

SPECIAL REPORT



Political Transformation and Security and Stability: The Case of West Africa's Guinea

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Executive Summary

For over four decades, the Republic of Guinea, the first country in Francophone Africa to gain independence and the world's second largest supplier of bauxite, an aluminum ore, was ruled by authoritarian strongmen. To a large extent, the initial recourse to authoritarianism was a response to the immense challenges that Guinea's first President, Ahmed Sekou Toure, faced when he hastily proclaimed independence in 1958, angering the French government. To deal with the hostile backlash from Charles de Gaulle's France, Toure turned to China, the Soviet Union, and their allies. The result was the transformation of the charismatic former labor union activist into a brutal dictator that tolerated no opposition and severely punished dissent. After Toure, things did not improve for Guinea as Colonel Lansana Conte, continued to rule Guinea with an iron fist. At the time of his death in 2008, corruption had become pervasive in Guinea, producing a decline in the Guinean economy and the partial mortgage of its huge resources to international business organizations with questionable pedigrees.

With the death of Conte and the promise by his successor, Dadis Camara, to conduct multi-party elections by 2010, Guineans expected that the reign of impunity would cease. Indeed, multi-party elections were held in Guinea in 2010 but not according to terms set by Camara, who was eased out of power by a near fatal shot to the head by a presidential aide. The resulting elections managed by General Konate and Jean-Marie Dore resulted in victory for President Alpha Conde – the longtime opposition leader – amid strong protests by the Peul-dominated *Union des Forces Republicaines de la Guinea* (UFDG). Today, the high hope that Conde's government would reposition Guinea for success through carefully managed and decisive reforms has all but evaporated. Though reforms of the mining and security sectors are ongoing, a section of the Guinean society as well as international allies are beginning to express their frustration at the slow pace of the reforms and the anticipated changes. Instead of change, many people are beginning to see Conde's government as not radically different from past governments. For instance, the country continues to be bifurcated regionally and ethnically; corruption is rife; security forces still show indiscipline (as indicated by the near assassination of President Conde in 2011 and the abuse of election demonstrators); illicit activities, especially drug and human trafficking are on the upsurge; and Guinea's borders continue to be porous at a time of rising Islamism in the Sahel-Sahara region.

With these in mind, it is safe to conclude that although threats to the security and stability of Guinea is low, the potential for violence to occur will increase in Guinea if citizens continue to experience serious socio-economic hardships. If ethnic divisions continue and if this contributes to perceptions that Conde's reforms are ineffectual, the military will become more polarized and (with other civil groups) challenge the government more robustly and in ways that may spur further violence. This situation may be complicated by the forthcoming 2015 presidential contest, which is likely to evidence the co-mingling of funds from illicit activities and politics to finance instability.

Introduction

The Republic of Guinea is a small and relatively poor West African country that covers an area of 245,857 square kilometers (94,981 sq. mi) and has 300 kilometers of Atlantic coastline. Formerly it was known as French Guinea because it was colonized by the French but also to distinguish it from its Lusophone neighbor, Guinea-Bissau.¹ It is sometimes known as Guinea-Conakry after its capital city, Conakry, Guinea's largest city and economic center. Its other important city, Kindia, its third largest city and capital of the Kindia Prefecture, lies about 85 miles northeast of Conakry and serves as the military headquarters of the Guinean Armed Forces that has a combined strength of about 45,000 personnel. For much of its history, the armed forces of Guinea played the most significant role in Guinea's political development, leading it inexorably to the brink of large-scale civil conflict and state collapse.

This overwhelmingly Muslim country of approximately 10 million people is bordered in the west by Guinea-Bissau and the Atlantic Ocean, in the north by Senegal and Mali, in the east by Cote d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone, and in the southeast by Liberia. All of these countries have witnessed large-scale armed conflicts beginning with Liberia in 1990 and Mali as late as 2013. Even Senegal, its relatively more politically stable neighbor and model of democracy in the region, is the site of the longest-running, low-level insurgency in Africa. Like the conflict in Senegal's Casamance region, the conflicts in Mali and other countries in the region have been inspired by multiple factors including the desire by ethnic and sectarian elements to form separate states or to control political power and the natural resource assets of the states. Guinea's location in a region subject to immense socio-political and economic upheaval necessitates an analysis of Guinea's susceptibility to regional conflict dynamics.

This is important considering the socio-cultural and economic linkages between Guinea, its neighbors, and the entire region. For instance, apart from having one of the world's largest reserves of natural resources² including bauxite, gold, and iron ore, Guinea is also known as the "water tower of Africa" because of its huge potential for hydropower generation.³ The River Niger, River Gambia, and River Senegal – all hugely important economic and communication channels in West Africa – have their source in the Guinea Highlands⁴ or the Fouta Djallon Mountains in central Guinea, which peak at 6000 feet.⁵ Moreover, Guinea has had to contend with the large number of refugees fleeing conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea-Bissau, Cote d'Ivoire, and Senegal's Casamance, which has had adverse effects on the wellbeing of local populations in terms of health, education, food, environment, and security.⁶

Although Guinea has never experienced a "civil war,"⁷ it is subject to sporadic violent periods of civilian unrest inspired by ethno-political cleavages and corruption, which is made worse by military wrangling and ineffective governance.⁸ In 2010, however, Guinea successfully transitioned from authoritarian rule to an electoral democracy that promises and has initiated broad socio-political and economic reforms. These include a reform of the security sector that has been at the heart of the governance crisis, and the mining sector that is its economic backbone. But the question is, has the entrenchment of multi-party democracy and the election of 72-year old Alpha Conde, the once exiled opposition leader who had been sentenced to death in absentia by the authoritarian regime of Sekou Toure, neutralized persistent threats to security and stability in the country and put Guinea on the path to socio-political stability and economic recovery?

This special report is organized into three sections. Section one describes the situation in Guinea today, three years after President Alpha Conde assumed power. It examines contemporary challenges in critical sectors that might pose obstacles to peace and stability or affect the planned America-led military training in Kindia. Section two examines the socio-political and economic history of Guinea from the pre-colonial era until the 2010 election of President Conde. The section shows how the post-independence struggles shaped the nature of political contestation, governance, and socio-economic development in Guinea. The resulting authoritarianism and impunity continues to threaten the security and stability of Guinea, which is surrounded by nations that have experienced or are experiencing large-scale conflicts. Underlying the narrative in this section is the tension between the military and civilian populations, which has both inspired the worst forms of egregious government-perpetrated violence and popular antagonism towards the military. The final section comprises the conclusion of this special report.

Guinea Today

In June 2010, Alpha Conde, Guinea's longtime opposition leader, was elected president of this troubled West African country. It was the first time Guineans voted in genuine multi-party elections since Guinea blazed the independence trail among French colonies in 1958. What is unique about Conde's election is not merely the fact that it ushered in multi-party democracy or that the election was widely considered (by local and international observers) to be free and fair. Instead, it is that Conde's election was supposed to end over 50 years of authoritarian rule, which witnessed the gross abuse of human rights, spiraling corruption, the ethnic polarization of the country, and the gradual decline of the Guinean economy that produced a concomitant decline in the standard of living. From the moment of his inauguration in December 2010, President Conde, who says he "inherited a country but not a state,"⁹ faced daunting challenges, including impunity in the mining sector, which holds the promise of supplying what Guinea needs most: "law, good faith, order, security."¹⁰ The president is also contending with criticism of doing too little to reverse pervasive corruption, and the lack of unification in a country that is regionally and ethnically fractured. The president has issued a decree naming a new cabinet that does not include any member of the opposition. Although many analysts see this as a demonstration of leadership, there are many in Guinea who sees this as a further indication of the ethno-political division of the country.

Great Expectations, Meager Resources

President Conde's government has greatly improved on the dismal human rights records of past administrations. However, these freedoms are still not fully guaranteed as indicated by the September 2011 crackdown on demonstrators, which prompted Amnesty International to conclude, "President Conde is resorting to exactly the same brutal methods as his predecessors."^{11 12} Also, reinforced by patriarchal inheritance laws and traditional systems of justice that permits the victimization of women, Guinea's societal discriminations against women remain common. For instance, thousands of young girls are trafficked primarily for domestic servitude and sexual exploitation, and their employers subject them to abuses including forced labor, beatings, and rape.^{13 14} Although it is making significant efforts to come into full compliance with the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), it has not complied with minimum standards of the law.¹⁵ It is for this reason that it is included in the 2012 tier 2 Watch List for human trafficking.

The implication of this is that Conde continues to be challenged by the great expectations of Guineans who believe that with his election, this former law professor with vast international connections, will

reposition Guinea for the difficult task of nation-building and economic recovery. President Conde is uniquely primed to do this because of his experience as a persecuted opposition leader and technocrat. Though Guinea is rich in resources, it is considered one of the poorest countries in the world because it boasts very little industry, scarce electricity, few navigable roads, hardly functioning public institutions, high rates of illiteracy, and low GDP. It is in response to this paradox that President Conde has asked, “how can we be so rich and yet so poor?”¹⁶ This question drives the ongoing reform of the mining sector.

Ethno-Political Cleavages

Although, historically, ethnic groups have never been monolithic voting blocs in Guinea, ethno-political cleavages are hardening and it will take great effort to reorder the prevailing identity politics that already affect Conde’s reforms and may produce violence in the 2015 presidential contest. However, it will be difficult to unify a country that is badly divided along ethnic lines due to violent political contestation in the past. This fact underscores Conde’s second major challenge, which involves a mix of ethnicity and politics. For instance, Conde grappled with the problem of conducting a transparent legislative election in the wake of the violence in the southeast of the country between Malinkes and Kpeles, and elsewhere between Peuls and Malinkes as well as widespread protests from opposition political parties. These clashes forced the Conde government to postpone legislative elections for several years, further irking opposition politicians and critics of his government. When the elections were eventually held in September 2013, President Conde’s party, the *Rassemblement du Peuple de Guinee* (RPG), and its allies won 60 of the 114 seats by drawing much support amongst his own ethnic group,¹⁷ further confirming the ethnic bifurcation of political contestation in Guinea.

Security Sector reform

Despite the hiccups experienced in the process, the reform of Guinea’s security sector (with assistance from the U.S.) is still active. The planned training in Kindia of the Guinean military by the U.S. military for the Mali peacekeeping operations is part of the reforms. However, there remain large pockets of mistrust among the security forces, between civilian populations and the military, and between different ethnic groups. Conde’s security sector reform has made little progress, as tension remains very high between the security forces – which are accustomed to impunity and is plagued by ethnic disputes – and the population that has borne the brunt of police and army brutality.¹⁸ Although the mistrust will play out in Kindia – a microcosm of the Guinean population with all major ethnicities represented there as well as significant foreign populations, especially Sierra Leoneans – it is very unlikely that it will disrupt the planned training program or threaten American interest in the short-term.

The above underscores the challenges that Conde is facing from the military, including what to do with a military that had become too partisan, bloated, corrupt, ethnically divided, and undisciplined. To underscore this challenge, the military – which has been implicated in multiple coup attempts, mutinies, and human rights abuses including the 28 September 2009 massacre of protesters at a stadium in Conakry and the killing of at least 157 protesters in 2007 – was also implicated in the attempted assassination of President Conde in July 2011. Analysts believe that the attempted assassination is connected to Conde’s attempt to end corruption within the senior military command, his failure to implement the promised salary increase for the military, and the ethnic and generational divides within the military.¹⁹

Economic Reforms

While the government has been busy courting international investors for its mine fields, which typically requires huge capital, it is busy importing food that its farmers can grow more cheaply. For instance, in 2013, Guinea imported 30,000 tons of rice despite having more than 7 million hectares of arable land 60% of which is uncultivated. This is one of the reasons that the agricultural sector, which contributes less than 20% of GDP, under performs relative to the number of people engaged in agriculture. Thus, if Guinea is to become food self-sufficient and avoid the “resource curse” that has turned most parts of Africa into “conflict zones,” President Conde must reassess his priorities and make agriculture reform, in addition to mining reform, the centerpiece of his economic policy.

This point underscores the economic challenge that Conde must deal with, which is how to improve the living standard of the population that is among the poorest in the world. For instance, Guinea ranked 156 out of 169 countries assessed on the 2010 Human Development Index of the United Nation Development Program (UNDP).²⁰ Though its land is agriculturally fertile, Guinea continues to be susceptible to periodic food insecurity and there has been no noticeable improvement in chronic malnutrition, which in 2009 stood at 36.2% of the population and afflicts at least 8.3% of Guinean children.²¹ The poor socio-economic conditions of Guineans have fueled past anti-government protests including the 2007 protests that claimed many civilian lives²² and may spark new anti-government actions against the Conde government in principal cities like Conakry and Kindia. Things are looking up, though, with the June 2012 launching of operations at Guinea’s first iron mine, which was built as a joint venture between African Bellzone and the China International Fund (CIF). Over \$300 million USD was expended on the project, which is expected to produce 4 million metric tons of iron a year²³ and significantly boost the local economy.

President Conde is convinced that the dismal socio-economic conditions of the people are tied to official corruption, which permeates all sectors of the Guinean economy including the mining sector that accounts for about 90% of Guinea’s foreign exchange earnings. Local officials have colluded with predatory international business organizations like *Beny Steinmetz Group Resources* (BSGR) that unfairly benefit from Guinea’s huge resource assets at the expense of local populations. For instance, in highly questionable circumstances, BSGR obtained exploration permits for half of the deposit in Guinea’s Simandou Mountain – which potentially could earn Guinea more than \$140 billion over the next 25 years – for nothing, but sold 51% of its stake for \$2.5 billion to Vale – a Brazilian mining company – barely a year later.

At the time of his election as president (and even now), the Guinean government had a “Potemkin quality” in which “a profusion of bureaucrats showed up for work at crumbling administrative buildings, but there was little genuine institutional capacity”²⁴ to deal with Guinea’s problems, including pervasive corruption where “almost everybody who had any expertise was compromised.”²⁵ To fix some of these problems, Conde relied on his vast international contacts, which he used to enlist the support of international organizations like *Revenue Watch*, which helped Conde to void mining contracts where past irregularities were uncovered. President Conde also introduced a new mining code that increases the state’s stake in mining profits, revokes inappropriate mining rights, improves the vetting process for companies applying for mining permits, and provides tax breaks and other incentives to companies duly vetted and registered. However, the entire mining reform process, just like the 2011 transfer of Conakry’s port that led to litigation, has been handled clumsily.²⁶ Also, Conde’s promise to end corruption has not

gained much traction due to institutional weakness, which enables even members of his government to engage in corruption. For instance, cocaine trafficking has increased in Guinea due mainly to collaboration between drug traffickers and senior civilian, military, and police officials.²⁷

More importantly, President Conde has not showed enough effort to diversify the Guinean economy from dependence on mineral export and food import to developing the agricultural sector, which considering Guinea's fertile soil, ought to be the main stay of the Guinean economy. For instance, at least 4 million people are engaged in subsistence farming compared to the about 40,000 people engaged directly and indirectly in the extractive industry²⁸ and the existence of the farmers is precarious due mainly to governmental neglect.

Regional Conflict Context

The vulnerability of Guinea to Islamist threats is accentuated by the porosity of its border with Mali, which has created conditions favorable to the cross-border traversing of radical Islamists, their ideas, and weapons. Its proximity to Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, has created conditions favorable to the cross-border traversing of organized criminals including drug traffickers and remnants of insurgent cells that are eager to offer their services as paid mercenaries and are experienced at causing trouble in resource-rich regions. Guinea is increasingly indicating structural, institutional and geopolitical vulnerabilities that may make it the target of radical Islamists that are aggrieved by Guinea's participation in the peacekeeping operations in Mali.

The above points to challenges that Guinea faces from the regional conflict context, specifically the spillover of conflicts and tensions from neighboring states such as Sierra Leone, which has a very large refugee community in Kindia. To some extent, Guinea is trapped within an "arc of instability"²⁹ that is stretching across Africa's Sahara and Sahel regions. Although its population is predominantly Muslim, religious tension between Muslims and Christians or sectarian tensions are rare in Senegal. However, its proximity to countries that have been racked by ethnic, political, economic, and religious conflicts, particularly Mali that has witnessed intense fighting between jihadists and French-led liberation forces, is cause for concern.

Organized Crime

One possible reason there is lack of international collaboration to enable Guinean authorities fight the scourge of drug trafficking, which has become pervasive, is that Colonel Moussa Tiegboro Camara – the head of Guinea's anti-narcotics body – was implicated in the 28 September 2009 massacre of anti-regime protesters, making it difficult for Western nations to cooperate with him.³⁰ Despite this, there is a need for international collaboration to fight this illicit trade. Otherwise, the combination of powerful backers (in and outside of Conde's government) and the huge drug revenue will create incentives for powerful groups (including jihadist forces fleeing neighboring Mali and drug traffickers fleeing neighboring Guinea-Bissau) to forcefully challenge the state and plunge Guinea into deeper crisis.

To underscore the challenge Conde faces from organized crime groups that have found Guinea to be a safe place to conduct business, drug trafficking syndicates have proliferated in Guinea since this democratic dispensation. Analysts believe that the surge in cocaine trafficking, for instance, has been helped by civilian rule as "locals and Latin Americans" long suspected of drug trafficking are operating freely with "high-level protection from within Conde's administration".³¹ These traffickers receive

support from top civilian, military, and police officials. Analysts believe that the growth of drug trafficking in Guinea was aided by the one-sided focus of the state on completing the transition to civil rule and securing the peace as well as the focus of international counter-narcotics agents on the neighboring state of Guinea-Bissau³² where “an April U.S. sting operation targeted Guinea-Bissau’s military chief, prompting traffickers to seek sanctuary in Conakry.”³³ This has enabled drug traffickers to freely operate in Guinea, which has a much larger population for criminals to blend into (as well as market) than Guinea-Bissau. They bring in cocaine from Latin America that ends up in Europe and use some of the drug money to corrode Conde’s efforts to improve governance. Proceeds of the drug trade are laundered through various channels, including “real estate, fishing companies and local mining operations.”³⁴ In cognizance of the huge threat posed by organized crime groups, Conde’s government has begun to clampdown on drug traffickers. For instance, the government arrested about 20 Nigerians and started checking Latin American workers in early February 2014 in a renewed effort to crackdown on the growing wave of drug trafficking.³⁵

Social, Political, and Economic History of Guinea

Guinea, Pre-Independence

In 1958 when General Charles de Gaulle assumed almost absolute powers in France, he announced (as part of the Constitution of the French Fifth Republic) the creation of the French Community, which was a first step in granting independence to French colonies. Led by Ahmed Sekou Toure, Guineans rejected de Gaulle’s plan and demanded immediate independence. The territory now known as the Republic of Guinea had been part of several succeeding empires in West Africa, historically known as the Empires of the Western Sudan. These flourished between the 10th and 15th centuries. Strong leadership, kinship ties, and the trade routes that each sought to control unified the empires.³⁶ Guineans today – like populations in the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Cote d’Ivoire, and Mali – trace their origins to the Mali Empire. In pre-colonial times, the Mali Empire was called *Manding*, which explains why the most dominant of Guinea’s 25 ethnic groups are called *Mandinka*, *Mandingo* or *Malinke*, meaning people from *Manding*.³⁷ In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, France negotiated the current boundaries of Guinea with the British (who controlled Sierra Leone) and the Portuguese (who controlled territories now known as Guinea-Bissau and Liberia).

From 1904 until 1958, Guinea was part of French West Africa, which was administered from Dakar in Senegal. After World War II in which Guinea contributed troops to the French military, there was a rapid upsurge of nationalism among Africans. African nationalists parading an assortment of extremist political ideologies (both rightists and leftist) continued to pressure France – which had been economically devastated by both the depression and the war – for independence, making orderly French administration impossible.

Guinea, 1958-1984

On 2 October 1958, Guinea became one of the first African states to gain independence. However, unlike other African states during the period, Guinea achieved independence in very dramatic circumstances that ultimately shaped the nature of political contestation and state economic policy from independence until 2010 when Guinea successfully held multi-party elections for the first time. After the French Fourth Republic collapsed in 1958 due to political instability and tensions with its colonies, particularly Indochina and Algeria, a new republic – the fifth – began with a new constitution in 1958 that gave all

French colonies the choice of autonomy within the French Community or full independence. While other French colonies chose the former, Guinea under the leadership of the charismatic trade unionist Ahmed Sekou Toure, opted for full independence after a referendum in which 95% of Guineans wanted out of French control. Toure was a Mandinka whose *Democratic Party of Guinea* (PDG) won 56 of 60 seats in the 1957 territorial elections that made him Vice-President of the Government Council of French Guinea under Governor Jean Ramadier. While the independence issue was raging, Toure insisted on Guineans' right to full independence, arguing, "we prefer poverty in liberty to riches in slavery."³⁸ On 2 October 1958, Sekou Toure became the first President of the new sovereign Republic of Guinea.

The decision of the Guinean people to opt for full independence did not resonate well with the French government, which responded by imposing tough economic and social sanctions on Guinea. For instance, the de Gaulle-led French government withdrew the French administration too quickly. This denied the young country the benefit of a phased, seamless withdrawal that would have minimized post-independence pressures on Guinea and its people. In pulling out, France took much of Guinea's infrastructure, large amounts of capital, and vital human assets, leaving President Toure to make difficult choices about how to proceed in the midst of meager resources and great expectations from the Guinean people. To overcome this challenge, Toure quickly aligned Guinea with the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and adopted socialist policies,³⁹ which made Guinea a "heated proxy battleground for the Cold War."⁴⁰ The alliance with the USSR failed to address many of the concerns and needs of the Toure government and the Guinean people. When the alliance failed, Toure adopted the Chinese model of socialism but continued to receive aid and investment from the West including the U.S. After the election of Valery Giscard d'Estaing as president of France in 1974, relations with France improved and both countries exchanged diplomatic visits and carried on trade with each other. The normalization of relations with France, notwithstanding the French reaction to Guinea's proclamation of independence, created a political and economic trajectory that would haunt Guinea for much of its history.

This forced Sekou Toure to seek alternative economic opportunities in the Eastern Bloc, where socialism was not simply an economic system but more a political and ideological one that permitted the evisceration of citizen rights and the promulgation of draconian measures that brutally suppressed dissent or challenges to the government in power. All of these occurred in the guise of protecting the "revolution," preventing the neo-colonization of Guinea by France and Western powers, and creating the template for home-grown economic and social development that would guarantee socio-economic and political liberation for the Guinean people. As his many volumes and PDG booklets reveal, Toure's political philosophy was an eclectic mix of Marxism-Leninism (especially inspired by Lenin's statecraft), Maoism (especially the conception of populist ideology and one party-rule), African Socialism (inspired by Afro-socialists such as Julius Nyerere, Leopold Senghor, Aime Ceaser, etc.) Pan-Africanism (inspired by Kwame Nkrumah, Nonalignment (inspired by Tito of Yugoslavia, Sukarno of Indonesia, Nasser of Egypt, and Nkrumah of Ghana)⁴¹ and by the history of local resistance in Guinea.⁴² These factors as well as France's attempt to undermine his regime by isolating and defeating it, the prevailing fear (among African nationalists) of neocolonialism,⁴³ inadequate aid from USSR and the Socialist Bloc, and the gradual political annihilation of his ideological allies in the region⁴⁴ shaped the president that Toure became. In many ways this, contradicted the principles of equality and liberty that he had previously espoused. For example, during his resistance to French colonial rule, Sekou Toure asked Guineans to "choose between servitude and a free sky, your chain and the horizon."⁴⁵ Yet, in his over two decades of

rule, he abandoned the grassroots that brought him to power, limited freedom, abused human rights, severely punished dissent, presided over the decline of the Guinean economy that saw an explosion of poverty, forced thousands of Guineans into involuntary exile in neighboring countries, and was hostile to press freedom, human rights, and participatory democracy; becoming the epitome of what he had railed against in his formative political years.

President Toure created a one-party dictatorship modeled on Marxism-Leninism and Maoism, asserting that the PDG – the official state party that was organized into thousands of local committees – expressed the will of the people. The pyramidal one-party political system that he established had a PDG cell in every village, city area, military barrack, and school, and every Guinean was a PDG member from birth to death. During his more than two decades rule, it was a treasonable offence to oppose the PDG, which was used to return Toure to power unopposed in the presidential elections of 1968, 1974, and 1982. Both real and imagined political opponents and critics of the Toure government were punished severely. For instance, in Conakry's infamous Camp Boiro prison (originally called Camp Camyenne and constructed with assistance from the Czechoslovak government), as many as 50,000 people – accused of sundry crimes including counter-revolutionary activities, ascribing to middle-class values, and being different, etc. – were either assassinated or “disappeared.”^{46 47 48} Similarly, Toure ethnicized Guinean politics, which allowed him to purge ethnic groups such as the Peul that he disliked or feared. In October 1971, for instance, thousands of Peul people were slaughtered by the Toure regime. The punitive measures taken against the Peul and critics of his government was only matched by the spectacular decline (or failure) of the Guinean economy. Buoyed by socialism, Toure created a bloated bureaucracy, which meant that the bulk of export revenue (from bauxite) would go into the payment of salaries leaving very little for the execution of capital projects or the rehabilitation of decaying infrastructure. Further, his economic policies constricted the legitimate economy allowing the illegitimate economy – based on corruption, smuggling, and trafficking – to thrive. In the end, President Toure's reign was emblematic of the governance tragedies of African states during the period, which is characterized by “dictatorial excess, economic mismanagement and corruption, and growing overtones of ethnic and social division.”⁴⁹

Guinea, 1984-2008

On 24 March 1984, President Sekou Toure died at the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio while undergoing cardiac treatment. His longtime Prime Minister, Louis Lansana Beavogul, replaced him as interim President on 26 March 1984 but was toppled by a group of soldiers led by Colonel Lansana Conte, Assistant Chief of Staff of the Guinean Army, on 3 April 1984. The soldiers who say they were appalled by the “bloody and ruthless dictatorship”⁵⁰ of the Toure government of which Interim President Beavogul was a permanent fixture, established the *Comite Militaire de Redressement Nationale* or Military Committee for National Recovery (CMRN) as the highest decision making organ of the new regime and named Colonel Conte as President and Colonel Diarra Traore as Prime Minister. However, disagreement between Conte and Traore led to the demotion of Traore. A subsequent coup attempt by Traore in 1985 was easily foiled by Conte. However, the crackdown on the coup plotters including the execution of Traore assumed ethnic dimension as Traore and most of those killed were of the majority Malinke ethnic group while Conte was of the minority Sousou.

The new regime started on a promising note by freeing many of the political prisoners at Camp Boiro (many of the leaders of the Toure regime were imprisoned and later executed) and adopting liberal economic policies that failed to take Guinea out of economic doldrums, though they succeeded in halting

its further decline. During this initial period, the West including France showed interest in providing development aid to Guinea and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) granted the government a line of credit to rebuild the Guinean Economy. This renewed interest in Guinea and the collapse of Communism encouraged the new junta to cut the bloated bureaucracy, privatize government-owned enterprises,⁵¹ and introduce (superficially) multi-partisan politics in Guinea, effectively dismantling Toure's socialist economic structure.

Although the junta turned away from socialism and recorded modest economic gains, its human rights record was as abysmal as Toure's. For example, it tried over 200 officials of the Toure government in a non-adversarial process that all but guaranteed their conviction. Many of these people (the only group outside the military that could mount an effective opposition to Conte's regime), were sentenced to death. Many of the convictions were in absentia, meaning that under Conte, a large number of Guinean politicians languished in exile. Under these circumstances, it was easy for Conte and his Party of Unity and Progress (PUP) to win the Presidential election of December 1993 that many opposition politicians called an "electoral masquerade."⁵² The opposition as characterized the presidential elections of 1998 and 2003 as deeply flawed. Prior to the 2003 election, Conte organized a referendum to amend the constitution to allow him to run for a third presidential term. While the official results indicated that 87% of registered voters participated in the referendum, opposition politicians claimed that only about 20% of registered voters actually participated. This formed the basis upon which all major political parties (and their candidates) boycotted the elections, which a very sick Conte (who was suffering from diabetes) won with 95% of the votes.

Like Toure, Conte also ethnicized politics. For instance, in the 1998 presidential election, Conte, a Sousou, ran against politicians from different ethnic groups including Ibrahim Ba (a Peul) and Alpha Conde (a Malinke) who with Jean-Marie Dore (who would become the transition Prime Minister in the 2010 transition) formed the Coordination of Democratic Opposition (CODEM) to wrest power from Conte. After the elections, Conte had Conde arrested (and later convicted) for sedition, sparking deadly riots in Malinke communities, which led to the further arrest and conviction of 14 leading Malinke opposition politicians. Eventually, local and international pressure forced President Conte to grant Conde a presidential pardon in May 2001.

Apart from politicians and civil society groups, the main opposition to Conte's regime came from the military. In 1996, military mutiny involving rebelling army units that were demanding higher pay almost led to the collapse of the Conte government. The soldiers sacked the presidential palace, looted shops, and dispatched Conte to an army base. In order to resolve the disagreement that killed over 50 people and return to power, Conte had to sign a five-point accord with the mutineers. Subsequent coup plots and threats as well as paranoia, forced Conte to purge the military targeting soldiers outside of his minority Sousou ethnic group. In one such trial in 1998, Conte handed down 20-year sentences to convicted soldiers based mostly on confessions obtained through torture. In a major purge in March 1999, the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of Guinea, Colonel Oumar Soumah and 30 other soldiers of Malinke ethnicity were fired for their association with the 1996 mutineers. The prevailing internal ethnic tension within and outside of the military, "spread into neighboring Sierra Leone, where RUF (Revolutionary United Front) fighters trained by some 1996 mutineers launched deadly border raids on several northern Guinean towns."⁵³ Finally, in a November 2005 purge, Conte dismissed over 1,800 army officers over

the age of 60, most of whom were ethnic Peul. Thus, he systematically ensured that the Guinean armed forces were firmly under the control of Sousou officers.

The struggle to retain power using clandestine means took Conte's focus away from the economy, which was the arena where Guineans were suffering most. Popular dissatisfaction with Guinea's dwindling economic climate engendered by spiraling inflation, massive official corruption, decaying infrastructure, and bad governance prompted two massive strikes in 2006 (organized by a conglomerate of civil society groups including the Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea, Union for Progress in Guinea, the Guinean Social Movement, the New Democratic Forces, and student and religious groups), and a third nationwide strike in early 2007 in which protesters – concerned about the dwindling health of President Conte – called on the National Assembly to declare the presidency vacant. Attempts by the government to suppress the third strike, which occurred in two phases and comprised members of opposition political parties, former exiled politicians, human rights and democracy activists, etc. led to the killing of 137 protesters and injury to 1,700.⁵⁴ However, the strikes forced a physically weakened but reluctant President Conte to cede some powers to a consensus Prime Minister, Lansana Kouyate, who was recommended by the striking unions and opposition political parties. President Conte replaced Kouyate with Ahmed Tidiane Souare in 2008 with very little resistance from the civil society groups, who had become disenchanted by Kouyate's inability to effect positive change. On 22 December 2008, President Conte died from the combined effects of diabetes and heart disease – conditions that he had battled for several years with the same tenacity that he had battled opposition to his over two decades rule of impunity.

Guinea, 2008-2010

Conte's death, which repeated the 1984 scenario in Guinea, produced another military coup. Captain Moussa Dadis Camara headed the new Junta known as the *National Council for Democracy and Development* (CNDD) and his junta was notable for several reasons. First, he promised to hold elections within two years, giving Guineans hopes that the authoritarianism and arbitrariness that had characterized government since 1958 would soon end. Because of this, the junta initially received massive support from the populace. Second, civil society perceived that Camara would renege on his earlier promise triggering a wave of civil discontent and mass protests. At one such protest at a Conakry stadium on 28 September 2009, soldiers loyal to Camara opened fire on unarmed civilians, killing 157 people. Third, in the wake of this unprovoked attack, the United States, the African Union, and the European Union instituted crippling sanctions of the regime and the state. The United Nations established a tribunal to investigate the incident, which the International Criminal Court later established as a crime against humanity. Fourth, in December 2009, Camara was shot in the head by a former aide and was flown initially to Morocco for treatment and then to Burkina Faso for convalescence. In Camara's absence, his deputy, General Sekouba Konate assumed authority and appointed Jean-Marie Dore, a pro-democracy activist and prominent opposition leader, as the interim Prime Minister in a power-sharing government that would facilitate Guinea's return to civilian rule. Finally, all of these steps culminated in the 2010 presidential elections in which the incumbents did not run and no political party or candidate received any clear backing from the state.

The 2010 presidential election was a contest between Cellou Dallein Diallo, an ethnic Peul and leader of the UFDG, and Alpha Conde, an ethnic Malinke and leader of the RPG. In the first ballot, Diallo received 44% of the votes (not enough to avoid a run-off) while Conde received a paltry 18% with the

remaining votes divided among many other candidates. But in the second ballot, Conde gained support from the other candidates and produced an unlikely victory with 52.5% of the votes compared to Diallo's 47.5%. The voting showed a regional/ethnic divide with the eastern region (dominated by Malinkes) voting for Conde and the central region (dominated by Peuls) voting for Diallo. The votes from the western coastal regions, including Conakry were evenly split. This ethno-regional twist produced unrest between security forces and Diallo supporters, between Peuls and Malinke soldiers, and between Malinkes and Kpeles.

Conclusion

The Republic of Guinea, since its independence in 1958, has followed a path that most West African countries have followed: hopes of a new dawn at independence followed by single-party authoritarian rule and political and economic naiveté that quickly crashes those dreams; increasing governmental arbitrariness that produces hostility amongst stakeholders in government leading to more arbitrariness and impunity; paranoia among regime leaders that leads to mass military purges, the stifling of political opposition, and the ethnicisation of political contestation; socio-economic stagnation produced by corruption and lack of visionary leadership; a succession of long-term, strong-man rulers; and armed conflicts and wide-scale civilian suffering.

Despite this historical context, Guinea has been a relatively peaceful and stable country. Unlike its neighbors in the region, it has never experienced a civil war, a fact that may be due more to the brutality of its long-term rulers than to any other factor. However, with the new political dispensation, things are changing in Guinea. At the same time that there is renewed hope that Guinea is on the cusp of economic recovery and political stability, there is apprehension that the liberalization of the political space is producing unintended consequences such as the proliferation of drug trafficking networks in Guinea. The huge revenue from illicit drugs have started to corrode governance and the involvement of extremists and Islamists fleeing conflict in Mali, of drug dealers fleeing detection in Guinea-Bissau, and former soldiers of fortune from Sierra Leone seeking new economic opportunities, may complicate the situation in Guinea and reverse all of the tentative gains made from Conde's widely publicized reforms.

At the moment, Conde still enjoys wide local popularity, especially among Malinkes and political allies. International support for his government has also been overwhelming. However, the recent reconstitution of his cabinet without representation from the political opposition as well as increasing frustration from international partners at the slow pace of the reforms, especially in the area of corruption, may significantly affect his popularity within and outside of Guinea.

Despite all these, there is little potential that the fragile peace in Guinea under Conde will be disrupted in any significant form. The greatest threat, which at this time is very low, to stability is a polarized military that has historically been undisciplined. As ethnic tensions increase and the fight against corruption toughen, the push back from a polarized military that is steeped in corruption will increase. A repeat of the assassination attempt of 2011 may have very adverse consequences (similar to the situation that precipitated the Rwanda crisis) on this country that has become more ethnically divided since 2010. The threat will increase significantly if drug lords and Islamists join the fray with their illicit funds and incendiary rhetoric.

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- ¹ Darboe, A. 2010. "Movements and Campaigns: Guinea 1958-present." *Nonviolent Conflict* [last accessed on 3 February 2014].
- ² The struggle to appropriate natural resources has often fueled armed conflicts not just within particular African states but between states or forces operating across states. See Collier etc.
- ³ PPIAF 2012. "PPIAF Assistance to Guinea." *Public Private Infrastructure Advisory Facility* [last accessed on 21 January 2014]. Available from: http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2013/04/02/000333037_20130402155341/Rendered/PDF/756240PPIAF0As00Box374359B00PUBLIC0.pdf.
- ⁴ FAO 1997. "Irrigation Potential in Africa: A Basin Approach." *Food and Agricultural Organization* [last accessed on 22 January 2014]. Available from: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/W4347E/w4347e00.htm#Contents>.
- ⁵ See Dickovick, J.L. 2013. *Africa*. Lanham, MD: Stryker-Post Publications.
- ⁶ IOM 2004. "Development of Micro-Enterprises for Guinean Women." *International Organization of Migration* [last accessed on 5 February 2014]. Available from: <https://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/site/myjahiasite/shared/shared/mainsite/projects/documents/mida.pdf>.
- ⁷ See Keefe, P.R. 2013. "How an Israeli billionaire wrested control of one of Africa's biggest prizes." *The New Yorker* [last accessed on 31 January 2014]. Available from: http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2013/07/08/130708fa_keefe?currentPage=all.
- ⁸ See HRW 2009. "Bloody Monday: The September 28 Massacre and Rapes by security Forces in Guinea." *Human Rights Watch* [last accessed on 31 January 2014]. Available from: http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/guinea1209web_0.pdf.
- ⁹ Ibid
- ¹⁰ See Keefe, P.R. 2013. "How an Israeli billionaire wrested control of one of Africa's biggest prizes."
- ¹¹ Ibid
- ¹² See Freedom House 2012. "Guinea." *Freedom House* [last accessed on 8 January 2014]. Available from: www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2012/guinea#.UvZINnK9X10.
- ¹³ CIA World Factbook 2013.
- ¹⁴ Freedom House 2012. "Guinea."
- ¹⁵ In addition to the trafficking of girls, Guinea is a source, transit, and destination country for men and children trafficked for the purpose of forced labor. Boys are trafficked for forced agricultural labor, and as forced beggars, street vendors, shoe shiners, and laborers in gold and diamond mines.
- ¹⁶ Ibid
- ¹⁷ See Posthumus, B. 2013. "Guinea election results reveal entrenched ethnic vote, or do they?" *Think Africa Press* [last accessed on 8 January 2014]. Available from: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201310241255.html>.
- ¹⁸ ICG 2013. "Guinea: A way out of the election quagmire." *International Crisis Group* [last accessed on 9 January 2014]. Available from: <http://www.osiwa.org/en/portal/newsroom/671/Creating-Spaces-for-Discussion-Crisis-Group's-Recent-Guinea--Mali-Reports.htm?w=cn&t=5>.
- ¹⁹ Arieff, A. and Cook, N. 2009. "Guinea's 2008 Military Coup and Relations with the United States."
- ²⁰ See UNDP, Human Development Report 2010, available from: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2010/chapters/en/>.

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- ²¹ See Arieff, A. and Cook, N. 2009. "Guinea's 2008 Military Coup and Relations with the United States."
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Dickovick, J.L. 2013. *Africa*.
- ²⁴ Keefe, P.R. 2013. "How an Israeli billionaire wrested control of one of Africa's biggest prizes."
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Posthumus, B. 2013. "Guinea election results reveal entrenched ethnic vote, or do they?"
- ²⁷ Lewis, D. 2014. "Insight: Surge in cocaine trade undermines Conde's bid to revive Guinea." *Reuters* [last accessed on 9 January 2014]. Available from: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/01/31/us-guinea-drugs-insight-idUSBREA0U0EG20140131>.
- ²⁸ Posthumus, B. 2014. "Mangos not mining are the future of Guinea." *Chatam House* [last accessed on 12 January 2014]. Available from: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201402101142.html?viewall=1>.
- ²⁹ See UN Security Council 2013. "Arc of Instability Across Africa, if left unchecked, could turn continent into a launch pad for larger-scale terrorist attacks, Security Council told."
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Lewis, D. 2014. "Insight: Surge in cocaine trade undermines Conde's bid to revive Guinea."
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ Ibid.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ Samb, S. 2014. "Guinea arrests, checks foreigners in drugs clampdown." *Reuters* [last accessed on 13 February 2014]. Available from: http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/02/12/us-guinea-arrests-idUSBREA1B1NH20140212?utm_source=Africa+Center+for+Strategic+Studies+-+Media+Review+for+February+13+2014&utm_campaign=2%2F13%2F2014&utm_medium=email.
- ³⁶ See Department of AAOA. "The Empires of the Western Sudan: Ghana Empire." In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000-. Available from: http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/ghan/hd_ghan.htm (October 2000).
- ³⁷ Darboe, A. 2010. "Movements and Campaigns: Guinea 1958-present."
- ³⁸ Camara, M. 2013. "Sekou Toure: Guinea's Hardline Hero or Visionary Villain?" *Think Africa Press* [last accessed on 1 February 2014]. Available from: <http://www.thinkafricapress.com/guinea/sekou-toure-hardline-hero-visionary-villain>.
- ³⁹ See Schmidt, E. 2007. "Cold War in Guinea: The Rassemblement Democratique Africain and the struggle over Communism, 1950-1958." *The Journal of African History* 48, pp. 95-121. Doi: 10.1017/s0021853707002551.
- ⁴⁰ Darboe, A. 2010. "Movements and Campaigns: Guinea 1958-present."
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² Ibid.
- ⁴³ A term that meant both the cultural hegemony of the West and the domination of African economies by Western powers.
- ⁴⁴ Including Congo's Patrice Lumumba (1961), Algeria's Ahmed Ben Bella (1965), Ghana's Nelson Nkrumah (1966), and Mali's Modibo Keita (1968)⁴⁴ and the failed Portuguese-led coup attempt (1970).

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Dickovick, J.L. 2013. *Africa*.

⁴⁷ See “Guinea: A Memorial for the Camp Boiro Victims.” Available from:
https://www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=171868490505.

⁴⁸ See BBC 2002. “Mass graves’ found in Guinea.” *BBC News* [last accessed on 4 February 2014]. Available from:
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/2349639.stm>.

⁴⁹ Dickovick, J.L. 2013. *Africa*.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.