

### 6.6.5 The British Togoland Referendum (1956)

Three major political parties engaged in the plebiscite campaign: the Togoland Congress, the CPP and the Northern People's Party (NPP). The Togoland Congress, which campaigned for the reunification of Togoland, promoted the separation of British Togoland from the Gold Coast, while the NPP and the CPP, although opponents in Gold Coast politics, took the same position regarding the referendum and campaigned for the integration of British Togoland.

*Photo 20: Voting Campaign in Southern Togoland (April 1956)*



Source: Information Services Department (Accra), R-2832-5. Photo: J.T. Ocansey.

In its campaign, the Togoland Congress naturally endeavoured to securitize the issue at hand, spreading the message that integration would mean “slavery.”<sup>630</sup> The people of British Togoland would lose their culture, identity, and personality as well as surrender the people of French Togoland to the French with no prospect of reunification. Separation from the Gold Coast, on the other hand, would mean that the people would remain free people forever; the road to unification, independence and eventually federation would be open. These ideas were also spread on posters and banners.

<sup>630</sup> As quoted in Amenume, *The Ewe Unification Movement*, p. 264.

*Photo 21: March organised by Togoland Congress, Ho (6 May 1956)*



*Photo 22: Alex Odame addressing a gathering, Jasikan (April 1956)*



Source: UN Photo.

*Photo 23: Referendum Day, Logba Adzakoe (9 May 1956)<sup>631</sup>*



Source: UN Photo.

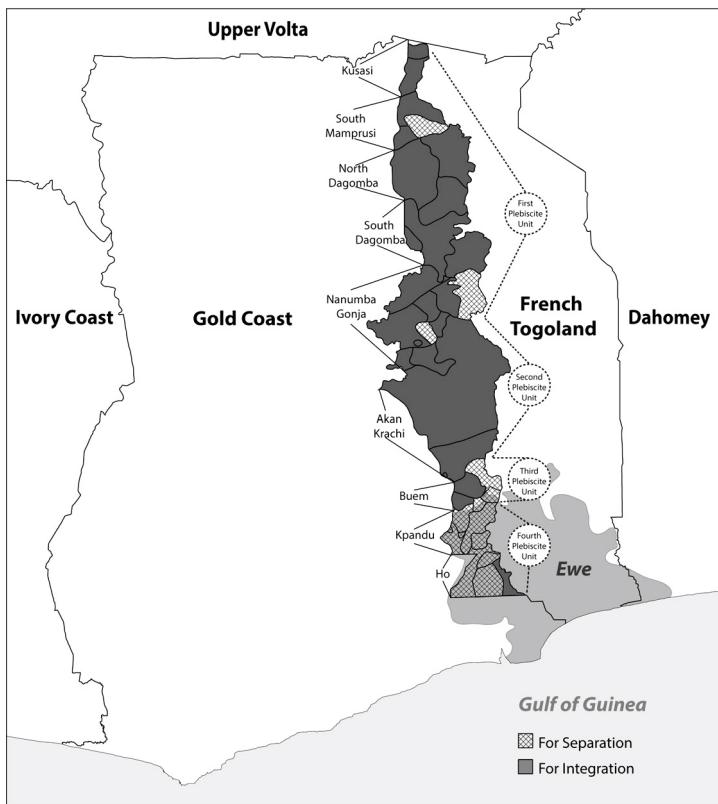
Amenumey quotes an election poster of the Togoland Congress, which securitises the electoral choice by calling upon the Togolanders to “demonstrate our patriotism, our sympathy for our suffering of our brothers under French administration [...] can you the

<sup>631</sup> Voting scene on plebiscite in the village of Logba Adzakoe as voters line up at the polling station..

Southern Togolanders forsake your kinsmen under the French perpetually?"<sup>632</sup> As the report of the 1955 Visiting Mission showed, with few exceptions, the debate on integration and unification was conducted along ethnic lines,<sup>633</sup> with a majority of Ewe in favour the status quo and a majority of non-Ewe in favour of integration. However, the British willingly left open the question of whether British Togoland would gain independence as a federal state of Ghana or be subsumed under a unitary constitution. As calculated by the British statistical analysis of the 1954 General Election, the question divided many unificationists and dominated much of the campaign.

The referendum was held on 9 May 1956 in an "atmosphere of absolute freedom, impartiality and fairness."<sup>634</sup> The overall result was 54,785 votes for integration to 43,976 for separation, that is a clear majority of 58% voted in favour of integration (see Map 9).

Map 9: British Togoland Referendum (1956)



Source: Own creation.

<sup>632</sup> As quoted in Amenumeey, *The Ewe Unification Movement*, p. 264.

<sup>633</sup> Nugent's (2002) analysis of the referendum, however, concludes that ethnicity played only a minor role in the referendum.

<sup>634</sup> GAOR, "Report of the United Nations Plebiscite Commissioner" A/3173 (United Nations (UN), 1956), p. 467.

While the north of British Togoland, sparsely populated mainly by Dagomba and Mamprusi, clearly favoured integration into the Gold Coast for the sake of their territorial unity, the south, densely populated by Ewe but ethnically far more heterogeneous, was more in favour of separation for the sake reunifying French and British Togoland. As predicted, the northern section voted overwhelmingly for integration, whilst in the southern section, the vote was divided between the Guans and Akans, opting for integration, and the Ewes, opting for separation. Especially many Ewes in the Ho and Kpando district voted against integration because they feared to be degraded to an ethnic minority within Akan-dominated Ghana and to be further removed from the Ewes in neighbouring French Togoland.

## 6.7 Turning the Tides II: French Togoland (1956–1960)

### 6.7.1 Loi-Cadre & the Autonomous Republic of Togoland (1956)

Despite the understanding reached between Teitgen and Lennox-Boyd, concerns arose within the French Overseas Ministry arose that the matter of the southern section of British Togoland might be deferred until the referendum in French Togoland.<sup>635</sup> The reason being that international developments caught up with France and put the Overseas Ministry under time pressure to implement reforms: Morocco and Tunisia had already achieved independence in March 1956, revolutionary war was raging in Algeria, fuelling nationalist sentiment in other colonial territories, and the already-imminent independence of the Gold Coast was considered a threatening spark that could soon spread to French sub-Saharan Africa. Thus, to avoid another catastrophe in *Afrique Noire* and the possible disintegration of the French Union, the Minister of Overseas France, Gaston Defferre, prepared the *loi-cadre* (framework law) to grant more autonomy to the French overseas territories. When on 23 June 1956 the French National Assembly passed the 'framework law', it gave Defferre in essence the power to fill the 'framework' with decrees, thus, enabling the rapid introduction of Territorial Assemblies and universal suffrage in French overseas territories. Strictly speaking, the framework law (including the decrees) did not bring autonomy to the overseas territories, but rather 'decentralization' or half-autonomy since the administration of the overseas territories was split: while the territorial authorities would now fall under the administration of the newly introduced territorial assemblies, including (limited) budgetary authority, the security-related areas of the *Service d'Etat*, such as foreign policy, defence, gendarmerie, and the areas' criminal police, remained within the reserve powers of the Ministry of Overseas France.

Without doubt, the *loi-cadre* can be considered a securitisation measure straight out of the Copenhagen School's playbook: The background to its adoption was the danger of a disintegration of the French Union. Its purpose was to circumvent the impossibility to get all the individual measures through the legislative mills at the usual bureaucratic

<sup>635</sup> ANOM (Aix-en-Provence), 1AFFPOL/2182/3, *Royaume-Uni*, Procès-Verbal des entretiens franco-britannique des Directeurs, 17–18 May 1956, p. 2 [8].