Weathering the Storm:  
State Repression and Opposition Division in Togo.

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Summary: Early works on regime change has argued that unified opposition forces are likely to push regime change, particularly when they push members of the authoritarian coalition to defect. Attempts to use repression to end opposition mobilization should if anything only reinforces the opposition movement. In this paper, I rather argue state repression can be used by regime forces to exacerbate divisions between opposition leaders and disrupt the movement’s unity. Repression creates grievances among the civilian population who demand retribution against the security forces and the government. Opposition leaders – who are looking for an opportunity to dominate the movement – bandwagon on these grievances by taking more radical stances against the regime. This paper illustrates this theory through an analysis of the pro-democracy movement in Togo between 1990 and 1993. In this period, the early unity of the opposition movements was shattered as moderate and radical leaders failed to agree on a common strategy against the regime. I argue that the regime maintenance operation, launched by the Togolese armed forces, exacerbated these divisions and consequently prevented the pro-democracy movement from re-unifying itself after May 1991.

Introduction

“Opposition cohesion is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for a regime transition” (Van de Walle 2006, 87). Early works on regime change has argued that unified opposition forces are likely to push regime change, particularly when they push members of the authoritarian coalition to defect. They portray the regime as a passive actor whose action can only accelerate regime change process. However, movements’ unity can be broken either as a result of monetary co-option of certain opposition leaders by incumbent government or by rivalries between opposition leaders.
As opposition movement are often coalitions of various social forces without diverse interests, research on the factors behind the unity of said-movements have argued that these movements remain unify when structures or historic leaders keep these groups together. In other words, opposition movement would remain unified for the same reason than authoritarian coalition would: when institutions create sufficient incentives for them to do so.

While this perspective provided important insights into the internal workings of nationalist/pro-democracy movements, it still failed to consider how regime forces can try to create wedges among opposition groups. Rather than look at monetary incentives as a mean to co-opt opposition leaders, I will argue in this paper that state repression can be used by regime forces to exacerbate divisions between opposition leaders and disrupt the movement’s unity.

Repression creates grievances among the civilian population who demand retribution against the security forces and the government. Opposition leaders -who are looking for an opportunity to dominate the movement- bandwagon on these grievances by taking more radical stances against the regime. Radical political stances become a mean to overpower rivals by gathering support from social groups angered by state repression. These rivalries can create almost unsurmountable wages among opposition leaders as moderate leaders refuse to accept the radical’s leadership of the movement. Such a strategy, however, only works when there is only a few risk of defection from military units in charge of repression.
This paper illustrates this theory through an analysis of the pro-democracy movement in Togo between 1990 and 1993. In this period, the early unity of the opposition movements was shattered as moderate and radical leaders failed to agree on a common strategy against the regime. I argue that the regime maintenance operation, launched by the Togolese armed forces, exacerbated these divisions and consequently prevented the pro-democracy movement from re-unifying itself after May 1991.

The rest of this paper is divided into three sections. The first section reviews existing theories and provided the theoretical ground for my own hypotheses. I explain the methodological choices, process-tracing and the selection of the Togolese case, in the second section. I analyse the evolution of the Togolese opposition movement, and the influence repression had on this evolution, in the third section.

**The Mobilization of Civil Society and Regime Change**

The literature on democratic transitions concluded that two factors seem to be tied in the regime change process: authoritarian elite rifts and mobilization of civil society. While early research emphasized divisions within the ruling coalition behind democratization processes, research after subsequent transitions emphasized civic resistance campaign (O'Donnell & Schmitter 1986, 15-7; Bunce 2003). Civil society mobilization is conceptualized as the main force behind transitions from authoritarianism to democracy (O'Donnell 2010; Bermeo 1997). As Valerie Bunce summarized, “mass mobilization promised—and delivered—a popular mandate for democracy in the first competitive elections” (2003, 173).
Not all civic resistance campaigns are not as effective as peaceful campaigns are more efficient than violent ones (Celestino & Gleditsch 2013, 396). Peaceful protests are more effective because they tend to attract large number of participants. The two mechanisms linking increase participation to regime change -the cost of repression and the likelihood of elite- are tied together; repression leads to regime downfall only when it pushes certain members of the authoritarian coalition to defect. Chenoweth and Stephan concluded that peaceful protests were more effective because the potential long-term economic effect of the continued campaign and the social ties between protesters and military personnel convinces members of the ruling coalition to defect to the opposition (2011, 10-1). Van de Walle conceptualized such processes as tipping games; less loyal regime members would abandon the regime as it becomes clear that opposition forces have the ability to overpower the incumbent government (2006, 86-7).

These research state there is a precondition to said-success, namely the unity of the movement. Van de Walle concluded that, “Opposition cohesion and incumbent fragmentation often mirror each other and cannot be understood separately. Opposition cohesion is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for a regime transition” (2006, 87). Even the preservation of the non-violent character of protest movements depends on its relative unity. Pearlman concluded that, “there is one prevailing path to nonviolent protest: a path that demands that a movement has or creates internal political cohesion” (2012, 24). Cohesive structures or unifying leadership can prevent radical groups from rising and beginning an outbidding among opposition movement, who propose more and more drastic measures against the regime (Lawrence 2010, 99).

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2 On how different authoritarian coalition members react to popular mobilization see Morency-Laflamme (2015).
Authoritarian regime can alleviate the potential consequence of civic resistance campaign if the coalition in power remains unified. Autocrats can create structures that assure a share of the perks among coalition members or tie coalition members to their destiny, can prevent defection (Bratton & Van de Walle 1997, 86; Brownlee 2007, 38). Military personnel who remain loyal to the regime, specifically, can in fact allow regimes to survive long-periods of domestic and international pressures (Alagappa 2002, 53).

However, these research did not analyse how authoritarian regime can influence the opposition characteristics. Previous research emphasized that autocrats can provide incentives for certain opposition leaders join their coalition. Barkan concluded, for instance, that, “authoritarian regimes have used competitive elections to maintain themselves in power by fragmenting the opposition, isolating anti-regime hard-liners, and buying off patronage-seekers” (2000, 234). Barkan’s argument is that incumbent autocrats can and do use state resources to buy-off certain opposition leaders, particularly patronage-seekers, in order to weaken the anti-regime coalition. Gandhi and Przeworski also concluded that authoritarian legislatures can be used to coopt certain opposition groups (2006). These potential mechanisms, however, require that opposition coalition members can be divided-up and that certain partners are willing to be coopted.

Previous work argued that state repression can help to unify resistance movements. Chenoweth and Stephan argued that, “Repressing nonviolent campaigns may backfire if the campaigns have widespread sympathy among the civilian population by turning passive supporters into active participants” (2011, 51). Khajawa reached a similar conclusion as he argued that, “instead of deterring protest, repression increased subsequent collective action” (1993, 64). Works on nationalist/sub-nationalist movements
has, however, hinted that repression can and does lead to increased divisions as certain groups embraces violent strategies. Shellman, Levey and Young concluded that state repression can initiate cycles of increased violence as opposing movements launch violent actions as a reprisal (2013, 329). While Shellman & all argued that the movement as a whole launched violent movements in reaction to state repression, other research found a different relation where certain groups embraced violent strategies to outbid rivals within the nationalist movement. These research linked the passage from non-violent to violent struggles to internal splits within the opposition coalition (Asal, Brown & Dalton 2012, 100). Lawrence, in his study of nationalist movement in the French Empire, concluded that the destruction of unified leadership by French forces left a political vacuum that minor leaders tried to fill by outbidding each other in terms of violent rhetoric (2010, 99). Alternatively, McLauchlin and Pearlman proposed that violence is embraced by certain splinter groups when the existing structure of the opposition coalition failed to contain them (McLauchlin & Pearlman 2012; Pearlman 2012). Repression reinforces existing rifts within the coalition as groups dissatisfied with the opposition structure embrace violent rhetoric (McLauchlin & Pearlman 2012, 45).

Many opposition movement are ad hoc coalitions of civil society groups, opposition parties, former regime members who unified on a temporary basis; they thus lack any clear structure to contain them (Van de Walle 2006, 85-6). Some coalitions remain unified despite this lack of institutional ties.

The peaceful-violent dichotomy is not the only potential divide among opposition groups. The literature on transition from authoritarian rule point out that certain opposition groups, usually referred to as moderates, embrace the idea of reaching
political compromise with former opposition forces while radical groups, not necessarily violent, take tougher stance against the regime. (O'Donnell & Schmitter 1986, 27). While structures can help to maintain cohesion among opposition groups, I argue that repression can greatly diminish this effect as it can lead certain social groups to have more intense grievances against the incumbent regimes. ‘Radical’ leaders, in reaction, take a tougher stance against the regime in a bid to gather popular support. Shellman and al. in fact argued that political violence can be seen as a mean to gather popular support (2013, 324). Certain leaders in this scenario embrace radical ideologies as a mean to integrate more embittered groups into their organizations and overpower their rivals within the movement.

An important caveat of the use of repression as a mean to divide the opposition is its potential effects on military personnel loyalty as opposition forces can appeal to share social ties with military personnel. Autocrats can, and do, manipulate social ties in order to eliminate this possibility. By using selective recruitment, autocrats increases the social distance between military personnel and civil society in order to make any common actions by both groups nearly impossible (McLauchlin 2010, 338). Increased social ties has two important effects: it creates a ‘fear of the masses’ effect among the armed forces but it also reinforces the possibility that certain opposition groups will radicalize. In the context of democratic transitions, social distance push officers to oppose regime change as they believe winning ethnic groups will attack their privilege by either reshuffling the command structure to favour their own groups or create a non-ethnic army (Harkness 2014, 12; Bratton & van de Walle 1994, 464).
In this paper, I thus argue that (H1) *state repression can create wedges among the opposition forces as certain leaders take tougher stances in a bid to rally these embittered groups*. However, this strategy only works if (H2) *the incumbent government severed most social ties between the units responsible for state repression and civil society groups*.

**Process-Tracing and Case-Selection**

In order to test the validity of my argument I use a technique called theory-building process tracing. Process tracing is a technique in which the researcher attempts to “[identity every] steps in a causal process leading to the outcome of a given dependent variable of a particular case in a particular historical context” (Vennesson 2008, 231). Potential causal chains are tested using process tracing in order to validate/infirm the relationship between the variables identified (George & Bennett 2005, 215; Mahoney & Rueschemeyer 2003, 365). To achieve this goal, the researcher must theoretically map out every potential mechanisms that explain the link between a particular combination of variables and a specific outcome. All mechanisms are linked, as they are triggered by the previous event in the link and activate the next event, or causal mechanism (Beach & Pedersen 2012, 176; George & Bennett 2005, 212).

I thus argued that there are three links between state repression and the creation of rifts within opposition coalition. First, as a precondition, the armed forces must have been loyalized, usually through selective recruitment and promotion. Second, there must already be latent divisions within the opposition coalition as certain groups refused to be fully integrated within the opposition structures, demonstrated their disagreement with
the opposition’s strategy and/or division of power or that certain opposition groups refused to join the opposition coalition. Third, state repression should create grievances within the population as certain protesters take tougher stance against the regime and are willing to clash with security forces. In reaction, leaders of the opposition unhappy with the situations should attempt to co-opt embittered protesters by taking tougher stances against the regime.

**State Repression and Opposition Division Causal Chain**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(X₂) Loyalization mechanisms applied to the armed forces</th>
<th>Latent divisions within the opposition coalition</th>
<th>(X₁) State Repression heightens grievances among population</th>
<th>(Y) Rifts within the opposition coalition</th>
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<tr>
<td>-ethnic stacking -non-loyalists appointed to minor positions -regular purge of unreliable elements</td>
<td>-certain groups keep their structures despite their participation in coalition -certain groups remain out of the coalition</td>
<td>-Protester-Security Forces Clash -Population targeted by repression, not leaders</td>
<td>-certain leaders take radical stances against the regime -denunciation of any compromise with regime -certain moderate leaders coopted by regime</td>
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I selected the Togolese case and the pro-democracy movement between 1990 and 1993 to test my theory. In Togo, a pro-democracy coalition, composed of civil society groups, traditional political opponents and exiled political elites challenged the rule of President Gnassingbé Eyadéma and his single-party, the *Rassemblement du Peuple Togolais* (RPT) and demanded the return to multiparty and free and fair elections (Heilbrunn 1993, 285-9). While the regime accepted the return to multiparty rule, Eyadéma remained president until his death in 2005 and his political coalition remains in power to this day. Regime repression, furthermore, was costly for the regime as
continuing strikes plunged the country in an economic crisis while state repression convinced the three main partners of Togo –France, Germany and the United States- to cut military aid and cooperation. One key factor in the ability of the regime to maintain his grasp on the country is the increased division within the opposition forces as Gnassingbé Eyadéma –and his son and successor Faure Gnassingbé- could co-opt certain parties and leaders when necessary. I selected this case and the 1990-1993 campaign as the relative unity of the movement -before March 1991- was broken and led to the rise of radical political leaders which favoured a ‘street revolution’ as a mean to dislodge Eyadéma from power. I argue that this disunity is a direct result of regime maintenance operation launched by security personnel in April-May 1991.

I gathered the data for this research during two rounds of fieldwork in 2013, between January-March 2013 and November-December. Most interviews were conducted with members of opposition parties, professors, journalists and civil society members who were active in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The rest of this paper is divided in four sections representing the four causal chain identified above: creation of a loyalist army, latent divisions within the opposition coalition, state repression as a catalyst to popular grievances and rifts within the pro-democracy coalition.

The 1990-1993 Pro-Democracy Movement in Togo

The Construction of a Loyalist Army

The Togolese government had already largely severed the potential social ties between the armed forces and civil society in the decades that preceded the 1990-1993
crisis in Togo. While political and economic elites historically came from Togo’s southern regions, the RPT government created a largely monoethnic army, centred on Kabyè clans.

The rank-and-files of the small Togolese army came almost exclusively from northern tribes when Lieutenant Étienne Gnassingbé Eyadéma - a Kabyè from the village of Pya in the north of the country- rose to power in April 1967 (Cornevin 1968, 68; Horowitz 1985, 449). Though southerners were somewhat more present thanks to their better access to educational institution, northerners were also dominant within the officer corps,.

In the first decade of his rule, Eyadéma had to deal with northern rivals who tried to build alternative networks within the army. Partisans of Eyadéma’s first rival, Captain Emmanuel Bodjollé, tried in 1967 and 1970 to challenge the president’s power (Decalo 1973, 84). In 1976, it was the turn of Lieutenant Gaston Gnêhou, a northern officer married to one of Eyadéma’s sister, who was trying to create a network of northern officers dissatisfied with the president policies (Toulabor 1986, 186). The RPT began a policy of group purge as two groups seen as too closely allied with Bodjollé –Mobas and Kabyès from the village of Kounéah- were pushed out of the army. After 1977, it was the turn of southerners to be viewed with suspicion by the Togolese government (Decalo 1990, 234). Documents found after a mercenary attack in 1977 tied two high ranking Ewe officers like Lieutenant-colonel Merlaud Lawson and Colonel Rainhilf Koffi Kongo, to the exiled civilian opponent of the regime (Everett 1986, 14). In reaction, the regime began to push southerners out of the army and those who remained were barred from serving in key units like the presidential guard or being in charge of munition depots.
Already, in the 1970s, President Eyadéma and the RPT had instigated a policy of kabylization of the army.\(^3\) New recruits were, as Ellis described, “habitually hand-picked during the wrestling matches which were traditionally held every year in [Eyadéma’s] home region during the important festival known as *evala*” (1993, 467). Crucial command posts were given to close associates of the regime: the presidential guard was commanded by Eyadéma’s half-brother, Lieutenant Toï Donou and of an officer from Pya, Colonel Akoussoyé Séverin Assih. Colonel Assih was also put in charge of the gendarmerie. His uncle, Benoît Yaya Malou was in charge of the national police academy (Toulabor 1986, 190; Heilbrunn 1993, 460).

After 1986, this process accelerated as new elite units were created and reserved for Kabyès (Toulabor 2008, 324).\(^4\) By 1990, Kabyès represented 54% of all military personnel and almost a quarter of all troops came from Pya (Toulabor 2005, 4). The officer corps was even more in the hands of Kabyè power as no units were commanded by southern officers. Even among Kabyès, the clans from Pya were favoured over others; on 26 military units, 10 units were headed by officers from Pya, while within the senior position as on five of the nine generals were Kabyès (Toulabor 1999, 106; Chouala 2004, 567).

This Kabyè army, particularly elite Kabyès units headed by Eyadéma’s close associates, would come to play a key role in the maintenance of the regime in the 1990-1993 period. Throughout the crisis the only Kabyè officers who came out in favour of

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3 Kabylization refers to the creation of a mono-ethnic army in Togo around the Kabyè ethnic group.

4 These units would come to play a key role, alongside the presidential guard, in the anti-opposition campaign. They include the *Forces d’Intervention Rapide* (FIR), two paracommandos units, and a new infantry battalion nicknamed *pigeons.*
political liberalization and/or regime change had been already expelled of the army as they were seen as potential rivals to Eyadéma (Huband 1991, 20; Thiriot 1999, 202). Furthermore, only marine commandos—the only section of the army still under command by southerners—refused orders to repress protesters.

1990-1991: FAR and Temporary Unity

The movement that challenged Eyadéma’ rule in the Fall of 1990 took its origin in the late 1980s, when the RPT’s clientelist policies began to fail. Dropping phosphate revenues and border closure in Ghana—as trans-border trade was a major source of revenue for southern economic elites—pushed the regime to implement drastic austerity measures which reduced the citizens standards of living (Steinholtz 1985, 29). As Heilbrunn noted, “a decade-long depression had left the single-party state without the means to co-opt the numerous challenge to its rule” (1997, 225). Austerity measures largely touched the urban population in the south, particularly those dependent on the large government projects launched in the 1970s and early 1980s. By 1990, southern elites began to be also affected by rounds of layoffs within the civil service.5

Pressure was mounting on the government. Units were increasingly placed around Lomé, seen as the potential center of any anti-regime actions; close to two-thirds of all troops were now stationed near the capital (Toulabor 2005, 3). Prominent civil society figures were followed and were arrested. In a meeting on May 12 1990, General Ameyi gave this warning to Yaovi Agboyibo, head of the Ligue togolaise des droits de l’homme (LTDH): “It is out of the question that we leave power to some embittered fools. If they

5 One notable exception is the armed forces, untouched by the government cuts.
want to challenge us, we will see who will come out on top” (Agboyibo 1999, 57). At the University of Lomé, a militia composed of Kabyès, the Haut Conseil des Associations et Mouvements Étudiants (HACHEME), detected and repressed student mobilization (Toulabor 2008, 320). When Hacheme was overwhelmed, the gendarmerie intervened and tortured student leaders (Interview, National Conference Representative 1, Lomé, November 19 2013).

The trial of two student leaders would launch the opposition campaign. on October 5th 1990, the trial of two students was followed by the first large protests of the pro-democracy movement (Agboyibo 1999, 59; Ellis 1993, 465). The regime responded by sending the gendarmerie units to end the protest. In response to the death of five student in the protest, there were calls for a general strike which paralyzed Lomé for three days (Heilbrunn 1993, 287). Over the next few months, new organizations were formed and joined the existing ones. The beginning of the protests in Togo was marked by a revival of Togolese civil society as new organizations were founded and challenged the official institutions control over Togo. These new groups demanded major political reforms, including a return to multiparty elections and the respect for human rights.

Over the next months, the government’s attempts to end the protests failed as new groups left government-sanctioned associations and joined the pro-democracy movement. On November 26 1990, during a protest by taxi drivers on strike, soldiers attacked with machetes the strikers. On the campuses, AMENTO –a group of northern students- acted as the government militia and used clubs and acid against protests. The army tried to stop

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6 Two key organizations would be the Ligue Togolaise des Droits de l’Homme (LTDH) –headed by Yaovi Agboyibo and Joseph Koffigoh- the Association Togolaise de Lutte Contre la Torture – headed by Jean Degli.
protests by ramming participants with their jeeps. Some groups began to coordinate their actions in order to more effectively challenge the government. On March 14th 1991, ten organizations including the LTDH and newly formed student groups coalesced into the *Front d’Action du Renouveau* (FAR). The FAR launched a 48 hour strike from March 16 to the 18, which affected most southern cities. As protests continued to grow in importance, and as FAR demonstrated its ability to control the protests, Eyadéma decided to meet with them on March 18th 1991. Eyadéma agreed to three key demands: to tolerate multipartism, grant general amnesty to all former regime opponents and to the holding of a *Forum National de Dialogue* where FAR and RPT would negotiate a number of reforms (Tète 1998, 60).

FAR managed to create a temporary unity among opposition groups; however, new political parties lobbied for the dissolution of FAR, seen as challenge to their own control over the opposition movement. While Agboyibo, one of the FAR heads, proposed to transform FAR into a single political party, his proposal was rejected by other members who already wanted to form their own parties (Iwata 2003, 143). The dissolution of the FAR has two important implications for the regime: first, it now meant that there was no an organization who could speak for the whole pro-democracy movement and, second, that there were disagreements among opposition leaders. These disagreements would, in fact, increase throughout in the following months.

Barkan, in his 2000 work on protracted transition, divided opposition members in Africa into three categories 'transition-seekers', 'patronage-seekers', and 'antiregime hard-liners' (2000, 235). While the term patronage seekers could apply, in one time or another, to most leaders, there was a definite division between transition-seekers and antiregime
hardliners. Transition-seekers had often, at one time or another, participated in the regime institutions: Joseph Koffigh and Yaowi Agboyibo were lawyers who had contributed to the regime sanctioned human rights commission in 1987 while Edem Kodjo was the first secretary general of the RPT. Anti-regime hardliners, or radical oppositionists, came largely from the historic opposition parties: Gilchrist Olympio was the leader in exile to the Union des Forces pour le Changements –UFC-, the descendant of his father’s Union Togolaise; the UFC portrayed himself on many occasions as the natural heir to the last civilian government in Togo. Leopold Gnininvi headed the Convention Démocratique des Peuples Africains (CDPA), who had been somewhat active against the regime since the early 1980s (Toulabor 2003, 118). There are many other political parties which would come to influence the opposition coalition, but these five leaders, and their respective organizations, were the most influential ones.

Already in March 1991, there were disagreements within the organizations. Radical leaders like Gnininvi disagreed that it was necessary to negotiate with the regime while the UFC was not even a member of the FAR-coalition (Agboyibo 1999, 91). These rifts would be used by the regime in order to reduce the moderate leaders control over the opposition movement.

State Repression and Popular Grievances

In April 1991, two events allowed the Togolese regime to alter its repression strategy. First, FAR disbanded as each leaders hoped to become the first president of a democratic Togo. Second, Gilchrist Olympio returned to the country after decades of exile. Olympio refused to work with other opposition parties as he saw himself, and his
party, as the rightful leader of Togo. State repression would exacerbate divisions among these groups.

Since the beginning of the pro-democracy movement campaign, the regime forces had targeted opposition leaders and protesters. For instance, Agboyibo’s house had been set ablaze in early March in retaliation for the formation of FAR. In early April, the army was deployed within the streets of the capital –Lomé- and ordered to reinforce a curfew against the population in general (Tête 1998, 59). On April 5th, two university students were shot and killed as they attempted to remove a statue of the president. On April 11th, however, 30 bodies were found in the Bé Lagoon. This was the largest massacre since the beginning of protests. Furthermore, Eyadéma publicly declared that the Forum National de Dialogue would not bring many meaningful reforms for Togo (Heilbrunn 1997, 233). Youth groups, which had been at the heart of the protests, began to challenge the security forces. Some began to form militias called the Ekpemogs, mostly armed with Molotov cocktails and rocks (Toulabor 2008, 320). The Ekpemogs burned local police stations and government buildings.

On the anniversary of the assassination of Sylvanus Olympio, on April 27th, youth groups organized a funeral processions which turned violent. Protesters were increasingly calling for Eyadéma’s resignation. Radical groups increasingly used the image of Sylvanus Olympio as a standard and were convinced that protests alone could topple the regime. Clashes between protesters and security forces continued throughout the 1991-1993 period, taking an increasingly north versus south rhetoric for many protesters.

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7 They were inspired by former pro-CUT militias which were active between 1958 and 1963, the Ablodé Sodja (Gaba 1997, 242)
Rifts within the opposition forces

After many rounds of negotiations, political parties and civil society organizations formed a new unified organization, the Collectif de l’Opposition Démocratique (COD). Certain radical leaders, like Claude Ameganvi and Leopold Gnininvi joined the organization even if they were skeptical of the organization ability to push Eyadéma to the negotiation table. Gilchrist Olympio, who was very popular in southern cities, refused to join (Seely 2001, 184).

Nevertheless, COD leaders called for an unlimited strike on June 6th. Eyadéma still refused to meet COD’s demand, which included the holding of a National Conference where representatives would vote major political reforms for the country. The COD’s control over protesters showed sign of weakening as calls to stay at home on June 8 were not followed by close to 20’000 protesters (Rennebohm 2011, 4). Pro-Regime militias continued to attack protesters, which led to continued clashes in early June. On June 12th, RPT representatives finally conceded to the opposition demand for a national conference in what became known as the June 12th accords. In exchange however, Eyadéma was supposed to stay president during the period and the conference would not become sovereign.8

The June 12 accords were denounced from the start by many opposition groups who saw them as another ruse by Eyadéma to stay in power (Ameganvi 1998, 128). Unlike FAR, who was a relatively cohesive organization, COD was divided into two

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8 The sovereignty issues arose as in neighbouring Benin, the conference representatives in February 1990 declared themselves sovereign as a mean to make the conference independent from the incumbent government decision and policies
camps: moderate who were convinced that negotiations with the regime could bring regime change and radicals who thought that through street protests they could push Eyadéma to immediately leave power (Agboyibo 1999, 101).

Radical leaders, in the month before the National Conference (CNS), used the time to try to take control of the opposition movement. Already, Gilchrist Olympio and his partisans had refused to join COD. Within the structure itself, radical groups rallied around Leopold Gnininvi’s leadership and derailed the normal proceedings of the organization. While the presidency of the organization was supposed to pass from one leader to another, youth groups rallied to maintain Gnininvi in the leading position (Interview, National Conference Representative 1, Lomé, November 19 2013).

The relative unity of the opposition movement would be broken afterwards as every leader tried to use meetings and conference resolution as a mean to secure the leadership of the movement, and afterwards of the country (Heilbrunn & Toulabor 1995, 89). As a former CNS representative reported, “Everyone has its own presidential ambitions, they tried to use the conference as a mean to gather political support and isolate other opposition leaders” (Interview, National Conference Representative 2, Lomé, November 19 2013). In this struggle, radical leaders had two main advantages: first, they could use their popularity among social groups who favoured Eyadéma’s immediate ouster; second, they could denounce moderate leaders who had remained in the country throughout Eyadéma’s reign as collaborationists in an effort to delegitimize them (Seely 2001, 184).
Radical leaders used their newfound power to go back on the COD’s agreement with the regime. “Many, particularly UFC affiliates and individuals close to Gnininvi decided to go against the planned reforms and the June 12 accords, even denouncing them” (Interview, former civil society leader 1, Montreal [phone interview], December 17 2012). Eyadéma and the regime representatives used the vote of the first resolution, granting the conference sovereignty, to leave the meeting blaming the opposition’s refusal to respect the previous agreements (Tète 1998, 66). While regime representatives would ultimately come back to the meeting, the armed forces were now out of the negotiation process. Radical leaders still continued to propose major reforms, including the prosecution of many commanding officers and ministers with close ties to Eyadéma (Thiriot 1999, 390-4).

The opposition divisions during the CNS would create major rifts around the future transitional government, which was charged with preparing the founding elections and final constitutional reforms. Gnininvi tried to prevent the nomination of any leaders either linked to Agboyibo and Kodjo to the new governmental bodies. The main rift, however, was around the selection of a transitional prime minister. Gnininvi thought he could be easily elected thanks to his leading role in COD, but Joseph Koffigoh rose as a challenger. Koffigoh ultimately won thanks to the support of certain moderate and UFC representatives and to the decision of RPT representatives to vote for the more moderate and least experience candidate. Gnininvi would resent his electoral defeat.

Koffigoh, now at the head of the transition government that was composed of, “some of the most outspoken radicals of the opposition who were impatient to see Eyadéma ousted once and for all” (Seely 2005, 368). While Koffigoh desired to
‘integrate’ the RPT and Eyadéma in the reform process and avoid a violent confrontation, radical representatives wanted to go forward in their desire to erase Eyadéma’s political power. Already, during the CNS, the opposition representatives had stripped the president from his power to appoint military officers and had disbanded the RPT (Thiriot 1999, 390-4). Continued aggressions by security forces pushed radical representatives within the transitional legislature, called Haut Conseil de la République (HCR), to pass new resolutions against the regime. On October 1st and 8th, military officers took over the national radio stations and called for the dissolution of the transitional government. In reaction, the HCR demanded the arrest of three commanders, including one of Eyadéma’s son. On October 19, members of the HCR demand Eyadéma’s resignation, though they failed to pass a resolution (Iwata 2003, 148). On November 26, the HCR announced the RPT’s dissolution and the seizure of all their assets.

This last resolution was used as an excuse by pro-regime forces to launch a low-level terror violence in Lomé, attacking people in the streets and besieging the prime ministerial house. During the siege, HCR representatives completely failed to come to Koffigoh’s defense (Degli 1996, 111). Koffigoh was taken hostage on December 3rd and taken to Eyadéma. The president renegotiated the terms of the transition government, recovering large powers of appointment and giving key ministries to RPT dignitaries (Seely 2005, 368). Left by himself, Koffigoh was slowly co-opted by the regime as he had to rely far more on RPT representatives than opposition ones during the end of his term.

This failure to unify would be from that point forward a key determinant of the opposition failure to contain Eyadéma and/or achieve political victory. After the
Ouagadougou accords in 1993, the newly formed COD II should have presented a single candidate to the presidency, Edem Kodjo. But two key actors, Olympio and Agboyibo, refused to back this deal (Ameganvi 1998, 171). In the February 1994 elections, the two participating opposition parties, Agboyibo’s *Comité d'action pour le renouveau* (CAR) and Kodjo’s *Union togolaise pour la démocratie* (UTD), got a short majority over the RPT and its allied. In a bid to divide the two parties, Eyadéma appointed Kodjo and not Agboyibo as prime minister even if CAR had far more representatives. The strategy worked as CAR representatives refused to back Kodjo and boycotted most of the parliamentary session in 1995 (Sangmpam 1995, 629). The RPT got back its majority in parliament after a by-election in 1996 and simply dropped the UTD from the ruling coalition.

**Conclusion**

The increased division of the opposition movement after April 1991 had long term repercussions on the ability of the opposition to push democratization. Calls by radical forces for prosecution of regime representatives disrupted the relative unity of the pro-democracy movement in its early days and allowed the RPT government to deal with isolate groups rather than the movement as a whole. 

State repression can divide opposition movements as it creates a pool of potential new recruits for radical leaders. This divisionary effect, however, is dependent upon two pre-existing conditions: opposition leaders unhappy with the structure of the movement and military units unlikely to defect as a consequence of repression.
This research also highlights that state repression seems to be more effective when it is used ‘at large’ rather than ‘targeted’. Selective repression of opposition leaders did not diminish the movement’s power or will, but rather push opposition movement to diversify itself and create lose organization more responsive to state challenges. Repression ‘at large’ creates the condition for the rise of radical leaders who can pose a challenge on the long-run against the incumbent government but in the short-run diminish the established opposition group’s control over the movement.

This analysis promises insightful new research on the effects of state repression on opposition movement. Future work should test the generalizability of this paper’s conclusion. These conclusions also hint that co-optation of opposition groups by government forces can be caused both by leader’s desire to access rent, but also by efforts to end its isolation from other political forces. Future research should analyse the ‘avoidance of repression’ as a perk linked to the co-optation of opposition forces by the government.

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