ewe-speaking or not) who had been divided between British and French administrations. In French Togoland, Olympio's party, the Comité de l'Unité Togolaise, initially shared in the vision of the All-Ewe Conference, but then decided to prioritise Togoland reunification, thus cohering with the vision of the Togoland Congress.²⁷

²⁴ For further details, see Arthur Knoll, *Togo Under Imperial Germany 1884-1914: a case study in colonial rule* (Stanford CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1978), particularly chapter 3; D. E. K. Amenumey, 'German Administration in Southern Togo', *Journal of African History* X (4) (1969), pp. 623-39.

²⁵ Paul Nugent, *Smugglers, Secessionists and Loyal Citizens on the Ghana-Togo Frontier: the lie of the borderlands since 1914* (Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2002), particularly chapter 1.

²⁶ D. E. K. Amenumey, *The Ewe Unification Movement: a political history* (Ghana Universities Press, 1989), particularly chapters 1 and 2.

²⁷ *Ibid*, chapter 4.

The “Togoland reunificationists” encountered stiff opposition in both the British-administered and French-administered territories. In British Togoland, the Convention People’s Party, led by Kwame Nkrumah, argued that British Togoland should join with the Gold Coast and attain its independence as a part of Ghana. On this matter, if not on others, Nkrumah and the British spoke as one. In French Togoland, the “moderate” African politicians, including Grunitzky, argued that French Togoland was a small and relatively poor territory, whose interests would be served by accepting a limited measure of autonomy within the French Union, and thereby maintaining a close relationship with France and with other francophone African countries.²⁸

On 9 May 1956, a controversial plebiscite was held in British Togoland. A small majority for “union” with the Gold Coast prevailed.²⁹ The United Nations thus terminated its trusteeship agreement with the British government, and British Togoland achieved independence as an integral part of Ghana on 6 March 1957. Across the border, the Comité de l’Unité Togolaise continued to argue that a limited measure of autonomy within the framework of a French Union did not constitute “self-government” in the terms of the trusteeship agreement for French Togoland. Olympio’s appeals to the United Nations were finally heeded, and on 27 April 1958, fresh elections were held under United Nations supervision in order to ascertain the wishes of the people of French Togoland. These elections generated a clear majority for the Comité de l’Unité Togolaise and its allies in the Juvento.³⁰ Thus Olympio embarked upon a two-year period of negotiation on the terms of French Togoland’s independence from France.

Olympio was immediately confronted with conflicting demands for “reunification” and “union”. The first demand emanated from the most committed Togoland reunificationists within his own party and the allied Juvento movement, who believed that Togo’s independence would not be complete until it had reclaimed the former British Togoland from Ghana, to form a *reunified and independent* Togo. The second demand emanated from Nkrumah, who was quite clear that Togo’s future lay not in independent nationhood, but in a *political and economic union* with its larger western neighbour, Ghana. Just as British Togoland had entered into a “union” with Ghana upon its independence from Britain, so French Togoland should do the same upon its independence from France. Hence Nkrumah’s oft-cited statement that Togo could become the “seventh region” of Ghana.³¹

²⁸ Ibid, chapter 5.

²⁹ I put the term “union” in inverted commas because, as I have argued elsewhere, the constitution of an independent Ghana had not been decided by the time of the 9 May 1956 plebiscite. It is therefore possible that some people who voted for “union” expected that British Togoland would enter into a loose federal arrangement with other regions of the then Gold Coast, and did not anticipate their full integration with Ghana under a unitary constitution. See Kate Skinner, *The Fruits of Freedom in British Togoland: literacy, politics and nationalism, 1914-2014* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), particularly chapter 4.

³⁰ D. E. K. Amenumey, ‘The General Elections in the “Autonomous Republic of Togo, April 1958: background and interpretation’, *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 16 (1) (1975), pp. 47-65.

³¹ Skinner, *The Fruits of Freedom*, particularly chapter 5.

Union versus Unité: the pressure to choose

Nkrumah was emboldened by evidence of divisions within the Juvento, which had contested the 27 April 1958 elections on a joint ticket with Olympio's Comité de l'Unité Togolaise. Whilst some Juventistes were committed Togoland reunificationists, others were attracted to an economic and political union with Ghana and a combined approach to planned development.³² This cleavage became apparent when two rival Juvento delegations sought to participate at the All-African People's Conference, held in Accra between 8 and 13 December 1958. Messan Aithson, leader of the pro-Nkrumah Juvento faction, had his membership revoked, and the pro-Olympio faction appeared to have carried the day.³³

Just six months later, however, the Juventiste Anani Santos resigned his seat in Olympio's cabinet, triggering another crisis within the Juvento, and a backlash from the Comité de l'Unité Togolaise. At an emergency congress on 21 June 1959, the Comité de l'Unité Togolaise passed a motion to *désolidariser* from the Juvento (in other words, to end the pact that had carried them through the elections 14 months earlier).³⁴ Reports presented to the Juvento's eighth national congress – held at Be, Lome, 9 to 10 April 1960 – summarised the challenge.³⁵

According to these reports, neither the executive committee of the Juvento, nor the membership as a whole, had been informed of, or given its backing to, Santos' resignation, but they were nonetheless obliged to confront the fall-out. With Santos *in* the cabinet, the Juvento could consider itself organisationally distinct from the CUT (and thus capable of exercising some pressure upon it), but nonetheless sufficiently united by common goals to form part of the government. With Santos *out* of the cabinet, the ground had shifted, and the Juvento had only two options: either it should cease to operate as a separate organisation and fuse with the Comité de l'Unité Togolaise; or it must insist on its separateness, and be reclassified as an opposition party.³⁶

This narrowing of options was unpalatable to the Juventistes, given that many occupants of Comité de l'Unité Togolaise seats in the national assembly were the direct beneficiaries of Juventiste energies and grassroots organisation during the election campaign of April 1958. On the other hand, the reports presented to the Juvento congress also emphasised the risk that this domestic disunity would merely serve as an encouragement to Nkrumah to push Togo into a union with Ghana, and thus undermine Togo's national sovereignty before independence from France had even been formalised. Thus between the resignation of Anani Santos in May 1959 and formal independence of Togo on 27 April 1960, the

³² For example, Amos Klutse Sosu from the Akepe branch of the Juvento gave an interview to the *Ghanaian Times* on 21 Feb 1959. He claimed to support immediate independence for Togo, followed by Togo's entry into a Ghana-Togo union, as part of Nkrumah's broader vision for West Africa. See also Skinner, *The Fruits of Freedom*, p. 190.

³³ Skinner, *The Fruits of Freedom*, p. 191.

³⁴ Archives Nationales Togolaises, Lomé (hereafter ANT), Klouto 37, Affaires politiques et administratives, Juvento, Mouvement nationaliste togolais, 8ème Congrès national, tenu à Be, les 9-10 Avril 1960, 'Rapport sur l'Unité', p. 2.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 'Rapport sur l'Unité' and 'Rapport moral d'activité'.

³⁶ *Ibid*.

Juventistes divided between those who wished to keep faith with Olympio, and thus joined the renamed Parti de l'Unité Togolaise, and those who embraced the label of "opposition" that had been thrust upon them.

The French of course had their own interests to protect in their negotiations with Olympio over the terms of Togo's independence. Togo confronted a substantial budget deficit, and this gave the French a weighty bargaining chip in their negotiations with Olympio about Togo's continued participation in the franc zone and the terms on which French goods could be imported into Togo. However, whilst the French had clearly preferred Grunitzky to Olympio, and resented the latter's ambitions for a greater measure of economic independence from France, they were also concerned by the possibility that Togo would be pressured into a political and economic union with Ghana. France's permanent representative at the United Nations complained formally to the secretary-general in March 1960 about Ghana's annexationist intentions towards its eastern neighbour.³⁷ At the Togo independence celebrations on 27 April 1960, a Ghanaian military intervention did not materialise, but economic pressure was quickly brought to bear.

Speaking at Ho on 19 December 1960, Nkrumah emphasised the artificiality of the colonial border, which had separated "our own kith and kin". He was unapologetic about the "recent trade restrictions [which] have been imposed [by Ghana on the now independent Togo] to bring home clearly and unmistakably that union of Ghana and Togoland is natural and inevitable".³⁸ The closure of the Ghana-Togo border was justified in terms of a clamp down on cocoa farmers in the former British Togoland, who wished to sell their produce across the border in Togo, where prices were higher than those offered to producers by state purchasing bodies in Ghana. But border closures also generated shortages of imported goods in Togo, and thereby placed pressure on Olympio and his government.

Party divisions, cross-border missions, and "the will of the people"

In addition to this more overt economic pressure, certain covert political missions were undertaken, with a view to influencing the results of elections in Togo in a direction unfavourable to Olympio and his Parti de l'Unité Togolaise. On 7 January 1961, Mumuni Bawumia (then Minister of Works and Housing in the Ghana government) wrote directly to Nkrumah to report on his recent "unofficial" Christmas visit to Togo. Bawumia was concerned about the relationship of ethnic groups such as Moba, Chakosi, and Yansi, whom he regarded as subordinate to the paramount chief (Nayiri) of Mamprusi (in Ghana) and of whose loyalty he sought to be assured. In the Mango district of northern Togo, he suggested, the chiefs were mostly "pro-Olympio but their ties with

³⁷ Centre des Archives Diplomatiques, Nantes (hereafter CADN), Accra Ambassade 61: Armani Bérard, French ambassador and permanent representative at the United Nations, to Dag Hammarskjöld, United Nations secretary-general, 12 March 1960.

³⁸ Cited in Samuel Obeng, *Selected Speeches of Kwame Nkrumah* (Ghana: Afram publications, 1979), p. 235.

Mamprusi and the Nayiri are much stronger. I found no difficulty in getting them to understand the issues and to agree to support the course [sic]. They needed to be properly guided by the UDPT in the move.”³⁹

At the time of Bawumia’s visit, all individuals and parties opposed to Olympio were expected to appear together on a single party list. The Union Démocratique et Populaire du Togo (UDPT) thus encompassed both the more radical and left-wing Juventistes who had split from the governing party, *and* the more conservative elements who, under the leadership of Grunitzky and Meatchi, had enjoyed French favour through much of the 1950s. Ultimately, Olympio’s opponents were disqualified from contesting the April 1961 legislative elections due to the late deposit of their candidate list. Thus Bawumia’s mission had no meaningful impact on the vote.

The record of the mission is significant, however, because it suggests that Nkrumah had at least tolerated, and perhaps actively endorsed, Bawumia in his efforts to harness the more conservative elements within Togo’s “composite” opposition party. Nkrumah and his allies were ready to make use of rivalries between chiefs, and to co-operate with the more powerful chiefs in their efforts to control their “subordinate” peoples, in order to undermine Olympio’s domestic support base. This suggests that the same dynamics that Richard Rathbone identified within the Ghanaian nation-state were also being mobilised across its national borders. A party which had “inveighed against the divisiveness of ethnic ties” now “took sides” in “ethnic disputes” if they provided an opportunity to weaken an enemy or strengthen a useful ally; and rather than “crushing chieftaincy, the CPP had instead domesticated it.”⁴⁰

After Olympio’s victory in the April 1961 elections, Ghanaian ambitions in Togo continued to manifest themselves, this time through the Ghana-Togo Union Movement. The French ambassador in Accra explained that the explicit aim of this movement was to remove the artificial border and to encourage the formation of an economic and political union between the two states. He added, however, that the movement had been formed “at the instigation of the CPP and the Bureau of African Affairs”, and that it intended to mobilise support by forming branches within Togo as well as in Ghana.⁴¹ The ambassador regarded this as a deliberate provocation, and linked it to an editorial in the *Ghanaian Times* on 13 July 1961, which challenged Olympio to hold a referendum and allow the inhabitants of Togo to decide whether they wanted to unite with Ghana.

Both the Ghana and Togo governments kept a close eye on the press at home, arresting journalists and editors, and either proscribing outright, or otherwise

³⁹ PRAAD, SC/BAA/59 Northern Togoland. Mumuni Bawumia to Kwame Nkrumah, 7 Jan 1961.

⁴⁰ Richard Rathbone, ‘Kwame Nkrumah and the Chiefs: the fate of “natural rulers” under nationalist governments’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 10 (2000), pp. 45-63, quotes from p. 61 and p. 62.

⁴¹ CADN, Accra Ambassade 61: Ambassade de France au Ghana, Accra, to Ministre des affaires étrangères, Paris, 14 July 1961.

causing to fail, newspapers that were perceived as too critical.⁴² In Togo, greater control over information was achieved through the establishment of a government news agency, EDITOGO, whilst in Ghana the *Evening News* towed the ruling party line. It is clear that the *Evening News* engaged in a propaganda war against the Olympio government, including the publication of selected articles and editorials in English, French and Ewe, in order to ensure the widest possible readership within Togo. It also seems that the Olympio government tolerated certain local-language newspapers within Togo because they were useful in countering the *Evening News* agenda through a steady stream of critical or even vitriolic commentary on Nkrumah and his pan-African ambitions.⁴³

Frank Gerits notes that, as early as January 1959, George Padmore had “ordered the daily dispatch of 300 copies of the *Evening News* and *Ghanaian Times* to ‘selected people, news agencies of European countries as well as those of independent and dependent African States’ ”.⁴⁴ After the Congo Crisis of 1960, Nkrumah became still more committed to a strategy of “public diplomacy”: modern mass communications would allow him to speak directly to the people, and thus “mobilise a mass audience behind his plan for direct unification”, rather than negotiating with leaders who were the “victim of British and French manipulation”.⁴⁵ In Togo, however, “public diplomacy” was not only about convincing the people that “Ghana was the only nation able to lead an African union and cope with neo-colonial conspiracies.”⁴⁶ It also aimed directly to undermine Olympio by painting him as a stooge.

On 15 December 1961, in an article entitled “Olympio: Africa’s No. 2 Tsombe”, the *Evening News* described Olympio as a stooge, who was “directly nominated by his French Colonial masters”. The *Evening News* was correct that Olympio had not stood as a candidate in the April 1958 elections in Togo, but it omitted to mention that the reason Olympio did not stand was that he barred by the French administration from so doing. Olympio was appointed as prime minister only after his party, the Comité de l’Unité Togolaise (in alliance with the Juvento), had obtained a clear majority. The article continued that Olympio was “possessed of a shameful stigma of inferiority complex: explicable only when we remember that his mother was a Kabre slave bought by his Brazilian father who was himself a notorious slave dealer”. This was not a one-off. On 27 January 1962, the *Evening News* claimed that Olympio was refusing to reduce barriers “between thousands of people of the same ethnic origin” because he was worried that if Togo becomes a region of Ghana, he would be “relegated to a minor position as regional commissioner”.⁴⁷

⁴² Skinner, *The Fruits of Freedom*, p. 202.

⁴³ Kate Skinner and Wilson Yayoh, *Writing the New Nation in A West African Borderland: Ablode Safui (the Key to Freedom)* (forthcoming).

⁴⁴ Frank Gerits, “‘When the Bull Elephants Fight’: Kwame Nkrumah, Non-Alignment, and Pan-Africanism as an Interventionist Ideology in the Global Cold War (1957-1966)”, *The International History Review* 37 (5) (2015), pp. 951-69 at p. 957.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 964.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 961.

⁴⁷ Clippings of both articles were kept by the Bureau of African Affairs and can be found in the George Padmore House Research Library, Accra, file BAA/RLAA/914 Togoland.

As the Preventive Detention Act began to bite in Ghana, Nkrumah's domestic political opponents flooded across the border into Togo where, according to the Ghana government, they had ample opportunities to align themselves with neo-colonial agendas and conspire to overthrow the government back home.⁴⁸ In December 1961, Michael Dei-Anang wrote to Nkrumah with a proposal to address the Togo problem. Describing Olympio as "sinister and unreliable" and noting Olympio's "encouragement" to "Dr Busia, Mr Gbedemah and other refugees who have made no secret of their intention to plot against Ghana in Lomé", Dei-Anang proposed a special committee, to be headed by Ako Adjei (then Minister of Foreign Affairs), and including A. K. Barden (BAA), John Tettegah (secretary-general of the TUC), and the attorney-general, commissioner of police, and comptroller of customs.⁴⁹

The first meeting was held 29 December 1961. It proposed a series of draconian measures against Togolese people living in Ghana, including a requirement for them to register, their dismissal from public sector posts, and a complete ban on new entrants from Togo to Ghana. The committee also discussed the possibility of legislation which would force dissidents to return from Togo back to Ghana, by empowering the state to take ownership of "the properties of persons who for political [reasons] have voluntarily left Ghana and have declared themselves refugees if such persons fail to regain their native land after a fixed date line". Finally, the meeting discussed "the fantastic claim of Mr Olympio to the territory of the Volta Region [part of which had been previously been British Togoland] integrated with Ghana after a United Nations plebiscite". Ako Adjei indicated that Olympio was unlikely to receive much support for reopening this issue, but Dei-Anang nonetheless felt that Ako Adjei should explain this to the public via a radio announcement.⁵⁰

A few days later, however, Dei-Anang wrote to Ako Adjei with the following rather cryptic message: "Osagyefo has read the minutes of the first session of the Special Committee on Togoland Affairs. He is of the opinion that in view of certain moves which are now being made in connection with his recent discussion with President Maga of Dahomey and of which you are aware, the Commission should be suspended temporarily until after the proposed meeting of Foreign Ministers of Ghana, Togoland and Dahomey has been held." President Maga's intervention did not repair the fences between Olympio and Nkrumah.⁵¹ But it is clear that Nkrumah met directly with Grunitzky, for Grunitzky wrote to thank Nkrumah for meeting face-to-face on 4 November 1962, for supporting "my refugee compatriots in Ghana", and for his "great understanding, coupled with [his] perfect knowledge" of Togolese affairs.⁵²

⁴⁸ Kate Skinner, 'Brothers in the Bush: exile, refuge, and citizenship on the Ghana-Togo border, 1958-1966' in Nathan Carpenter and Benjamin Lawrance (eds), *Africans in Exile: mobility, law, and identity* (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 2018), pp. 167-184.

⁴⁹ PRAAD, Accra, SC/BAA/434 [also RG 17/1/434] Special Committee – Togoland Affairs. Letter from Dei-Anang to Nkrumah, 12 Dec 1961.

⁵⁰ Ibid. Minutes of the First meeting of the Special Committee on Togoland Affairs, 29 Dec 1961.

⁵¹ Maga's attempts at mediation are briefly described in Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, pp. 235-7.

⁵² PRAAD SC/BAA/133 [RG 17/1/131B] Togoland. Letter from Grunitzky to Nkrumah, 17 Nov 1962.

Just as people who opposed Nkrumah in the former British Togoland sought refuge in the Republic of Togo, so members of the opposition parties in Togo sought refuge in Ghana. Many of the latter wrote to district and regional administrative officers, and even to government ministers, upon their arrival in Ghana, describing their victimisation at the hands of local vigilantes attached to Olympio's party or allied parties (such as Juvento).⁵³ The Nkrumah government argued, quite publicly, that Togolese refugees residing in Ghana had the right to mobilise against the regime in their own country, if this was backed by "the will of the people" and would serve the higher purpose of liberating them from oppressive or neo-colonial rule.⁵⁴

The initial popularity of the Olympio government had clearly waned by the end of 1962, as a result of increased taxation, a squeeze on government expenditure, shortages of imported goods, and severe clampdowns on its domestic opponents (although some of these patterns were also evident in Ghana itself in the later years of the Nkrumah regime).⁵⁵ But Ghanaian "public diplomacy" and other missions in Togo did not simply give voice to "the will of the people". They also aimed to shape "the will of the people" in a rather specific direction.

A secret union agreement

In file RG 17/2/814 in the Ghana national archives, researchers will find a "Treaty of Economic Co-operation between the Republic of Ghana and the Republic of Togo".⁵⁶ The treaty is dated 21 February 1963 but it is not clear that it was ever signed. The treaty itself is innocuous: it pledged the contracting parties to set up a joint commission "to study all matters relating to economic co-operation between their respective countries" and to put forward proposals "for promoting closer economic co-operation". Its final clause, however, contains a twist: "The present treaty shall come into force immediately upon, but shall not be published before, ratification."

An annexure attached to the treaty provides some clues as to why the treaty was not to be published before it had been ratified. Clause 1 of the annexure committed the two contracting parties to "examine and consider a proposal that there should be complete economic integration between their respective countries". Clause 2B indicated that "the Government of Ghana shall furnish to

⁵³ Several letters of this kind can be found in PRAAD, Ho, Volta Region, VRG 2/199 Frontier Incidents; and VRG 2/12 and 2/13 Intelligence Reports.

⁵⁴ Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, p. 309-10, citing a government note, composed by Geoffrey Bing.

⁵⁵ Jeffrey Ahlman, *Living With Nkrumahism: nation, state, and pan-Africanism in Ghana* (Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2017), particularly chapter 6; Kate Skinner, 'Who Knew the Minds of the People? Specialist Knowledge and Developmentalist Authoritarianism in Postcolonial Ghana', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 39 (2) (2011), pp. 297-323.

⁵⁶ Whilst the bulk of the Bureau of African Affairs papers are located in the George Padmore Research Library, some files were transferred to the Ghana national archives (that is, the Public Records and Administration Department, PRAAD, in Accra). These files were initially catalogued under SC/BAA but were later recatalogued under RG 17.

the Government of Togo such temporary financial assistance as the Commission may unanimously recommend, subject to compliance by the Government of Togo with such terms and conditions relating to such financial assistance as may be so recommended by the Commission". Clause 2C committed the contracting parties "to enact, prior to the public announcement of such economic integration, such legislation as the Commission might unanimously decide, and so advise, to be necessary as a preliminary to such integration". Clause 3 specified that "this Annexure shall not be published" but "shall for all purposes be deemed to have equal effect with, and be part of, the said Treaty".

If this treaty and annexure were genuine documents drafted by members of the Ghana government, with a view to soliciting the signatures of the post-coup provisional Togo government in February 1963, then they are deeply ironic, on at least two levels. Firstly, commitment to a union between Ghana and Togo, which the Nkrumah regime had suggested was "the will of the people", and within their interests, could not be disclosed to them until after it had been signed. The second irony concerns the underlying rationale for economic union.

In an aide memoire attached to the treaty and annexure, the Ghana government provided an acute analysis of Togo's postcolonial predicament. "In the view of the Ghana Government the present economic difficulty which Togo is facing arises from the fundamentally disadvantageous terms of the financial and economic relationship with France and the States of the French Community." The aide memoire pointed to a balance of payments deficit, a shortage of foreign currency other than francs, and the corresponding pressure on Togo to purchase goods for import on the more expensive French markets. It further pointed to the special prices at which the French could purchase Togolese coffee and palm kernels, and the duty-free importation of French goods to Togo. The latter worked against the government's efforts to grow local industries, whilst depriving the government of a source of revenue, and thus pushing it to burden the poor with taxation. In effect, the aide memoire spelled out in more concrete detail for Togo the same diagnosis that Nkrumah argued at a broader, continental level in *Africa Must Unite* just a few months later.

Ironically, however, much of the aide memoire's analysis of Togo's post-colonial predicament was consistent with that of Olympio himself. Olympio was far from oblivious to the neo-colonial ties that inhibited Togo's economic development. But in his bid to reduce Togo's balance of payments problem, avoid reliance on French loans and budgetary subventions, and prepare Togo to exit the franc zone, Olympio had imposed rigid fiscal discipline.⁵⁷ Austerity measures thus hit the Togolese at the end of a prolonged and bitter struggle for Independence - precisely the moment that they had been expecting to enjoy "the fruits of freedom". For Olympio, austerity was justified as the price that had to be paid for reducing reliance on France and establishing the necessary conditions for greater autonomy and prosperity in the future. But in the short term, austerity chipped away at popular enthusiasm for Olympio's government, and opened him

⁵⁷ Têtêvi Godwin Tété-Adjalogo, *Histoire du Togo: tome 3, le regime et l'assassinat de Sylvanus Olympio 1960-1963* (Paris: NM7 Editions, 2002), p. 111.

up to Ghanaian claims to better articulate the “will of the [Togolese] people” and to serve their interests.

After the assassination of Olympio, the provisional Togo government inherited these economic difficulties. If the proposed treaty and secret annexure were indeed genuine documents, then the Ghana government seemed to be offering Grunitzky a route out of a quagmire – a move not dissimilar to that made vis-à-vis Guinea in 1958, when the French withdrew budgetary subvention in response to Sekou Touré’s famous “non” to de Gaulle’s proposals for a French Community. Ghana would fill Togo’s balance of payments deficit, and enable increases in expenditure on capital investments, social services, and administration; but this would only be sustainable in the medium term if Togo was to integrate completely with Ghana, and follow the policies recommended to raise its gross national product up to the higher Ghanaian level.

This meant that if Ghana was continue down a socialist path, Togo would have to follow. Recognising that proposals for a complete economic union might cause capital flight, the aide memoire recommended, “After consultation with the Government of Togo, the Treaty should be signed tomorrow (Saturday, 23rd February).” It further added that although the benefits of economic integration with Ghana should be highlighted to the Togolese people during elections for a new civilian government, “it would be fatal to disclose to the political parties the exact terms of the Secret Annexure”.

The aide memoire continued to list the many advantages that the Togolese could derive from economic integration with Ghana, including access to cheap electrical power from the hydro-electric dam at Akosombo, the use of the Tema harbour, access to Ghanaian geological survey expertise for the identification of exploitable mineral deposits, and supplies of cheaper goods (such as refined petroleum products, textiles, rice, sugar, cigarettes and alcoholic drinks) from Ghana’s emerging import-substitution industries. Yet all of these benefits were to be made contingent on complete economic integration, including “a customs union”, “joint economic planning” and “a linked currency”. If the documents in RG 17/2/814 were indeed genuine propositions from the Ghana government to the provisional Togo government in February 1963, this might explain why Nkrumah rushed to an immediate and unilateral diplomatic recognition.

Ironically, Nkrumah’s avid pursuit of a Ghana-Togo union seems to have raised concerns among African leaders, particularly in the run-up to the critical meetings held at Addis Ababa in May 1963. Nigeria, Guinea, Tanganyika, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Niger, and the Central African Republic all opposed the participation of the Togo delegation at the foreign ministers’ preparatory meeting. At the heads of state and government summit, Sekou Touré “threatened to walk out if Togo was allowed to participate”.⁵⁸ The objections clearly cut across the Monrovia / Casablanca divide, and leaders who had been willing to

⁵⁸ Bolaji Akinyemi, ‘Organisation of African Unity: the practice of recognition of governments’, *Indian Journal of Political Science* 36 (1) (1975), pp. 63-79 at p. 67.

cooperate with Nkrumah on other matters would not support him in his stance towards Togo.

Conclusion

The fraught relations between Ghana and Togo, and the responses of other African leaders to the Olympio assassination and Togo coup, point to fundamental differences in understandings of national sovereignty during the early 1960s. For Nkrumah, a tiny territory such as Togo had no meaningful national sovereignty when it was still tied to a former colonial power in the core areas of currency, trade, and defence, and when its very national borders were merely the contingent outcomes of colonisation and recolonisation. Togolese national sovereignty was thus dispensable, in order to achieve the higher aim of union – first between Ghana and Togo, and ultimately of all other African states in a continental union government. The insistence of other African leaders on an investigation into the Togo coup, and on a considered response to the diplomatic recognition of the provisional Togo government, suggests that they placed a higher premium on national sovereignty, no matter how fragile it may have been.

Bolaji Akinyemi argued many years ago that several competing beliefs were at work among the African political leaders who debated between different versions of the OAU charter in May 1963. These leaders sought to balance the principles of national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and non-intervention in one another's domestic affairs. Nkrumah's Ghana fell into that category of African states that, according to Akinyemi, arrogated unto themselves "the right to intervene in the domestic affairs of other [African] states in order to maintain the purity of the African revolution".⁵⁹ The evidence outlined in this chapter points to the relative ease with which "the will of the people" could be invoked and then discarded, to justify a range of strategic goals.

Other African governments denied the right of intervention, under almost any circumstances, insisting that national sovereignty was paramount, even as they suppressed their own domestic opponents and thus made it almost inevitable that political opposition would be reorganised by exiles living across national borders. All states were "seemingly opposed to non-African intervention in African affairs", whether this was direct, or via other African states. But as Akinyemi pointed out, the third position was only selectively maintained. Some African leaders signed defence agreements with France, agreed to the establishment of French military bases on their national territory, or utilised French troops to maintain internal security. Thus they strengthened their own governments against their domestic political opponents, in relations that could easily be described as "neo-colonial" in the very terms set out by Nkrumah in *Africa Must Unite*.

The principles elaborated in clause 3 of the OAU charter did not provide an adequate answer to the question of under what conditions intervention by one

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 72.

African state in the affairs of another might be justified. This meant that each time a government was overthrown in a coup, the questions that had been raised in regard to Togo were repeated. Was it an internal affair, or aided from outside? Could members of the OAU extend diplomatic recognition to a new government without condoning the method of the coup? Since the answers to these questions varied, the OAU's desire and ability to reach and enforce a collective decision on the extension of diplomatic recognition to post-coup governments remained severely limited.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ See, for example, the recriminations between African heads of states in the aftermath of the Idi Amin coup against Milton Obote in Uganda. Claude Welch, 'The OAU and international recognition: lessons from Uganda' in Yassin El-Ayouty (ed), *The Organization of African Unity After Ten Years: Comparative Perspectives* (London and New York: Praeger, 1975), pp. 103-117.