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Why Peace Fails in Guinea Bissau? A Political Economy Analysis of the ECOWAS-brokered Conakry Accord



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Imprint

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Layout : Green Eyez Design SARL,
www.greeneyzdesign.com

ISBN : 978-2-490093-01-4

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication is the result of rigorous scientific work set up by the Peace and Security Centre of Competence in Sub-Saharan Africa of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) to reflect on the economic and political situation in Guinea Bissau. The aim is to contribute to the proposal of new approaches and responses to collective security. We would like to extend our warmest thanks to all the experts who actively participated in this collegial work with their multidisciplinary and multisectoral contributions. The FES PSCC expresses its deep gratitude to Professor Carlos CARDOSO, Researcher and Director of the Amílcar Cabral Research Centre (CESAC) in Bissau and to Associate Professor Davis AWORAWO, expert in Strategic Studies, International Relations, Political History and Development for their generosity in sharing their knowledge and experience in order to complete this study. A special and sincere thank goes to Dr. Habibu Yaya BAPPAH who has duly drafted this publication in accordance with the request of the FES PSCC.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The study examines the current political crisis in Guinea-Bissau and seeks to explain it from a political economy perspective. It examines the Conakry Agreement negotiated by ECOWAS and proposes recommendations to end the crisis and promote stability in the country. Guinea Bissau is a post-conflict state with fragile institutions and scarce financial resources. In the last two years, the country has been without a stable government, budget and government. This is due to a political impasse that is mainly centered around political differences and lack of trust between the President of the Republic, José Mário Vaz and his former prime minister and leader of their party, the PAIGC, Mr. Domingos Simões Pereira. Despite the intervention of ECOWAS, which negotiated the Conakry Accord to end the impasse, disagreements persisted between the elites on its implementation. The study posits that the political struggle is not only a manifestation of a deep struggle of elites within the PAIGC, but an incomplete transition from state-controlled economy to a liberal democracy with market economy.

In terms of methodology, the study collected data from anonymous interviews with former United Nations (UN) officials and of ECOWAS Mission in Guinea Bissau (ECOMIB) force commanders, ECOWAS Commission officials serving in Guinea-Bissau; ECOWAS communiqués, reports of the UN Secretary-General on Guinea-Bissau and also media reports about the situation in the country, academic research works in books and journals. The method of data analysis used include triangulation, content analysis and political economy analysis.

The study found that the current political crisis in Guinea-Bissau is a manifestation of

the incomplete transition from a single-party socialist state to a liberal, democratic state with a market-oriented economy, in which the elites became both businessmen and public office holders. The elites' competition for access to resources translates into the struggle for state control. In the process ethnic-religious sentiment is increasingly used as a tool for political struggle and gaps in the country's semi-presidential system are exploited to make the state dysfunctional.

Although Guinea Bissau is mostly referred to as one of the poorest countries in the world, it has rich natural resources and good economic performance, thanks to support of international financial and development institutions. This has attracted the interest of many regional and international actors, who promised financial assistance amounting to about 1.6 billion US dollars to finance the country's Terra Ranka (fresh start) programme. Consequently, the elite political disputes are fueled by the struggle for the control of state power in order to secure access to the rich resources of the country and the huge financial assistance by the international partners.

The study identifies opportunities and challenges in the current context of the crisis which could be explored by stakeholders to end the political impasse and bring political stability to the country. These include the non-involvement of the military in the current political crisis thanks to the presence ECOMIB forces, sanctions and international pressure on top ranking military officers who were accused of involvement in drug trafficking, defense and security sector reform (DSSR), sustained international attention and pressure on the politicians to accelerate dialogue and resolution of the political stalemate in accordance with the Conakry Accord, the planned withdrawal of

ECOMIB by end of 2017, and the upcoming legislative elections in 2018, which could alter the balance of control in the parliament and give one party to the crisis a majority to be able to rule.

Finally, the study recommends that ECOWAS should reconsider and delay its planned withdrawal of ECOMIB forces until at least the parliamentary elections in 2018; the country's economic and financial reforms supported by international financial and development institutions should continue; the process of constitutional reform must be pursued by the government; political reform processes must be initiated by all stakeholders in the country; Bissau Guineans should work to make natural and agricultural resources benefit the population and contribute to Africa's economic and food security.

INTRODUCTION

This current political crisis in Guinea Bissau has left the country without a stable government, budget and economic programme for almost two years. The study examines the crisis and seeks to explain it from a political economy perspective. It also examines the Conakry Agreement negotiated by ECOWAS and proposes recommendations to end the crisis and promote stability in the country. Guinea Bissau is a post-conflict state with fragile institutions and scarce financial resources. The implementation of the Accord is analysed against the background of structural and dynamic factors that have sustained instability in the country over the years.

In terms of methodology, the study used data collected from anonymous interviews with former United Nations (UN) officials and ECOMIB deputy force commandants, officials of ECOWAS Commission that served in Guinea Bissau. These are recorded as field notes. The study also utilised reports of the UN Secretary General on Guinea Bissau, ECOWAS

Guinea Bissau

Capital: Bissau

Population: 1.9 Million

Area: 36,125 km²

Local Currency: CFA Franc

GNP: US \$ 1.3 billion

GNI per capita: US \$ 590

Inflation rate: 3.00%

GDP growth rate: 5.0%

Human Development

Index (rank / 188): 178

Human development

index (scale 0 to 1): 0.424

Source: African Development Bank (2017)

Communique, media reports on the situation in the country, as well as academic research in books and journals. The method of analysis of the data employed include triangulation, content analysis and political economy analysis.

THE POLITICAL CRISIS IN GUINEA BISSAU

Guinea Bissau is a post conflict state with fragile institutions and scarce financial resources. It is one of the world's poorest countries, but among the richest in terms of natural resource potentials and agriculture. Due to its prolonged period of political instability, the country's political and governance institutions are undeveloped from what the post-colonial revolutionary elites hoped to build. Since her independence from Portugal in 1974, after about 11 years of armed struggle, the country experienced military coups, mutinies, assassinations, and a civil war. In 2014, after a decade marked by political crises, civilian rule returned to the country with the election of José Mário Vaz as President and Domingos Simões Pereira as prime minister under the banner of the main political party in the country, the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC). The West African regional body, ECOWAS, played a major role in the transition process that led to the elections, supporting the transition government and the electoral commission with security and funds. There was hope for the future stability of the country, which never had an elected government that served a full mandate. However, that was not to be. In the past one and a half years, the country has been engulfed by bitter political rivalries among the political elites, particularly between President Vaz and his former prime minister and leader of their political party, the PAIGC, Domingos Pereira. President Vaz dissolved the government of Pereira, which was in place for almost a year. Since the dissolution of the government, the country has not been able to have a stable replacement. Successive appointments of four different prime ministers ended in controversies: Baciro Dja was appointed but had to resign after

the Supreme Court declared his appointment unconstitutional; Carlos Correia and his cabinet were dismissed by the President after their programme and budget was rejected by the Parliament with active collusion of 15 PAIGC deputies, who became known as dissidents; Baciro Dja was re-appointed by the President but rejected again by the political parties in the Parliament. ECOWAS intervened and brokered the Conakry Accord, which provides ways of resolving the political and institutional crisis including having a consensus prime minister that has the confidence of the President. On the basis of that, President Vaz unilaterally appointed Umaro Sissoko Embalo, who was also rejected by the PAIGC. This contention over the formation of a government has prevented the passage of vital economic programmes by the Parliament, which are necessary to revive the socio-economic condition of the country and set it on the path of post-conflict recovery and development. Without an approved budget, the government now runs on patronage and illegal allocation of funds by loyal official and public office holders appointed by the President.

Since 1998, ECOWAS has been a major stakeholder in the resolution of crises in the country. Its special mission in Bissau and peace-keeping force, the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea Bissau (ECOMIB), are playing a crucial role in the security and stability of the country. In its effort to address the current crisis, the 49th Summit of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government decided to send a presidential mediation mission to Bissau on 10 September 2016. The mission was led by President Alpha Condé of Guinea, as the ECOWAS designated mediator, and accompanied by President Ernest Bai Koromah of Sierra Leone. The mission was mandated to establish an inclusive dialogue process in order to end the crisis. In carrying

out this mandate, the mission reviewed the report of an earlier ECOWAS ministerial mission to Bissau and held wide consultations with different stakeholders including President Vaz, the Speaker of the People's National Assembly, the Prime Minister, the leadership of the two leading political parties in the Parliament, the PAIGC and the Party of Social Renewal (PRS), as well as the 15 dissident parliamentarians of PAIGC, and representatives of other parties in the parliament. The presidential mission also held meetings with representatives of the international community in Bissau, namely the United Nations (UN), African Union (AU), European Union (EU), ECOWAS and the Community of Portuguese Language Speaking Countries (CPLP). From these discussions a six-point roadmap for the resolution of the political crisis was signed on 10 September 2016 in Bissau. As a follow up to that, a consultation meeting was convened by President Condé in Conakry, which was attended by key parties to the conflict, namely the Speaker of the People's National Assembly, the Prime Minister, leaders of PAIGC, Party for Social Renewal (PRS), other parties represented in the country's parliament (New Democracy Party-PND, Democratic Convergence Party-PCD, Union for Change-UM), as well as, religious leaders and civil society representatives. The meeting culminated in the signing of the Conakry Accord on the implementation of the ECOWAS roadmap for the resolution of the political crisis in Guinea Bissau. The Accord is significant in many respects. It documents 10-point agreements on not only appointing a consensus prime minister but also on institutionalising political and security sector reform processes in the country. Today, the Conakry Accord is internationally recognised as the peace agreement that can end the political impasse in the country by ensuring that a consensus government is in place, and government

programmes are formulated and adopted to enable the beginning of socio-economic transformation of the country. However, the implementation of the Accord has been blocked by disagreement over the appointment of a consensus prime minister. Prime Minister Umaro Sissoko Embaló, who is one of the three candidates submitted for consideration during the negotiations of the Accord in Conakry, has not received the support of the PAIGC and the Speaker of the Parliament. Mr Embaló submitted the programme of his government to the Parliament, but it was rejected by the Permanent Committee of the Parliament on the basis of non-recognition of the government. When the 15 PAIGC dissidents' deputies allied with the PRS deputies to form a majority in the Parliament, the Speaker decided not to call for a session for fear of losing control, the political crisis therefore remains. Since the Parliament has been closed, the government's programme cannot be considered and passed. ECOWAS has threatened the political elites with targeted sanctions including the withdrawal, from September 2017, of ECOMIB, which has been providing them with personal security and contributing to the stability of the government and the country. In the Summit of June 2017, President Vaz asked his peers to give him a chance to work with a group of women in Guinea Bissau, who had waded into conflict to mediate an end to the political impasse. There are some structural and contextual factors that influence the political fortune of the country; these include her geography, socio-cultural composition, economic potentials, political system and history.

STRUCTURAL AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS OF GUINEA BISSAU'S POLITY

Geography

In terms of geography, Guinea Bissau is located on the North Atlantic coast of West Africa, between the countries of Guinea and Senegal. The country is made up of a mainland, the Bisagos Islands (Arquipélago dos Bijagós), and various coastal islands. Having an area of about 36,120 square kilometres (13,946 square miles), the country is a low-lying coastal region of swamps, rain forests, and mangrove-covered wetlands, with about 88 islands off the coast, extending 48 km out to sea. These geographic features impose great administrative burden and challenge for both colonial and post-colonial governments. In the 15th and early 16th centuries the Portuguese commanded the entire western coast of Africa. However, they did not care to establish full political control over the area. Gradually their monopoly gave way to incursions by French, Dutch, English, and other European powers. The French pressured both the northern and southern borders of what is now Guinea-Bissau and placed the Casamance region of southern Senegal fully under French rule after the late 19th century. The English rivalled Portuguese authorities on the coast and a long-running dispute between the two powers resulted with Guinea-Bissau under Portuguese rule. It was these contests from other colonial powers that compelled the Portuguese to establish its political control over the territory. As a European colonial power, Portugal did much less to lay the foundations of a political, administrative and economic system on which a new independent state could develop. The small size of the colony and its population (about 170,000 in 1901),

the lack of natural resources of commercial value limited Guinea Bissau to a secondary role for Portugal, compared to its other African colonies. Therefore, the Portuguese intervention in Guinea Bissau was mainly mercantile: they did not have plantations, and hardly had anything worth the name "agribusiness". The few adventurers who took up residence in Guinea-Bissau intermarried, employed their relatives and some others, ran basically family businesses and generally evaded Portuguese law and administration or became a part of it for their own purpose. Owing to the limited political control exercised by the Portuguese, many territorial issues between the country and her neighbours were settled only after the independence of the country. For instance, the maritime border of the country was partially delineated in the 1980s and 1990s through legal arbitration. In the case of the country's border with Guinea-Conakry, the division took place through the Arbitral Award of 14 February 1985. Similarly, the delimitation of the maritime border with Senegal was partly done through the Arbitral Award of 31 July 1989. In May 1990 Guinea Bissau forces clashed with Senegalese forces in Sao Domingo in the north of the country. In its response, the PAIGC Political Bureau appealed to the international community, calling on it to put pressure on Senegal to make it "respect the principles and norms of international law". Territorial issues with respect to land and water borders still persist to date and is one of the regional issues that could militate against the peaceful resolution of the political crisis in Guinea Bissau.

Socio-cultural composition

In terms of ethnic and linguistic groups, Guinea-Bissau's population is dominated by more than 20 African ethnicities, including the Balante, the numerous Fulani and their many subgroups, the Diola, the Nalu, the Bijagó, the Landuma, the Papei (Pepel), and the Malinke. There is also a small Cape Verdean minority with mixed African, European, Lebanese, and Jewish origins. The distribution of the population by the major ethnic groups is as follows: Balantas, about 30% of the population; Fulas (Fulani), about 20%; Mandingas (Mandingo), about 13%; Manjacos, about 14%; and Papeis, about 7%. In religious terms, the population can be divided into three main groups: African traditional beliefs, Muslims, and Christians of various persuasions. A 2008 chart on distribution of the religious affiliations shows that adherents of Islam, that is Muslims, are the majority in the country with about 45.1%, followed by Christians, 22.1%, animists, 14.9% and others 17.9%. The Muslim population is principally dominated by the Fulas and Mandingas, who are concentrated in the north and northeast. The Balanta and Papel, live in the southern coastal regions, and the Manjacos occupy the central and northern coastal areas. Ethnicity and religion plays a subtle role in the national politics of Guinea Bissau. It has gained currency in recent years. Given their number, there is a growing sentiment among the Muslim population to have control over the government in the country, which has been mainly in the hands of Christians. Therefore, the strong national integration that was developed by the ideology and policy of the PAIGC's independence movement and the early postcolonial government that advocated a national-unity-in-ethnic-diversity-model is gradually giving way. Ethno-religious manipulations in the current political crisis in the country has been introduced by the elites.

Economic potentials

Guinea Bissau's economy depends largely on agriculture and fishing. Agriculture predominates since it accounts for 54% of the GDP, occupies 85% of the active population and represents 93% of exports. Main crops produced are rice and cashew nuts. However, agriculture faces several constraints, especially poor road conditions, lack of technical assistance to ensure considerable productivity gains, and inadequate supply of goods essential for conducting activities in the sector. Illegal logging and trafficking in narcotics also play significant roles. In terms of economic indices, Guinea Bissau is categorised as poor. Two out of three Bissau-Guineans remain below the absolute poverty line. However, the country has huge potential in natural resources. There is a substantial potential for development of mineral resources, including phosphates, bauxite, and mineral sands. Offshore oil and gas exploration has begun in the country. There are many foreign investors that scramble for access to the resources and inadvertently fuel the political crises in the country.

Furthermore, Guinea-Bissau has considerable fishery resources. The country has a coastal line of about 274 km and More than 15 000 persons work in fish processing and commercialization. With an annual potential of 300 000 tonnes, the fishing sector has the highest and most immediate potential which has so far not been tapped due to an environment unconducive to private sector development and inadequate institutional capacity.

Another important economic activity in the country is logging. Nearly 70% of Guinea-Bissau's land area is covered by forests. However, illegal logging is widespread in the country, and the situation worsened after the military coup

of 2012, which resulted in a breakdown in the rule of law. The fall in the prices of cashew nuts and China's demand for wood, aided by the complicity of politicians and senior army officials, led to the increase in illegal logging. Consequently, the government of Guinea-Bissau declared a five-year moratorium on logging in April 2015.

Furthermore, there is the cocaine drug-trafficking business that has thrived in the country. In 2008, Guinea Bissau was declared the first "narco state" in Africa by the UN, with nearly a quarter of all of Europe's cocaine being trans-shipped through the country at one point. Some military and government officials have been linked to drug trafficking. In 2014, for instance, Jose Americo Bubo Na Tchuto, former head of Guinea-Bissau's navy, pleading guilty in an American court for importing narcotics into the US. Guinea Bissau's location close to South America by sea, the existence of many uninhabited, isolated islands, long unmanned borders, and widespread poverty and inadequate governance structures combined to make her an ideal location for drug and human trafficking. The drug cartels are deeply embedded in the country's political system, as Gambian historian Hassoum Ceesay explains: "While the narco-traffickers did not seize power, they were indeed extremely close to the centre of power; and while drugs did not run the country, traffickers took advantage of the state's inherent weakness and exacerbated it by their presence." Combating drug trafficking has attracted some countries, such as the United States, to have interest in developments within the country.

Political system and political history

The nature of the political system in Guinea Bissau is another source of tension in the country. Since 1993, the country operates a semi-presidential system, with a president, who is directly elected by the people, a prime minister, who is appointed by the president in accordance with the electoral result and after consulting with political parties represented at the National Assembly, and a cabinet, which is nominated by the president on the recommendation of the prime minister. The Achilles of the system is the constitutional provisions that confers near equal political powers on the sovereign organs of the state, namely the President of the Republic, the People's National Assembly, the government and tribunals. Although the constitution defines their relationship based on separation and independence, sovereignty and the subordination of all of them to the Constitution, it is problematic in practice. Article 62 of the constitution states that the President of the Republic is the Head of State, symbol of unity, guarantor of national independence and the Constitution and supreme commander of the Armed Forces and; also the representative of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau. The president has power to dissolve the National Assembly and dismiss the Government. This power has been abused by its holders as a means of influencing the exercise of governmental activity. But also, Article 76 of the constitution says that the People's National Assembly is the supreme legislative organ and political overseer, representative of all Guineans; it pronounces on fundamental issues of internal and external politics of the state. In a similar manner, the constitution states that the government, which is constituted by the Prime Minister, ministers and by secretaries of state, is the supreme executive and administrative organ of the country; it formulates policies for the country in accord-

ance with its programme, which is approved by the People's National Assembly. Article 98 provides that the Prime Minister is nominated by the President of the Republic in accordance with electoral results and after consulting with political parties represented in the People's National Assembly and, Ministers and secretaries of state are nominated by the President of the Republic, on the proposal of the Prime Minister. As the head of the government, the Prime Minister has a duty to guide and coordinate its action and ensure the execution of the laws; the Prime Minister is also obliged by the constitution, without prejudice to other attributions that are conferred on him by the Constitution and the law, to inform the President of the Republic on issues regarding the internal and external politics of the country. While the Tribunals are organs of sovereignty with competence to administer justice on behalf of the people. This constitutional complexity has partly contributed to the current political crisis in the country.

Furthermore, the country's past has a lot of influence on the present. The current political crisis is a reflection of the past experiences, namely the political and economic experience of the country from colonialism and armed liberation to post-colonial state building. Guinea-Bissau is one of the five former colonies of Portugal in Africa. The other two are Angola and Mozambique. However, unlike in the other two, the Portuguese colonialists did not pursue settler colonization, massive expropriation of peasants, establishment of large plantations and capitalist mines in Guinea Bissau. There was no serious effort at building a colonial state. The traditional ethnic and social structures were left intact, and the only contact with colonial authority for the vast majority of Bissau Guineas was with tax collector, the policeman and soldier. The agrarian peoples of Guinea Bissau

can broadly be categorised into two: "horizontal societies" containing strong elements of a village community, and hierarchical, feudalistic societies. These societies were analysed by Amilcar Cabral with regards to their potential for joining the liberation movement. Cabral surmised that the horizontal societies would most amenable. The hierarchical communities were used to exploitation and expropriation. They traded in slaves and commodities with the Portuguese. The largest of the horizontal groups is the Balantes, among whom each individual village holds the property rights to the land, but the products of agriculture and instruments of production belong to the male head of the family. There is no accumulation of social surplus among the Balantes. Moreover, women participate in food production and enjoy ownership rights to what they produce, thereby providing them with a degree of freedom. Among the Balantes, polygamy is the exception rather than the rule, and a widow has the right to marry a man of her choice after the required waiting period, rather than automatically being inherited by the brother of her late husband. The religious ideology is animist. This is not the case with the hierarchical societies, such as the Fulas, whose society is based on a higher technological level including artisanal metalworking, class division and class exploitation. There is also a system of social accumulation in which the peasant has to give a percentage of his produce to the chief and his retainers. Among the Fulas, most women lack social and economic rights and polygamy is widely practiced. A mixture of Islamic theology and traditional deities creates a separate caste of priests retained by the chief who dominate the intellectual life of the society. Based on these ethnic and social formation, the liberation movement found its strongest and rapid response from the Balantes. Consequently, the Balantes dominate the armed forces to date.

Expectedly, the Fulas did not fully identify with the liberation movement and allied with the Portuguese. Nevertheless, Amilcar Cabral went on an aggressive campaign among these hierarchical groups in their communities, educating them on the importance of the liberation struggle and social change.

The PAIGC liberation struggle began as purely political campaign, however, it was quickly and brutally suppressed by the colonialist. The wage workers at the harbour were identified by Amilcar Cabral as the conscious revolutionary force from among the various segment of the country's population, because they could understand colonial exploitation based on their economic position and location in the urban centre. Therefore, in 1959, when the Pidjiguiti harbour worker went on strike for higher wages, the colonialists responded brutally killing 50 of the workers and injuring many. That was the turning point and the start of armed struggle by the PAIGC. In 1961, the PAIGC began direct action (sabotage and attacks on colonial facilities), followed in 1963 by overt warfare with support from China and the Eastern Bloc countries. From 1963 to 1973, the PAIGC gained and consolidated control over increasing portions of the territory of Guinea Bissau, and began to undertake the political and economic administration of the liberated areas, which included the setting up and daily running of schools, healthcare facilities and a network of 'People's Stores', where local producers sold their produce and bought other agricultural products as well as a limited range of consumer goods. The armed struggle also enjoyed the support of neighbouring countries, as the PAIGC opened its headquarters in Conakry. On 24th September 1973, the PAIGC unilaterally declared independence in Madina do Boé, despite not yet being in full control of the territory. Many socialist countries in the

UN recognized the independence, however, it was not until the overthrow of the Salazar dictatorship in Portugal in April 1974 that Portugal granted the territory its independence.

After independence, the PAIGC embarked upon a state building project the was based on its sole dominance, which still influences the unity and stability of Guinea Bissau to date. The new PAIGC government immediately faced problems such as an untrained public administration, a highly fragmented social structure and an extremely unstable political system when it declared its independence in 1974. The new social democratic government led by Luis Cabral, half-brother of Amilcar Cabral, who was assassinated, began that arduous task of state building and economic transformation. From 1973 to 1980, the PAIGC tried to build a social democratic state in Guinea Bissau. It established a leftist one-party state that sought to control and command society, economy, and culture. With little economic infrastructure, and much of the country relatively inaccessible, the new PAIGC leadership was unable to implements of an economic policy of agro-industrialization. The rigid socialist program, which restricted private enterprises to small shops, eventually failed, and the government was ousted in a coup d'état. There are two issues that contributed to the fall of the first government. One, the failure of the economic policy, resulting in an excruciating economic situation characterized by shortages of food and basic goods due drought at the time. Two, there was tension between the Cape Verdean mestiços, who were more educated and held leadership position in the Luis Cabral government, and the Guineans, particularly the Balantes, who constituted the bulk of the guerrilla force during the liberation. The Balantes lived in fear of domination by the mestiços-the mixed race. Therefore, when Luis Cabral attempted to consolidate his

powers, it heightened the fear of the Guineans. A new constitution adopted on 10 November 1980, established a presidential regime that increased the power of Luis Cabral and stripped the powers of his commissar and president of the People's National Assembly comandante João Bernardo "Nino" Vieira. Four days after, November 14, riding on the back of excruciating economic situation, Vieira, who is a popular PAIGC guerrilla leader and minister of armed forces since independence, led a military coup that overthrew Luis Cabral and suspended the constitution. After the coup, Cape Verde ended its union with Guinea Bissau. Vieira appointed a Council of the Revolution that ruled the country for four years. The faction that led the coup called itself the Readjustment Movement and promised to correct the mistakes made by Cabral, such as socialist development agenda and human rights violations. The country continued its socialist policies, and political dissent was banned. Since the coup d'état, the armed forces of Guinea Bissau came to occupy an important place in the political life of the country to date.

Under the Council of the Revolution, the economic condition of Guinea Bissau did not improve. By 1984, a new constitution was adopted by a People's National Assembly under the

guidance of the PAIGC. It ended the reign of the Council of the Revolution. The constitution sought to construct a pluralistic, just, and free society. It opened up the space for a multiparty political system and provided for an economic and social organization of the country based on the principles of a 'market economy', the 'subordination of political power to economic power', and the 'co-existence of public, cooperative, and private property' (Article 11 (1)). The constitution also made extensive provisions with regards to the sovereignty and rights of the people, foreigners, unity, and assurances of guarantees of worthy life for the fighters for the freedom of the Homeland. The 1984 Constitution underwent amendments in 1991, 1993, 1995, and 1996. With the opening up of the political space, new political parties were established which challenged the monopoly of the PAIGC. These parties were formed by elites that broke away from the PAIGC, such as Kumba Yala, who formed the PRS. Since then, the party and elite political alliances became regular in winning elections and forming the government. Explaining the current political situation in the country would require identifying the different actors in the conflict and their motivations.

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS IN THE GUINEA BISSAU POLITICAL CRISIS

The key stakeholders in the political crisis of Guinea are the signatories of the Conakry Accord, namely the President, the leader of PAIGC and former prime minister Domingos Simões Pereira and 15 dissident deputies of the PAIGC, Mr Cipriano Cassamá, the speaker of the People's National Assembly, the PRS, which is the second largest political party in the Parliament, which has gained majority through its alliance with the 15 dissident deputies of the PAIGC, and other parties in the Parliament, namely Party for Democratic Convergence (PDC), the Party for a New Democracy (PND) and the Union for Change (UM) National Assembly. Religious and Traditional leaders, the. The civil society represented by youth and women groups are also important stakeholders. International stakeholders include the P5, namely ECOWAS, the AU, UN, EU, and CPLP, who individually and collectively seek to resolve the political crisis. ECOWAS is however, the most prominent among them, responsible for bringing about the Bissau Agreement and the Conakry Accord which became the rallying point of all international efforts towards resolving the conflict. These actors can be broadly categorised into five clusters namely:

1. The elites and their political parties
2. The military and liberation struggle heroes.
3. Civil Society Organisations, traditional and religious leaders, youth and women,
4. Regional actors: ECOWAS, AU, Senegal, Guinea, Angola
5. International partners: UN-UNIOGBIS, CPLP, EU and others.

The elites and their political parties

This category of actors operates at the national level. The leading party is the PAIGC and its members are the dominant actors in the political life of Guinea Bissau, as well as the main protagonist of the political crisis. Since the struggle for independence to date, the stability of the party and that of the country have been interlinked. It can be rightly claimed that whatever crisis the country is facing stems from the party, whose members for the most part of the country's history dominate both the political space and the military. In the current crisis, the major actors are José Mário Vaz, the President of Guinea Bissau, Domingos Simões Pereira, leader of the PAIGC, whose removal from the position of prime minister sparked the current crisis. José Mário Vaz is supported by Umaru Sissoko Embaló, the current Prime Minister, the 15 dissident deputies led by Braima Camara, and other political parties in the parliament led by PRS, the second largest party in the country. While Domingos Simões Pereira is backed by the Speaker of the National Assembly, Cipriano Cassamá, the rest of the Party and other opposition parties.

José Mário Vaz: President of Guinea Bissau since 2014, José Mário Vaz, also known as JOMAV, was Minister of Finance in the government of Carlos Gomes Júnior, under the presidency of Malam Bacai Sanhá until the coup d'état of 2012. Before then, he was elected Mayor of Bissau in 2004 position and held the position until 2009, when he was made the Minister. After the coup of 2012 that deposed their government, he fled to Portugal, but returned in February 2013 and spent three days under arrest. Although, he was credited for negotiating the pardoning of the country's debt with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Mr. Vaz was accused of being involved in the disappearance

of 9.1 million euros in aid donated to the country by Angola, a charge he denied but remained unclear if the donation was ever sent. He emerged the presidential candidate of PAIGC in a second round of primaries organized by the PAIGC Central Committee after beating 12 other candidates. The primaries were marred by controversy as 14 members of the PAIGC Central Committee “voted” for Carlos Gomes Júnior, the prime minister deposed in a military coup in April 2012, despite his name being rejected by the structures of the party. It was an evidence that the party lacked internal cohesion. JOMAV studied Economics in Lisbon, worked in the former National Bank of Guinea-Bissau and later established a big business in estate development and construction. He is said to have an inflexible stance on issues.

Domingos Simões Pereira: President of PAIGC, and former prime minister of Guinea Bissau, Mr. Pereira held many government and non-government positions in his career building a strong political base in the process. Between 1988 and 1999, he acted as National Director of Aviation and Land Transport, Director General of Roads and Bridges, Chief of Cabinet of the Minister of Public Works and Director of the Civil Engineering Laboratory and Technical Director of the Cooperativa “Unidad e Progresso” in Bissau. From 1999 to 2000, he was technical assistant for the defence group and National Coordinator of the European Development Fund. From 2000 to 2004, he acted as Technical Assistant for the Infrastructure Reform of Private Sector Development and Project and the World Bank. In addition, between 2002 and 2003, he acted as Minister of Social Equipment. From 2004 to 2005, he served as Minister of Public Works, Construction and Planning and from 2006-2008 he acted as Adviser to the Prime Minister of Guinea-Bissau Infrastructure, as an official of the World Bank. For two years,

he held the position of Secretary General of the Catholic charity organization in Guinea Bissau, Charitas, where he connected with the underprivileged in the society. From 2008 to 2012 he was Executive Secretary of the CPLP. In June 2014, after the presidential elections, he became prime minister. His government was dissolved by President Vaz. From his antecedents, he has been able to build strong networks internationally. Since the dissolution of his government, Guinea Bissau has not had a stable government in place. He has been able to use the party machinery to bring down prime ministers appointed to replace him. Together with his supporters in the Parliament, they have frustrated the functioning of the government of Umaro Sissoko Embaló

Cipriano Cassamá, the Speaker of the National Assembly, is another important actor who has used his authority to back his party leader, Domingos Simões Pereira. In about two years, the National Assembly has not had a session because the Speaker and the PAIGC parliamentarians ordered its closure as a result of the political crisis. He was among the signatories of the Conakry Accord, and has been at, and also himself led, mediation efforts to break the political impasse. For example, in March 2017, Mr Cassamá presented a proposal at a meeting convened by President Vaz in order to end the crisis. Mr. Cassama proposed the appointment of Augusto Olivais as new head of government and 17 ministries for the ruling PAIGC, 12 cabinet post for the PRS, and one each for PND, PDC and UM. Mr Cassamá also initiated and held meetings with international actors, such as the P5 group in Guinea Bissau. In this regard, Mr Cassamá may appear as an autonomous actor in the crisis, even though he backs his party leader.

Umaro Sissoko Embaló, the current Prime Minister: He served in the military where he

rose to the rank of Brigadier-General. He undertook National Defence Studies at the National Defence Centre of Spain, and further studies on National Security in Brussels, Tel Aviv, Johannesburg, Japan and Paris. Although little is known about him, he held various positions in previous governments, including advisor to president, prime minister and Speaker of Parliament. He was unilaterally appointed by President Vaz as the consensus candidate under the Conakry Accord. Rejected by the PAIGC, Mr. Embalo has been unable to have his government programme debated at the parliament because the Parliamentary Committee, which is dominated by loyal members of the PAIGC, claimed that his appointment did not comply with the consensus arrangement enshrined in the Constitution and the Conakry Accord. This is what makes the crisis a political issue enshrined in the constitution and the Accord.

The 15 dissident deputies of PAIGC led by Braima Camara: The PAIGC has been undergoing internal crises since the end of the liberation struggle against the Portuguese colonialists. This is aggravated with the introduction of a multi-party system in the 1990s. Although the party won the elections of 2014, it has not been able to bring together party members who fell apart in the course of the party primaries and formation of government. The current political impasse was perpetuated by the belligerence of the 15 PAIGC deputies, who rejected the government and programmes of their fellow party man, Carlos Correia, thereby resulting in the collapse of the government. Consequently, the party expelled them, but the Supreme Court ruled that the 15 deputies could retain their seats. The 15 dissident PAIGC deputies formed a coalition in the People's National Assembly with the opposition PRS to form a majority in the parliament. This has resulted in a stalemate, in which the parliament

remained closed as the PAIGC fear that once it reopens, they would lose control of the parliament. The 15 dis-sident deputies are led by a strong political actor in Bissau today, Mr Braima Camara. He is a Deputy of the PAIGC, founder and current president of the Guinea Bissau Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Agriculture and Services, a businessman and also a special adviser to President José Mário Vaz. He is at the centre of a controversy over the improper utilization of over 20 million US dollars contributed by donors, including World Bank and IMF, to the Fund for the Promotion of the Industrialization of Agricultural Products. The Fund, which began to be implemented in 2011, was to be generated from a tax of 50 CFA francs for each kilo of chestnut to be exported. This led to its eventual dissolution in 2015. As the Fund Manager, Mr. Camara was accused of embezzlement by rivals close to former Prime Minister Domingos Simoes Pereira. In order to clear his name, he submitted the list of names of entrepreneurs, implicating public and private authorities, to the Public Prosecutor's Office, bringing a case against them for improperly benefitting from the Fund, including using it for payment of wages civil servants and other departments of the State. The allegations of corruption have caused serious crisis within the PAIGC, and also increased the stakes in controlling the state, in order to shield themselves or prosecute the others. Now these are all party leaders within the PAIGC, whose individual ambitions and fears have become a factor in the stability in the polity.

Besides the PAIGC, other parties in the country also play an active role in the conflict. The PRS, established by a former PAIGC member Kumba Yala in 1992, is the second most influential political party in the country. In the 2014 legislative elections, PAIGC took 55 seats and was allocated two additional seats for diaspora

representation, bringing its total to 57; the Party of Social Renewal (PRS) secured 41 seats; the PDC took two seats while PND and UM won one seat each. After its alliance with the 15 dissident deputies of PAIGC, PRS now has majority in the parliament, which can approve the programme and budget of Prime Minister Umaro Sissoko Embaló and possibly take over the position of the Speaker of the People's National Assembly. However, the PAIGC, PDC, PND and UM have teamed up to frustrate that from happening.

The military and liberation struggle heroes

The military is another important actor in the political crisis in Guinea Bissau. Constituted by the guerrilla wing of the liberation movement, the military is populated by ex-rebels. Many of the rebel leaders went on to hold high-ranking positions in the military – and still do today. In recent years, they have used their status as past liberators to justify their meddling in the government, saying they still know what is best for the country. The military is thus in need of reform to become a professional body, free from political influence. In the absence of that, they have been involved with drug trafficking, military coups and assassinations. Furthermore, the military lacks ethnic diversity. As presently constituted the Guinean armed forces is dominated by the Balante ethnic group, who constitute the large chunk of the liberation force with some of them, who ought to be veterans, having up to 85 years of age. This dominance of the Balantes has enabled them to dominate the political space in the country. Moreover, until recent efforts by international partners in the reform, it was difficult to know the actual number of the forces, as many soldiers brought their children, cousins or his relatives

into the barracks to make them soldiers. Due to the lack of resources and stability, successive governments in Bissau had been unable to demobilise the guerrilla forces, pay them their gratuity and pension. Many times, the soldiers go without salaries for months. With such a military, the security of the democratic regimes is always threatened.

Civil society organisations, traditional and religious leaders, youth and women

Although long years of single party, socialist rule had suppressed the civil society, the introduction of liberal democracy in the 1990s gave impetus for civil society organizations including traditional and religious leaders, and women and youth groups to gain influence in the politics of the country. The traditional and religious leaders play a mediating role in the conflicts among the elites. Youth and women groups are filling up the gap, where the traditional and religious leaders have failed. They have not only been regularly consulted but also involved in brokering agreements alongside international mediators. Although many of them may have been co-opted by the parties to the conflict and therefore compromised by the corrupt practices of the elites. In the current political crisis, for instance, there are civil society movements that emerged to support the two parties in the conflict. On one hand, there is the Citizens' Movement for Peace, Democracy and Citizenship, supporters of President Vaz, the Prime Minister, the 15 dissidents and the PRS, who marched in Bissau on the 9th of March 2017 and demanded that the National Popular Assembly to reopen in order to end the political blockage. On the other hand, a group supporting the PAIGC and parliament under the name of Movement of Conscientious

and Non-Conforming Citizens, came out two days after, on 11th March, 2017 to protest and called on the resignation of the President, as well as the organisation of general elections. This shows how the conflict has fragmented the civil society. However, some women group, supported by the UN integrated office for Peace-building in Guinea Bissau (UNIOGBIS), are currently leading the last effort towards the resolution of the crisis. These women from various civil society organisations have opened up channel of communication between the Parties and ECOWAS awaits the outcome of their effort before it withdraws its stabilisation force, ECOMIB from the country.

Regional actors: ECOWAS, AU, Senegal, Guinea

ECOWAS is the main regional actor that has invested huge human and financial resources towards the stabilisation of Guinea Bissau, which is a founding member of the organisation. Since 2012, ECOWAS deployed a peace-keeping mission (ECOWAS Mission in Guinea Bissau-ECOMIB), and a special mission, to monitor the political, security and socio-economic developments in the country. Working with the armed forces, ECOMIB has contributed to the non-involvement of the military in the current political crisis. The ECOWAS-brokered Conakry agreement is the main framework accepted by the Parties to the crisis and the international community for the resolution of the impasse. However, disagreement by the Parties over its application remained a hindrance. The AU largely works with ECOWAS as its pillar in West Africa based on the principle of subsidiarity. Senegal and Guinea-Conakry, two important neighbours of Guinea Bissau, play a major role within the framework of ECOWAS due to socio-economic and political relations with

the country. ECOWAS military intervention in Guinea Bissau was first triggered by the intervention of Senegalese and Guinean troops in the country's civil war of 1998, to assist the government forces of president João Bernardo Vieira, which were fighting against the rebel forces of his Chief of Staff, Brigadier-General Ansumane Mané. Senegal's specific interest in Guinea Bissau has to do with the rebellion in its Casamance region, and the concern they had that Guinea Bissau soldiers have been selling the MFDC weapons purchased cheaply from Cuba and some donated by France. Pressured by France, with which he had tight relations, President Vieira accused Mané of complicity. Moreover, Senegal is a one of the top import sources of Guinea Bissau, second to only Portugal and China. Senegal also has shared interest with Guinea Bissau in the control and management of fishing in their territorial waters. As for Guinea-Conakry, the ties with Guinea Bissau dates back to the liberation struggle when PAIGC set up its first government in Conakry and operated from the territory of Guinea to fight the Portuguese. It was perhaps in recognition of the close ties between the countries that ECOWAS appointed President Condé to mediate in the political crisis in the country that led to the signing of the Conakry Accord. However, there is a growing feeling within the Bissau Guinean society that the two neighbours are sabotaging the stability and development of their country in order to continue dominating the country's informal market and artisanal fishing.

International actors

Aside from the regional actors, there are international actors that have been engaged with Guinea Bissau towards the resolution of its long years of crisis. The major ones are the UN Integrated Peace-building Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), the Community of Portuguese Language Speaking Countries (CPLP) and the EU. Together with ECOWAS and AU, these organisations make up the group of P5 in Guinea Bissau for their active cooperation and collaboration. Headed by the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), UNIOGBIS supports Guinea Bissau in the areas of inclusive political dialogue and national reconciliation; review of the country's Constitution; national security sector reform, as well as, developing civilian and military justice systems that are compliant with international standards; mobilization, harmonization and coordination of international assistance, including enhancing cooperation with the AU, ECOWAS, CPLP, EU and other partners in support of the maintenance of constitutional order and the stabilization of Guinea-Bissau. Based on this, the UN office in Bissau engages daily with the situation in the country. The CPLP is another actor that mobilizes international support for Guinea Bissau. The organisation was established in 1996 and is composed of nine members: Brazil, Angola, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Mozambique, Portugal, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Timor-Leste. Its membership is a strong resource for its interventions in Guinea Bissau. The CPLP has been leveraging its cultural, diplomatic and political ties with Guinea Bissau to assist in the resolution of its crisis. Moreover, Portugal and Angola have used the CPLP as a platform for engaging in the resolution of the political crisis at international fora. The CPLP actively participated in the establishment of the

International Contact Group on Guinea-Bissau (ICG-GB) in 2006. The objective of the ICG-BG was to create conditions for the coherent support on the part of the international community for Guinea Bissau's efforts at improving its capacities in the political, social, economic, financial and security domains. Moreover, both Portugal and Angola have cultural and economic ties with Guinea Bissau. Most of the elites in Guinea Bissau had some form of training or education in Portugal. Many have homes or families in Lisbon. Hence, the elites in PAIGC have a strong connection with Portugal. Mr Domingos Pereira served as the Secretary General of the CPLP, and could be influenced by the organization. In terms of investment, Portugal is a beneficiary of the EU fisheries partnership with Guinea Bissau, having a good share of allocation of fishing opportunities in shrimps and tuna in the territorial waters of Guinea Bissau. Angola's interest in Guinea Bissau include investment in the production of Bauxite, shareholdings in banks and in the Portuguese firm, Galp, which is involved in the downstream oil sector. Angola's 500 million US dollars Bauxite project for the development of a bauxite mine in the Boe region and a deep-water port in Buba is currently stalled by the political crisis. In 2011, Angola deployed troops in Guinea Bissau ostensibly to assist the country in the reform process of the defence and security system.

The EU has also been supportive of the political and socio-economic development of Guinea Bissau. For instance, under the 10th European Development Fund (EDF), the EU allocated 102.8 million euros to the country for strengthening state structure, improving governance, conflict prevention and national reconciliation, use of hydroelectric and solar energy, macro-economic stability, child protection, and support to non-state actors. The EU also supports the sustenance

of troops deployed under ECOMIB through the payment of allowances, feeding and care. It has an interest in the stability of Guinea Bissau to, among others, secure its investments in the economy, such as the fisheries Partnership. Following the return of democracy in 2014, the EU, Guinea Bissau and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) co-hosted an International donors-roundtable conference on sustainable development in Guinea-Bissau in Brussels in 2015, where donors pledged over 1 billion US dollars for a *Terra Ranka* (fresh start) development strategy for the country. The EU is, thus, an influential actor in the resolution of the crisis in Guinea Bissau.

From the foregoing, it is clear that there are diverse actors and interests that are at play in the political crisis in Guinea Bissau. This has implications for the persistence of the crisis as well as for its resolution. In the next section, the interaction between the context and actors is analysed.

ANALYSIS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN THE CONTEXT AND THE STAKE-HOLDERS IN GUINEA BISSAU

The current context of political impasse in Guinea Bissau is centred principally around the political differences and mistrust between President Vaz and his former prime minister and leader of their party, Mr Pereira and the implementation of the Conakry Accord. However, this bickering is only a manifestation of deeper elites' struggle within the PAIGC over control of the party, the state and the economy. In the bid to outdo one another, the elites are exploiting the ethno-religious differences in the country as well as the lacuna in the constitution. Meanwhile, the country has remained without a stable government, without approved programme and the parliament is closed. There is increasing discontentment in the society as civil servants and state-owned media went on strike demanding for the readjustment of salaries. Politically motivated protests have been organised and international partners of Guinea Bissau are increasingly becoming impatient. ECOWAS has threatened to withdraw ECOMIB forces, which have helped in the stability of the country by providing security to the leaders and government institutions. By the end of November 2017, the political elites were yet to resolve the impasse.

The ECOWAS-brokered Conakry Accord has remained the only framework endorsed by the political and social stakeholders within Guinea Bissau and international actors for the resolution of the political impasse. The Accord is a road map of an earlier agreement, the Bissau Agreement, which was signed on 10 September 2016. In the Bissau Agreement the political elites agreed to, among others, the following:

1) An inclusive dialogue; 2) The formation of inclusive, consensus government; 3) Institutional reform initiatives; 4) Establishment of a ministerial committee under ECOWAS guidance to periodically evaluate the road map; 5) Implementation of the defence and security sector reform and; 6) The progressive withdrawal of ECOMIB.

Thereafter, the ECOWAS Mediator, His Excellency Professor Alpha Condé, President of Guinea convened another meeting in Conakry to produce a road map for the implementation of the Bissau Agreement. Signed by all the key political and social stakeholders in the country, the Accord of Conakry outlined 10 key undertakings by the Bissau Guinean elites to:

1. agree on the choice of a consensus Prime Minister, who has the confidence of the President;
2. form an inclusive government based on proportional representation of all political parties in the People's National Assembly,
3. see the possibility to include an independent prominent figure and civil society leader;
4. The inclusive government will implement a programme prepared by a national roundtable dialogue within thirty days following the appointment of the Prime Minister.
5. Compliance with the existing principle for the appointment of senior officials of the Republic;
6. Preparation and adoption, by the national roundtable dialogue, of a Stability Pact signed by key political and social stakeholders, and structured around the principles of:
 - a. Accountability and transparency in institutional decision-making;
 - b. Constitutional reform aimed at establishing stable relations between the Executive, the Legislative and the Judiciary;
 - c. Reform of the electoral law for the organization of legislative and local elections in 2018;
 - d. New political party law including public funding of political parties on the basis of their representation in the National Assembly;
 - e. Defense, security and justice sector reform
 - f. Take-off of the implementation of a development programme in line with vision *Terra Ranka*.
7. ECOWAS, African Union, CPLP, United Nations and EU's support for the development, implementation and monitoring of the Stability Pact, in particular through the provision of high-level expertise as well as other substantial financial resources and logistics;
8. Establishment of a 3-level monitoring and evaluation framework to ensure the stability of the process:
 - a. At the level of ECOWAS Council of Ministers
 - b. At the level of the ECOWAS Commission, in conjunction with international partners
 - c. At the level of the Mediator who will report to the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government.
9. The constitutional reform will be conducted as part of a nation-wide

consultation taking into account existing review structures. ECOWAS and the United Nations will provide high-level constitutional experts;

10. The unconditional reintegration of the 15 radical MPs into PAIGC, albeit in consonance with existing texts within PAIGC.

Clearly the Conakry Accord sought to address the immediate disagreement between the politicians and then set the ball rolling for a deeper structural political reform, such as the review of the constitution.

So as a first step, the political elites, in particular the PAIGC and the President should get a consensus prime minister. But the mistrust between President Vaz and Domingos Pereira is deep. This started with events leading up to their party primaries. PAIGC was engulfed in an internal crisis in the run-up to its national congress, at which it was expected that a proposed amendment to the party's statutes would be discussed and organs and presidential candidate would be elected. The two major candidates to the party's leadership were Domingos Simões Pereira, and Braima Camará. Each of them was seeking to get his supporters to be elected as delegates to secure victory. In view of the acrimony in the race, the editor of the *Diário de Bissau* newspaper, Mr João de Barros, opined that the PAIGC would be divided from the congress by the victory of either of the candidates and noted that there was a clear tendency for religious vote. Mr de Barros opinion on the influence of religion would later become evident. On the Party's statutes in force at the time, Braima Camará wanted to maintain the arrangement whereby the national secretary, had administrative functions, and the president leading the party as well leading the list to the legislative elections, namely becoming the prime

minister in the event of the party's victory in the parliament. This arrangement was a source of contention for the party. Hence, there was a new proposal that the PAIGC should have a secretary-general, who would be head of the legislative branch (prime minister in the event of having majority in the parliament), with the president only dedicating himself to the party – that was the choice of some presidential candidates Carlos Correia and Satu Camará and other candidates for the party's leadership who intend to hold the post of Secretary General: Domingos Simões Pereira, Aristides Ocante da Silva, Cipriano Cassamá and Daniel Gomes. Braima Camara succeeded to defeat the proposal and got the statuesque maintained. However, with the help of the PAIGC Central Committee, which was disturbed by the influence of Braima Camara, Mr. Simões Pereira managed to win over 60% of the party delegates' votes and, despite litigations, Mr. Camará accepted defeat. Thus, in line with the PAIGC statutes, Mr Pereira became the party's prime ministerial candidate in the 2014 national elections. When it was time to elect the party's presidential candidate, Mr Pereira threw his, and by extension the party's support, to Mario Lopes da Rosa, who as Minister of Fisheries during transitional government, had financially supported the PAIGC's campaign for the legislative elections. Mr. Braima, however, mobilized support for Mr. José Mário Vaz, who was a fellow businessman and associates when Vaz was Minister of Finance while he was heading the Chambers of Commerce. Mr. Vaz went on to secure the party's nomination and won the elections in a run off against Nuno Gomes Nabian, who ran as an independent candidate. Mr. Pereira, as the leader of the party with majority in the Parliament, became the prime minister. The mistrust between President Vaz and Mr. Pereira might have started when Pereira nominated Mario Lopes da Rosa to the post of Minister

of Foreign Affairs, which did not go down well with President Vaz. Many observers opined that the ministerial appointments at the time were delayed as a result of that, as President Vaz saw the nomination of his challenger as a threat to his future stay in power. More so, the position of Foreign Affairs Minister, which could give him the opportunity to build his political base with international support.

Another issue that added to the political rivalry between President Vaz and Mr. Pereira is over the control of the economy, in particular the natural resources and the 1.6 bn US dollars international financial assistance for the country's *Terra Ranka*. With allegations of corruption trailing most of the political elites, Mr. Vaz promised to fight corruption and secure the wealth of Guinea Bissau. During his inaugural speech as President of Guinea Bissau, he recalled his promise to be vigilant on the scourge of corruption, to call to his office all files pertaining to illegal timber exploration and natural resources for the good of the people. Mr. Vaz reiterated this statement in the first face-to-face with UN Secretary General Representative in the Country. Therefore, from the onset, he had indicated interest in overseeing the affairs of the government in the economy. To match his word with action, he would invite the Minister of Natural Resources to his office, seeking to know or monitor what was going on in the sector. Mr. Pereira, as prime minister, found this to be an interference in the affairs of the government. Hence, it increased the rift between them. Some of the means of making money from controlling the government include the issuances of license to investors for fishing, oil exploration and other businesses, management of customs receipts and international funds.

A year after, President Vaz convened an emergency session of the People's National Assembly to the address the nation and its representatives about the prevailing crisis and mistrust between himself and the prime minister, Domingos Pereira. In the speech, the President decried corruption, squandering of goods, nepotism, and conflict of interests, as evils that undermine the credibility of government institutions, distort the values of the society, and discourage the productivity of serious investors. The President added that the people voted for him to be an arbitrator between the government and the People's National Assembly, a government policeman and in case of crisis, a firefighter of the system, and therefore, he would be attentive to the proper implementation of the governance programme and budget that was endorsed and approved by the parliament. The President went on to say that, "if, at any time, I found that there were serious and persistent derelictions that call into question the interests of the people, I should be able to live up to my responsibilities in order to establish respect for the laws for the well-being of our people." With these words, the President confirmed the rumours and speculations going around that the institutional relations between the sovereign organs might be better than they were at the time. President Vaz then let out the fundamental issues affecting his relationship with the government and parliament with some rhetorical questions: He wondered:

- Have these disturbances been caused by the fact that I have warned against the exploitation of our natural resources?
- Have these disturbances been caused by the fact that I have appealed to a transparent and responsible management of our fishery resources?

- Have these disturbances been caused by the fact that I have drawn attention to the devastation of our forests?
- Have these troubles been caused by the fact that I am engaged in an uncompromising struggle against corruption, nepotism and misappropriation of public funds?
- Have these disagreements caused for questioning the transparency of the concession process of public works and the quality of the built roads?
- Have these troubles been the cause of having denounced absenteeism, the lack of working culture of civil servants?

These questions indeed touched on the key issues of contention in the current political crisis, namely control over natural and agricultural resources, allegations of corruption, and poor governance. Since this speech, President Vaz started frustrating the regular constitutional consultation and briefing between him and the Prime Minister. When Mr. Pereira went for the briefing, he would wait for hours before seeing the President. Sometime, he would be stopped at the gate until calls were made before he was allowed to enter the presidency. These were the highest points of the disagreements between the leaders before the government was sacked.

Another indication of the primacy of control of natural resources in the political crisis was when President Vaz and Carlos Correia, the third prime minister appointed after the dismissal of the government of Mr Pereira, did not agree on the appointment of ministers for natural resources and interior. Instead, Mr Correia himself was agreed to hold the position until the disagreement was resolved. He also did

not last long, and his government was sacked by President Vaz for its inability to manage the political crisis and create better political and institutional conditions for the government's full function. Indeed, the cabinet proposed by Mr Correia excluded the PRS, which is the largest opposition party with 41 out of 102 seats of Parliament. Therefore, it was bound to fail. When Correia submitted his government programme and budget to the parliament, it was rejected with the support of 15 deputies of the PAIGC. This action of the 15 deputies has brought to the fore the ethno-religious dimension to the political crisis.

Out of the 15 dissidents, 11 are Muslims, mainly Mandigas and two Fulas and 4 are Christians. The four top elements of the group are Muslim: Baciro Dja and Braima Camara are Mandingo; Adja Satu Camara and Soares Sambu are Beafada – but now a days Mandinga and Beafada are seen to be of the ethnicity, with common culture. The activities of the group are widely seen by observers in the country as an attempt to break the Christian control over the PAIGC and polity since independence. This struggle for Muslim representation and leadership is said to have started during the political struggle of Malam Bacai Sanha. Sanha contested for the Presidency twice and lost first to Mr. Kumba Yala in 2000 and the Mr. Vieira in 2005. Therefore, in his third bid for the position in 2009, he came with the slogan, "Hora Tchica" - meaning "the time has come". This slogan was interpreted by some in the Muslim majority society of Guinea Bissau as a subtle demand for a Muslim leadership in the country. However, Mr. Sanha had difficulty getting the PAIGC leadership to support his nomination. Malam Bacai Sanha succeeded to mobilise funds from some Arab countries to win the party primaries and the election. For instance, media reports say that

Gaddafi provided support to the presidential campaign of President Malam Bacai Sanha and uniforms to the Bissau Guinea army and renovated several of its military barracks. Bacai Sanha succeeded to be the president but continued to have problem with PAIGC. His prime minister Carlos Gomes and army Chief of Staff, General Zamora Induta colluded and fought him, draining his strength and affecting his health. The high point of the conflict was in 2010, when a coup attempt was staged in which the Deputy Army Chief of Staff, Antonio Injai staged a mutiny against the Carlos Gomes and General Induta. Malam Bacai Sanha used that to regain control by negotiating the release of Gomes from military detention while General Induta never returned as the army chief of staff.

Aside from the subtle manipulation of ethnicity and religion, the weaknesses in the semi-presidential system have been exploited by the elites to make the government unworkable. Given the overlapping powers of the President, the People's National Assembly and the Prime Minister as head of government, each actor is able to use their position to disturb the stability of the country. This is more so that the prime minister is by the PAIGC statutes the leader of the party. Without understanding and cooperation among those at the helm of the organs, the country runs into a political and institutional quagmire. Fernando Loureiro Bastos opines that the balance of the system of government in Guinea-Bissau has been called into question, firstly by Article 68(m) of the constitution which allows the President of the Republic to 'preside [over] the Council of Ministers, whenever he chooses' and, secondly, Article 68(j), which gives him/her the power to 'create and dissolve Ministries and Secretaries of State'. Moreover, in some situations, the constitution provides that 'the President represents the Republic of Guinea-Bissau' (Articles 62(2) and 68(a), and

has been used as a constitutional authorization for the creation of a counter-power, or even a 'parallel government', by the circle of the supporters of Presidents of the Republic. At the moment, the President is claiming to exercise his constitutional authority as the elected leader of the people to insist on having a government, in particular a prime minister, that has his confidence. This is affirmed by the Conakry Accord. However, the leader of his Party, Mr Pereira, is using the Party's control in the parliament to project the superiority of the party over the President by ensuring that any government that does not satisfy his interest and that of the party, such a government will be rejected. This illustrates that a consensus is required to break the deadlock. However, in the current circumstance, this will be difficult to achieve because the stakes are high. Both President Vaz and Mr. Pereira are fighting for their political survival. There are legislative and local elections coming up in 2018. The President is already looking at his re-election in 2019 and he is not ready to lose the fight with his party. Therefore, riding on the back of his marriage of convenience with the 15 PAIGC dissident deputies and PRS, he hopes to take over the Parliament and defeat the PAIGC. The PAIGC is afraid of losing the Parliament, and therefore, the Speaker has refused to open the parliament. The Conakry Accord has therefore created an opportunity for the PAIGC to resolve their internal conflicts by providing for the reintegration of the 15 dissident deputies and restoring the party's majority in the Parliament. However, both Pereira and President Vaz have been uncompromising.

It is of interest that despite the political impasse, the country has remained relatively stable and peaceful. Two things contributed to buoying up the country from sinking into another major political crisis. One, the ECOWAS stabilisation

force, ECOMIB, has successfully discharged its mandate of seeing through the transition to democracy, effectively providing security to the political leaders and institutions of the state, defusing tension with their presence and working with the national armed forces and orienting them to act professionally. The current high-ranking officers of Guinea Bissau have demonstrated maturity in restraining the institution from intervening in the political crisis. Most of the politicised military officers have been subdued: At least five officers that participated in the coup of 2012 received UN sanctions, which restricts their movement; Some officers are on exile due to revenge threats on their lives for their past actions; while others are facing trial, or have gone underground because they are wanted by the US for connections with narcotics trafficking. Through the isolation of the politicised military officers, a coup d'état may be unlikely. However, because of the assurances of their physical security from ECOMIB, the political elites have continued to remain intransigent to the avenues provided by the ECOWAS-brokered the Conakry Accord, and the goodwill of the international community for them to resolve their political differences and end the impasse. Consequently, in view of this and the financial burden born for keeping ECOMIB longer than necessary in the country, the ECOWAS leaders decided to initiate plans for the withdrawal of their forces. Although, this had been postponed twice, the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government gave the political elites the last chance to resolve their problem or have ECOMIB withdrawn beginning end of September 2017.

The second factor is the good economic outlook for the country in the last three years occasioned by a sustained global demand for, and increase in the price of, cashew nuts. According to the

International Nut and Dried Fruit Council (INC), demand for cashews has risen by 31% globally over the last decade, driven by its popularity in Asia and its image as a healthy ingredient in the West. Furthermore, Cashew nut prices have crossed five US dollars per pound to reach historic levels of 5.35-5.50 US dollars a pound. Therefore, since the cashew nut sector employs about 80% of the population, it means that the population is economically contented and might not be agitated by the on-going political impasse. A typical case of this is Braima Seidi, a cashew farmer who said "I have never earned as much money as this year...I always managed about two-and-a-half tons, but as the prices were low my income was too. With the boom in the sector, he said he had made enough money to build a house, purchase a motorbike, and buy a ton of rice for his family. This benefit also extends to the economy. As cashew nuts constitute the main export commodity of the country (about 90 percent), it is tremendously weighting in the country's GDP and contributing significantly to the State Budget. For that the economy of Guinea Bissau has continued to witness growth in recent times, despite the political crises. The gross domestic product (GDP) of Guinea Bissau grew by an estimated 4.9% in 2016, driven by a good agricultural season. It was also projected that the country may see real GDP growth of about 5% in 2017 and 2018. The recovery that began following the return to constitutional order in 2014 is continuing, aided by an exceptional year for cashew sales and a notable expansion in the harvest of food crops (8.9%). However, the political climate, which is replete with uncertainty, does not favour investment, which has also had a negative impact on the potential for growth and the quality thereof. The inability of government to have its programmes approved by the National Popular Assembly meant that its potential

contribution to the GDP was limited. This is also compounded by the fact that donors suspended their budgetary support to the government in 2016 due to a secretive bank rescue initiated by the authorities in 2015, which did not go down well with them. On the whole, the political crises in the country has continued to mitigate the growth of the economy.

The prospects of the economy, which attracts the interests of the national elites and international businesses have also inadvertently fuelled the Guinea Bissau's political crises. Many external actors try to ally with the different factions of the national elites in the hope of gaining concessions or licence for the exploitation of the natural resources in the country. As the elites' contest for the control of the state and the economy for their own benefit, the external actors find it easy to advance their interests. Dealing with a weak, corrupt and unstable state enables these external actors to extract concessions and business agreements that are inimical to the country. For example, in the fishing sector, there two set of actors that operate, namely the artisanal fishers and the industrial fishers. The artisanal fishers are constituted by the ordinary Bissau Guineans. While the more sophisticated industrial fishers are dominated by foreign vessels, which include both legal and illegal ones. the Bissau Guineans only benefit from limited exploitation of the sea resources due to lack of capacity, namely adequate equipment and national institutional capacities for regulation, surveillance and control. National fishing fleet of Guinea Bissau cannot compete with international actors in the sector. Therefore, the fishing sector only supports subsistence for the riparian communities and provided limited national income from licensing of international fishing companies. Even at that, the activities of these big fishing industries

have an impact on the availability of the catches made by artisanal fishers. Due to instability and corruption, management of the fishing resources remains a challenge to the Bissau authorities. Unauthorized vessels are able to exploit the weaknesses of the country's coastal surveillance capability to operate in the territorial waters of the country with impunity. The phenomenon of illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing is a major issue in the Bissau Guinean territorial waters. For instance, in March 2017, Greenpeace teamed up with the Fisheries Surveillance Department of Guinea Bissau (FISCAP) and undertook a joint patrol to fight illegal activities in the country's territorial waters. Four vessels were arrested and brought to Bissau port for investigation by local authorities for illegal transshipment at sea, failure to display readable names on the vessels, non-payment of fines, and the use of illegal fishing equipment. They were three Chinese-flagged fishing vessels and one flying Comoros flags.

Moreover, although a victim of IUU, Senegal is another beneficiary of the political instability and weak surveillance and control of territorial waters of Guinea Bissau. Senegalese fishermen operate with near impunity. In July 2017, the maritime surveillance of Guinea Bissau managed to capture seven canoes belonging to the Senegalese, while four others escaped. Research has shown that these infringement by the Senegalese fishing canoes is regular.

Big industrial vessels, which are beyond the reach of the country's surveillance, are also present and they do greater harm to the Bissau Guinean sea resources. In general, West Africa is hard hit by IUU, which is estimated to reduce the number of jobs in artisanal sectors in the region by 300,000. It was reported that from 2010 to 2016, Mauritania, Senegal, The

Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, and Sierra Leone lost around 2.3 billion USD annually in revenues, while a minimal amount of 13 million USD was recovered through Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS). The highest number of IUU incidents in the West African region occurred in Guinea Bissau, which, in 2014 alone, the authorities documented as many as eight vessels fishing illegally during just one week of patrol.

Even the authorized fishing vessels operate on the basis of poorly negotiated agreements. For instance, in 2007, the EU and Guinea-Bissau concluded a fisheries partnership agreement, which came into effect on 16 June 2007. This fisheries agreement allowed EU vessels from Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece and France to fish in Guinea-Bissau's waters. It was a multi-species agreement covering tuna as well as cephalopods, shrimps and demersal species. The agreement was for four-years, renewable,

and envisaged to cover the periods 16.6.2007 - 15.6.2011 and 16.6.2011 - 15.6.2015. Financial commitment made by the EU with regards to this agreement is 9.200.000 euros/year, including 3.000.000 euros/year to support the fisheries sector. This agreement shows how profitable the fishing sector could be for the country. However, the terms seem unfavourable to Guinea Bissau and currently there are discussions on reviewing it. If the country had a stable, formidable institution with the requisite capacities, the partnership agreement with the EU could have been better. But, this is a country that cannot negotiate good deal with a strong investor, nor exploit these resources by itself. Thus, the agreement was signed.

The forgone analysis shows how immense the economic resources and potentials of Guinea Bissau. These resources influence the politics of the state.

WHAT OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE IN GUINEA BISSAU?

There are opportunities and challenges to look out for in addressing the political impasse in Guinea Bissau. Especially around some of the conflict drivers addressed by the Conakry Accord, there are a number of developments that offer both opportunities and challenges for the future. One, the defence and security sector reform (DSSR): The DSSR programme pursued by multiple partners is an important stabiliser of the Bissau Guinean polity. Owing to its origin as a guerrilla movement, the armed forces exercised considerable influence on the political processes in the country. They were involved in coups, matinees, assassinations and drug trafficking. The police and National Guards have been unable to fulfil their core functions properly. The judiciary and civil/public service operate below the optimum. In view of these, Guinea Bissau adopted a strategic document on DSSR in November 2006. The objective of the DSSR is to change this situation. Since then, the country has received assistance and pledges of support from ECOWAS, AU, UNIOGBIS, EU, CPLP, International Organisation of Francophonie (OIF) and other bilateral partners. After delays caused by the coup d'état of 2012, which made many partners to withdraw, ECOWAS started the implementation of its support programme in 2013. The programme includes infrastructure and barracks rehabilitation, pension fund, demobilisation/retirement/recruitment, reinsertion/reintegration, training and institutional support. It was estimated to cost 63 million US dollars. From these ECOWAS has been able to rehabilitate four of the 12 selected barracks and identified 2282 military/police/national guard personnel for placement within

a pension scheme after their demobilisation and retirement. This figure, which is about half of the total number of the armed forces in the country, includes liberation war heroes, who have remained in service since the days of the liberation war. However, this process has been stalled by the introduction of the payment of Gratuity, intended to provide a substantial means of settlement of the retirees into their new life. There was fear that if insignificant amounts were paid to them as pension, they might come back and disturb the system after spending it. However, the estimated sum for the gratuity is over 58 million US dollars, which is more than the amount needed for payment of pension, estimated at about 25 million US dollars. ECOWAS is still negotiating with the authorities to find a way of resolving the issue of the gratuity.

Before ECOWAS, the EU provided financial and technical assistance for the implementation of SSR under the 9th and 10th European Development Fund (EDF) covering the period 2008-2013 for an amount of 27 million euros. These covered a wide range of sectors, including justice sector reform (6 million euros), strengthening law-enforcement in combating drug trafficking (2 million euros), a demobilization programme (7.7 million euros), and three technical advisors deployed since October 2007 to provide advice on the institutional framework for SSR, the development of instruments for compensation and reintegration, setting up pension schemes and preparation of the remaining processes needed for the SSR process. Besides the EU, there were many other examples of international bilateral and multilateral partners involvement in DSSR in Guinea Bissau. These include technical assistance from Portugal; support to the Security Forces Modernisation Programme, including training

for law enforcement by Brazil and Portugal; support by Spain, Italy, UK and UNDP to the Programme for Capacity-building to Control Organized Crime including equipment and technical assistance; support by UNDP under the Defence Restructuring and Resizing Programme; support by the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), Portugal, Brazil and Spain to the Defence Forces Modernization Programme, to rehabilitate military infrastructure and military-technical cooperation; support by China, Portugal, France, Germany, the PBF and UNDP under the Justice and Security Programme, including administration of justice, rule of law, access to justice and penitentiary infrastructure and administration; and strategic support to the SSR process, currently by Brazil and UK, among others. With all these programmes, the defence and security sector reform are yet to reach the desired level. Christoph Kohl summarized the key reasons for this as 1.) vastly differing understandings and expectations on the donor and on the Bissau-Guinean side, 2.) lacking coordination, integration, flexibility and continuity among the various reform strategies, 3.) structural procedural constraints on the donor side that yield rigid and short-term project approaches, 4.) inadequate financial resources, 5.) insufficient incorporation of societal actors and representatives from the Bissau-Guinean security sector within the reform process, and 6.) poor communication. Thus, more effort needs to go into exploiting the huge interests of partners, coordination and ownership by Guinea Bissau.

Two, the imminent withdrawal of ECOMIB: the imminent withdrawal of ECOMIB is putting pressure on the politicians to accelerate dialogue and resolution of the political impasse. The President has had several consultations with key stakeholders with the support of the women's group. Although, the contentious issue around

the appointment of the prime minister still remains, at least discussions have been taking place. With the current political balance between the factions within the PAIGC, no quick resolution is possible, especially as each has decided to dig in. If ECOWAS withdraws its mission, there is a risk of reversal of gains made in the last five years. As the defence and security sector of the country is yet to be fully reformed, the absence of ECOMIB could create room for some young officers to overthrow the recalcitrant politicians. Therefore, this is a challenge that needs close attention.

Three, the sustained international attention: Although, the support of development partners is declining, it can be argued that international attention on the situation in the country has been largely sustained. On the political level, the situation of the country has remained in the agenda of ECOWAS, AU, UN, CPLP and EU. These organisations, which formed themselves into the P5 Group, have continued to engage on a daily basis with events on the ground, in the country. They have been jointly mediating in the crisis, as well as, collaborating and exchanging with each other. The P5 have been having regular consultations with the key political actors, who have found in them a useful avenue of providing their own sides of the story to the international community. For example, in December 2016, Cipriano Cassama, the speaker of parliament invited them and gave them a report of his effort towards resolving the impasse. He said he saw not only the need, but also the duty of reporting to them. Again, in March 2017, he invited them and shared with them a proposal he shared with the State Council. The government also engages with the P5 group. Whenever situation demands, the P5 uses a unified voice. For instance, worried by incendiary comments from some eminent personalities in the People's National Assembly

and in the government, the P5 issued a joint statement calling for restraint. This presence of the group in the evolving crisis has an assuaging effect in the tension in the country, as the parties find vent for their concerns.

On the socio-economic front, the continuous role played by the World Bank, IMF and other development partners have been very helpful to the institutions of the state. For instance, towards revitalising economic activity and reducing poverty, the IMF provided the country a three-year Extended Credit Facility (ECF) of SDR17.04 million in July 2015. Two years after, Guinea Bissau is only able to access SDR 7.95 million, which was used to shore up budgetary resources in a context of challenging domestic resource mobilisation and declining support from development partners. This is significant in terms of assisting the state to function. Furthermore, the African Development Bank Grant to the country for economic and financial governance strengthening is another important support to Guinea Bissau. Scheduled to cover from July 2015 to June 2019, the five million ADB unit of account project is aimed at improving public finance management, fight against anti-corruption, strengthening the private sector and non-state actors and promoting rule of law. Another important intervention is the World Food Programme capacity development for the Government within the framework of the country's *Terra Ranka* Strategic Plan 2015–2020. The support is targeting the reduction of undernutrition, increase access to education and improve national capacities for monitoring food security. These and many similar supports in the socio-economic sector is helping to reduce the negative effects of the political impasse on the country.

Four, the forthcoming legislative elections in 2018: the legislative elections in 2018 is an opportunity for changing the balance in the Parliament. A new configuration of political party alliance could enable one faction of the PAIGC to triumph over the other. This could put a temporary end to the crisis. It is also an opportunity for the population of the country to decide on whom to entrust their affairs. But it is also potentially a contentions moment that could lead to more serious crisis. As the West African forces, ECOMIB, are about to withdraw, without them on the ground, there could be chaos. Unless, the DSSR is stepped up and attained, the national defence and security institutions may not be able to cope.

Five, the resilience of the Bissau Guinea civil society is another opportunity for sustaining international assistance to the country. Thus far, the people have demonstrated resilience in the face of attempts at manipulation of religion and ethnicity, endured long suffering under a government without programme. Although, the labour and trade unions have been on and off strikes, their street protests and demonstrations have not degenerated to serious instability.

CONCLUSION

The current political crisis in Guinea Bissau is a manifestation of elite's conversations on the socio-economic and political transformation of their country from a single-party socialist state to a liberal democratic state with a market-oriented economy. These conversations have been both violent and peaceful. The separation of state and market typical in western democracies has not yet occurred. The Bissau Guinean state is still a player in the economy. With a private sector that is undeveloped, the state dominates. Consequently, the transformation has created room for some elites that are both politicians and businessmen. Both President Vaz and Mr. Pereira are businessmen, for instance. Competition for access to resources has been translated into the struggle for the control of the state. Ethno-religious sentiment, which Amilcar Cabral and his comrades tried to transform through the *national-unity-in-ethnic-diversity-model*, is increasingly being used as a political bargaining tool. In their contest for political control, the elites have exploited the lacuna in the country's semi-presidential system to make the state dysfunctional. The constitutional provisions regarding the distribution of powers among the organs of sovereignty is problematic in practice. As factions take control of one of the organs of sovereignty, they use

their position to create stalemate in governance. This is what explains the current political impasse created by the two factions within the PAIGC, each led by the President José Mário Vaz as President and his party leader and former prime minister, Domingos Simões Pereira. The ECOWAS-brokered Conakry Accord was intended to serve as a mechanism for resolving the disagreements over the appointment of the prime minister and the cabinet. It was also aimed to advance the national conversations over constitutional and political reform and set the country on the path of development. Although, the international community still finds the Accord as an important framework for ending the political impasse, patience for the slow pace of the elites' negotiations and compromises is running out. ECOWAS is putting pressure on the elites to end the crisis by threatening to withdraw ECOMIB, which provides both protection and security to the political elites and the state institutions. The withdrawal of ECOMIB, which was slated to begin by the end of September 2017, could plunge the country into an uncertain condition. There is a risk of reversal of gains made in the recovery of the economy, reform of the defence and security sector and democratisation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In terms of focus for the future, therefore, this study recommends the following:

Short term

- Delay in the withdrawal of ECOMIB: As the main force for the security and stability of the country, ECOWAS should consider delaying the withdrawal of ECOMIB. This is to support the on-going dialogue among the elites which was instituted by the Conakry Accord. Since, the military have been kept out of the current political crisis, thanks to the presence of ECOMIB and other international efforts relating to the DSSR, it is imperative to maintain the political space for the conversation of the elites to continue. As the 2018 legislative elections, the political crisis may be heightened by the desire of each faction to survive the political struggle.
- The P5 group may consider taking a more proactive mediation role in ending the current impasse. If the elites are unable to resolve the disagreements on their own, the international community could arbitrate in the crisis and bring a technocrat, a civil society leader, or an independent prominent figure to lead an inclusive government as provided in the Conakry Accord. As it stands, the elites cannot be left to deal with the situation on their own, because each faction is digging and determined not to blink first.
- The international community, led by the P5 group, should focus on the forthcoming 2018 legislative elections and support the electoral process in the hope that this could give the population the opportunity to change the current balance in the parliament, thereby arbitrating on who to entrust their affairs. The tenure of the current management of the National Electoral Commission (NEC) has expired, and its reconstitution is normally done in the plenary of the People's National Assembly. Therefore, the current political impasse could affect the forthcoming elections, if it is not resolved.
- Sanction regimes on individuals or organisations committing acts that undermine the peace, security, stability and development of the country and other countries should be sustained. The hot pursuit of drug dealers by the international community led by the US is a good example of how global actions could mitigate global problems. ECOWAS could also apply its threats of sanction to individuals or groups that destabilise the on-going national political conversations and dialogue.
- Support civil society engagement with the political situation, the women, youth, traditional and religious leaders, as well as the labour and trade unions. The civil society should be encouraged to pursue and promote the interests of the people and not identify with self-interests of the political elites.
- The different DSSR programmes pursued by partners should be a subject of coordination, monitoring and evaluation by the P5 group. The issue of Gratuity should be incorporated into the pension scheme, and funds could be mobilised to pay off the gratuity. Other aspects of the DSSR, such as police and justice reform should also be given more attention.

- The economic and financial reforms of the country supported by international financial and development institutions should continue. The 2015-2020 Terra Ranka development strategy should be salvaged and implemented, as much as possible.

Medium Term

- As envisaged in the Conakry Accords, the constitutional reform process should be pursued as part of national dialogue and specifically targeted to address the issue of separation of powers between the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary.
- Political reform processes should be initiated to discourage political office holders from holding or promoting private business.
- The political reform should also include regulating political party financing, the role of media and security forces during elections to ensure equitable or fair allocation air time, and security coverage for different stakeholders.
- The reform process should provide space for traditional and religious leaders, women and youth, to promote national voice, rather than divisive campaigns in the country's political processes.
- National legislations and agencies should be set up or strengthened to establish economic and financial laws and regulations in the affairs of the country in order to address the issue of corruption, economic and financial misconducts by investors and national officials.

Long term

- The Bissau Guineans should work towards making their rich natural and agricultural resources beneficial to the population and contribute to the economic and food security of Africa. This can be achieved by improving the country's bargaining and negotiations capacity in order to improve her terms of trade and foreign investments.
- The national stakeholders should pursue a programme on national integration akin to that of the national-unity-in-ethnic-diversity-model implemented by the founding leaders of the country.
- The government should also pursue a foreign policy that takes into account the geo-strategic position of the country. The government should focus on good neighbourliness and micro-regional conventions in the management of water resources, fighting piracy and other crimes along the land borders.

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About this study

Guinea Bissau is a small West African country with roughly 1.85 million people, which has progressively seen violence and instability. Since the independence of Portugal in 1974 after 11 years of revolutionary struggle the country has experienced military coups, mutinies, assassinations, and a civil war. In 2014, after a decade marked by coups, instability and intermittent violence, President José Mário Vaz returned to the country. There was hope for the future stability of the country, which never had an elected government that served a full mandate. However, this was not to be. In the last one and a half years, the country has been engulfed by bitter political rivalries among

the political elites in the country. At the centre of these bitter political rivalries are the President, Jose Mario Vaz and his leading party leader and Prime Minister Domingoes Simoes Pereira. In a bid to break the political deadlock, a high-level ECOWAS mediation effort was launched under His Excellency Professor Alpha Conde, President of Guinea (Conakry), a road map and a peace agreement were signed by the political rival elites in Bissau and Conakry in 2016 respectively. These agreements are collectively called “the Conakry Accord”. However, its implementation is fraught with great difficulties, which sadly plunge the country every day into a deeper crisis.

