



Dr. Gilles Olakounlé Yabi

# **The Role of ECOWAS in Managing Political Crisis and Conflict**

**The Cases of Guinea and Guinea-Bissau**

ECOWAS and the cases of Guinea and Guinea-Bissau

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Original in French, translated by Roger Addah

## About the author

**Yabi Gilles Olakounlé:** With a PhD in development economics from the University of Clermont-Ferrand I-France, as a former journalist and political analyst, Gilles Yabi is an independent consultant and researcher in the fields of conflict analysis, peacekeeping operations and political governance, particularly in West Africa. As part of his missions as consultant and researcher, he had collaborated with the Foundation for International Relations and External Dialogue (FRIDE, Spain), Centre for Research and Action for Peace (CERAP in Côte d'Ivoire ), the Open Society Institute (OSI, U.S.) and now with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. From September 2004 to May 2008, he served as senior policy analyst in the West Africa office of the International Crisis Group and was particularly focusing on Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea. Before joining Crisis Group, he worked as a journalist with the International weekly newspaper Jeune Afrique edited in Paris.

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## List of Acronyms

UNSOPBGBIS	United Nations Support Office for Peace Building in Guinea-Bissau	DPG	Democratic Party of Guinea
AfDB	African Development Bank	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
ABPG	Autonomous Regiment of the Presidential Guards	RPID	Republican Party for Independence and Development
ECOWAS	Economic Community Of West African States	SRP	Social Renewal Party
CEN	Community of Sahelo-Saharan States	PUP	Party for Unity and Progress
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission	GPR	Guinea People's Rally
RECs	Regional Economic Communities	RUF	Revolutionary United Front
MCNR	Military Committee on National Recovery/ Comité militaire de redressement national	AU	African Union
MCNR	Mediation Council on Security and National Reconciliation	EU	European Union
NCDD	National Council for Democracy and Development	WAEMU	West African Economic and Monetary Union
NTC	National Transitional Council	ULIMO	United Movement for Democracy in Liberia
CPF	Conflict Prevention Framework	UNODC	United Nations Office against Drug and Crime
ICCJ	International Criminal Court of Justice	UNOWA	United Nations Office for West Africa
CPSS	Community of Portuguese Speaking States		
CPS	Council on Peace and Security		
TCNR	Transitional Council for National Recovery		
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Monitoring Group (Groupe de contrôle de cessez-le-feu de la CEDEAO)		
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States		
PRAF	People's Revolutionary Armed Forces		
IMF	International Monetary Fund		
ICG-G	International Contact Group on Guinea		
ICG-GB	International Contact Group on Guinea-Bissau		
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy		
CMDF	Casamance Movement of Democratic Forces		
MRU	Mano River Union		
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia		
IOF	International Organisation of French Speaking Countries		
UNO	United Nations Organisation		
OAU	Organisation of African Union		
APIGC	African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde		

## Summary

Over the 2007-2010 period in Guinea and 2005-2010 in Guinea Bissau, officials of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have demonstrated a real political will to rely on the Protocol on the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peace-keeping and Security adopted in December, 1999 and the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance adopted in December, 2001 to positively influence political and security developments. The ECOWAS Commission is clearly committed to play its part by dispatching fact-finding and election observer missions, by appointing special representatives and mediators as well as initiating the establishment of international contact groups. The Commission has also defended the new values upheld by the regional organisation through firm public condemnation of human rights violations perpetrated by the armed forces in both countries in the last few years. The will to act and defend the principles of constitutional convergence that the organisation has adopted is, however, not enough to make a decisive contribution to the quest for lasting peace and security in especially difficult situations.

The interest that ECOWAS has shown in Guinea Bissau was reflected in different initiatives which made it possible to temporarily calm-down tensions without dealing with the root causes of structural instability and political violence in the country. The recurrent crises in this country are the signs of a laborious and erratic process of building a State that would be legitimate as well as capable of guaranteeing the security of its citizens and leaders. Conflict prevention implies carrying out successfully far-reaching reforms in the security sector, putting a stop to the involvement of military leaders in crime, reform of the public administration and improvement of economic management in order to restore credibility in a particularly deprived State. The will and declarations of intention of ECOWAS can only have a decisive impact to the extent that they are accompanied by a significant and immediate investment in terms of human and financial resources. In Guinea, the organisation has been the driving force of the international community following the takeover of power by the military junta in December, 2008.

The stand adopted by the Community combined firmness on principles, political realism and international mobilisation to formulate requirements for a short transition leading to the transfer of power to elected civilian

political leaders. When the military leaders began to renege on their initial commitments, the reaction of the international contact group, led by ECOWAS and the African Union, helped to marginalise the junta's most hostile wing and alienate the military from the exercise of power.

Managing complex situations with very limited human and financial resources for ECOWAS implies setting priorities, clearly identifying what it can achieve in the short, medium and long term and map out differentiated strategies taking into account the most imminent threats to peace and security in each of the countries within its community space. The external partners of ECOWAS must, for their part, ensure that the assistance that they offer does not lead to a proliferation of disparate initiatives that might weaken strategic thinking within the organisation and cause a significant gap between ambitious action plans and the Commission's capacity to implement them. The various forms of support to ECOWAS institutions to enable it fully play its role as guardian of principles of democratic governance and respect for human rights, which it is already doing very well is crucial. But there is no alternative to strengthening national institutions entrusted with the preservation of peace and security and accountability of the political authorities of each Member State through the collective action of their citizens.

## Introduction

Established in 1975 originally as a regional organization to essentially promote the economic integration of the fifteen Member States, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)<sup>1</sup> has been gradually transformed, under the pressure of political events, into an organization also responsible for finding solutions to armed conflicts and other political crisis which were undermining peace and security within the community space. The 1990 decade saw ECOWAS, spurred by its most powerful member country by far, Nigeria, intervene beyond the conventional diplomatic field by sending thousands of soldiers to try to restore peace in Liberia, then in Sierra Leone and more modestly in Guinea Bissau. The assessment of these military interventions decided by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, the highest decision making body of ECOWAS and implemented by the Executive Secretariat<sup>2</sup> has been the subject of many studies and has generated intense debates twenty year after the establishment of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group, ECOMOG, the peacekeeping force of the organization. What seems undeniable is that ECOWAS indeed faced enormous difficulties in achieving its objectives of restoring peace where it intervened but its military and diplomatic engagement contributed immensely to the international effort which finally helped in ending conflicts that devastated the Mano River Basin region between 1990 and 2003.

ECOWAS interventions in the 1990s were, first and foremost, geared towards ending civil wars involving one or several armed rebel groups and the government of legally recognized Member State. The Assembly of Heads of State and Government was going to the rescue of one of its members facing armed rebellion. The aim was indeed to defend the legality embodied by a sitting president and government and not necessarily to defend the political standards adopted by the community like the respect of specific democratic principles or human rights. When Nigeria decided that ECOMOG should intervene in

Liberia a few months after Charles Taylor's rebel movement attacked the government of Samuel Doe, neither the victim of the attack nor the Nigerian government could be described as models of democracy and respect for human rights.

The decade of 1990s was also marked by democratic transitions on the African continent in general and West Africa in particular, with varied fortunes depending on the country. ECOWAS logically could not represent values and defend political principles that were barely beginning to be officially accepted by Heads of State and Government of Member States of the Organization. It is the Protocol on the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security adopted in December 1999 and complemented by the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good governance, adopted in December 2002, which established a clear link between the objective of conflict prevention and resolution and the will to develop strong political principles like the community's objection to any accession to power through unconstitutional means and the possibility to intervene in case of serious and massive violation of human rights. These are to a large extent the same general principles that were stated in the Constitutive Act of the African Union (AU) adopted in July 2001. The AU and ECOWAS mechanisms which are meant to help them maintain peace and security at the continental and regional level respectively are presented under section I.

This study reviews actions taken by ECOWAS under its Mechanism for the Prevention, Management, Resolution of Conflicts, Peacekeeping and Security in two fragile countries of the region, namely the Republic of Guinea Bissau and the Republic of Guinea. The former experienced an armed conflict between 1998 and 1999 and played host to ECOMOG troops for a very brief period before the end of the war. Guinea Bissau continued to show signs of political instability and violence over a period of ten years after this intervention, despite the presence a United Nations Peace Building Support Office (UNOGBIS) and sustained attention from ECOWAS. The study will examine the role of ECOWAS starting from 2005, a year during which a presidential election brought to a close a transitional period after the coup d'état which occurred in September 2003 in a country that had witnessed much in its turbulent history. How did ECOWAS attempt to help a country as fragile as Guinea Bissau to reduce the risk of a resurgence of armed conflicts and to come out of a vicious circle of political instability, lack of

1. The fifteen Member States of ECOWAS are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. Mauritania withdrew from the organization in 2002.

2. The Executive Secretariat of ECOWAS based in Abuja, Nigeria, became the ECOWAS Commission in January 2007, following institutional reforms. The Executive Secretary, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, then became the first President of the ECOWAS Commission.

economic and social progress and criminalization of the State? This study will respond to this question by, in the first instance, describing the historical context which accounts for the structural political fragility of Guinea Bissau (section II) and, secondly, drawing a parallel between political events covering the period 2005 to end 2009 and ECOWAS initiatives and reactions (Section III).

The history of the Republic of Guinea is no less turbulent than that of its neighbour, though it is basically different in many respects. Having attained independence about fifteen years before Guinea Bissau, it had been ruled by only two presidents during its fifty years of existence. The slow end of the second regime due to the deteriorating health of President Lansana Conté, the embodiment of the regime has been since 2003 a source of grave concern for ECOWAS insofar as it was also raising the issue of succession crisis in context marked by weak institutions and serious economic and social difficulties facing the people. Section IV provides the main outlines of the historical context within which the crisis in Guinea evolved while section V shows the stands and actions taken by ECOWAS between January 2007—at the time of the general strike and unprecedented demonstrations violently quelled by the Conakry authorities—and December 2009, a year after the demise of President Conté and the takeover by a military junta.



## I. African Peace and Security Architecture: principles, components, and role of regional organizations

### I.1. The African Union and the peace and security architecture at the continental level

As a successor to the Organization of African Unity, African Union was established during the Summit of Heads of State and Government held on 9th July 2002 in Durban, South Africa. The new Pan-African organization, drawing lessons from the much criticized performance of the OAU (1963 -2002), states in its Constitutive Treaty (adopted on 11 July 2000) great ambitions in terms of promoting the political and economic integration of the continent. Among the 14 objectives stated in the Treaty are the following three: “promote peace, security and stability on the continent”, “promote democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and stability on the continent”, “promote and protect human and peoples’ rights in accordance with the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights and other relevant instruments on human rights”.<sup>3</sup>

The operational principles of the AU also bear testimony to the primacy given to issues of peace, security and governance based on respect for human rights and democracy. One can mention principles such as the “formulation of a common defence policy for the African continent”, “ban on resorting or threatening to resort to the use of force between Member States of the Union”, “non interference in the internal affairs of another Member States”, “the right of the Union to intervene in a Member State upon a decision of the Conference in some serious circumstances such as: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity”, “the right of Member States to request the intervention of the Union to restore peace and security”, “respect of democratic principles, human rights, rule of law and good governance”, “condemnation and rejection of unconstitutional change of government”.<sup>4</sup>

Like the OAU, the AU recognizes the sovereign equality and interdependence of all Member States and the non interference of a Member State in the internal affairs of another Member State. But the distinction is that, unlike

its predecessor, the AU has adopted the principle of the right to intervene in serious circumstances and affirmed the condemnation and rejection of unconstitutional change of government.<sup>5</sup> The principle of non interference in internal affairs which was sacrosanct at the time of the OAU is no longer absolute and has given way to a doctrine based on democratic rules (rejection of unconstitutional change of government in other words coup d’états) and the protection of people against the most serious forms of political violence (war crime, genocide, crime against humanity). These new principles reflect a major development in the “culture of security” on the African continent.<sup>6</sup> Though there are still no criteria for membership of the AU aside the geographical location on the African continent and the commitment to adhere to the Constitutive Act, Article 23 and 30 demonstrate the AU’s determination to distinguish itself from the OAU. Article 23 provides, among others, for sanctions against any member that will not comply with decisions and policies of the Union, while article 30 stipulates that “Governments which come to power through unconstitutional means shall not be allowed to participate in the Union’s Activities”.

To achieve its objectives in terms of peace and security, the AU has set up a permanent decision organ for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict, i.e. the Council of peace and security. According to the Protocol on the establishment of the Peace and Security Council (PSC), adopted in July 2002 by the Conference of the Union, this organ “is a collective security and early warning system with the aim of allowing a rapid and effective response to conflict and crisis situations in Africa”. According to the Protocol, the CPS “shall be supported by the Commission, a Panel of the wise as well as a continental early warning system and a stand by force and a Special Fund”.<sup>7</sup> Conceived as the equivalent of the United Nations Security Council at the level of the African continent, the CPS comprises fifteen members with equal rights, ten of whom are elected for a term of two years and five for a term of three years.<sup>8</sup>

3. Article 3 of the Constitutive Treaty of the AU.

4. Article 4 of AU Treaty.

5. Articles 4h and 4p of the AU Treaty.

6. For an analysis on the evolution of the AU doctrine, see for example From Non-Intervention to Non-Indifference: The Origins and Development of the African Union’s Security Culture, African Affairs, 106/423, pp. 253-279, March 2007.

7. Article 2 of the Protocol relating to the establishment of the Peace and Security Council.

8. Article 3 of the Protocol on the PSC.

The PSC is expected to take initiatives and lead appropriate actions in situations of potential conflict as well as full blown conflicts. It is responsible for taking all measures required to prevent the resurgence of a conflict which had already been resolved. The President of the AU Commission plays a key role in the conflict prevention and resolution mechanism under the leadership of the CPS. He can draw the Council's attention to any issue, which in his opinion may threaten peace, security and stability on the continent; draw the Panel of the Wise's attention to any issue which, in his view, requires its attention; and he can, on his own initiative or at the request of the PSC, use his good offices, either personally or through Special Envoys, Special Representatives, the Group of Eminent Persons or Regional Mechanisms to prevent potential conflicts, resolve on-going conflicts and promote peace building efforts and initiative and post-conflict reconstruction.<sup>9</sup> The President is assisted mainly by the Commissioner in charge of peace and security issues.

Another important component of the AU machinery for anticipating and preventing conflicts is the Continental Early Warning System provided for under article 12 of the Protocol. It is made up of an observation and monitoring centre known as "The Situation Room" responsible for data collection and analysis on the basis of an appropriate early warning indicators module and observation and monitoring units of Regional Mechanisms directly linked through appropriate communication means to the Situation Room. This system should enable the President of the Commission have access to specific and reliable information on potential conflict situations in member countries and inform in due course the PSC.<sup>10</sup>

The African Stand-by Force is another essential pillar of the peace and security architecture in Africa and undoubtedly the most striking illustration of the AU's ambition on this issue. This African Force should enable the PSC assume its responsibilities in terms of deploying peace missions in accordance with the Constitutive Act.<sup>11</sup> This Force is made up of

multidisciplinary stand-by contingents with civilian and military components stationed in their countries of origin and ready to be deployed as soon as required. The regional brigades which will constitute the African Standby Force are being formed under the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), with some at an advanced stage than others in the process. The brigade set up by ECOWAS, the Regional Economic Community with the longest experience in terms of regional military intervention would be the first to become operational.

The Peace Fund is the financial tool which is expected to provide the AU with the necessary resources to set up its peace and security architecture and fund possible military and civilian missions which are very costly in member countries plagued by conflicts or serious crisis. The Peace Fund is a special fund "made up of financial appropriations from the regular budget of the Union, including arrears of contributions, voluntary contributions of Member States and other sources in Africa, including the private sector, civil society and individuals as well as external fund raising activities carried out by the President of the Commission."<sup>12</sup>

The protocol on the PSC also defines links between the continental mechanism and regional mechanism for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. These are mechanisms set up within RECs which have a strong political and security dimension like ECOWAS. Article 16 of the Protocol provides that "Regional Mechanisms shall be part of the security architecture of the Union which has the primary responsibility to promote peace, security and stability in Africa". The PSC and the President are expected to harmonize and coordinate activities of Regional Mechanisms in the area of peace, security and stability, "to ensure that these activities are consistent with the objectives and principles of the Union" and work "closely with Regional Mechanisms to ensure effective partnership" between the PSC and Regional Mechanisms.<sup>13</sup>

The Protocol states that "modalities for this partnership shall be based on their respective comparative advantage and the prevailing circumstances», this makes room for flexibility in the sharing of roles and

9. Article 10 of the Protocol relating to the establishment of the Peace and Security Council.

10. Article 12 of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council.

11. Article 13 of the Protocol on the PSC.

12. Article 21 of the Protocol on the PSC.

13. Article 16 of the Protocol on the PSC.

responsibilities between the AU and RECs. The PSC and RECs have essentially a mutual consultation and coordination role since “the Regional Mechanisms concerned shall, through the President of the Commission, keep the Peace and Security Council fully and continuously informed about their activities and ensure that these activities are closely coordinated and harmonized with activities of the Peace and Security Council; while “the Peace and Security Council, through the President of the Commission shall also keep the RECs fully and continuously informed of its activities”.

To ensure the coordination and harmonization of positions between the continental and regional levels “the President of the Commission shall convene periodic meetings, at least once a year, with Chief Executives and/or officials in charge of peace and security issues at the level of Regional Mechanisms”. In the same vein, Regional Mechanisms are invited to participate in the review of any issue referred to the PSC, whenever the issue is being addressed by a Mechanism or is of particular interest to this Mechanism. The President of the AU Commission is also invited to participate in meetings and deliberations of Regional Mechanisms.<sup>14</sup>

## **I.2. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution**

At the time of the establishment of ECOWAS in 1975, its main objective was the economic integration of its Member States. To achieve this objective, to a large extent hampered by political crises in the region and rivalries between heads of state for the leadership of the regional organization, there was the need to gradually attach greater importance to peace, defence and security issues. The decade of the 1990s has been particularly decisive for ECOWAS’ evolution into an organization capable of

intervening diplomatically and militarily in cases of serious threats to the security of a Member State and within the community space in general. ECOWAS consequently played a key role in the arduous resolution of protracted and devastating civil wars in Liberia (1990-97 and 2003-2007) and Sierra Leone (1991-2002) which sometimes spilled over into Guinea and threatened to cause unrest in the entire West African region.

ECOWAS then intervened on the diplomatic front through its mediation organs comprising Heads of State and Government of a core of Member States, and militarily by sending thousands of soldiers of the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group drawn from the Nigerian Federal Army and other Member States of the organization. It was after several years of ECOMOG’s military presence under extremely difficult material and security conditions and at the instigation of the regional military power, Nigeria that Sierra Leone and Liberia received United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. ECOMOG was indeed accused of behaving as a warring party to the conflict in Liberia and Sierra Leone or as an occupation force. However, its presence at the height of the fighting and chaos in these two countries, when there was no peace to be maintained, played a major role in the stabilisation of the Mano River Basin region. ECOWAS was led to intervene vigorously in the management of conflict in the 1990s before establishing the institutional and operational basis of a regional mechanism for peace and security supported by the texts of the organization.

### **Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security**

It was in 1999 in Lome that the Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS adopted the Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security. According to the Protocol “the Assembly of Heads of States shall be the highest decision making body on issues relating to conflict prevention, management and resolution, peacekeeping and security, humanitarian support, peace building, control of cross-border crime, proliferation of small arms as well as other issues covered by the provisions of the Mechanism”. But the Assembly shall delegate to the Mediation and Security Council the power to take on its behalf decision for the appropriate implementation of

14. Article 16 of the Protocol also state that «the Commission shall set up liaison offices to the Regional Mechanisms” and “the Regional Mechanisms shall be encouraged to set up liaison offices to the Commission”. It finally provide for the full participation of Regional Mechanism in the establishment and effective running of the Early Warning System and the African Standby Force.

the provisions of the Mechanism”.<sup>15</sup> The Mediation and Security Council (MSC) comprises nine Member States with seven elected by the Assembly, and the two other members being the current chairperson and the immediate past chairman. Members of the MSC can serve for a two-year renewable term.

According to the Protocol<sup>16</sup> the MSC shall take decisions and implement policies on issues of conflict prevention, management, resolution, peacekeeping and security; authorize all forms of intervention and decide among others on the deployment of political and military missions; approve the mandate and terms of reference of these missions; revise periodically these mandates and terms of reference in accordance with developments; and upon the recommendation of the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS<sup>17</sup> nominate the Special Representative of the Executive Secretary and the Commander of the Force (in case of deployment of a military mission in a Member State). The MSC can meet at three levels: the Heads of State and Government level, Ministerial level (Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence, Interior and Security) and at the level of ambassadors of Member States of the Council accredited to ECOWAS in Abuja.

In accordance with the Protocol,<sup>18</sup> the Executive Secretary has the power take measures “which can take the form of fact finding missions, mediation, facilitation, negotiation and reconciliation of parties to the conflict”. He recommends the nomination of the Special Representative and the Commander of the Force to the MSC; appoints members of the Council of Elders; supervises political, administrative and operational activities and provides logistic support for the missions; prepares periodic reports on activities of the Mechanism for the MSC and Member States; deploys fact finding and mediation missions on the field based on his assessment of the situation; convenes, in consultation with the Chairman of the Assembly (of Heads of State and Government), all meetings of the MSC, Council of Elders and the Commission of Defence and Security; and implements all decisions of the MSC. The Executive Secretary is assisted in its functions by the Deputy Executive Secretary in charge of Political,

Defence and Security Affairs (which has become since January 2007 the Commissioner in charge of Political Affairs, Peace and Security).

The organs that support the MSC and Executive Secretariat are the Commission of Defence and Security, the Council of Elders and the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).<sup>19</sup> Member States are represented on the Commission of Defence and Security by Chiefs of Defence Staff or their equivalents; Officials of Ministries responsible for Internal Affairs and Security; Experts from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Each Member State and depending on the agenda, officers of other services such as immigration, customs, drugs and narcotics agencies, border guards or civil protection force. This Commission deals with the technical and administrative aspects and determines logistics requirement of peacekeeping operations. It assists the MSC especially in formulating the mandate of peacekeeping forces, defining the terms of reference of these forces, nominating the commander and determining the composition of the contingents.<sup>20</sup>

The Council of Elders is made up of eminent personalities who can, on behalf of ECOWAS, use their good offices and experience to play the role of mediators, conciliators and facilitators. These personalities “coming from various segments of society, including women, political, traditional and religious leaders” are proposed on a list approved by Mediation and Security Council at the level of Heads of State and Government. These personalities are called upon when the need arises by the Executive Secretary or the MSC to deal with a given conflict situation.

With regard to ECOMOG, it is a structure made up of several multi-purpose units (civilian and military) on stand-by in their country of origin and ready to be deployed in due course. ECOMOG conducts among others observation and peace monitoring missions, peacekeeping and restoration operations, humanitarian action support missions, missions to monitor the enforcement of sanctions, including embargos, preventive deployments, peace building operations, disarmament and demobilization, policing activities to fight fraud and organized crime and any other operations that may be ordered by the CMS.<sup>21</sup> The ECOWAS Mechanism includes finally a sub regional peace and security observation system known as “early

15. Article 6 and 7 of Chapter II of the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security.

16. Article 10, Chapter II of the Protocol.

17. The Executive Secretary of the President has become the President of the ECOWAS Commission from 2007.

18. Chapter II, Article 15 of the Protocol.

19. Chapter III of the Protocol.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*

warning” or “the system”. This system is made up of an observation and monitoring system based at the headquarters of ECOWAS as well as monitoring and observation zones.<sup>22</sup> Information gathered in each of these zones are transmitted to the observation and monitoring centre in Abuja to enable the Department of Political Affairs Peace and Security to anticipate and react promptly to potential crisis situations.

Requirements for implementation of the Mechanism are also specified in the Protocol.<sup>23</sup> It provides for the release of the Mechanism in case of aggression or armed conflict in a Member State or threat thereof; in case of conflict between two or several Member States; in case of internal conflict that threatens to trigger a humanitarian disaster or constitutes a serious threat to peace and security in the sub region; in case of serious and massive violations of Human Rights and the Rule of Law; in the event of overthrow or attempted overthrow of a democratically elected government and any other situation as may be determined by the Mediation and Security Council. The Mechanism is implemented upon a decision of the Assembly of Heads of State and Governments; upon decision the decision of the Mediation and Security Council; at the request of a Member States; on the initiative of the Executive Secretary (President of the Commission) or at the request of the OAU (now African Union established after the adoption of the Mechanism) or the United Nations.

### Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance

ECOWAS has shown its determination to increasingly guide its Member States through new political and institutional standards aimed at promoting peace, security and stability in the region by formulating the “Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution of Conflicts, Peacekeeping and Security”. Adopted by the Heads of States and Government on 21st December 2001, the Supplementary Protocol is meant to complement that of 20th December 1999 on “internal crisis prevention, democracy, good governance, rule of law and individual rights” and bring the necessary improvements to the Mechanism. This Protocol establishes

therefore a clear and direct link between the observance of democratic and good governance standards in Member States and peace as well as security prospects, which is undeniably an improvement in the security culture within the West African community space. The Protocol defines the constitutional principles common to all Member States of ECOWAS, including the separation of executive, legislative and judiciary powers; empowerment and strengthening of Parliaments; independence of the judiciary; prohibition of any unconstitutional change as well as any undemocratic mode of acceding to, and maintaining power.<sup>24</sup> The Supplementary Protocol also defines a series of principles concerning elections in Member States as well as the observation and support role of ECOWAS during elections. For example, it provides that “no substantial modification shall be made to electoral laws in the last six months before elections, except with the consent of a majority of Political Actors”; and that “bodies responsible for organizing elections shall be independent and/or neutral and shall have the confidence of all political actors”.<sup>25</sup>

At the request of any Member State, ECOWAS can provide support and assistance in the organization and conduct of any election in whatever form. The President of the ECOWAS Commission may dispatch to the country concerned an election observation or supervisory mission. At the approach of an election to be held in a Member State, he may send to the country concerned a fact-finding mission to collect all texts governing the election concerned; collect any information and elements marking the framework and conditions under which the elections will be held; gather any useful information on candidates or political parties contesting the elections; meet all candidates, political party officials government authorities and other competent officials; assess the state of preparations; gather all elements useful for the correct appreciation of the situation.<sup>26</sup> The Protocol provides details on the func-

24. This last principle which goes beyond the rejection of only coup d'états stated in the African Union texts would enabled ECOWAS to address for the first time in 2009 in Niger the issue of manipulation of the Constitution by Heads of State who wants to maintain themselves in power through means that can be described as undemocratic. President Mamadou Tandja prolonged his second and last term by three additional years against the decisions of national institutions especially, the Parliament and Constitutional Court which were both dissolved, and against the advice of ECOWAS which suspended Niger. The life span of the new constitution desired by President Tandja and extension of his term of office were cut short by a successful military coup d'état in February 2010.

25. Articles 2 and 3 of the Supplementary Protocol.

26. Article 13 of the Supplementary Protocol.

22. Ibid.

23. Article 23 Chapter V of the Protocol.

tioning of election observation missions till the submission of the report to the President of the Commission who will forward it, if necessary, with his personal observations to the Mediation and Security Council which decides on recommendations to be made to the country concerned and/or to all Member States and, when the need arises, measures to be taken.<sup>27</sup> The aim of these election observation and information missions is to avoid that the usual tensions in electoral periods degenerate into violent conflicts.

The Supplementary Protocol also aims at setting community standards concerning the role of armed and security forces within a democratic framework. It reaffirms among others that “the army and public security forces shall be under the command of a legally constituted civilian authority”, prohibits “the use of arms to disperse non violent meetings or demonstrations”, authorises “the recourse to the use of minimal or proportionate force in case violent demonstrations and prohibits “in any case the recourse to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment”.<sup>28</sup> It indicates that “personnel of armed forces and those of public security forces, as part of their training, shall receive instructions on their Constitution, principles and rules of ECOWAS, human rights; humanitarian law and democratic principles”.<sup>29</sup>

Finally, the Protocol includes sanctions that the Authority of Heads of State and Government can apply against a Member State in cases where “democracy is abruptly brought to an end by any means or where there is massive violation of human rights.”<sup>30</sup> Upon the recommendation of the Mediation and Security Council, a decision may be taken at an appropriate time to apply sanctions which may range, in order of severity, from the refusal to support candidates presented by the country concerned for elective positions in international organizations to the suspension of the country concerned from all governing bodies of ECOWAS through the refusal to hold ECOWAS meetings in the country concerned. In case of suspension, the Protocol provides that ECOWAS will continue to “monitor, encourage and support efforts made by the Member State suspended to return to normalcy and constitutional order”.<sup>31</sup>

27. Article 18 of the Supplementary Protocol.

28. Section IV of the Supplementary Protocol.

29. Ibid.

30. Article 45 of the Supplementary Protocol.

31. Ibid.

## ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework

The Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security as defined by the initial Protocol of December 1999 and complemented and amended by the Supplementary Protocol of 2001 enabled ECOWAS to legitimize and further structure its interventions in emerging or existing political crisis in Member States. ECOWAS at the level of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government and also at the level of the Executive Secretariat (now the Commission) had to make pronouncements on the quality of electoral processes in a number of member countries as well as unconstitutional means of accession to power in a number of countries like the situation in Togo after the demise of President Gnassingbe Eyadema (2005). The armed conflict in Cote d'Ivoire, the second economic power in the community (September 2002), the return of the civil war in Liberia before Charles Taylor's exile in August 2003, the search for stabilisation in Sierra Leone, the deterioration of the political and economic situation in Guinea, the 2005 elections in Guinea Bissau as well as permanent political and military tensions in this country against the backdrop of rising international drug trafficking, hardly gave a respite to ECOWAS organs and immediately put to test the ambitions of the Mechanism. The need for coordination of the Mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution between ECOWAS and the AU, which is undergoing fundamental changes, and the UN present through its peacekeeping and peace building missions and its Office for Africa, has become evident. The transformation of the Executive Secretariat into ECOWAS Commission came into effect in January 2007 and has strengthened the visibility and supranational character of the organization.

Following a series of consultations and experts' meetings, the Mediation and Security Council adopted on 16th January 2008 a Regulation defining the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF), a document which aims at clarifying the strategy for the implementation of principles contained in the 1999 and 2001 Protocols. In this new document, it is stated that ECOWAS has “set up several promising organs in the area of conflict prevention to underpin its mandates, including the Early Warning System, the Mediation and Security Council, the Council of the Wise and Special Mediators” but “the implementation of the preventive aspects of the Mechanism has sometimes lacked a strategic approach. This is

characterized by weak internal coordination, under-utilization and misdirection of existing human resources as well as the deployment of limited instruments.”<sup>32</sup>

It is also stated that “the distribution of roles and responsibilities between ECOWAS and Member States, between Member States and Civil Society, as well as between ECOWAS and external partners is weak resulting in the utilization of limited instruments, piecemeal interventions and late responses to crises”.<sup>33</sup>

The ECPF is designed as “a comprehensive operational conflict prevention and peace-building strategy that enables the ECOWAS system and Member States to draw on human and financial resources at the regional (including civil society and the private sector) and international levels in their efforts to creatively transform conflicts”, “a guide for enhancing cohesion and synergy between relevant ECOWAS departments on conflict prevention initiatives...” and “a reference for developing process-based cooperation with regional and international stakeholders, including the private sector, civil society, African RECs, the AU and UN systems, as well as development partners, on conflict prevention and peace-building around concrete interventions.”<sup>34</sup> Divided into fourteen components starting with Early Warning, Preventive Diplomacy and Political Governance, Human Rights and Rule of Law, the ECPF is now the main document on which the Commission relies for the mobilisation of assistance from external partners in the area of peace and security.<sup>35</sup> The European Union (EU) has therefore undertaken to allocate 119 million Euros of its 10th European Development Fund for the operationalization of the ECPF while other partners (like the Danish, German and American Cooperation Agencies) contribute to the financing of the development of action plans for the various components.<sup>36</sup>

32. ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework Regulation MSC/REG.1/01/08, ECOWAS Commission, January 2008.

33. Section II of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework.

34. Article 7 of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework.

35. The other components of the ECPF are: Media; Natural Resource Governance; Cross-Border Initiatives; [8] Security Governance; Practical Disarmament; Women, Peace and Security; Youth Empowerment; ECOWAS Standby Force Humanitarian Assistance; and Peace Education.

36. Deepening Regional Integration in Response to the Global Economic Crisis, 2009 Annual Report, ECOWAS Commission, Abuja, December 2009.

## II. Guinea Bissau: A Turbulent Political History

### II.1. The consequences of the long history: from the struggle for independence to false stability (1960–1997)

Like all African countries which gained independence about half a century ago, Guinea had a specific historical path that is necessary to understand its current political, economic and social situation.<sup>37</sup> The peculiar character of Guinea Bissau (known as Portuguese Guinea during the colonial era) in the West African region is linked to three interrelated factors: together with Cape Verde they were the only two Portuguese colonies in the region; it was the only West African colony which obtained independence through armed struggle; it became independent in 1974, fourteen years after most of the other new States in the region (and sixteen years after neighbouring French Guinea). Sharing borders with Guinea and Senegal, former French colonies which experienced different modes of colonial exploitation, it was isolated for long time, with the Cape Verde Archipelago as only its natural ally. 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, the lack of natural resources of commercial value limited it to secondary role for Portugal compared to its other African colonies.

With Portugal having refused to negotiate the independence the people of the colony were clamouring for, the African Party for Independence founded by a core of elites brought by Amilcar Cabral, a Cape Verdean born in Portuguese Guinea and future national hero, began an armed struggle. Founded in 1956, the African Party for Independence quickly turned into the Party for the Independence for Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), was advocating a bi-national vision and aiming at integration in the struggle for liberation and independ-

ence of Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde. It was from Conakry, the capital of French Guinea which gained independence as far back as 1958, that the PAIGC launch an offensive.<sup>38</sup> The liberation war was marked from 1962 by sabotages, attacks against colonial military barracks and commercial harbours and reprisals by the Portuguese army. The guerrilla war fought by the People's Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARP), the military branch of PAIGC, culminated quickly in military successes and the control of over 70% of the territory by the end of the 1960s.

After years of costly colonial wars in terms of resources and without prospects of victory and convincing strategic motivation, Portuguese military men showed signs of weariness. In Portugal, the "Carnation Revolution" led by officers overthrew the regime of Marcelo Caetano in April 1974. The new Portuguese authorities accepted the principle of independence for Guinea Bissau and other Portuguese colonies in Africa. The PAIGC had accomplished its mission, and henceforth, had the task of building a politically and economically viable nation-state, which is a different kind of challenge altogether. The agricultural economy of the small country was stagnant and the human resource capable of setting up the institutional base of the independent state was extremely limited. Almost all of the people that had secondary or university education were Cape Verdeans or mixed race while the tension between the Cape Verdean elite of the PAIGC and guerrilla fighters recruited mainly from rural area in Guinea Bissau became unavoidable at the time of shaping up the bi-national project of Amilcar Cabral. The latter was assassinated by dissidents in January 1973 under conditions that are yet to be unravelled. However, the immediate future of the country depended outrageously on the political and economic choice the PAIGC had to make in the early years of independence and ultimately on the cohesion, legitimacy and quality of its leadership.

Luis de Almeida Cabral, who succeeded his half brother Amilcar as the leader of the party became the first president of the independent state and had difficulty in maintaining unity within the PAIGC

37. This section which provides a summary of the political history of Guinea Bissau since independence is drawn from *Guinée-Bissau: Besoin d'Etat*, an International Crisis Group Africa Report No 142, 2nd July 2008.

38. Sekou Touré, the first president of Guinea became the anti colonialism figure in the region, when he claimed immediate independence instead of the association formula within a Franco-African community France was proposing to its ex-colonies at the time.



gripped by tensions between Cape Verdeans and Guineans who feared to be marginalized by the Cape Verdeans. During the liberation war, the Cape Verdeans, though small in number, constituted the leadership of the party while Guineans from rural areas particularly those from the “Balante” ethnic group form the bulk of guerrilla combatants.

Luis Cabral attempted to consolidate his power and to protect himself against the ex-combatants which form the new army by promoting close Cape Verdeans military officers. However, the rivalry became obvious between President Cabral and Joao Bernardo Vieira, known as “Nino”, one of the heroes of the liberation war. Though he is from the “Papel” ethnic group, Vieira enjoyed widespread legitimacy among the Balante alongside whom he fought. The majority of Balantes in the army supported Nino Vieira during his show down with Luis Cabral. As speaker of Peoples’ National Assembly then Prime Minister from September 1978, Vieira with the support of most ex-combatants which make up the national army finally took over power through a military coup d’état on 14th November 1980. This coup put an end not only to Luis Cabral’s presidency but also the bi-national project with Cape Verde. Having been stripped off high ranking position they were holding, a number of Cape Verdean militants of the PAIGC left the country.

Nino Vieira was certainly a hero of the independence war popular within the armed forces of the new independence state but he lacked the tools to propose a political, economic and social project for Guinea Bissau which was then free from Cape Verdeans’ influence (but also deprived of the technical and administrative skills) and isolated in a West African region shared among francophone and anglophone countries which already had in the early 1980s twenty years of nation building experience behind them. Vieira concentrated on consolidating his power by relying on the one party state machinery, the PAIGC, and especially an army which inherited the guerrilla fighters and had kept their reflexes. The greater majority of the military men, including those who were promoted to the rank of general officer, received only practical training in the arms profession. To maintain power, Vieira endeavoured to give preference to the army in the distribution of favours without trying to reform and modernize it and neutralize potential opponents who may nurture ambitions of coup d’état. The task was made easier with the concentration of all powers in the hands of the president. He chairs a Revolution-

ary Council with seven out of the nine members coming from the military and which takes decisions concerning the party and the country. Anytime he felt threatened, the Head of State does not only resort to dismissals but also carries out institutional reforms which strengthen his authority.<sup>39</sup>

The most serious threat to Nino Vieira’s power, however, came from his ex-companion-in-arms. Paulo Correia, a very popular Balante soldier in the army, who held the position of Vice President, was arrested together with about fifty other soldiers for a coup attempt in November 1985. Condemned to death, Correia and his five accomplices were executed in July 1986 despite many appeals for clemency from both within and outside the country. This development was not without consequences for President Vieira who was then perceived as an enemy by a number of Balante soldiers who had so far supported him.<sup>40</sup> The fear for coup d’états became constant, a situation which does not allow the commitment to develop this small country poor in natural resources and which is of no great interest for western powers and therefore lacked assistance. A country whose meagre resources were used mainly to stabilize the army and pay with difficulty civil servants’ salaries was not spared international pressures to implement economic and political reforms in the early 1990s.

Like a number of countries in the region, President Vieira agreed to move from a one party state to multipartism in 1991. The craze for the establishment of political parties was the same as in other African countries in democratic transitions in the 1990s. However, as elsewhere also, most of the new political parties tended to rely on a personality who has financial resources and the support of an ethnic group instead of governance projects. The PAIGC, which remained a State within a State and its leader, Nino Vieira won without surprise the first multi party democratic elections organized in 1994. The PAIGC won 62 seats out of 102 in the new parliament; the rest was shared among the new opposition parties, with the most important being the Party for Social Renovation (PRS) led by Kumba Yala. As a tutor of philosophy from the Balante group, he pushed Vieira to a second round

39. For instance in 1984, the Post of Prime Minister was abolished after an accusation of attempted coup d’état was levelled against Victor Saude who was occupying this position. Nino Vieira held concurrently the posts of Head of State and Head of Government till the restoration of the Prime Minister position in 1991.

40. See Guinea Bissau : Besoin d’état, op.cit.

during the presidential polls of August 1994. Kumba Yala's electoral stronghold was Balante and he seemed to have benefitted especially from the support of military men from this ethnic group. The execution of the six conspirators from the Balante ethnic group was used as an electoral argument against President Vieira during the campaign but he warned against the risk of the country being ruled on ethnic lines if Yala should win. The incumbent President Vieira was retained in power with 52% of the votes.

In the aftermath of these multiparty elections, the ethnic factor and its unhealthy link to the issue of the composition and functioning of the armed forces could no longer be overlooked in the national political game. A more positive element in this period of significant political change was the peoples' strong interest in the electoral exercise. The majority of the 400,000 registered voters cast their vote with a turnout rate of 88.91% for parliamentary elections and 89.33% for presidential elections and there was no electoral violence. On the institutional front, Guinea Bissau had a new democratic learning phase marked by the choice of a semi presidential political regime based on the Portuguese model. The 1994 Constitution gave the president the power to dissolve parliament in case of serious political crisis but the Prime Minister who is the head of government is appointed by the president on the basis of party representation within parliament. The government is answerable to Parliament which can pass a vote of no confidence and overthrow it. After fifteen years of concentration of power in the hands of the president and his military and civilian entourage without any real counter power, Vieira had to adjust to the new rules of the game. Beyond Nino Vieira, it was the entire political and military elite, still dominated by ex-combatants of the liberation war who knew each other well and had complex personal relationships, which had to strive to observe the demanding rules of a democratic system. They failed to do so.

President Vieira maintained the authoritarian and personal style of managing the country and the apparent democratic transition did not change the wearing effect of being in power for nearly twenty years. The economic crisis and budget difficulties persisted till the end of the 1990s and strikes by the public service, freed by the political opening, became recurrent, paralysing the State which was already running at minimum level. The political change at the institutional level did not reflect in fundamental economic reforms or the modernization of the

State and much less a reform of the armed forces which continued to function almost autonomously, under the authority of unchallenged former heroes of the liberation war.

## II.2. From civil war to a failed political changeover (1998-2005)

Ironically, it was only a few years after the political opening marked by general multiparty elections that the country plunged into civil war. The low intensity but longstanding conflict in Casamance, a region in the southern part of neighbouring Senegal and culturally close to the latter, is a determining factor in the dangerous rise in tensions among political and military leaders in Guinea Bissau.<sup>41</sup> While Vieira drew closer to Senegal and more broadly to the francophone space by joining in July 1997 the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) and adopting its currency, the CFA franc, President Abdou Diouf put pressure on his counterpart to put an end to the links and arms trafficking between elements in the Guinea Bissau army and rebels of the Movement of Democratic forces of Casamance (MFDC). Vieira laid the responsibility for the shameful link between his army and the enemies of his Dakar ally at the doorstep of his then Chief of Defence Staff, General Ansumane Mane, another important figure in the independence war. Accused of negligence and suspended from his duties, he blamed the arms trafficking on the then Minister for Defence and the President and was relieved of his post and placed under house arrest on 6th June 1998. The following day 7th June, soldiers loyal to Mane deployed in the capital and demanded the resignation of Vieira. The rebellion called for his resignation and the formation of a transitional government to hold new elections.<sup>42</sup>

This was the beginning of an unusual civil war which unfolded at the heart of the capital Bissau lasting and serious human, psychological, social and economic consequences. The fight opposed rebel soldiers supporting Mane and the loyalist supporting the president. The civilian population were initially less concerned as the war

41. The rebellion in Casamance was launched in 1982 by the Movement of Democratic Forces (MFDC) which revolted against the marginalization of this region by the government and claimed independence.

42. See Guinée-Bissau: Besoin d'Etat, op.cit.

was between two people who were very close since the liberation war and were behind the coup d'état in 1980. The military interventions of two neighbouring countries on the side of Vieira's troops were counterproductive because they were considered as external aggressions which rekindle the Guinea Bissau nationalism. Guinea, under the leadership of Lansana Conté sent helicopters and 400 men to support his personal friend, Nino Vieira.<sup>43</sup> Senegal on its part sent a troop of 2200 men to help the president subdue the junta. A number of ex-combatants of the liberation war joined the rank of Mane loyalist to fight the foreign troop. The war raged until the signing of a peace agreement in Abuja on 1st November 1998 between the two brothers turned enemies, Vieira and Mane. This agreement was the result of the diplomatic activism of ECOWAS under the chairmanship of Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo.

The agreement made provision for the withdrawal of foreign forces followed by the deployment of ECOMOG troops, the peacekeeping force of ECOWAS, as well as the instauration of a government of national unity to organize elections at the earliest possible time.<sup>44</sup> A government was formed in February 1999 by the Prime Minister, Francisco Fadul, a personality independent of the political parties. This government strived to mobilize external assistance for the reconstruction—as the limited infrastructure in the capital was to a large extent destroyed by the war—and for the preparation of elections scheduled for November 1999. The deployment of ECOMOG was constrained by financial and logistics difficulties and only 600 men from four countries in the region were present on the ground in March 1999.<sup>45</sup> The situation, however, remained tense, with the implementation of the peace accord coming up against the issue of disarming the presidential guard. By virtue of the Abuja accord, ECOMOG was responsible for the security of the President and Prime Minister and the supervision of the disarmament of warring factions.<sup>46</sup>

While ECOWAS was urgently soliciting international financial assistance to support the rapid deployment of ECOMOG in order to fulfil the mandate stated in the Abuja Accord, the Mane junta re-launched an offensive on 6th May 1999 to disarm Vieira's soldiers. The junta took over Guinea Bissau on 7th May 1999 and put an end to Vieira's presidency after 19 years in power.<sup>47</sup> These events which rendered the Abuja Accord null and void were condemned by ECOWAS during the ministerial meeting held in Lome from 24 to 25 May 1999. The organization invoked both the 7th May coup d'état and difficulties in financing ECOMOG operations to justify the withdrawal of its peacekeeping force less than five months after its deployment though the new Guinea Bissau political and military authorities<sup>48</sup> made a request for ECOMOG to be maintained. After the withdrawal of ECOMOG which reflected in the disenchantment of ECOMOG, external assistance for the transitional process and peace building in the country fell on the United Nations which opened a Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau (UNOGBIS) authorized by the UN Security Council in March 1999.<sup>49</sup>

With the support of the United Nations and other external partners, the transitional government organized parliamentary elections and the first round of presidential elections on 28th November 1999.<sup>50</sup> For the first time after independence, the PAIGC lost its grip over the political scene. It was overtaken by the Party for Social Renovation led by Kumba Yala which won the greater majority of seats in Parliament. Organized on 16th January 2000, the second round of presidential elections was contested by the PRS candidate, Kumba Yala, and that of PAIGC, Malam Bacai Sanha, who had been for a long time the political opponent of Vieira within the party. Yala benefitted from the strong desire for change which he seemed to embody compared to Bacai Sanha who came from the former single party. Kumba Yala was elected with 72% of the votes. No one could deny an

43. The two men knew each other since the underground years of PAIGC. Lansana Conté then commander of the Boke military region in Guinea was directly involved in the support Sekou Touré's Guinea was providing to the struggle for the independence of Guinea Bissau for which Nino Vieira was one of the military strategists.

44. Secretary General's report presented in compliance with resolution 1216 of the Security Council on the situation in Guinea Bissau, S/1999/294, 17 March 1999.

45. The contingents were from Benin, Gambia, Niger and Togo.

46. Secretary General's report presented in compliance with resolution 1216 (1998) of the Security Council, op.cit.

47. Having first of all taken refuge at the Portugal Embassy, the deposed president was allowed to leave the country.

48. Secretary General's report presented in compliance with resolution 1233 (1999) of the Security Council on the situation in Guinea Bissau S/1999/741, 1 July 1999.

49. Secretary General's report presented in compliance with resolution 1233 (1999) of the Security Council on the situation in Guinea Bissau S/1999/741, 1 July 1999.

50. Secretary General's report on developments in the situation in Guinea Bissau and activities of the United Nation Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau, United Nations, 23 December 1999.

ethnic interpretation of this election in people's mind. For a number of Balantes, Yala's accession to power was a victory for all members of this community which was still dominant in the army. Precisely because the Balantes were in the majority in the army since independence and had always been closely linked to political power, the feeling of a number of Guineans from other ethnic groups was dominated by the fear for the "Balantisation" of all centres of power which could lead to poor management of public affairs and constitute a source of serious tensions in the country.<sup>51</sup>

During the first year of his term, it was the wish of the leader of the military junta, Ansumane Mane to continue to play a lead role without submitting himself to the new political authority, which was the greatest source of worry for President Kumba Yala. The former chief of defence staff who forced Vieira out of power through the use of arms, remained the most feared figure within the army and he refused all political positions proposed by President Yala who wanted ensure the army's loyalty by appointing his close allies to head it. Mane preferred to remain independent from the government and arrogated to himself the role of supervising the political game, claiming he was ready to intervene militarily to put things in order when the need arises.<sup>52</sup> In November 2000, Mane contested openly the authority of the president by raising objections to the nomination of several Balante officers before proclaiming himself Chief of Defense Staff in place of General Verissimo Correia Seabra. This new rebellion ended in the death of Ansumane Mane killed in November 2000 officially during a confrontation with soldiers loyal to Correia Seabra. Yala gained then the freedom to manage the country.

Yala proved to be an authoritarian, unpredictable president and eccentric its decisions. He does not even have a team of officials capable of ensuring the running of the State and much less undertake economic, institutional and security reforms that were vital for the country. Within the PRS, people with technical skills and experience in managing public affairs were scarce. Relations with international financial partners deteriorated very rapidly, leading to the suspension of budgetary support provided by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The

State was no longer able to pay public servants' salaries; Arrears accumulated and reached record levels of up to ten months, provoking strikes. While Kumba Yala's term of office could have been an era of post civil war reconstruction, external and internal resource mobilization, and a wide range of reforms starting from the security sector, (army, police, judiciary) and public administration, it was marked by the president's mischief and instability in government. Thus, four Prime Ministers were appointed and dismissed between 2001 and 2003.<sup>53</sup> In November 2002, Kumba Yala dissolved Parliament and called for early parliamentary elections; these could not be held within the time limit set by the Constitution and the country was without government for several months. Anxiety was rife among the people who were tired of the president's incoherent decisions. They welcomed with some relief on 14th September 2003 a new coup d'état carried out by the chief of defence staff, General Verissimo Correia Seabra. The international community condemned the principle of taking over power by force, but was, in actual fact, also relieved by the abrupt end of Kumba Yala's rule.<sup>54</sup>

A new transitional period was set in motion and like the previous one, the transition proceeded as planned, leading to the holding of parliamentary elections in March 2004, only ten months after the coup d'état. Once again, an authority in the army, a former combatant of the liberation war like Vieira and Ansumane Mane, had interfered in the political game to overthrow a ruling president. General Verissimo Correia Seabra led the National Transitional Council but it was the team formed by the interim president, Henrique Pereira Rosa and the Prime Minister Artur Sanha, former Secretary General of Kumba Yala's PRS who managed the transition and had the mandate to organize elections. With the parliamentary elections held in March 2004, the PAIGC came back into the picture and had the majority of seat in Parliament. It was from the great historical party that the new Prime Minister, Carlos Gomez Junior, was chosen. He formed his government in May 2004 while the interim president, Henrique Rosa, stayed on until the organization of presidential

51. Guinée-Bissau: Besoin d'Etat, op.cit.

52. Prior to the parliamentary and presidential elections of November 1999, Mane's military junta proposed a charter which will give the military the role of supervising the political game for a period of ten years. This proposal was naturally rejected by the political class and civil society.

53. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau and activities of the UN Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau, S/2001/237, 16 March 2001; S/2002/1367, 13 December 2002; S/2003/621, 9 June 2003; S/2003/1157, 5 December 2003.

54. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau and activities of the UN Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau, United Nations, 5 December 2003.

election with the first round scheduled for June 2005. However, a new development quickly brought to the fore the extreme fragility of the country. On October 6, a section of the army started a mutiny to protest against the non payment of salaries, the precarious nature of their living conditions and corruption in the military hierarchy. The mutiny culminated in the assassination of the chief of defence staff, Verissimo Correia Seabra the army's spokesman.<sup>55</sup> Once again, no one was tried and convicted for these assassinations.

After the physical elimination of Seabra, it was General Tagme Na Waie, a Balante, who became the Chief of Defence Staff at the request of leaders of the mutiny. Like most of the Army Generals, he owed his position and prestige to his past as combatant in the independence war. He is not well educated but he enjoyed the trust and respect of soldiers all moulded in the memories of the liberation, the only source of unquestionable and long-lasting legitimacy in their view. Tagme Na Waie, with the support of the army played an important role in the outcome of the presidential election held on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2005. Banned from any political activity for ten years starting from 1999 and still in exile in Portugal, the former president Nino Vieira should not have been allowed to participate in the June 2005 elections. In the same way, Kumba Yala, also barred from any political activity for five years, according to the transitional charter that was drawn up after the September 2003 coup d'état. These legal bans could not withstand Guinea Bissau realpolitik whose strings are based on exchange of services and one-off alliances between the most influential individuals and groups in the society are sometimes difficult to unravel.

The combination of a powerful external factor—the financial, logistical and therefore political support from Guinea (Conakry and Senegal) and a decisive internal factor—an agreement with the army led by Tagme Na Waie made it possible for Vieira to stage a winning come back onto the political scene after six years in exile. On 7th April 2005, the former president made a triumphant entry into the Bissau stadium on board a military helicopter provided by his longstanding friend, Lansana Conté, president of Guinea. This perfectly stage-managed come back signalled his ambition to contest the presidential election. Chosen by his PRS party, the other former pres-

ident Kumba Yala, announced his candidature for the election in defiance of the ban on political activity imposed on him. The Supreme Court, under intense pressure, validated the candidacy of Vieira and Yala who had both shown their capacity to mobilize and therefore destabilize in case their personal ambitions were frustrated. Vieira, who has some friends and a lot of enemies in the PAIGC, his former party stood as an independent candidate. The PAIGC chose Malam Banca Sanha who led the country briefly after the forced departure of Vieira in May 1999.

The country was heading towards a tense electoral confrontation between three candidates, two former presidents and one interim president supported by the majority of the PAIGC while another group within the party chose to support Vieira.

Without security guaranties from Tagme Na Waie and the army, Nino Vieira could not have returned to his country without fearing for his life and with the ambition of returning to power through the ballot box. His rule between 1980 and 1999 were marked by episodes of coup attempts that were severely repressed as well as preventive neutralization of his potential rivals within the army. Tagme Na Waie himself was tortured and thrown into prison by Vieira after the 1985 coup attempt. Their objective alliance from 2005, even reduced simply to the army's neutrality vis-à-vis the presidential candidates, could be only disturbing. It can only be based on an agreement by which the head of army will guarantee the security of President Vieira in return for the protection of the army's interest should he win the elections. Within an army bound together in the defence of their collective interest remained, however, deep divisions stemming from old personal rivalries among influential officers who knew each other during the struggle for independence.<sup>56</sup>

55. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau and activities of the UN Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau, S/2004/969, 15th December 2004

56. Vieira could therefore rely on some soldiers who supported him against Ansumane Mane during the 1998-99 war though some elements close to Mane remained influential in the army, which is potentially dangerous for the former president. Tagme Na Waie's control over the armed forces was beginning to wane due to the growing influence of another Balante officer, rear admiral Bubo Na Tchuto, chief of staff of the navy. Navy officers are repeatedly cited in cases trafficking of drugs from Latin America which transit through Guinea Bissau, a new scourge which is drawing once again sustained international attention to the country since 2005-2006

### III. ECOWAS and conflict prevention in Guinea Bissau: a review of the period 2005–2009

#### III.1. Management of electoral and post electoral tensions in 2005 and identification of priority areas

ECOWAS has played an important role in Guinea Bissau since 1997-98 civil war which involved armed forces of two member countries, Senegal and Guinea, fighting alongside forces loyal to president Vieira without any mandate from the regional organization. These bilateral military interventions were disastrous as they intensified and prolonged the armed conflict in the capital. Following mediation efforts by ECOWAS under the chairmanship of the Togolese president, the Abuja Accord paved the way for the cessation of hostilities and the deployment of the first ECOMOG contingents under very difficult logistics and financial conditions.<sup>57</sup> The resumption of fighting which led to the defeat of Nino Vieira on 7th May 1999 then compelled ECOWAS to withdraw its peacekeeping forces and to a large extent pull out of the Guinea crisis and gave way to the United Nations which came in 1999 through the establishment of the United Nation Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau (UNOGBIS). The resources allocated to UNOGBIS were limited compared to the assistance required by the country in terms of disarmament and reform of the armed forces after a short but disastrous civil war.

After adopting, in the meantime, frameworks provided for in the Protocol on the Conflict Prevention Mechanism (December 1999) and the supplementary protocol (December 2001), ECOWAS became active again in Guinea Bissau starting from 2004 and particularly after the 6 October 2004 mutiny. ECOWAS provided a grant of US\$ 500,000 to cover part of arrears in salary payments to soldiers and decided to establish a permanent presence in Guinea Bissau by nominating a Special Representative of the Executive Secretary to collaborate with national authorities and the international community in order to

promote peace.<sup>58</sup> Together with the UN, AU and the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries, ECOWAS helped in easing tensions around the presidential elections held in June and July 2005. The UN played the initial roles of easing pre-electoral tensions linked to the controversial candidatures of Nino Vieira and Kumba Yala. The UN Secretary General appointed in 2005 a special envoy to Guinea Bissau in the person of the former Mozambican President Joachim Chissano. The latter paid a visit to the country from 2nd to 10th May 2005 and met all the major stakeholders in the electoral process as well as leaders of the armed forces from whom he obtained a public commitment to political neutrality and submission to civilian authorities.<sup>59</sup> ECOWAS and AU got directly involved in preventive diplomacy activities by sending a joint high level mission to the country. On May 21 2005, President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria (then Chairman of the AU), President Mamadou Tandja of Niger (then Chairman of ECOWAS), President Abdoulaye Wade of neighbouring Senegal, Prime Minister Cellou Diallo of neighbouring Guinea and the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, Mohamed Ibn Chambas went to Guinea Bissau to encourage all candidates to abide by the rules of the game and election results.<sup>60</sup>

Malam Banca Sanha, the PAIGC candidate came first during the first round organized on 19th June 2005, ahead of Nino Vieira and Kumba Yala who was eliminated (with 25% of the votes) but found himself in a position of a referee. Yala contested for several days the results of the first round which he felt he had won. President Wade of Senegal had to organize a meeting which brought together Yala, Vieira and Sanha to have Yala accept the results of the first round while still claiming that he actually won.<sup>61</sup> The defeated president continued to command a significant proportion of Balante votes. On 2nd July 2005, against all expectations, Yala threw his support behind Nino Vieira who won the second round organized on 24th July 2005 (with 52.35% of the votes) against the PAIGC candidate. The political atmosphere deteriorated after the proclamation of Vieira's victory, as

57. See Section II.2.

58. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau and activities of the UN Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau S/2004/969, 15 December 2004.

59. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau and activities of the UN Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau S/2005/380, 10 June 2005.

60. Ibid.

61. "Guinea-Bissau: Kumba Yala agrees to accept election defeat while insisting he won", IRIN, 28 June 2005.

the results were contested by his opponent. This once again called for international efforts to secure peace after the elections.

The president of the AU Commission dispatched a special envoy in the person of Cape Verde's President, Pedro Rodrigues Pires, who insisted that all electoral disputes must be exclusively addressed in accordance with the law. Sanha and the Prime Minister (and also leader of the PAIGC) Carlos Gomez Junior, however, had difficulty in accepting the final decision of the supreme court in favour of Vieira. Besides the AU special envoy, mediations efforts aimed at ensuring the endorsement of results of the second round were deployed by the Community of Portuguese Speaking countries whose chairman at the time, Fradique Menezes of Sao Tome & Principe, also paid a visit to Guinea Bissau, as well as ECOWAS which had just established a permanent presence in the country with a Special Representative of the Executive Secretary.<sup>62</sup> These efforts yielded results as the newly elected president took the oath of office on 1st October 2005 after all the legal appeals were exhausted by his opponent in the second round. Joao Bernardo Vieira's tenure did not however begin under the best of conditions. This central figure in the political history of the country since 1980 was a source of serious antagonisms and rancour as shown in the post-electoral tension.

The political class remained very polarized in the months that followed Vieira's return to the helm of the State. The president had to cohabit with a Prime Minister and Head of Government from the PAIG, which won the parliamentary elections of March 2004. The PAIGC came out of the presidential elections very divided, a group of leaders headed by Aristide Gomes having chosen to support Vieira, the independent candidate, against that of the party, Bacai Sanha. Long months of post-electoral disputes between July and October 2005 worsened the tension between the elected president and the prime minister. President Vieira's decision to dismiss the head of government was not long in coming. A Vieira loyalist was chosen as early as November 2005, leading to an objection by the PAIG, the majority party in parliament but divided between partisans and opponents of the elected president. Aristide Gomes' government relied on Vieira's support within the PAIGC and the PRS of Kumba Yala whose vote transfer during the second round was

very decisive. The political antagonism moved to Parliament and was opposing staunch supporters and opponents of the president and the Prime Minister.<sup>63</sup> The situation was not conducive to serious discussions on issues to be addressed by the government or simply on the immediate means of stopping the deterioration of public finances.<sup>64</sup> While ECOWAS and UNOGBIS were organising meetings between presidential advisors, members of government and parliamentarians from all parties in order to reduce the tension between national institutions, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO) and ECOWAS were considering possibilities for financial and technical assistance to the country in the economic sphere. These organizations paid a joint visit to Guinea Bissau in February 2006.<sup>65</sup>

It is within an unfavourable post-electoral political context that the government had to show its commitment to address two pressing challenges: the issue of security sector reform (army police, judiciary) and less difficult task of fighting against the settlement of international drug trafficking networks in the country, a phenomenon that had become obvious from 2005. A team of experts on security sector reform sent by the United Kingdom visited the country in October 2005 and presented a report in December 2005 to the government. Based on the recommendations of this exploratory work, the Prime Minister set up on 7th February 2006 an inter-ministerial committee on security sector reform. A steering committee was also established. Led by the Minister of Defence, it included the UN office (UNOGBIS), UNDP, CPLP and ECOWAS as observers.<sup>66</sup> The process seemed to have been well launched. It was later realized that progress in terms of security sector reform was going to be extremely slow and limited.

62. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau and activities of the UN Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau, S/2005/575, 12 September 2005.

63. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau and activities of the UN Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau, S/2005/752, 2 December 2005.

64. As a sign of the extreme financial fragility of the State, the government had to contract a short term commercial loan to the tune of 4 billion CFA francs to pay salaries from November 2005 to January 2006. However, this effort was not enough to stem strikes which severely affected young Guineans which could not attend school for several months. See Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau and activities of the UN Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau, S/2006/162, 14 March 2006.

65. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau and activities of the UN Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau, S/2006/162, 14 March 2006.

66. Ibid.

As the use of Guinea Bissau territory as a transit point and an operational base in West Africa for cocaine traffickers from Latin America and the possible implication of security forces and public authorities were now being discussed openly, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which had a regional office in Dakar, began to intervene concretely. A mission carried out in January 2006 helped to assess the capacity of national institutions to control drug trafficking. The findings were very clear. In all the main areas required to fight organized, dangerous networks with considerable financial resources, Guinea Bissau is extremely deprived.<sup>67</sup> It urgently requires a multifaceted assistance to hope to discourage the activities of these criminal networks which continue to convey huge quantities of cocaine especially in small aircrafts landing on makeshift airstrips on a territory uncontrolled by security forces or controlled precisely by elements of the Guinea Bissau army in league with foreign traffickers.

Representatives of ECOWAS, the UN Secretary General and CPLP once more had to deploy mediation efforts following new tensions within the political elite in the country triggered by a military operation launched by the Guinea Bissau army on 14th March 2006 against a faction of the rebel Movement of the Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC). The aim of Vieira's army was to wipe out the base of a branch of the Senegalese rebel movement led by Salif Sadio in the border area with Senegal. The fact that this operation was launched only five months after Nino Vieira's return to power shows the renewal of the Bissau-Dakar axis and seems to confirm the possibility that Senegalese political authorities contributed to the victorious return of former president Vieira after the 1998-99 disastrous civil war. Besides, the military operation led to a serious humanitarian crisis in the combat zone between the army and MFDC. There were stormy debates in a parliament that was already marked by permanent defiance between supporters of the pro Vieira government of Aristide Gomez and its resolute opponents. The good offices of the ECOWAS representatives and two other organizations very present in the political affairs, the United Nations through UNOGBIS and CPLB as well as the management of the humanitarian consequences of the war with Casamance rebel contributed to the resolution of the crisis.<sup>68</sup>

67. Ibid.

68. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau and activities of the UN Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau S/2006/487, 6 July 2006.

### III.2. The commitment of ECOWAS in 2006–2008: the International Contact Group, the fight against drug trafficking and reform of the security sector

The ECOWAS ministers of Foreign Affairs during their meeting that preceded the Summit of Heads of State and Government in January, 2006, hailed the 2004 and 2005 elections that restored constitutional order in Guinea Bissau, while emphasising on the one hand, the need for the political and military players to refrain from any act that could threaten recent gains and, on the other hand, appealing to the foreign partners to support the government in the pursuit and implementation of reforms in the security sector. The Executive Secretary of ECOWAS then decided to deploy a fact finding mission on the country's situation in the following areas: security, social, humanitarian and political, within the framework of the protocol on the mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution, which mandates him to do so. The mission included, among others, two members of the Council of Elders. The report for this meeting, which was held from 2nd to 5th May, 2006 in Bissau, was later discussed during a meeting of ministers of Foreign Affairs of the organisation in Monrovia.<sup>69</sup> The main result of this initiative of the ECOWAS in the explicit framework of its conflict prevention role in one of the most fragile countries of the region was the decision of the Heads of State and Government to adopt the decision of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs to create an International Contact Group on Guinea Bissau to serve as a platform for coordinating and harmonising the interventions of the country's partners with the dual objective of achieving political stability and economic recovery.<sup>70</sup>

Over the same period, ECOWAS and its most powerful Member State, Nigeria, came to the aid of the government of Guinea Bissau, which still had great difficulty carrying out its basic responsibilities; the payment of public service workers' salaries. Nigeria released an emergency financial assistance of 2.5 million dollars while the Executive secretariat of ECOWAS contributed 1.5 million dollars to this effort.<sup>71</sup> The International Contact Group (ICG-GB) led by ECOWAS participated in a round table of

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid.



partners of Guinea Bissau organised in Geneva in November 2006, during which financial pledges came up to 267.51 million dollars, which is below the 538 million dollar target.<sup>72</sup> But these remain only promises which take months if not years to materialise. In the case of Guinea Bissau, the difficulty to mobilise funds is just as great as the government's ability to propose specific projects and programmes for funding is seriously constrained by the lack of qualified human resource within the public administration. The financial contribution made by ECOWAS began to yield significant tangible results during 2007. The 3.5 million dollar budgetary assistance that ECOWAS promised during the donors' round table enabled the government to pay off arrears accrued from debt servicing to the African Development Bank, thus ending the measures that were taken against Guinea Bissau by this important financial institution, which had excluded it from any further engagement.<sup>73</sup>

The ICG-GB enabled ECOWAS and other ECOWAS member States present in the group (Cape Verde, Senegal, Gambia, Nigeria, Ghana, who regularly participate in the meetings of the group), to carry out advocacy among donor countries and multilateral institutions based on the need to consider the particular fragility of Guinea Bissau and the direct link between economic stabilisation of the country, strengthening the State, its security and that of the whole of West Africa which is increasingly exposed to the transnational threat of drug trafficking, arms trafficking and terrorism. The issue of drug trafficking has thus clearly aroused the interest of the European Union (EU) countries, which are the destination countries of most of the cocaine passing through Guinea Bissau (and other countries of the region such as Guinea, Senegal, or Cape Verde) and American countries (Brazil and United States, especially) engaged in a long raging war against powerful criminal cartels that have discovered the comparative advantages of the West African routes for their trafficking activities.

By 2006, there was no more doubt about the introduction of drug traffic in Guinea Bissau. In September 2006, 674 kg of cocaine, arm stocks and communication equip-

ment were seized in the capital.<sup>74</sup> The disappearance, a few weeks later, of this large quantity of drug seized by the crime police and kept in a store of the ministry of finance thought to be secure, blatantly illustrated the involvement of civilian and/or military officials in the traffic.<sup>75</sup> The preliminary report from an inter-ministerial commission of enquiry later pointed to influential political figures in the government of the former Prime Minister Aristide Gomes.<sup>76</sup> In April 2007, the criminal brigade would again intercept a vehicle carrying 635kg of cocaine, two soldiers and one civilian. Once handed over to the military, the two soldiers were quickly released, a testimony to the level of involvement of military top officials in this highly lucrative traffic.<sup>77</sup>

While the UNODC, with the support of the United Nations Mission in Guinea Bissau was at the forefront to take up the issue of drug trafficking and to work out a strategy to support the State, ECOWAS was also quick to make a response to this threat a priority. It underscores the regional dimension of the threat posed by drug trafficking, since substantial seizures were made in other countries of the region over the same period. Everyone is equally aware of the geographical, political, military and economic factors which make Guinea Bissau particularly attractive to the Latin American trafficking networks and the serious consequences of failure to react swiftly and dissuasively. ECOWAS, in the course of 2007, stated its intention to organise an international conference on drug trafficking in the sub-region.<sup>78</sup> The technical assistance of UNODC and provision of a basic mobility and communications equipment to the criminal investigation department of Guinea Bissau is the first concrete response to the awareness of the infiltration into the state by networks of organised crime. The first international conference on drug trafficking in Guinea Bissau was held on 19 December, 2007, in Lisbon, under the auspices of the governments of Portugal and Guinea Bissau. 6.7 million dollars (against a target of 19 million dollars) was then pledged by participants at the conference for emer-

72. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau and activities of the UN Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau, S/2006/946, 6 December 2006.

73. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau and activities of the UN Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau S/2007/576, 28 September 2007.

74. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau, 6 December 2006, op.cit.

75. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau and activities of the UN Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau, S/2007/401, 3 July 2007.

76. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau, 28 September 2007, op.cit.

77. Ibid.

78. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau, 28 September 2007, op.cit.

gency anti-drug actions in 2008.<sup>79</sup> The ministerial conference organised by ECOWAS, on the other hand, took place from 26 to 29 October, 2008 in Praia (Cape Verde), and brought together the fifteen member States as well as regional and international organisations.<sup>80</sup>

Despite the identification of reform of the security sector as the primary work to be done and on which will rest all the other reforms and initiatives targeting the political and economic stability of the country, including the war against drug trafficking, the process largely remained comatose between 2006 and 2008. The inter-ministerial committee set up by the embattled Prime Minister Aristide Gomes yielded no result until his departure in April, 2007. In March, 2007, the three major political parties in the National Assembly concluded a “stability pact” and a parliamentary and governmental agreement which would lead to the creation of a government of national unity led by a Prime Minister from the PAIGC.

The hostility of president Vieira to this plan which implied a separation from his ally, Prime Minister Aristide Gomes, did not prevent the National Assembly from passing a vote of no confidence in the government on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2007, and getting Aristide Gomes sacked. On 9<sup>th</sup> April, 2007, the third vice chairman of PAIGC, N’Dafa Cabi was appointed Prime Minister, already the third head of government during the legislative cycle ushered in by the 2004 elections, whose tenure was to end in 2008. The N’Dafa Cabi government set up a new inter-ministerial committee and a new steering committee to reform the security sector in June, 2007. Some progress was finally made. The Committee, in September 2007, approved an action plan for the 2007-2009 period concerning four sectors (defence, security, justice, and issues concerning veterans) estimated at 184.3 million dollars.<sup>81</sup> The government was expected to contribute up to 10%. With the contributions announced by foreign partners covering 23.4% of the total cost, there was still a great need for funding of 76.6%.<sup>82</sup>

Without playing the lead role, ECOWAS constantly provided support to reforms in the security sector. At its be-

hest, the second meeting of the ICG-GB brought together, on 26 March, 2007 in Lisbon, nine countries (Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Spain, France, Ghana, Nigeria, Portugal and Senegal), the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP), the United Nations and the West African Monetary and Economic Union (UEMOA). The group notably dwelt on the security threat linked to the illegal arms flow and drug trafficking and called on the government to implement the ECOWAS Convention on small arms, and commended the offers made by Angola and Nigeria to participate in the training of soldiers and the Guinean security forces.<sup>83</sup> In May 2007, ECOWAS approved a financial package of 2 million dollars for a programme to reintegrate about thirty senior officers of the Guinea Bissau army in agriculture, including training in Brazil.<sup>84</sup> The project was expected to be piloted by the UNDP and implemented by an agency chosen by the Brazilian ministry of foreign affairs. The implementation proved difficulty and was just another illustration of the gap between the ambitions of ECOWAS and its capacity to concretely accomplish its initiatives.<sup>85</sup>

The interest of ECOWAS in reforming the security sector was seen again in April, 2008, by the visit of a delegation of the Joint Chiefs of staff of the organisation (led by the chiefs of army staff of Nigeria and Burkina Faso) focusing on the evaluation of the state of the military barracks and more generally on the standard of living of soldiers.<sup>86</sup> The delegation called on ECOWAS and the United Nations to double their efforts at mobilising funds for the implementation of the security sector reform programme, including reintegration of former combatants into civilian life. Results of a census conducted among the army published in 2008 confirmed one of the problems of the armed forces of the country. 55.4% of active members out of 4,458 were senior officers and non-commissioned officers, giving the army the structure of an inverted pyramid, which is particularly costly for a poor country like Guinea Bissau.<sup>87</sup> The fact that this census was only completed in 2008 also reflected the slowness and inconsistencies of the security sector reform programme.

79. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau and activities of the UN Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau S/2008/181, 17 March 2008.

80. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau and activities of the UN Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau, S/2008/751, 2 December 2008.

81. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau, 28 September 2007, op.cit.

82. Ibid.

83. “High level contact group mission for Guinea Bissau”, ECOWAS Press Release N°23/2007, 28 March 2007.

84. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau and activities of the UN Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau, S/2007/401, 3rd July 2007.

85. Interviews in Bissau, January 2010.

86. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau and activities of the UN Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau, S/2008/395, 17 June 2008.

87. Ibid.

### III.3 The November 2008 parliamentary elections and ECOWAS' involvement

The country's political system and the electoral timetable adopted during the transition which followed the 2003 coup had the effect of imposing a demanding political rhythm on the very young, fragile and deprived democracy of Guinea Bissau. Since the National Assembly determines the choice of a Prime Minister, the head of government with a four-year mandate, fresh parliamentary elections had to be organised in April, 2008. President Vieira, who was elected in July 2005 for a five year term did not have to risk his mandate until 2010. A contradiction between the provisions of the constitution which stipulates April 2008 as the expiry period of the mandate of the National Assembly, elected in March 2004, and the electoral law, on the other hand, which explicitly provides the period from 23 October to 25 November for the organisation of parliamentary elections led to an umpteenth tension between president Vieira and the Parliamentarians. The latter would vote an extension of their mandate beyond 21 April, 2008 and until declaration of results of the new parliamentary elections slated for 16th November, 2008.<sup>88</sup> On 1st August, 2008, the Supreme Court declared the law passed by the National Assembly unconstitutional, allowing president Vieira to dissolve the government of Martinho N'Dafa Cabi and to appoint a new Prime Minister, Carlos Correia, tasked with leading an interim government to expedite on-going programmes and organise the November 16 elections.<sup>89</sup> This brought to three the number of Prime ministers appointed between the presidential elections and the 2008 parliamentary elections and four within the legislative cycle which started in March, 2004. This instability in governance is prejudicial to the implementation of the crucial reforms that the country needs.

As was the case with the previous elections, it was the United Nations, notably UNDP and ONUGBIS who played the leading role in providing support to national institutions involved in the electoral process, in response to an official request by the Prime Minister to the UN Secretary General.<sup>90</sup>

The United Nations Security Council's decision in December, 2007, to include Guinea Bissau on the list of countries on the programme of the Commission for Peace building, was expected to reflect a significant increase of the UN's support to the country, making it possible to hope for a better coordination of all interventions.<sup>91</sup> In March, 2008, the country was also declared eligible to receive financial assistance from the Peacebuilding Fund. The year 2008 was dominated by preparations for parliamentary elections with the major challenge being the mobilisation of funds which were to be centralized was by UNDP. ECOWAS was among the first to make a contribution of 500,000 dollars.<sup>92</sup> The European Union, the African Union, ECOWAS, UEMOA, the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) and the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries decided to send electoral observer missions before and during the legislative elections of 16 November, 2008. The International Contact Group, a local representation of which was created in May, 2008 and co-chaired by ECOWAS and Portugal, regularly met in the months leading to the elections to dialogue with the government and other local stakeholders and to facilitate coordination of the activities of partners.

The ECOWAS observer mission led by a member of the Council of Elders and made up of 45 observers were deployed to all the regions of the country. It was supported by a team of ECOWAS staff, especially the electoral assistance unit, led by the Advisor on democracy and good governance of the chairman of the commission.<sup>93</sup> Before deployment of the mission, the office of the special Representative of the chairman of the Commission in Guinea Bissau had the opportunity to observe the various stages of the electoral process, including voter registration which was appropriately conducted from 3 to 9 July, 2008 and facilitated the registration of 578 974 persons, representing 94.6% of the estimated electorate.<sup>94</sup> All the observer teams expressed satisfaction with the voting process as well as counting of the

88. Ibid.

89. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau and activities of the UN Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau S/2008/628, 29 September 2008.

90. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau and activities of the UN Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau, S/2007/715, 6 December 2007.

91. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau and activities of the UN Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau, S/2008/181, 17 March 2008.

92. Other major contributions came from the European Union, UN Peace building Fund, Angola, UNDP, Brazil, Portugal Spain and Japan.

93. "ECOWAS observers in Guinea Bissau for legislative elections", Press Release N°113/2008, Bissau, 15 November 2008.

94. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau, 29 September 2008, op.cit.

votes. 82% of registered voters did vote and the results announced by the National Electoral Commission on 26th November were not seriously contested. The PAIGC obtained a clear majority of votes cast (227 036) and won 67 of the 100 seats in the Parliament. The PRS consolidated its position as the second largest party of the country obtaining 115 409 votes and winning 28 seats in Parliament. The Republican Party for Independence and Development (PRID) formed by Aristide Gomes, the former Prime Minister and close ally of President Vieira, won three seats whilst the two other parties won one parliamentary seat each.<sup>95</sup>

With the crucial help of the external partners, Guinea Bissau was once again able to organise elections with a clean bill of health, free of violence and giving the impression of an increasingly better studentship of democratic practices by the political players of the country. The PAIGC, which won the legislative elections elected one of their own, Raimundo Pereira as Speaker of Parliament whilst the Party chairman and former Prime Minister (2004-2005) Carlos Gomes Junior was appointed Prime Minister by President Vieira on 25 December, 2008.<sup>96</sup> In spite of the long standing tension between the two men, the President respected the verdict of voters and the constitutional provision which stipulates that the Head of government shall be from the majority party in Parliament. The new Gomes Junior government that took office on 8 January 2009 had to deal with the same numerous priorities as previous ones, among which was reform and modernisation of the State, reform of the security sector, the war against drug trafficking and organised crime and stimulating economic growth. Organisation of local elections before the end of 2010 was also on the government's agenda as well as the presidential elections five years later at the end of Niño Vieira's tenure. The days and months following the satisfactory legislative elections of 8 November 2008 revealed once again that the absence of change in practices within the armed forces and the nebulous relations among the factions of this army and the political players still left the country in danger of sudden and destructive violence.

### III.4. From political and military tensions to the double assassination in March 2009: initiatives and reactions of ECOWAS

All stakeholders and observers of the political life of Guinea Bissau knew that the dynamics of alliances and conflicts among the various poles of influence within the armed forces on the one hand, and between the factions of this army and political party leaders on the other hand, always played a role, at least, as important as election results. As pointed out above, Jão Bernardo Vieira's spectacular return to power in 2005, having been forced into exile in 1999, was largely due to these ad hoc alliances between military players and influential politicians who are familiar with each other since the days of the liberation war. The historical recap given in the preceding sections also demonstrated that the plots and suspicion of plots, coup attempts, preventive eliminations of opponents between 1980 and 1999 created conditions for structural instability of the army and its defiance towards civilian political power. The infiltration of drug trafficking from Latin American countries into the country and the temptation for some military and political players to become accomplices to transnational criminal networks have only significantly exacerbated the threats to the stability and peace of a country already struggling to observe democratic procedure.

The much talked-about reform of the security sector notably since 2004 was supposed to forestall this threat but there has been very little progress since 2009. A mission sent by the UN Secretary General in October, 2008, following a request by the Minister of Defence of Guinea Bissau, concluded that the reform programme did not have a clear medium and long term strategic vision and stated the government's lack of capacity, lack of institutional infrastructure and resources for planning as the main constraints.<sup>97</sup> While a succession of assessment missions of various organisations and partners came to Bissau, and strategic documents on the security sector reform were periodically wound back to zero, nothing changed in the mind-set, personal calculations and logic of interest of the military chiefs in the barracks. Since the 2004 parliamentary and 2005 presidential elections failed to reflect in any real reform, there was no

95. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau and activities of the UN Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau, S/2008/751, 2 December 2008.

96. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau and activities of the UN Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau S/2009/169, 31 March 2009.

97. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau, 2 December 2008, op.cit.

reason to hope for an end to the tradition of political and military coup d'états and assassinations.

The first serious security alert was signalled in August, 2008. The army chief of staff Tagme Na Waie had announced that the naval chief of staff, rear admiral José Americo Bubo Na Tchuto, was planning a coup d'état. He was subsequently arrested and placed under house arrest but managed to escape and left the country. He was rearrested on 12 June, 2009 in Gambia by the authorities of this neighbouring country of Guinea Bissau. Following the alleged plot by the chief of navy staff, the military authorities dispersed the navy personnel in various barracks throughout the country in order to monitor them more closely.<sup>98</sup> For some years, the navy had become a particularly influential corps under the leadership of Bubo Na Tchuto whose recent financial affluence, reflected by his flamboyant generosity towards his men aroused suspicion. Considering the responsibility of the navy in watching over the coasts and several islands that are part of the country's territory and the proven use of the territory as a transit point for cocaine traffickers, there was serious suspicion about the navy as well as the other high ranking officers of the army.<sup>99</sup>

The rivalry between Bubo Nchuto and his chief of the general staff, Tagme Na Waie, was also known in Bissau. The fear of destabilisation of the military and political institutions by Bubo Na Tchuto operating from Gambia, by giving orders to those loyal to him, was rife for several months. The security apparatus of President Vieira and that of the army chief of staff and the composition of the protection units were modified.<sup>100</sup> These measures did little to prevent violent attacks with grenades and automatic weapons on the residence of President Vieira on the dawn of 23 November, 2008. The aim of the assailants was obviously to physically eliminate the President, who came out unhurt. Five soldiers were quickly arrested while military enquiries were on-going about these attacks.<sup>101</sup> Carried out just seven days after the November 16 parliamentary election that was commended for the quality of organisation, the assassination attempt on President Vieira was just another brutal pointer to the extremely fragile nature of a political process of demo-

cratic apprenticeship that looked promising and the constant temptation of targeted violence as a means to resolving conflicts.

ECOWAS quickly responded to the attack on the president's residence, with a communiqué published on the same day<sup>102</sup> and especially by dispatching the very next day 24 November, a high level delegation led by the President of the Commission Mohamed Ibn Chambas and the Burkina Faso Secretary of State for Regional Cooperation, Minata Samate Cessouma, representing the rotating presidency of ECOWAS, to Bissau. The delegation held talks with the President, the Prime Minister, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence, the general chief of army staff and the leaders of the main political parties.<sup>103</sup> The mission of good offices without doubt contributed to calming down tensions immediately after the attempted assassination of President Vieira and demonstrated that the regional organisation had no intention of allowing the diplomatic and financial efforts made to organise the recent parliamentary elections to be eroded by the actions of a group of soldiers hostile to the Head of State. But no concrete decision was taken on the stabilisation of Guinea Bissau, following its Security and Mediation Council meeting in Ouagadougou on 8 December, 2008. During the month of December 2008, the office of the president of the African Union Commission also dispatched a special envoy, Francisco Madeira, a Mozambican, to Bissau.<sup>104</sup>

Internal measures taken by the military authorities to beef up the President's security as well as the attention of ECOWAS, AU and other external partners of Guinea Bissau did nothing to stop yet another assassination attempt, a successful one this time around, which claimed the lives of the army chief of staff, general Tagme Na Waie and President Vieira. On the evening of 1st March, 2009, Tagme Na Waie was killed in a bomb explosion which destroyed a section of the building housing the offices of the army chief of staff. Some hours later, on the dawn of 2nd March, a group of soldiers attacked the residence of President Vieira, broke in and executed the

98. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau, 29 September 2008, op.cit.

99. Interviews in Bissau, January 2010.

100. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau, 2 December 2008, op.cit.

101. Ibid.

102. "Statement by ECOWAS on the attack on the residence of the President of Guinea Bissau", Press Release N°116/2008, Abuja, 23 November 2008.

103. "ECOWAS delegation due in Bissau", Press Release N°117/2008, Abuja, 24 November 2008.

104. During the same period, President Pedro Pires of Cape Verde also paid a visit to the Country and the Angolan President, Eduardo dos Santos, dispatched a special envoy showing the growing interest the big Portuguese Speaking country on the continent to Guinea Bissau.

Head of State after torturing him.<sup>105</sup> A committee of military leaders set up some hours after the double murder, led by Navy commander José Zamora Induta, broke the news of these tragic events to the nation and reaffirm the subordination of the armed forces to the civilian political authorities and their commitment to uphold the constitution.<sup>106</sup> This was effectively enforced since the Speaker of Parliament, Raimundo Pereira, became interim President of the Republic effective 3 March, 2009, charged with the responsibility of quickly organizing a presidential election. The government immediately set up a commission of enquiry on 2nd March on the two assassinations, which yielded no result.

The events of 2 March stirred the consternation of Guinea Bissau's partners, beginning with ECOWAS, whose chairman, President Umaru Yar'Adua, decided to dispatch, right from 3rd March, a delegation made up of some Ministers of Foreign Affairs from Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia and Senegal, accompanied by the President of the ECOWAS Commission.<sup>107</sup> As in the aftermath of the first unsuccessful attack on President Vieira in November 2008, ECOWAS was swift at deploying a high level presence on the ground to contain the immediate risk of anarchy following the decapitation of the army and Presidency within a few hours. The ECOWAS Committee of Chiefs of Defence Staff, meeting in an ordinary session from 4 to 6 March in Praia, Cape Verde, also considered the situation created by the events in Guinea Bissau, and specifically recommended the deployment into the country by the regional organisation of a «Multi-disciplinary group to monitor the security sector reform programme».<sup>108</sup> The Committee of Chiefs of Defence Staff thus established a direct link between the tragic events of Bissau and the failure to implement the reform of the security sector, which has nonetheless been touted as an absolute priority for several years.

The situation in Guinea Bissau then became the main subject of discussion at the ministerial meeting of the

ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council held on 19th March, 2009 right in Bissau, a powerful symbol to mark the solidarity of the regional organisation and its determination to help the country to rise from the effect of the double assassination, which had occurred less than twenty days earlier. The MSC ministers recommended that ECOWAS collaborate with the United Nations with a view to deploying military and police contingents to protect state institutions, important personalities and the electoral process in Guinea Bissau.<sup>109</sup> They also recommended the immediate organisation in Cape Verde of a round table of Guinea Bissau's technical and financial partners with a view to mobilising funds for implementation of the reforms of the security sector. Another recommendation of the MSC was that ECOWAS work with the AU and the UN to set up an international commission of enquiry into the events that occurred in Guinea Bissau since the alleged plot of August 2008, in order to put an end to impunity and contribute to justice and reconciliation. The war against drug trafficking was once again on the table, with the ministers of the MSC recommending a strengthening of the institutional capacity of the ECOWAS Commission in this area to begin of the implementation of the ECOWAS plan of action (adopted in October 2008) by considering Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde and Guinea as pilot countries. The MSC further indicated that ECOWAS would make a financial contribution toward the organisation of the early presidential elections necessitated by the brutal murder of President Vieira.<sup>110</sup>

The recommendation of ECOWAS MSC to deploy a preventive military and police contingent was not supported by the Government of Guinea Bissau, whose spokesperson indicated on April 1 that the country rather needed international support for the security sector reform programme.<sup>111</sup> The round table recommended on this subject by ECOWAS was held on 20 April, 2009 in Praia, jointly organised with the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP), UNOGBIS and the governments of Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde. It brought together representatives from 29 countries as well as from the AU, CPLP, the EU the OIF, the Peacebuilding Committee of the United Nations and various UN agen-

105. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau and activities of the UN Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau S/2009/169, 31 March 2009.

106. Admiral Zamora Induta was later appointed Acting Army Chief of Staff under the Interim President Raimundo Pereira before being confirmed by the president elected in July 2009, Malam Bancal Sanha.

107. "ECOWAS Chairman condemns killings in Bissau, urges security agencies to avert deterioration of situation", Press Release N°020/2009, Abuja, 2 March 2009.

108. "ECOWAS deployed a multi-disciplinary group to monitor the security sector reform in Guinea Bissau", Press Release No N°025/2009, Praia, 6 mars 2009.

109. "ECOWAS Foreign Ministers call for deployment of Protection Force in Guinea Bissau", Press Release N°029/2009, Bissau, 21 March 2009.

110. Ibid.

111. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau and activities of the UN Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau, S/2009/302, 10 June 2009.

cies. The meeting particularly recommended the establishment of a pension scheme for the armed forces, establishment of a police academy, capacity building for the security services to ensure protection of the national democratic institutions and their representatives as well as coordination of dialogue with the partners on reform of the security sector by the government of Guinea Bissau. Once again, the lack of coordination of the actions envisaged under the reform and the absence of a division of labour among the numerous technical and financial partners had been identified as major obstacles to progress on the reform.<sup>112</sup> The ECOWAS Commission and its member States announced during the round table another financial contribution of 13.5 million dollars to Guinea Bissau for the reform of the security sector, economic stabilisation, support to an international enquiry into the political assassinations and organisation of the early presidential elections which was scheduled for June, 2009, just a little beyond the constitutional deadline of two months considered as too short by the political players of the country.<sup>113</sup>

The assassination of President Vieira was in effect forcing the poor country to organise fresh Presidential elections only seven months after the last parliamentary elections largely financed with foreign aid. The exercise of internal democracy in the major parties once again worked out well. Malam Bacai Sanha, an unsuccessful candidate in 2000 and 2005, was preferred over the interim President Raimundo Pereira, who rather has the support of the Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Junior to represent the PAIGC in the elections, the first round of which was scheduled for 28 June, 2009. The PRS again chose to field former President Mohamed Yala.<sup>114</sup> Another former President who led the transition between 2003 and 2005, Henrique Pereira Rosa, stood as an independent candidate just as the Minister of Territorial Administration Baciro Dabó who was close to Niño Vieira. While the electioneering campaign was about to start in conditions that looked adequate, another double assassination was about to plunge the country again into uncertainty. On 4th June 2009, candidate Baciro Dabó was shot by men in military uniform at his residence. The same day, a PAIGC member of parliament and former Minister of

Defence, Helder Proença, along with his driver and body guard was killed in an ambush.<sup>115</sup> The security services later claimed that the two men were preparing a coup attempt and were killed because they resisted arrest.<sup>116</sup>

ECOWAS condemned this new wave of targeted violence perpetrated by members of the armed forces and the Committee of Chiefs of Defence Staff of the organisation which was meeting in Ouagadougou on 11 June, 2009, dispatched Guinea Bissau a contact mission made up of Chiefs of Defence Staff from Benin, Cape Verde, Gambia, Nigeria and Senegal with a view to finding «practical solutions» to the security and political challenges of the country on the eve of the elections.<sup>117</sup> The ECOWAS Assembly of Heads of State and government held in Abuja on 22 June, 2009, six days to the first round of the early presidential elections, announced additional financial support for the organisation of the elections. The Nigerian government also decided to disburse 3.5 million dollars to pay three months salary arrears to the soldiers and to provide them vehicles and communication gadgets to ensure the safety of the elections. These gestures by Nigeria and ECOWAS played a determining role in the timely holding under satisfactory security conditions of the two rounds of the presidential elections on June 28 and July 26 2009.<sup>118</sup>

The elections were violence free and were adjudged free, fair and transparent by the various observer missions deployed in the country, including that of ECOWAS, AU, OIF, the CPLP, EU and civil society organizations notably supported by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.<sup>119</sup> With 39.59% and 29.42% of votes respectively, in the first round, Malam Bacai Sanha of the PAIGC and Mohamed Yala of the PRS qualified for the second round while the independent candidate Henrique Rosa came third with a

112. Ibid.

113. "ECOWAS and Member States rally to support Guinea Bissau at roundtable", Press Release N°039/2009, Praia, 20 April 2009.

114. Former president Kumba Yala had in the meantime changed his first name after his conversion to Islam in 2008.

115. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau and activities of the UN Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau, S/2009/302, 10 June 2009.

116. Interviews, Bissau, January 2010.

117. "ECOWAS Chiefs of Defence Staff want contact mission", Press Release N°061/2009, Ouagadougou, 12 June 2009.

118. Interviews, Bissau, January 2010.

119. Friedrich Ebert Foundation (Dakar office) dispatched, financed and supported a team of expert observers of Rencontre africaine pour la démocratie et les droits de l'Homme (RADDHO) to monitor alongside bigger regional or international organizations the holding and transparency of the June 2009 presidential election. This work was done in collaboration with Guinea Bissau Human Rights League (LGDH). In May 2009, the Foundation (Dakar and Abuja Office) organized a round table that brought together political, military, religious and traditional forces, civil society, and universities in order to establish a conducive atmosphere for June 28 2009 presidential election.

good score of 24.19% of votes. The 40% rate of abstention was, however, the highest since the first multiparty elections in 1994, indicating voter apathy. During the second round on 26 July, 2009, the rate of abstention was still high at 39%. Malam Bacai Sanha who had lost against Yala in 1999 and against Vieira in 2005, won this time round with more than 63.31% of votes compared to 36.69% for the ex-president Yala. The President elect was sworn into office on 8 September, 2009 in the presence of the Heads of State of Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Gambia and Cape Verde. He promised to turn a new page in the political life of the country based on dialogue, stability and social justice as well as an end to impunity.<sup>120</sup> The far-reaching changes to be made in Guinea Bissau in 2010 remain as numerous as at the end of the first transition following the civil war in 1999 and at the end of the second transition after the overthrow of Yala in 2003.

### III.5. ECOWAS and political stabilisation in Guinea Bissau: perceptions

#### Perception of political, institutional and civil society players of Guinea Bissau

The overall perception of the role of ECOWAS among the political, institutional and civil society players in Guinea Bissau in recent years is very positive.<sup>121</sup> The organisation has always stood by the country each time the political or security situation deteriorated. Military missions conducted by ECOWAS Chiefs of Defence Staff of countries of the region with a view to maintaining dialogue with the authorities of the Guinea Bissau army, the numerous visits to the country by the President of the ECOWAS commission, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, the Mediation and Security Council meeting in Bissau a few days after the trauma of the double assassination at the beginning of March, 2009, the efforts at rallying international attention to the needs of the country through the creation of the International Contact Group at the instigation of ECOWAS as well as the decisive support from Nigeria

through ECOWAS to secure the electoral process in June and July 2009 made possible by payment of salary arrears of members of the army, among others, amply testify to the regional organisation's solidarity with the country. The role of discreet mediation among the political and military players locally played by the special representative of the President of the Commission in Bissau is also acknowledged and hailed in a context where the crises are almost always linked to personal antagonisms.

The role of the AU is also viewed positively, although it is considered essentially political and relatively remote and ad hoc. The Pan-African organisation showed its interest by discussing the Guinea Bissau issue at its Peace and Security Council meeting notably in the aftermath of the tragic loss of President Vieira in March, 2009-reaching the decision that it was not a coup d'état but a political assassination-, appointing a special representative of the President of the AU Commission who visited the country many times between 2003 and 2009, deploying systematically electoral observer groups and especially by providing constant diplomatic backing of ECOWAS initiatives, which is closer and better equipped to manage the Guinea Bissau issue. The AU's intervention has the crucial significance of bringing on board in a multilateral framework, those African countries that share the political, institutional, cultural and linguistic heritage of Portuguese colonisation. The AU has therefore appointed some personalities from other Portuguese speaking countries to lead its mission in Guinea Bissau, such as Mozambique's Francisco Madeira, who proved very active as a special envoy in the aftermath of the September 23 coup d'état and in the ensuing years. The language and peculiar institutional configuration of the former colonies of Portugal have been acknowledged as real obstacles which are sometimes important in relations between ECOWAS and Guinea Bissau. On a diplomatic scale, the influence of a Portuguese speaking country like Angola within the AU also makes it possible to generate the Pan-African organisation's interest in Guinea Bissau whose crisis could seem remote and minor from Addis Ababa.

The main criticism about ECOWAS made by the actors and observers in Guinea Bissau borders on the limited capacity of the organisation to translate its political will of helping to ensure sustainable stability of the country into concrete action or, at least, push the bilateral and multilateral partners with much greater financial and technical resources (UNO, EU, CPLP, Portugal, Spain, France, United Kingdom..) to do what it lacks the resources

120. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau and activities of the UN Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau, S/2009/552, 22 October 2009.

121. These perceptions come mainly from the author's interviews with political, social and economic actors in the country during a mission to Bissau in January 2010.



to do on the ground. ECOWAS, just as the AU, since, at least, the September 2003 coup d'état and the October 2004 mutiny, has long held that far-reaching reforms of the security sector combined with a fight against small arms proliferation is an indispensable condition for lasting peace and stability in Guinea Bissau. But ECOWAS has not found the key to implementing short term actions, right from 2005 or 2006, as part of the general reform of the security sector that is necessarily long and costly, in order to reduce the risk posed by factional interests within the army and the deplorable habits of the soldiers perpetually to the democratic institutions. Yet these were so painstakingly put in place following the electoral process that was strongly supported by the regional organisation. The interest shown by the President of the ECOOWAS Commission, its current chairmen, the Security and Mediation Council, and the Committee of Chiefs of Defence Staff, found expression in various meetings of good offices and mediation in Bissau, allowing for a temporary easing of tensions, but which failed to deal with the root causes of the structural instability and the targeted political violence in the country.

The stakeholders in Guinea Bissau equally shared views on two other important issues on which some ECOWAS organs have issued statements: the expediency of the deployment of a civilian and military force to protect some institutions and political figures following the assassination of President Vieira and the army chief of staff Tagme Na Waie in March, 2009 and the expediency of setting up an international commission of inquiry into these political assassinations as well as those of June, 2009. On the first subject, even before the return to democratic order with the election of President Malam Bacai Sanha in July, 2009, most of the country's political stakeholders were against the deployment of any foreign military mission even for the purpose of protecting institutions and personalities that embody them. People in Bissau always readily recall the powerful nationalist sentiments springing from the liberation war against Portugal, which was clearly manifest in 1998 when the military interventions by Senegal and Guinea alongside the troops of Vieira worked against the latter. The MSC's recommendation to deploy troops to protect institutions was therefore not at all appreciated by the country's leaders and was subsequently not followed through by the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government.

Concerning the need expressed by ECOWAS to shed light on the political assassinations that occurred in the

country in 2009 and the coup attempts denounced in 2008 by an international inquiry, the authorities in Guinea Bissau publicly approved it but often with a lot of reserve and without much excitement. Indeed, the subject of the international commission of inquiry is just as much a source of discomfort to the local political class as to ECOWAS, the AU and the UNO, whose Security Council has not accorded Guinea Bissau much attention, despite the existence of a Peace Building Office. Although the events are not directly comparable, a number of interviewees in Guinea Bissau and elsewhere have not failed to point out the difference between the handling of the massacre of demonstrators in Conakry in neighbouring Guinea on 28 September 2009—a swift setting up of an international commission of inquiry—and the reluctance of the international community to find out who was responsible for the assassination of the two eminent personalities in March, 2009 in Guinea Bissau.

Civil society actors in Guinea Bissau also acknowledge the important role played by ECOWAS in their country since the days of the civil war. The delegations, the conferences organised upon the initiative of ECOWAS and the decisive contribution of the regional organisation and its member countries to the proper organisation of the early presidential elections in 2009 are systematically mentioned. The criticisms, on the other hand, are also very clear: lack of follow up of ECOWAS missions, the inability to implement concrete actions, the absence of direct support to civil society organisations which are still more resource-stricken than elsewhere in the region and the absence of a strategic approach that would allow ECOWAS to anticipate incidences and to take real preventive action rather than merely react to worsening security conditions. The civil society leaders are also less ambiguous than the political actors in their support of any initiative meant to put an end to impunity by shedding light on the political violence that have rocked the country in the last few years, a necessary step to breaking the cycle of bloody vengeance and instilling minimum confidence in the judicial institutions. Notably supported by the African Union, the idea of a national dialogue for reconciliation, which would not ignore the needs for truth and justice for the victims, is defended by the civil society organisations and is endorsed, in principle, by President Malam Bacai Sanha. What remains is to move from declarations of intent to the concrete preparation of such a forum.

## The perception of partner countries and other organisations of Guinea Bissau

The major bilateral partners and foreign donors represented in Bissau and engaged in the political dialogue with the Government of Guinea Bissau are of the view that ECOWAS has over the last years made an important contribution to efforts to resolve and prevent conflicts and political tensions in a country which has structural difficulties in attracting the attention of the international community over the long term. For the western diplomatic community, ECOWAS is in a singular position to play a mediation and advisory role among political and military actors that organisations outside the region cannot play. It is closer to the ground, encompasses neighbouring countries whose security is directly linked to events in Guinea Bissau (Senegal, Guinea, Gambia) and countries with strong cultural and historical links with it (the three neighbours already mentioned including Cape Verde) and which constitutes in the African space, the most advanced regional economic community (REL) which has put in place a mechanism on peace and security. In case of an internal crisis within the political class of the country and even within the armed forces, the representatives, special envoys, and senior officers mandated by ECOWAS, can make use of personal connections and some familiarity with the psychology of the Guinea Bissau actors which are out of the grasp of diplomats with little knowledge of the region. The presence of a special representative of the President of the Commission is therefore believed to be beneficial, although the very small size of this Office will not allow him to go beyond a diplomatic role and that of providing information to the ECOWAS headquarters and facilitating missions to the country.

The external actors present in Bissau also point to the contribution to political dialogue and also the coordination of international assistance by the International Contact Group on Guinea Bissau created at the initiative of ECOWAS, although there is still no monitoring of the exchanges and recommendations made following the meetings of the Group. ECOWAS' determination to garner political interest and especially the technical and financial resources of donor countries and organisations in the interest of Guinea Bissau is obvious, except that this is not enough to attain the objectives as evidenced by the priority issue of reform of the security sector. On this particular issue, ECOWAS' commitment to play a greater

role than in the past became evident in the aftermath of the political assassinations of March, 2009. The round table requested by ECOWAS on international mobilisation of funds for the security sector reform organised in Praia in April 2009 testified to the determination of the regional organisation not to remain aloof from this issue, notably in contrast to the UN and the EU (the EU Commission through the European Development Fund and the Council of Europe through the European Defence and Security Policy).<sup>122</sup>

The mobilisation of sufficient funds to undertake some practical and indispensable actions with a view to facilitating acceptance of the principle of far-reaching reform in the army, police and judiciary, as well as the public administration system in general, is one of the major challenges facing Guinea Bissau, whose governments are politically fragile due to instability of the parliament linked to the internal schisms within the majority side and in technical and organisational terms due to the extremely limited capacity to develop and implement programmes and projects even when there is enough funding. The weakness of successive governments over the last few years, which, in reality, is a reflection of a structural weakness of the State of Guinea Bissau, as it was built from the independence of the country, reflects thus far, a lack of true national leadership to carry out reforms. The result is that the various bilateral and multilateral partners of the government each develop their own vision regarding the content of reform, decide what aspects they will fund, bring so many consultants to Bissau to conduct studies, reports and plans of action, which make no impact and which do not reduce in the short term, the permanent risk of paralysis of the country due to mutiny by disgruntled soldiers, settling of scores between law enforcement establishments or a general strike resulting from non-payment of salaries of civil and public servants.

The external partners of the country recognize that there is a real problem of coordinating their interventions, the need for a clear division of labour (the areas where they provide financial assistance to the government) and that of leadership that must be assumed by the government, with foreign technical assistance where

122. The EU mission which played a major role in drawing up new legal and judicial frameworks for the security sector was mandated by the European Council. The EU Commission is, however, dealing with other components of the security sector reform, especially, the establishment and contribution to a pension fund for the armed forces.

necessary. While all the players mention the limited financial and technical resources of ECOWAS compared to the others engaged in supporting crucial reforms for peace and security in the country, a good number of them have strong criticism on the role of the UN Office for support to peace building, believed to be confused. The lack of clarity in the mandate of the Office for support to Peace building, which has become an integrated Office of the UN in Guinea Bissau as of January 2010, would not facilitate division of labour among all the institutional partners of the country. The inclusion of Guinea Bissau on the list of the United Nations Commission on Peace building in December, 2008 so far does not seem to have produced the desired effect in terms of a better coordination of international aid in the area of conflict prevention. The reorganization of the UN Office in the country and the expected increase in its human resources specialised in the particular aspects of Police and judicial reform provides hope for a greater rationalisation of the responsibilities of all the players in the foreign aid provided to the country.<sup>123</sup>

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123. Secretary General's Report on the situation in Guinea Bissau and activities of the UN Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau, S/2010/, 26 February 2010.

## IV. The crisis in the Republic of Guinea: from State in decline to the December 2008 putsch

### IV.1. Long-term prospect: two regimes and two strong men in fifty years of independence

Guinea, a former colony of French West Africa, became independent on 1st October 1958 under peculiar conditions. Under the personal influence of the one who was instrumental in the trade union struggles of the last years of the colonial era, Ahmed Sekou Touré, Guinea rejected by referendum an association with the "Franco-African Community" proposed by the French President, General de Gaulle. Sekou Touré's "No" caused a sudden break between his country and France, whose relations with the other leaders of the West African colonies were rather good at the time of declaration of independence two years after that of Guinea, in 1960. Certainly, there was no war of independence, like the one that pitched the future Guinea-Bissau against the Portuguese colonizer, but rather a "cold war" during the 1960s and 1970s between Guinea, led by the charismatic Sekou Touré, and France. At the external level, the President of Guinea, influenced by socialism like many other leaders of the newly independent countries, turned to the Soviet Union and the Eastern countries to attempt to initiate the economic development of his natural resource-endowed country. In Africa, Sekou Touré, together with Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, was considered in the 1960s as a leader committed to Pan-Africanism and real political and economic independence of the continent. He supported all liberation struggles of the time, including the one launched in the neighbouring Portuguese Guinea by Amilcar Cabral's PAIGC.<sup>124</sup>

On the internal front, the First Republic (1958-1984) was marked by the absolute and brutal reign of Sekou Touré. The country withdrew into itself and the president felt threatened permanently, especially by plots hatched by the former French colonial power or Portugal, with the alleged complicity of opponents in Guinea. The political life of the country was dictated by real and false plots, followed by fierce repression. Sekou Touré set up an

extremely harsh police State, of which Camp Bioro, a confinement camp and sometimes a political prisoner's execution camp in the heart of the capital Conakry, remains the most famous. The dictatorship of Sekou Touré, founded on an effective surveillance by the security and secret services over the acts of the people, particularly the civilian and military elites, and a culture of silence by a president known for his inflammatory speeches, deeply marked the Guinean society. Following the nature of the Sekou Touré regime and the nationalist economic choices which constrained private initiative and could not produce the expected quick economic and social development, a significant portion of the population, intellectual elites, traders and private entrepreneurs, fled the country and settled permanently in neighbouring African countries (Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Liberia, Sierra Leone, among others) and further away, in Europe and the United States of America. Part of this Guinean Diaspora returned after the death of Sekou Touré in 1984. The country has today many influential people living in the Diaspora.

The legacy of Sekou Touré's regime is still controversial in Guinea, 26 years after his death. There was not only the extreme personalization of power, violent suppression of State institutions devoted his protection and the failure to prepare his succession, but also his personal charisma, his Pan-African and anti-colonial commitment and the decisive role he played in building the nation of Guinea, transcending the ethnic and cultural diversity of its citizens. The First Republic could certainly not eliminate the sentiments of ethnic belonging of Guineans and antagonisms among the various communities; it however unquestionably promoted a sentiment of belonging to one nation which, to a large extent, was stronger than others in the region. When Sekou Touré died in March 1984 after 26 years of personal rule, the chances of succession, which was not determined by the possession of State instruments of violence, were slim. The interim government of Prime Minister Lansana Beavogui managed the country for only a few days. A group of army officers seized power on 3 April 1984 and installed as Head of State Colonel Lansana Conté, former deputy Chief of the Army and a senior official of the Democratic Party of Guinea (PDG), a one-party system and political control machinery set up by Sekou Touré.

The Second Republic (1984-1991) was under the direction of the Military Committee for National Recovery (CMRN), a military junta led by Lansana Conté. The latter raised the hopes of the people of Guinea, suppressed by

124. It was within the framework of Guinea's secret military support in the war of liberation led by PAIGC in Guinea-Bissau that the future president Lansana Conté, then commander of the military region of Boké, made acquaintance with João Bernardo Vieira who became his close friend until his death.

over two decades of loss of their freedoms under the previous regime. Conté promised to put in place a democratic government, release all political prisoners, free Guinea from international isolation and develop the country's economy. He also encouraged Guinean exiles to return home. In December 1985, the government opted officially for a development strategy based on economic liberalisation and announced a number of reforms to that effect, including the restoration of private initiative, privatization of State enterprises and promotion of foreign investment, particularly in the mining sector, the main source of revenue for the country endowed with exceptional reserves of bauxite and other raw materials of great value. In the meantime, in July 1985, the military junta was shaken by a first coup attempt attributed to Colonel Diarra Traore, one of Conté's companions during the takeover. The president then showed his determination to consolidate his power by being as intransigent as his predecessor, in spite of his pledges to break with State violence. About forty officers and men of other ranks allegedly involved in the attempted coup d'état and about thirty dignitaries of the previous regime were executed outside all judicial processes.

Within a regional context, characterized by a wave of democratization in the early 1990s and demands from bilateral and multilateral financial donors for political reforms, Lansana Conté initiated a multi-party system. A new Constitution was promulgated through a referendum on 23rd December 1990. The Military Committee for National Recovery was dissolved in January 1991 and replaced with the Transitional Committee for National Recovery (CTRN), a civilian-cum-military body with equal representation. Political parties were officially allowed in 1992 and presidential elections took place in 1993 to end the transition period and usher in the Third Republic. Lansana Conté, candidate of the Unity and Progress Party (UPP), established for transition from the military junta to a formal civilian and democratic government, was challenged by eight candidates. The out-going president won in the first round with 51.7% of the votes; however, the results were strongly contested by the opposition parties, as the Supreme Court annulled, among others, the results of the electoral areas of the main opponent of the president, Alpha Condé of the People's Assembly of Guinea (RPG). This first controversial election inaugurated a series of elections that were deemed democratic, but

in effect were not credible during the entire period of Conté's presidency, as he was re-elected in 1998 and 2003 without the least suspense.

The democratic functioning of the Third Republic was to a large extent an outward show, as real power was exercised by a military career Head of State, whose main concern was to maintain under control at all cost the armed forces in order to contain the danger of a coup d'état, which was the only threat to his political existence. The Conté regime survived several plots and coup attempts in 24 years. The toughest test was the mutiny of 2-3 February 1996 which failed to be transformed into overthrow of the president. Lansana Conté escaped the bombardment of his office in the presidential palace before he was captured by the mutinous soldiers. He succeeded not only in convincing them to spare his life, but also to leave him in power by yielding to all their demands. Later, he imprisoned the main architects of that mutiny. The alert strengthened him in his conviction that the threat could only come from his army; he therefore strengthened the power of the military institution vis-à-vis civilian governments that succeeded one another to ensure the daily administration of the State, a function in which president Conté became less and less interested as the years went by.

## IV.2. The Guinea of Lansana Conté and armed conflicts in the ECOWAS zone

Throughout the 1990s till 2003, the security of Guinea was threatened by civil wars that raged on permanently in two immediate neighbouring countries, i.e. Liberia and Sierra Leone. These two countries are right in the Forest Region, a natural region of Guinea, that is populated by ethnic groups on both sides of the official borders and which is prone to the infiltration of irregular army groups in view of its geographical position. This region of Guinea played host to several hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing the war in Liberia (1990-2003, with a relative pause between 1997 and 1999) and in Sierra Leone (1991-2002). General Lansana Conté got involved very early in the Liberia and Sierra Leone conflicts which were themselves directly linked.<sup>125</sup> As early as 1990, the Guinea army provided contingents to

125. Guinea: uncertainties around the end of a reign, Africa Report N°74, International Crisis Group, 19 December 2003.

ECOMOG, the military force of ECOWAS deployed in Monrovia to prevent the overthrow of the regime of the Liberian president Samuel Doe by the combatants of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), the rebel group formed by Charles Taylor who declared the Liberian war in December 1989. Behind the rapid military action of ECOWAS, which did not have at that time the present institutional mechanism for prevention and resolution of conflicts, was the commitment of the political, economic and regional military power of Nigeria, then led by the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida. The Guinea of General Conté was the principal ally of Nigeria in the region, with the willpower to respond with a strong military intervention to the rebellion of Charles Taylor.

The government of Guinea got involved in the conflict which destabilized the entire Mano River region for about twelve years, well beyond the involvement of its armed forces in ECOMOG in Liberia then in Sierra Leone. Guinea entered the dangerous game of support for the rebel groups, whose increasing number complicated the resolution of the itinerant conflict. Resolutely hostile to Charles Taylor and determined to preserve the territory of Guinea from the regional manoeuvres and ambitions of the latter, Lansana Conté supported, from 1991 onwards, one of the Liberian rebel movements, United Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO), whose leaders were received in Conakry and fighters trained on Guinea territory.<sup>126</sup> The protracted nature of the conflict in Liberia, the spread of the civil war to Sierra Leone by the Revolutionary Unit Front (RUF), a rebel movement supported by Charles Taylor and the military resistance of Charles Taylor's troops, who wore out the soldiers of ECOMOG the majority of whom were Nigerians, pushed ECOWAS to accept a peace process that ended in the election of Charles Taylor as president in 1997. The war quickly resumed in Liberia, as it continued also in Sierra Leone, still with the involvement of Taylor on the side of the rebels of Foday Sankoh's RUF. The Guinea of Lansana Conté played a crucial role in the new conflict in Liberia, by actively supporting Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), a rebel movement that succeeded ULIMO and recruited in the Forest Region of Guinea, particularly in the Liberian refugee camps established in that part of the country.

In September 2000, Guinea became a victim, for the first time on her territory, of a series of coordinated

armed aggressions from Liberia and Sierra Leone. The attacks came from rebels in the pay of the Liberian president Charles Taylor who reacted so to the support given by Conté to the LURD rebellion. The attacks that caused considerable deaths and destruction in several towns and villages of the Forest Region revealed first of all the weaknesses of the Guinea army. During the initial months of the fighting, the government of Guinea was forced to resort to paramilitary forces comprising hastily armed "young volunteers" and combatants of ULIMO/LURD based in the region. Conté reorganized and then equipped his army to intervene on Liberia and Sierra Leone territories in 2000 and 2001, weakening significantly Charles Taylor's forces in Liberia and his RUF allies in Sierra Leone.<sup>127</sup> Guinea's war effort was facilitated in this period through the military cooperation of the Western powers, the United States and France, among others, who were anxious to preserve Guinea that had become over the years a pole of stability in the region engulfed in a cycle of violent and widespread conflicts.<sup>128</sup>

Lansana Conté came out strengthened from the diplomatic and military trials imposed by the long period of serious instability at Guinea's borders. His sworn enemy in the region, the former rebel leader and president of Liberia, Charles Taylor, was forced into exile in August 2003 under military pressure from LURD and diplomatic pressure from ECOWAS, Nigeria and the Western powers. Peace also came to Sierra Leone, where Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, a friend of Conakry's was re-elected president. Côte d'Ivoire, which also borders on Guinea, plunged into armed conflict in September 2002; however, there were no major consequences on the security of Guinea which did not go beyond political support from president Conté to his Ivorian counterpart Laurent Gbagbo. The president of Guinea stayed out of the many mediation efforts in the ECOWAS region to find a solution to the Ivorian problem.

### IV.3. Decline of the State at the end of Conté's rule and the escalation of protests and violence

Civil wars at the borders of Guinea incidentally enabled president Conté to turn attention from the domestic political

<sup>126</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>127</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>128</sup>. Ibid.

situation, characterized by lack of respect for democratic principles and by the power of the armed forces, the real centre of power under close control of the General-turned-president since the February 1996 mutiny. In 2001, at the time when attention was focused on attacks in the Forest Region and the resumption of the Liberian conflict, the president had the Constitution amended, removing the age limitation for candidates, that of the two consecutive terms of the Head of State and pushing the duration of the president's term of office from five to seven years. Conté could therefore stand for the presidential election scheduled for December 2003, whereas his state of health had become worrying in 2002. Obviously weakened, Conté did not need to campaign himself for re-election and entrusted the campaign to senior officials of his party, PUP, to do it on his behalf.<sup>129</sup> Within a context where none of the demands of the opposition parties regarding transparency of the electoral process and neutrality of the administration charged with organization was accepted by the regime, the main opposition leaders decided to boycott the elections, and condemned the vacancy of power caused by the illness of a president who was increasingly missing from public view and even from the capital, Conakry. Only two candidates were in contention for the 21st December 2003 elections: Lansana Conté and a candidate of a virtually unknown party in the country. The incumbent candidate was officially re-elected with more than 95% of the votes and would go to the polls again only in December 2010.

The December 2003 election was held within a difficult economic and social background for the people. Since 2002, scattered demonstrations increased in protest against continuous rise in the cost of living, lack of economic opportunities and state of infrastructure decay in the country. In the capital, water and power cuts which were virtually permanent in certain districts exasperated the people who sometimes demonstrated violently from 2003. Civil servants also protested against their salaries which were not enough to cope with price increases, beginning with the price of a bag of rice, the staple food of Guinean families. The end of military engagement at the borders of the country and the illness of president Conté who was keen on completing his term of office attracted henceforth local and foreign attention to the economic and social bankruptcy of the country and to the scale of corruption that engulfed the various clans around the president.

129. *Ibid.*

As expected, the third constitutional mandate of Conté was one too much. Social unrest took shape and became organized in the ensuing years until the start of the first general strike on 27 February 2006. At the same time as the escalation of social unrest and efforts to structure civil society around the trade union movement, a political dialogue between the government, the president's party and opposition parties, under pressure from financial donors, particularly the European Union (EU), created the hope for progress in democracy and for credible legislative elections scheduled for June 2007.<sup>130</sup> The third general strike, started on 10th January 2007 by the trade union centres with the support of a coalition of civil society organizations and the opposition political parties, degenerated into a cycle of demonstrations and bloody repressions by the Guinea defence and security forces and created a major political crisis.

In their strike notice, the trade union centres had, among others, condemned the established inability of the president to assume properly his mission before clearly formulating the demand to put in place a government of broad consensus, led by a prime minister who would be head of government, in order to enable the Head of State "to retire to better manage his health".<sup>131</sup> The ruling party and the government reacted first, by stating that it was not the role of the trade unions to formulate political demands. The January 2007 general strike was clearly more of a popular protest movement against a breathless regime than an ordinary strike for sectional reasons. The strike was massive from 10 January 2007 and remained non-violent until the violent reactions of the government encouraged trade union leaders and the people to embark on demonstrations. A peaceful march organized on 17 January in the administrative centre of Conakry, led by the two main trade union leaders, Rabiadou Serah Diallo and Ibrahima Fofana, was violently broken up by the security forces. The same day, president Conté received the trade union leaders in one of the military camps of the town and threatened them with death.<sup>132</sup>

In the ensuing days, the situation virtually became an insurrection in several Guinean towns and thousands of

130. Guinea in transition, Briefing Afrique N°37, International Crisis Group, 11 April 2006.

131. Proposals of the trade union centres: CNTG, USTG, ONSLG and UDTG to H.E. the President of the Republic of Guinea, document dated 14 January 2007.

132. "Info-31", Information Bulletin of Inter Centrale CNTG-USTG expanded to ONSLG and UDTG, dated 18 January 2007.

demonstrators demanded the resignation of president Conté. The violent reaction of the security forces had already resulted in about ten deaths before the great demonstration in the capital on 22 January. The ensuing repression was undertaken not only by the police and gendarmerie, but also and especially by soldiers of the autonomous battalion of the presidential security (BASP) who rained live bullets on demonstrators. A total of 59 unarmed civilians were killed by the Guinean forces between 15 and 24 January 2007.<sup>133</sup> The month of January marked the beginning of a political crisis that was largely foreseen and expected since the deterioration in the health of president Conté was in tandem with the decay of the State and the escalation of uncertainty surrounding president Conté's succession.

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133. Guinea : change ou chaos, Rapport Afrique N°121, International Crisis Group, 14 February 2007.



## V. ECOWAS battles with the crisis in Guinea: a study from 2007 to 2010

### V.1. ECOWAS mediation during the January-February 2007 crisis

Guinea is an important member of ECOWAS and the violent political crises that had shaken the Mano River region for more than a decade had given her the opportunity to play a decisive role in regional security matters. As already indicated, Guinea under Lansana Conté intervened in attempts to settle the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone by ECOWAS, by taking part not only in ECOWAS missions and at the bilateral level but also supporting armed groups involved in the Liberian war. Guinea also played a key role in managing the humanitarian consequences of these conflicts, by receiving hundreds of thousands of refugees. The Guinean authorities at that time generally thought that the magnitude of economic, social and environmental costs borne by the country during this period had not been adequately recognized by the international community. Even if Lansana Conté preferred action, direct language and personal relations at Head of State level at summit meetings, he respected the regional organization and Guinea retained the Executive Secretary position of ECOWAS between 1992 and 2002, a critical period in regional and international efforts to stabilize Liberia and Sierra Leone.<sup>134</sup> The deterioration of Guinea's domestic political situation and uncertainty surrounding Lansana Conté's succession was a source of concern for ECOWAS well before the January 2007 crises started by the general strike and demonstrations. It was from that moment however that the organization intervened openly in Guinea in conformity with the provisions of its conflict prevention, management and settlement mechanism.

The situation in Guinea characterized at the beginning by demonstrations and their violent repression was placed on the agenda of the 3rd ordinary Summit of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government held in Ouagadougou on 19 January 2007. The Summit mandated Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal to visit Guinea to help resolve the crisis.

As the situation deteriorated with the demonstration of 22 January and President Conté was traditionally opposed to any form of external interference in internal affairs, the visit of the two West African Heads of State was postponed sine die. The President of Burkina Faso, Blaise Compaoré, who had just assumed the rotating presidency of ECOWAS, undertook consultations, whereas his Nigerian counterpart Obasanjo proposed to entrust his compatriot and former president, General Ibrahim Babangida, with the mission of good offices to Guinea on behalf of ECOWAS.<sup>135</sup> On 24 January, in a press release ECOWAS "deplores the high number of human losses, particularly civilians, in Guinea" and "appeals to the Guinean authorities to guarantee peace and security of their compatriots, particularly when they are exercising their constitutional rights, i.e. freedom of association and expression."<sup>136</sup>

In Conakry, negotiations between the trade union centres, the National Employers' Council and Government representatives, with the mediation of the Speaker of the National Assembly, the Chief Justice and the President of the Economic and Social Council, and the facilitation of the religious authorities, ended with the signing of an agreement on 27 January 2007 that suspended the strike action. The first point of this agreement provided for the appointment of a Prime Minister who would be the head of government by delegation of part of the powers of the Head of State. It was specified in the text that the Prime Minister "should be a competent and upright senior civilian officer who had never been involved in misappropriation of funds".<sup>137</sup> The agreement reaffirmed compliance with the policy of separation of powers, and a series of economic and social measures demanded by the unions, and provided for the establishment of a Commission of Enquiry to find and punish the perpetrators of acts of violence during the June 2006 and January 2007 strikes and demonstrations.

This agreement could be considered as a victory for the popular protest movement of the unions over the Conté regime; however, there was no guarantee that the president, who had regained his vigour and determination as military head during those days of great tension, was going to delegate most of his constitutional powers to the new prime minister. There was the need to first appoint that

134. Guineans Edouard Benjamin (1993-1997) and Lansana Kouyaté (1997-2002) successively occupied the post of Executive Secretary of ECOWAS. Lansana Kouyaté was appointed Prime Minister of Guinea soon after the crisis of January 2007 and remained till May 2008.

135. «ECOWAS condemns the violence and calls for calm in Guinea, Press Release N°3/2007, Abuja, 24 January 2007.

136. Ibid.

137. Guinea: change or chaos, op.cit.

prime minister, and the president did that after thirteen days and only after the unions had threatened to go on strike again. On 9 February 2007, Lansana Conté appointed one of his close associates, Eugene Camara, a member several government teams and minister for presidential affairs at the time of the strike. As the unions and the population expected the appointment of a neutral personality who had not been closely associated with the regime, the appointment of a close associate of Conté's provoked spontaneous and more violent demonstrations than the previous ones in the capital and other secondary towns of the country.

Demonstrations of an unprecedented magnitude in the history of Guinea saw this time looting and destruction of many public buildings and houses belonging to members of government or close associates of president Conté. Human victims continued to rise, going beyond hundred since the start of the strike on 10 January. The demonstrators henceforth demanded the departure of the president and his new prime minister. To stop the looting and anarchy in most cities, president Conté decided on 12 February 2007 to declare a state of emergency, suspending in fact all liberties and entrusting power to the army and imposing a ten-day curfew. On 12 February, the president of the ECOWAS Commission, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, condemned in a communiqué the new killings of unarmed civilians, reminding the government of Guinea its duty to protect its citizens, ensure their security and implement in good faith the agreement signed on 27 January 2007.<sup>138</sup>

The intervention of ECOWAS to help resolve the January 2007 crisis had begun on the field on 2 February by an initial travel of General Ibrahim Babangida (rtd), accompanied by the president of ECOWAS Commission, Ibn Chambas. The choice of the former Head of State who led Nigeria under a military regime between 1985 and 1993 was done after consultations between the Nigerian president Obasanjo, who was very active on the African and international scene during his two terms of office (1999 à 2007) and Blaise Compaoré who had begun in January 2007 his incumbency as president of ECOWAS.<sup>139</sup> Obasanjo had indicated that Babangida could play in Guinea the useful role that another former Nigerian president, Abdusalami Abubakar had played in Liberia as a

special envoy of ECOWAS.<sup>140</sup> Babangida was also considered as one of the region's rare personalities that president Conté could not refuse audience—as it was known that he could do that if it was another head of State—, because he was a General like him and that both men had maintained good relations during the initial years of the Liberian and Sierra Leone wars.<sup>141</sup> As already mentioned, the Guinea of Conté had supported the diplomatic and military engagement of Nigeria then under Babangida in Liberia from 1990.

In justifying its intervention for fear that the crisis in Guinea might degenerate and cause further loss of human lives or spill into the neighbouring countries that had barely come out of civil wars, ECOWAS again sent, on 17 February 2007, a delegation led by General Babangida and comprising the president of the Commission Ibn Chambas and the ECOWAS Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Colonel Mahamane Touré. This mission, sent at the height of the tension in Conakry, requested president Conté to withdraw the choice of Eugene Camara and appoint a prime minister who would be chosen from a shortlist proposed by the trade union centres and the National Council of Civil Society Organizations.<sup>142</sup> On 26 February 2007, diplomat Lansana Kouyaté, who performed, among others, international functions as ECOWAS Executive Secretary between 1997 and 2002, was appointed prime minister and head of government.

After almost two months of demonstrations, violent repression by the armed forces and state of emergency that had caused 137 deaths, according to official figures released by the government and 183, according to civil society organizations,<sup>143</sup> the appointment of Lansana Kouyaté was a relief for the people. For the first time since he seized power in 1984, the Guinea president had yielded to the show of force by civilian stakeholders and not under pressure from mutineers from his army. However, modalities for getting out of the crisis left great uncertainty over room for manoeuvre which the new head of government was to enjoy and did not warn of any misunderstanding between players in the popular protests

138. "ECOWAS condemns renewed killings in Guinea", Press Release N°7/2007, 12 February 2007.

139. "Gen. (rtd) Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida on ECOWAS mission to Guinea", Press Release N°5/2007, Abuja, 1 February 2007.

140. Ibid.

141. Interview in Abuja, January 2010 and telephone interview with Guinean personalities and diplomats, March and April 2010.

142. Ibid.

143. Guinea: suspended change, Briefing Afrique N°49, International Crisis Group, 8 November 2007.

and the chosen prime minister. With powers merely delegated by a president who was not used to prerogative sharing, and without constitutional basis, Kouyaté however had to personify a change in the way the country was administered.

The state of grace did not last for long. The gap between the slow progress of the Kouyaté government and the immense expectations of Guineans gave rise to sharp criticisms and the trade union centres condemned as early as July 2007 the government's non-compliance with the protocol agreement of 27 January, the firm but unfulfilled promises of the prime minister (particularly improvement in electricity and water supply), appointments of senior officers of the Central Bank and regional ministers and governors.<sup>144</sup> The political class, as well as those who supported president Conté and leaders of opposition parties, also became increasingly distrustful of the prime minister who gave the impression of positioning himself as a new candidate to succeed Conté as head of a government appointed at the end of a serious political crisis. Within this context, preparations towards legislative elections initially scheduled for June 2007, then postponed to December 2007, had not known any significant progress. The national independent Commission of Enquiry to throw light on the grievous events of January and February 2007 was put in place only in December 2007, without obtaining the necessary means for the effective launch of its work.<sup>145</sup>

ECOWAS remained attentive to the situational change in Guinea after the inauguration of the Kouyaté government till the dismissal of the latter by president Conté on 20 May 2008. The organization, among others, opened an office in Conakry under a special Representative of the President of the Commission. For ECOWAS, the major concerns were the maintenance of the peace and security in Guinea under Conté and led by the head of government, Kouyaté, as well as the organization of legislative elections as early as possible to renew a National Assembly elected in June 2002 that had come to the end of its mandate since 2007. The political dialogue started between the presidency and the opposition parties and concluded in December 2006 had helped to reach, for the first time in the electoral history of the country, an agreement on the establishment of an Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) with equal representation for

the opposition, the government, representatives of civil society and administration. The establishment of INEC, changes in the electoral process, such as registration of biometric data and the planned distribution of voter's cards with photographs as well as confirmed technical and financial assistance from UNDP and EU, could ensure a truly credible legislative election.<sup>146</sup> Beyond the democratic need to renew parliament, these elections were to help elect a new Speaker of the National Assembly who, under the country's constitution, shall replace the president of the Republic in case of disability or death.

The crisis of January-February 2007 and the appointment of Kouyaté had changed nothing in the uncertainty surrounding the real state of health of president Conté and the chances of a transition that conformed to the Constitution in case of the death of the Head of State. The out-going Speaker of the National Assembly, who had voted the extension of his own term of office until it was renewed, Aboubacar Sompore, was considered as illegitimate by most stakeholders in Guinea who did not envisage that he would take over the reins of government in case of the death of the president. Even if the National Assembly was renewed through genuine legislative elections, many were the political and social stakeholders in Guinea as well as diplomats in Conakry who were convinced that the possible death of president Conté would be followed by an army takeover. Although no ECOWAS official had ever made a declaration in favour of a military coup d'état, it seemed however that the organization did not also believe in the need to support the scenario of a constitutional transition.<sup>147</sup> ECOWAS however actively supported preparations towards legislative elections, by announcing on 5 February 2008, a contribution of US\$500,000 to enable INEC to finally commence its activities.<sup>148</sup> Prior to, and after the dismissal of Lansana Kouyaté on 20 May 2008 and his replacement by a former minister who was a close ally of the president, Tidiane Souaré, progress in preparations towards elections slowed down.

In July, 2008, a joint mission of ECOWAS represented by the president of the Commission, Ibn Chambas, and the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) led by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for West Africa, Saïd Djinnit, paid a visit to Conakry to

144. Ibid.

145. Ensuring continuation of democratic reforms, Briefing Afrique N°52, International Crisis Group, 24 June 2008.

146. Ibid.

147. Interview with diplomatic sources, January and March 2010.

148. "ECOWAS to contribute 500,000 dollars to Guinea's electoral commission", Press Release N°006/2008, 5 February 2008.

recall not only the need for elections but also to start reforms in the security sector and combat drug trafficking, whose reality and magnitude had finally been recognized.<sup>149</sup> In May 2008, soldiers mutinied the umpteenth time to demand payment of arrears of allowances and the dismissal of certain heads accused of embezzlement of their allowances. For days they shot again into the barracks, sowed panic among the population and caused death among civilians who were hit by stray bullets.<sup>150</sup> The soldiers' demands were once again met by president Conté whose power depended more than ever before on the loyalty of his army. It was against this background of disorder and indiscipline among the defence and security forces, and the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force by men in uniform that the country found itself in December 2008 when the death of Lansana Conté was announced.

## V.2. ECOWAS in Guinea after the military coup d'état

Although the serious political crisis caused by the January and February 2007 demonstrations was a surprise to observers of the situation in Guinea, who did not expect a protest movement of such magnitude against the regime before the death of president Conté, everybody knew that the aftermath of the possible death of the president would be uncertain and full of serious dangers of violence, as the scenario of a constitutional transfer of power to the out-going Speaker of Parliament accepted by all institutions of the nation, particularly the armed forces, seemed to be the least probable. The outcome of the crisis at the beginning of 2007 did not change the fragile situation of the country, when the end of a regime established in 1984 came. Between February 2007 and December 2008, legislative elections were not organized, the National Commission of Enquiry on violations of human rights committed during the general strikes of June 2006, January and February 2007 could not sit, mutinies of soldiers accompanied with behaviours that endangered civilian lives were on the increase and lack of respect for hierarchy and basic discipline in the army was manifest. Under these circumstances, a takeover by the army immediately after the death of Lansana Conté was certainly

more than probable; however, there was total uncertainty surrounding the ability of the main components of the destructured and divided army to assume power collectively and appoint a new head. The mistrust of the group of officers and influential non-commissioned officers among the relatively young troupes, compared to the generals and colonels of Conté's generation who headed the staff headquarters, was known and did not ensure a takeover that respected military hierarchy. There was a real danger of confrontations between the various factions of the army who were interested in seizing power.

The death of President Lansana Conté was made public in the night of 22-23 December 2008 by the Speaker of the National Assembly, Aboubacar Somparé, constitutionally mandated to succeed the head of State, surrounded by the Chief of Defence Staff, General Diarra Camara, and the Prime Minister, Tidiane Souaré. The illusion of power transfer to the Speaker of the National Assembly with the support of the high military command lasted only a few hours. A group of young officers announced in the same day of 23 December the seizure of power by a junta that called itself the National Council for Democracy and Development (CNDD). After a rather short period of confusion, the CNDD effectively took control of the country's institutions and leaders of the junta paraded in the capital, Conakry, under acclamations from the crowd. The new strong man of Guinea chosen from the junta was Captain Dadis Camara, previously in charge of army fuel supplies and little known until the mutiny of May 2008 which saw him play a leading role by the side of Lieutenant Claude Pivi.<sup>151</sup> But the junta represented beyond a few personalities a compromise between the interests of various factions within the Guinea army. It was the old guard that bore the brunt of the takeover by the CNDD, one of the early decisions of Dadis Camara being the retirement of 22 Generals, some of whom were then arrested.

The international community, on principle, very quickly condemned the coup d'état. The African Union (AU), in accordance with its texts, suspended Guinea from the organization on 29 December 2008 at the end of the 165th meeting of its Peace and Security Council (PSC) in Addis Ababa. Most of Guinea's neighbouring States were very cautious and did not make any pronouncements on

149. "ECOWAS, UNOWA hold talks with stakeholders in Guinea", Press Release N°067/2008, 9 July 2008.

150. Ensuring continuation of reforms op.cit.

151. Dadis Camara is from the Guerze ethnic group, one of the groups that have settled in the Forest Region, whereas Claude Pivi is of the Toma Group, also in the Forest Region. Colonel Sekouba Konate, subsequently promoted General and General Mamadou Toto Camara were also influential in the CNDD.

the military coup d'état, with the notable exception of Senegal's Abdoulaye Wade who sympathized with the Chairman of the CNDD, Dadis Camara, and reckoned that the putsch in Guinea was not a classical coup d'état. This position was openly criticized by the head of Nigeria's diplomacy.<sup>152</sup> ECOWAS leaders, in view of the deterioration in the health of Conté in December, in fact reacted to the 23rd December 2008 coup d'état. Even before the extraordinary meeting of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government on Guinea on 10 January 2009 in Abuja, a mission comprising ministers of foreign affairs of Nigeria and Burkina Faso, the Chief of Defence Staff of Nigeria, the personal Chief of Staff of the President of Burkina Faso, the Commissioner of ECOWAS in charge of political affairs, peace and security, the special representative of the UN Secretary-General for West Africa paid a visit to Conakry at a time when the situation was still tense. This physical presence of ECOWAS just after the coup d'état signified to the CNDD junta at the outset that the Community would be watching its deeds and gestures, reassured the political stakeholders in Guinea who feared arbitrary arrests by the country's new masters and thus contributed to calm down the situation in the early days of the post-Conté era.<sup>153</sup>

ECOWAS's line of action soon after the takeover of power by the CNDD was defined by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government at the end of the 10 January 2009 Summit. The Conference "rejected any idea of a military transition in Guinea and decided to suspend participation of this member State in the meetings and all decision-making bodies of the Community, in accordance with the provisions of the 2001 Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance", recalling that the said protocol provided for zero tolerance for the takeover or maintenance of power by unconstitutional means and considered as legitimate only accession to power through free, fair and transparent elections.<sup>154</sup> ECOWAS undertook to closely monitor the situation in Guinea in order to see to the rapid return to constitutional order and proposed a nine-point programme that provided, among others, the establishment by the military junta of a National Transition Council, a deliberative body that would be composed of civilians and the military and would see to

the realization of the objective of a return to democracy through free, fair and transparent elections in 2009 and that would ban members of CNDD to stand for elections to take place before the end of 2009. ECOWAS also decided, in spite of the suspension of Guinea, to maintain "permanent and constructive dialogue CNDD, stakeholders in Guinea and partners" in order to ensure immediate implementation of these measures.<sup>155</sup> The Organization agreed to speak in favour of the inclusion of Guinea on the list of the United Nations Peace Consolidation Commission to enable it have access to the United Nations Fund for the Consolidation of Peace.

ECOWAS initiated the establishment of an International Contact Group on Guinea (ICG-G) that constituted a permanent and constructive Framework for Dialogue between the CNDD and the other stakeholders in Guinea, The group held first meeting in Conakry on 16 and 17 February 2009. The Group was formally established at the end of a consultative meeting on the situation in Guinea, held in Addis Ababa on 30 January 2009. Co-chaired by Ibrahima Fall, special envoy for Guinea appointed by the President of the AU Commission, Jean Ping, and the President of the ECOWAS Commission, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, the inaugural meeting of the ICG-G was attended by representatives of many institutions.<sup>156</sup> It was the opportunity to establish initial contact of African and non-African partners with the CNDD junta and the Prime Minister Kabine Komara who was appointed by the junta to head of a civilian-cum-military government. The Group stressed the importance of developing diligently an accurate road map for return to democracy and constitutional order in Guinea.<sup>157</sup> The main transitional stages leading to elections were identified and the Guinean authorities, the Chairman of the CNDD as well as the Prime Minister, reiterated their commitment that members of CNDD and the government would not take part in the forth coming elections. The Group also started bilateral consultations with the "Forces vives", the

155. Ibid.

156. United Nations Organization, International Organization of Francophonie (OIF), European Union (EU), Union of Mano River States (UMS), Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), Community of Sahelo-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), World Bank (WB), Angola which chaired the AU Peace and Security Council, Nigeria which is the current chairman of ECOWAS, African non-permanent members of the UN Security Council (Burkina and Libya), Permanent members of the Security Council and Spain. See Final Communiqué of the first session of the International Contact Group on Guinea, Conakry, 17 February 2009.

157. Final Communiqué of the First Session of the International Contact Group on Guinea, Conakry, 17 February 2009.

152. «ECOWAS suspends Guinea», RFI, 10 January 2009, [http://www.rfi.fr/actufr/articles/109/article\\_77158.asp](http://www.rfi.fr/actufr/articles/109/article_77158.asp).

153. Interview of the author, January-March 2010.

154. "ECOWAS leaders against military transition in Guinea", Press Release N°003/2009, 10 January 2009.

new coalition of the major political stakeholders of the country who had hailed the coup d'état of 23 December 2008 but begun to express worry about the ban on political activities, arbitrary arrests, extra-judiciary detentions and other abuses of power committed by the military. The ICG-G finally asked Guinean institutions—the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Political Affairs—to put in a clear and detailed request for financing as soon as possible and appealed to the international community for financial and material resources required for the conduct of credible and transparent legislative and presidential elections in the course of 2009.<sup>158</sup>

The International Contact Group on Guinea closely monitored the situation in Guinea throughout 2007; its meetings were more influential than those of similar groups in the region and much more frequent. The strategic and economic importance of Guinea, in view of its exceptional mining potential, explained without doubt the sustained international attention for post-Conté political transition. It was however African organizations—ECOWAS and AU in that order—that propelled the ICG-G and the consistent diplomatic action to put pressure on the military junta to agree to give priority to elections as soon as possible, respect the commitment of Dadis Camara not to be a presidential candidate; not to thwart the activities of political parties, civil society organizations and to protect human rights. If Dadis Camara's determination to make the fight against corruption, drug trafficking and crime one of his government's priorities was hailed within and outside Guinea, his populism, excessive media coverage of himself through hitherto unreleased televised programmes produced in his office at the Alpha Yaya Diallo military camp and the many movements that supported CNDD and its leader, began to create doubts about the real intentions of the president who was a creation of the coup d'état. The ICG-G held its second meeting on 16 March 2009 in Conakry, still under the Co-chairmanship of Mohamed Ibn Chambas of ECOWAS and Ibrahim Fall who represented AU. The Group encouraged CNDD and the "forces vives" to give priority to the establishment of a National Transition Council (NTC), voters' registration and the finalization of the electoral register as soon as possible.<sup>159</sup>

158. *Ibid.*

159. Final Communiqué of the Second Meeting of the International Contact Group on Guinea, Conakry, 16 March 2009.

At their 36th Summit held on 22 June 2009 in Abuja, Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS again expressed their views on the situation in Guinea. They "reaffirmed their determination to see to a return to constitutional governance in 2009 and urged members of CNDD and the transitional government to comply with the road map to democracy and honour its commitment to finance the elections". They also "recalled the need to respect the agreement which stipulated that members of CNDD and the transitional government should not take part in the elections".<sup>160</sup> The conference also demanded "that ECOWAS and the International Contact Group should reinforce their presence in Guinea" in order to maintain regular contact with stakeholders in Guinea and ensure that the timetable for credible elections in 2009 was implemented. A few days later, the ICG-G changed tone at its forth session held in Syrte in Libya and co-chaired by the presidents of the AU and ECOWAS Commissions, Jean Ping and Mohamed Ibn Chambas respectively. The Group expressed concern over lack of progress in preparations towards elections that should end the transition, the inability to establish the National Transition Council that ECOWAS had been demanding since January 2009, deterioration of the security situation, human rights violations and limitations on freedom of expression that weighed particularly on political parties that remained banned.<sup>161</sup> The same concern of the ICG-G was expressed at the Fifth meeting held in Conakry on 16-17 July 2009. The desire to bring pressure to bear on the Dadis Camara junta was evident in the final communiqué that "invites the CNDD Chairman to formalize his commitments", particularly that of not standing for future elections. The communiqué also stressed "the determination of the AU Peace and Security Council to implement provisions of the Constitutive Act and the Lome Declaration on anti-constitutional changes of Government, in case Guinea's authorities did not quickly take the necessary measures for return to constitutional order, in accordance with the time-table."<sup>162</sup>

In early September 2009, without officially announcing that he would stand in future elections as a presidential candidate, Captain Dadis Camara repeated henceforth

160. Final Communiqué of the 36th Ordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS, 22 June 2009.

161. "Contact Group expresses concern at slow pace of process of restoration of constitutional order in Guinea", Press Release N°066/2009, 27 June 2009.

162. Final Communiqué of the Fifth Meeting of the International Contact Group on Guinea, Conakry, 16-17 July 2009.

that the decision depended on the people, whereas there were signs that the junta would denounce all commitments previously entered into in the presence of political and social stakeholders and the international community. At the end of its Sixth Meeting held in Conakry on 3-4 September 2009 in an atmosphere of tension more than before, the ICG-G said that “it was faced with new realities concerning the principle of the president and members of CNDD, as well as the prime minister not standing for elections”, and “regretted the lack of consensus within the National Transition Council and deplored obstacles to freedom of expression of the citizens, the media and political parties”.<sup>163</sup> The ICG-G concluded that “such calling into question of the previous commitments of CNDD contravened the basis of partnership with the international community for a return to constitutional order”.<sup>164</sup> Tension was mounting in the increasingly divided country on the issue of the possibility of Dadis Camara standing in an election that would be organized by a government and a territorial administration placed under a military junta led by Dadis Camara. The Forum of Active Forces in Guinea that brought together most of the political leaders and civil society was opposed to the possible candidature of the head of CNDD and deplored the growing aggressiveness of the ruling military. The situation increasingly worried West Africa and missions of good offices were led by Heads of State. Thus, on 12 September 2009, the President of Liberia and Senegal visited Guinea to meet Dadis Camara and probably urge him to respect previous commitments.

In the absence of encouraging signs from Conakry, the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC), at the end of its meeting on 17 December 2009, “strongly condemns any attempt by Captain Moussa Dadis Camara, Chairman of the National Council for Development and Democracy (CNDD), to renege on the commitment he made to the effect that neither Captain Moussa Dadis Camara and other members of CNDD, nor the Prime minister would stand for the presidency” and “decides to impose appropriate sanctions on the Chairman of CNDD, as well as all other individuals, both civilians and military, whose activities tend to contravene the said commitments if, within a period of one month from the date of adoption of this decision, the above-mentioned individuals do not give

a written undertaking to respect the said commitments”.<sup>165</sup> The diplomatic pressure exerted on the Guinea regime through the ICG-G at the behest of ECOWAS moved to threats of targeted sanctions, a measure that could only be decided by the PSC of the AU or by the United Nations Security Council.

### V.3. Action of ECOWAS after the events of 28 September 2009

Political tensions turned into violence and extremely serious violations of human rights on 28 September 2009, when elements of the armed forces of Guinea deliberately opened fire on demonstrators that had gathered in the big Conakry stadium at the instance of the major political leaders who met with those of the civil society in a Forum of the “forces vives”. The intention of the forum was to bring together thousands of people to demonstrate against the obvious desire of Captain Camara to be a candidate at the presidential election and the freezing of activities under the initial transition time-table. The demonstration was maintained by the political leaders, including three former Prime ministers, in spite of the ban placed on it by the military authorities. The circumstances of the bloody repression of this peaceful demonstration at an enclosed place provoked agitation and dismay among the international community. The international Commission of Enquiry that was quickly established came up with 156 people killed or missing, 109 women raped and other sexual abuses, including sexual mutilations and sexual slavery.<sup>166</sup> In spite of the recurrence of deadly repressions of demonstrations of civilians by the armed forces of Guinea for several years, particularly that of January and February 2007 when 186 people were killed, the magnitude of the killings and sexual violence visited on women at the stadium on 28 September 2009 came as a surprise within and outside Guinea. Leaders of the “forces vives” at the stadium, including three former Prime ministers were themselves molested by soldiers loyal to the junta.

ECOWAS reacted promptly to the massacre by issuing a communiqué on 29 September 2009 to condemn the

163. Final Communiqué of the Sixth Meeting of the International Contact Group on Guinea, Conakry, 4 September 2009.

164. Ibid.

165. Final Communiqué of the 204th Meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council, Addis-Ababa, 17 September 2009.

166. Report of the International Commission of Enquiry charged to establish the facts and circumstances leading to the 28 September 2009 events in Guinea, United Nations.

acts of violence committed on the previous day in Guinea and called for the immediate “establishment of an international Commission of Enquiry in collaboration with the African Union and the United Nations Commission for Human Rights to identify the perpetrators and take appropriate measures”.<sup>167</sup> Prior to the 28 September events, the ICG-G had requested the incumbent ECOWAS Chairman, President Umaru Yar’Adua of Nigeria, to appoint a mediator who would have direct consultations with CNDD. ECOWAS announced officially the appointment of Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso as mediator for Guinea. Post-28 September diplomatic activity was intense, led mainly by the president of ECOWAS Commission, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, special envoy of the UN Secretary-General in West Africa, Saïd Djinnit. As early as 2 October 2009, these three personalities met with president Compaoré on the implementation of the mediation process and presented a draft mediation programme that included especially provisions demanding that Captain Camara renounce his election intentions, as he had already undertaken.<sup>168</sup> On 12 October, ICG-G held its eighth session at the headquarters of the ECOWAS Commission in Abuja and made strong recommendations to ECOWAS, AU and the UN. Apart from supporting the establishment of a commission of enquiry to get to the bottom of the 28 September 2009 events, the Group “urges ECOWAS to set up, with the assistance of its partners, an international observation and protection mission, comprising civilians and the military”; it also recommended the imposition of total embargo on arms for Guinea.<sup>169</sup>

Another Extraordinary Summit of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government was convened in Abuja on 17 October 2009. This summit was devoted to two political crises in the region: Guinea and Niger. The ECOWAS conference condemned “the barbaric acts of massacre, rape and other atrocities perpetrated by the security forces under the authority of CNDD against women and unarmed civilians on 28 September 2009”. It urged president Compaoré, in his capacity as mediator to take the necessary steps to reintroduce dialogue between the political stakeholders of Guinea, with the objective of

“establishing a new transitional authority to ensure a short and peaceful transition to constitutional order through credible, free and transparent elections; to ensure that neither the president and the other members of CNDD, nor the Prime minister and those who occupy positions of high responsibility in the new transition body hold themselves as candidates in the forthcoming presidential elections; and to determine the various stages of the transitional timetable...”.<sup>170</sup> The Conference of Heads of State and Government also hailed the decision of the United Nations Secretary-General to establish a Commission of Enquiry to get to the bottom of the 28 September 2009 violence and decided to impose an embargo on arms against Guinea under ECOWAS Convention on small arms and light weapons, their ammunitions and equipment and directed the president of the ECOWAS Commission to work with the new transition authority in Guinea as well as the new government that would come out of the transition to design and implement a programme of reform of the security sector, with the support of AU, the United Nations and other partners.

The flurry of diplomatic activity continued, illustrating the alignment of ECOWAS, AU and the UN on the same positions with regard to the Guinea junta. At their meeting on 29 October 2009 at Heads of State and Government level, the AU Peace and Security Council endorsed all decisions taken by the ECOWAS Extraordinary Summit, reaffirmed its total support for the mediation entrusted to President Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso by ECOWAS and asked the AU Commission to implement targeted sanctions, “particularly the refusal to grant visas, restrictions on travels and freezing of assets against the Chairman and members of CNDD, as well as members of the government and any other civilian or military whose activities aim to maintain the anti-constitutional status quo in Guinea”.<sup>171</sup> The series of decisions taken by the regional and international community soon after the 28 September 2008 massacre considerably changed the image of the CNDD military heads, beginning with Captain Dadis Camara who was forced explain himself on his personal responsibility in the Commission on violence and atrocities committed by the armed forces. President Camara and the Prime minister Kabine Komara accepted

167. «ECOWAS condemns the acts of repression in Guinea», Press Release N°096/2009, Abuja, 29 September 2009.

168. Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Office for West Africa, United Nations Security Council, 31 December 2009.

169. Final Communiqué of the Eighth Meeting of the International Contact Group on Guinea, Abuja, 12 October 2009.

170. Final Communiqué of the Extraordinary Summit of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government, Abuja, 17 October 2009.

171. Communiqué of the 207th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council of African Union, Abuja, 29 October 2009.



to collaborate with the International Commission of Enquiry, even though a National Commission was set up to examine the same events. Actively supported by the UN General Secretariat and the Security Council of as well as ECOWAS and AU, the International Commission of Enquiry started its work on 18 November 2009. It made field investigations from 25 November to 4 December 2009 and submitted its final report to the UN Secretary-General on 16 December. Over and above the AU targeted sanctions, the prospect of possible prosecution before the International Criminal Court for crimes committed on 28 September 2009 created great tensions among leaders of CNDD in Conakry.

President Compaoré, who was already a mediator in the Togo and Côte d'Ivoire crises and also appointed by ECOWAS to play that role in Guinea, started his consultations on 3 November 2009, with representatives of the Forum of the "forces vives", then with representatives of CNDD and the government in Ouagadougou, in the presence of AU and UN representatives. There were considerable differences of opinion among the Guinean parties. CNDD, represented by close associates of Dadis Camara, intended to conserve its principal role in the transition, did not understand ECOWAS's demand for the establishment of a "new transition authority" and did not intend to compromise on the issue of eligibility of Captain Camara. Representatives of the junta put forward nationalist arguments and increasingly denounced openly the strong interventions of external stakeholders in the International Contact Group. The imposition of individual sanctions by the AU seemed inadequate to influence the line of action defended by CNDD in Ouagadougou. Political and Civil Society stakeholders in the Forum of the "Forces vives" rejected, on their part, the status quo after the September 2009 massacre, demanding the withdrawal of CNDD and its leader Dadis Camara from future elections. The initial written proposals submitted to the parties by President Campaore on 18 November 2009 were rejected by the Forces Vives. These proposals did not exclude the possibility of the candidature of the junta leader, if he resigned two months prior to elections. These initial proposals—that were to guide future consultations according to the usual method of mediation teams of the President of Burkina Faso—were not in consonance with the previous decisions of ECOWAS and AU, which were very clear on the rejection of any possible candidature of the military successor of Lansana Conté and seizure of political power by the military who

continued to maintain an atmosphere of insecurity and fear in the country.

Whereas the first phase of the Campaore mediation seemed to be heading for an impasse and members of the International Commission of Enquiry were completing their mission in Conakry, an unexpected development occurred on 3 December 2009 that would have a decisive impact on the transition process. Captain Camara was nearly assassinated by his bodyguard, Lieutenant Aboubakar "Toumba" Diakite, during heated exchanges between the two men in a Conakry military camp. The junta leader was seriously wounded and urgently evacuated to Morocco. The assassination attempt provoked new violence and violations of human rights by the security forces loyal to Dadis Camara who went after the president's aggressor and his accomplices. Lieutenant Diakité, accused with other influential military men of the junta involved in the 28 September 2009 killings, was not captured. The assassination attempt on Captain Camara was unanimously condemned, and it considerably marginalized CNDD which came under extreme pressure. General Sekouba Konaté, officially the No.3 man of the junta, but who was in actual fact the most influential man with Dadis Camara, took charge of the CNDD and assumed the functions as interim Head of State.

Dadis Camara would spend several weeks in Morocco and news about his state of health was scarce until his surprise appearance in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) on 17 February 2010. In the meantime, discreet diplomatic manoeuvres involving the United States, France, Burkina Faso, ECOWAS and AU, among others, took over the summit diplomacy to neutralize, politically, Dadis Camara, who was weakened by the aftermath of the assassination attempt and kept in Ouagadougou, and start a dialogue on new foundations with General Konate. On 15 January 2010, a joint statement was signed in Ouagadougou by Dadis Camara, Sékouba Konate and president Compaoré that revived hopes for a peaceful transition towards constitutional order. This political agreement which made General Sékouba Konate the interim President for the transition period, allowed for the appointment of a new Prime Minister proposed by the Forces vives, the establishment of a National Transition Council and the organization of presidential elections within six months.

## V.4. ECOWAS and the Guinea Crisis: perceptions

### Perception of Guinea's stakeholders

The main political stakeholders of Guinea, as well as leaders of trade union centres and other civil society organizations, had the opportunity to meet representatives of ECOWAS during the various missions sent by the latter since the January 2007 social crisis-turned political and still more since the December 2008 coup d'état.<sup>172</sup> During the first stage of the ECOWAS engagement, the mission of good offices undertaken by the former Nigerian Head of State, Ibrahim Babangida, mandated by the Organization and the President of the Commission, Ibn Chambas, in February 2007 at the time when the country was ready to degenerate into anarchy and general confrontation between the armed forces and the civilian population, remained in the minds of people. ECOWAS came to the aid of one of its crisis-stricken member countries as it had the responsibility and that effort had been made both by the Heads of State (Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and Blaise Compaoré who had just assumed the rotating presidency) and the president of the Commission and his colleagues. In the view of Guineans, that mission helped to replace Eugene Camara with a prime minister proposed by leaders of the popular demonstrations against the Conté regime and to resolve the 2007 February crisis. ECOWAS remained attentive to subsequent developments between March 2007 and June 2008 under the Lansana Kouyaté-led government. But the laborious and incomplete implementation of the 27 January 2007 agreement to resolve the crisis by this government put Guinea almost in the same situation between June and December 2008 as before January 2007. Some stakeholders in Guinea regretted that ECOWAS did not follow up on its positive intervention of February 2007, by putting more pressure on Prime Minister Kouyaté. Although it was true that Guinea was a sovereign country with a sick president little inclined to see a stakeholder from outside interfering in its internal affairs, even if it was a regional organization of which the country was a member, one could however imagine ECOWAS insisting more for example so that the independent national Commission of Enquiry provided for by the agreement of January 2007 really did its work. In so far as some spe-

cific units of the Guinea armed forces had already committed serious violations of human rights in January and February 2007, a resolute pressure from ECOWAS, in conjunction with AU and the United Nations would have perhaps helped to isolate or threaten, before the death of Conté, the most dangerous elements within the armed forces.

Another important issue was that of knowing whether ECOWAS should have as its objective the pre-empting of an army takeover soon after the death of President Conté, a scenario that was considered by far the most probable by all observers, and if it had the means. A great number of political and social stakeholders in Guinea thought that a coup d'état was inevitable and even that it constituted the least dangerous situation for peace and stability of the country, in view of the rivalry among political leaders and the basically ethnic foundation of these political leaders. In spite of the brutality of many of its units and the accumulation of evidence of indiscipline and divisions within them, the army appeared to be the only institution of the country that was capable of maintaining minimum order once president Conté had died. Stakeholders in Guinea recalled systematically that the constitutional successor to president Conté presided over a National Assembly that was not only poorly elected but also had completed its term of office in June 2007 and that no-one would accept such a scenario for the transition. ECOWAS, without saying it, had done the same analysis and considered that an army takeover, if the latter succeeded in agreeing on a leader chosen from within would be a scenario that would reduce to the minimum, the danger of a chaotic and violent succession. The strategy of ECOWAS to condemn the coup d'état on principle, to be present earliest on the field in order to open dialogue with the junta that would take power and obtain from the coup makers commitments to respect a short transition towards restoration of constitutional order. Stakeholders in Guinea did not seem to criticize ECOWAS for adopting such a strategy and considered that the regional organization did not have the means to prevent a coup d'état.

ECOWAS activities during the months that followed the coup d'état were noted and lauded by Guinean political and social actors. Once they were united under the Forum of "les forces vives", they were regularly invited to the International Contact Group meetings and had always had access to ECOWAS officials. The transitional modalities proposed by ECOWAS corresponded largely

172. These perceptions came basically from telephone interviews of the author with stakeholders and observers of political and social life of the country between January and April 2010.

to the wishes of Guinean actors which did not associate with the junta. The stand adopted by ECOWAS with regard to the CNDD until September 2009, which focused on permanent dialogue with the junta coupled with conditions such as compliance with the transitional schedule as well as the prohibition of members of the government and junta to contest elections, was supported by political and trade union leaders as well as other civil society organizations. It was from September 2009 that the “forces vives” and ECOWAS changed their stand towards the CNDD and Dadis Camara. Decisions taken by ECOWAS, AU and the UN after the events of 28 September 2009 were also meant to marginalize the junta and were welcome by the “Forces vives”. The mediation by President Blaise Compaoré, however, provoked some reservations before and especially after the proposals he made in November 2009. Without affirming it openly, many members of the Forces vives had doubt about the neutrality of the Burkinabe Head of State who did not obviously make the prohibition of a possible candidature of junta leader, Dadis Camara, a non negotiable condition. Blaise Compaoré’s mediation on behalf of ECOWAS was stalled when the 3 December attack changed the situation. The President of Burkina Faso was the one who received Dadis Camara for convalescence or in other words a provisional exile and secured the signing of the 15 January 2010 accord which re-launched the transition on a more promising note. Judging from this result, Guinean stakeholders were of the view that his mediation was in the end successful.

### Perception of countries and other partner organizations of Guinea

ECOWAS’ actions were to a large extent appreciated by Guinea’s bilateral and multilateral partners, who were following closely developments in the country after the events of January and February 2007 and they later joined the Internal Contact Group from February 2009.<sup>173</sup> For these observers, ECOWAS has been without doubt the driving force of the international community’s political action in Guinea since the coup d’état of December 2008. This reflected in both the constant interest of the Commission through his President Mohamed Ibn Chambas in developments in this country and the decisive role

played by ECOWAS to mobilize other partners within the ICG–G. Without the dwarfing the importance of AU’s political contribution through the constant presence of the special envoy of the President of the AU Commission, Ibrahima Fall, at all ICG–G meetings, ECOWAS was at the forefront and had always done some remarkable preparatory work. The ICG–G distinguished itself from other current or past contact groups in the region by the frequency of its sessions—nine sessions between February and December 2009 against two or three sessions a year for the Guinea Bissau International Contact Group, as well as the force and impact of its positions. This pace and political influence are attributed to the fact that two African organizations directly concerned by the situation are co-chairing the ICG–G and are in a better position than non African partners to exert pressure on Guinean authorities.

Basically, the stand adopted by ECOWAS, combining firmness on the principles, namely, the systematic condemnation of any takeover through a coup d’état, political realism allowing space for constructive dialogue with the military junta and the mobilisation of other important partner of the country with the contact group in order to give a clear signal to the CNDD, was positively assessed. As soon as the leader of the junta expressed his willingness to renounce all his commitments in September, the reaction of the ICG–G driven by ECOWAS and with AU’s support had an impact on the chain of events. The establishment of a commission of enquiry on the September 28 2009 massacres required by ECOWAS and AU and the entire ICT–G as well as the imposition of targeted sanctions by the AU, according to observers, had a decisive impact of weakening the junta especially the close allies of Dadis Camara. The 3rd December 2009 assassination attempt staged by the aide de camp of the junta leader could not therefore be isolated from the panic within the CNDD caused by the effective investigations conducted by the international commission on the ground only a few weeks after the September 28 tragedy.

Views on the mediation role entrusted to President Compaoré by ECOWAS were less unanimous. For some, the choice is the only “error” committed by ECOWAS in the handling of the Guinean issue in the course of 2009. In their view, this choice was not the most sensible as the President of Burkina Faso was not a person who could convincingly back the principle of barring the candidature of a coup maker in a presidential election. According to these observers, the initial proposals made by the

173. Telephone interviews February and March 2010.

mediator during consultations with Guinean parties in November 2009 demonstrated the conciliatory stand of the President of Burkina Faso towards the CNDD, a decision that was not simply in line with decisions already taken by ECOWAS which gave him the mandate. For other ECOWAS partners within the ICG- G, what matters was the result of the mediation and not the initial proposals which were only a preliminary framework for discussions. The result was that President Compaoré was able to bring together in Ouagadougou Dadis Camara who was physically weak but willing to return to Conakry, and Sekouba Konate in a highly tense situation within the junta and was able to secure a decisive agreement for the continuation of the transition, the 10th January agreement. While it is premature to affirm that the Ouagadougou accord has guaranteed a peaceful transition marked by democratic elections in 2010, it has contributed to a positive change in the political dynamics in the country. At the time ECOWAS chose President Compaoré to mediate, it seems there were really no other heads of state who were particularly interested in this risky gamble. The establishment of a unit in charge of mediations within the ECOWAS Commission was an excellent decision which would reduce the reliance on some strong but controversial personalities.

## Analytical Conclusion

### Deep and complex crisis situations

Reviewing ECOWAS actions in Guinea Bissau from 2005 in the area of peace and security implies pondering over the organization's capacity to transform into concrete initiatives its ambitions in terms conflict prevention in certainly fragile but sovereign country and at peace. This study shows to what extent this task is challenging in view of the nature of the Guinea Bissau crisis. It is not exactly a crisis since it cannot be dated with precision. The study recalled the political history of this country which has never known a period of political serenity; the nineteen years of stability under President Joao Bernardo Vieira were marked by many coup attempts and episodes of political violence. Like a number of political crisis in some Sub Saharan African countries since the 1990s, the recurrent crisis in Guinea Bissau are first and foremost signs of a difficult, painful and non linear process of building a state which is both legitimate and capable of ensuring the security of its people. This process is turned into a vicious circle where political, economic and social failures during successive period have created over time conditions that are increasingly unfavourable if they do not rule out a redress of the situation. Anytime there was an opportunity for a new beginning in Guinea Bissau after the 1998-1999 conflict then after the second transition in 2004-2005, this was missed because the political actors were not able to show a spirit of compromise and discernment, because factions within the armed forces dread losing their dominant influence or better still because of the propensity of political and military actors to settle personal scores through assassinations, encouraged by the deep rooted impunity, was more important that the will to stabilize the country.

To prevent the resurgence of violent conflicts in such a context is a herculean challenge for any organization. It does not involve sending hundreds of soldiers to monitor a cease fire but helping a member country of the organization to carry out a far-reaching reform of the security sector and public administration and create conditions for the stabilisation of public finances and growth in a structurally weak economy, all within a democratic political system which requires from the political class the minimum ability to observe rules and allow the country's superior interest to prevail over personal and community antagonism. In this context, ECOWAS can only be effective

by identifying a niche where it can work towards removing the most immediate obstacles to the security sector reform and targeting short term objectives that are within its means. For ECOWAS, the objective must be to, first of all, bring Guinea Bissau up to the average standards in the region in terms of structuring and modernizing the security sector while encouraging initiatives by bilateral and multilateral partners interested in supporting more ambitious reform programmes over several years.

In a situation such as that of Guinea Bissau, timing is an essential strategic element. While external partners such the European Union are doing essential preparatory work on the various components of the security sector reform, it is urgent to implement concrete actions even if limited to prevent a clan of soldiers who are hostile to any radical changes to commit acts that will endanger the entire process. ECOWAS is in a better position than any other partner organization of Guinea to identify any risks of any excesses coming from military and/or political circles that had no interest in challenging the informal rules that have so far governed politics in the country and allowed in the last five years the criminalization of the State through the implications of some of its functionaries in international drug trafficking. If it wants to go beyond reacting to events and try to mobilize donors' attention to this country, ECOWAS must draw up, in addition to its regional plans of action, specific strategies and action plans for those members who need community solidarity the most. Guinea Bissau deserves such a special treatment. If ECOWAS is able to chalk some "success", to be measured through the absence of coups, mutinies, political and military assassination and regular functioning of all public institutions over a period of five years, it could use this example to build its credibility within the region and in relation to its non African partners. On the contrary, the inability to make a difference in such a small country will surely raise serious questions about the effectiveness of the organization on the ground.

Guinea is a much larger, more populous and more important country from the economic and geostrategic point than its neighbour. In a little over half a century of independence, it has established the economic base of a viable nation-state. However, modalities for building this state were determined by only two regimes identified with two strong men between 1958 and 2008. The long political stability was based on the monopoly of force under Sekou Touré then Lansana Conté, certainly with some significant variations in the control of power.

Though President Conté's ailment by 2003 was a source of major concern for all observers of the political situation in West Africa and naturally for ECOWAS, it was precisely because no one believed in the capacity of political institutions enshrined in the country's Constitution to manage the succession. ECOWAS had to take up the case of Guinea though the country could boast of escaping civil wars at its borders for over ten years and playing an important role in the resolution of these conflicts through ECOWAS and outside this framework by mitigating the humanitarian consequences as well as being a country which is extremely jealous of its sovereignty in view of its history. In addition, ECOWAS needs to embark on preventive diplomacy in a country which was ruled by President Conté, a military leader not very conversant with diplomatic norms and democratic principles set forth in ECOWAS protocols.

Preventing conflicts in Guinea meant anticipating the succession crisis and determining the scenario that is most likely to limit the risk of generalized violence in the short term but also implementing a strategy that will help the country take advantage of the end of Conté's regime to launch a real democratic transition. The challenge was a daunting one for ECOWAS. Undoubtedly, one may question certain choices made by the organization, starting from the fact that it resigned itself to a military takeover which is perceived as inevitable after the demise of President Conté. However, this study shows that ECOWAS was generally coherent in its actions and firm in defending its principles and determined to see Guinea embrace a political turnaround after several decades of real exercise of power by the military and the violation of the rights of their fellow citizens by some of its elements.

The game is not yet won and it is necessary that ECOWAS with the support of the AU Peace and Security Council maintain its arrangements for dialogue and pressure until presidential and parliamentary elections are held and in the coming years during which the risks of democratic regressions and use of force will remain high. There should not be any slackening in the fight against impunity especially with regard to the tragic events of 28 September 2009 and security sector reform programmes supported by ECOWAS, AU and the UN.

### **Unquestionable commitment to act and a promising collaboration with African Union**

In both Guinea and Guinea Bissau, ECOWAS officials, starting from the Executive Secretary and later the First President of the ECOWAS Commission between February 2001 and February 2010, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, have demonstrated a real commitment to use the 1999 and 2001 Protocols to influence political and security developments. The President of the Commission undoubtedly undertook to fully play his role as defined in the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security. He dispatched fact-finding and mediation missions, appointed special representatives, led a number of missions, including at the height of crises, as was the case in Conakry in February 2007 or January 2009, after the takeover by the CNDD junta. He involved other institutions of the Mechanism in efforts deployed, including the Mediation and Security Council (MSC) and maintained constant and constructive relations with heads of state occupying the rotating chairmanship position of the organization. He was able to portray the new values of the organization by being firm in his public statements on human rights violations by security and defence forces of member states and through his commitment to apply strict sanctions stipulated in the Protocols in case of breach of the constitutional order. Generally, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government adopted recommendations of the MSC which are submitted by the Commission, including strong decisions such as those that were taken against Dadis Camara's CNDD in October 2009.

Within the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the Commission has evolved a shared vision of effective defence of values captured in the 1999 and 2001 Protocols. This is a positive gain which should not be affected by changes of people at the level of the Commission and/or the Assembly of Heads of State and Government. Generally, there are no doubts about efforts made in recent years to expand the capacities and scope of activity of this department. While substantial resources have been allocated to the establishment of regional peacekeeping brigades placed at the disposal of the AU, there has been a special emphasis on strengthening the division in charge of the Early Warning System through training activities for analysts and the development of new technical tools as indicated in the 2009 ECOWAS Annual Report. Besides the support to the Medi-

ation and Security Council for the management of political crises in Guinea, Guinea Bissau and Niger, the Directorate of Political Affairs continued to allocate considerable resources for assistance and observation of electoral processes in member countries and embarked on preparatory work on action plans that will constitute the ambitious ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) adopted in January 2008. As indicated in the first section of this study, the ECPF is made up of 14 components. Consultants engaged by the Commission have been developing since 2009 action plans for the components on Democracy and Political Governance, Preventive Diplomacy, Natural Resource Governance, Security Governance, Media and Women, Peace and Security.

A review of the cases of Guinea and Guinea Bissau, especially from 2009, shows a commitment for close cooperation and alignment of political positions between ECOWAS and the AU, whose Peace and Security Council (PSC) is the leading decision making organ at the continental level. With regard to the Guinean issue, after the December 2008 coup d'état in particular, the two organizations have systematically sought to align their positions and present a common front within the International Contact Group which they co-chair. The threats and actual imposition of targeted sanctions by the AU PSC against the leaders of the CNDD junta were able to consolidate and give credibility to diplomatic efforts deployed by ECOWAS. The visible alignment of ECOWAS and AU positions made it possible to secure more easily the diplomatic support of influential external actors such as the European Union, its Members and the United States. Financial sanctions and travel bans and threats of invoking the International Criminal Court (ICC) in case of serious violations of Human Rights from western powers are more feared than when they are brandied or adopted by the African Union. Officials of the ECOWAS Commission have regularly shuttled between Abuja and Addis Ababa to provide information and analysis to the AU Commission and PSC.

The formula of an international contact group co-chaired by a regional economic community and the African Union could be replicated in the management of other political crises even if it does not guarantee an effective alignment of positions of all influential external actors. In the case of Guinea Bissau, where the issue was not so much how to isolate a military junta who wants to retain power than ensuring the effectiveness of a security sector reform, neutralizing military leaders involved in criminal

activities like drug trafficking and providing massive aid to reform public administration and restoring the credibility of an extremely deprived State, meetings and communiqués of an International Contact group will produce very little results if they are not backed by concrete actions which require the provision of adequate human and financial resources at the right time. Beyond the case of Guinea Bissau, most political crisis in West Africa which can degenerate into violent conflicts fall within the rather normal and predictable trajectory of young states in a political transition and democratic learning phase. Preventive diplomacy, whether conducted by ECOWAS, AU or both may resolve one-off dangerous situations and contain the level of violence, but cannot serve as an effective solution to recurrent crises.

### **Limitations in the capacity to influence security and political developments**

The will to act and the determination to enforce the organisation's norms are not enough to make a decisive contribution to the quest for sustainable peace and security within extraordinarily difficult contexts. Missions of good offices, of members of the Panel of the Wise or former Heads of States to convince ruling presidents to respect the Constitution of their country or commitments made before their citizens and the suspension of devious states from the governing bodies of the organization have very little chance of helping countries like Guinea-Bissau, Guinea and others in the region to come out of the trap of instability, militarisation, poverty and institutional weaknesses. Managing complex issues with limited human and financial resources implies that ECOWAS must make strategic choices, establish some priorities, identify clearly what can be achieved in the short, medium and long term in the area of conflict prevention and draw up differentiated strategies taking into account the most immediate threats to peace and security in each country within the community space.

This study covered two countries facing serious crises in recent years. However, ECOWAS is largely a community of fragile states because they are young and their official democratic political systems date mostly from the 1990s. Between 2005 and 2010, Guinea and Guinea Bissau were not the only cases of political crises before ECOWAS. Côte d'Ivoire, the second economic power in the region, is still embroiled in a crisis with a very uncertain outcome

despite the relative peace prevailing in the country for the past three years. The presence of a UN peacekeeping operation mandated by the Security Council since 2003 and the recourse to the exclusive mediation of the Burkinabe President by Ivorian actors since 2007 enabled ECOWAS as an institution to withdraw largely from this issue which has become unmanageable at its level. Togo experienced a disguised coup d'état and serious post electoral violence in 2005 and continued to mobilize ECOWAS attention until the presidential elections of March 2010. The desire of ex-president Mamadou Tandja of Niger to remain in power at the end of his two constitutional terms of office generated a political crisis in this country in 2009, leading to a military coup d'état in February 2010 followed by a transition that ECOWAS will have to facilitate until elections are held in February 2011.

Member countries which are not considered as not being in crisis are very likely to fall into situations of similar political tensions if not violence in the wake or after forthcoming elections. This is the case of the economic, military and diplomatic power in the region, Nigeria, which is still weakened by poorly organized and dubious elections like those of 2007 and repeated inter-community violence which claims several hundreds of lives some few kilometres away from the ECOWAS headquarters in Abuja. Liberia and Sierra Leone are still marked by disastrous civil wars they experienced and are still facing the big challenge of economic and social reconstruction, a requirement for the restoration of lasting peace and security. The contribution of these two countries to the regional organization can only be limited in view of the enormity of internal challenges. The respect of constitutional principles stated in the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance in other countries considered as stable such as Burkina Faso or The Gambia is very debatable. Countries which seem to have relatively progressed in the consolidation of their institutions and democratic culture, like Cape Verde, Ghana, Benin, Senegal or Mali are not many and are not influential enough at the regional level to weigh decisively on the orientations of ECOWAS. Besides, none of them is shielded from democratic regression.

It is essential not to lose sight of the political and economic realities of countries that make up ECOWAS while taking a critical look at the organizations' actions. While political practices in many Member States are slow in embracing principles stated in texts, the safeguard role played by ECOWAS has never been so precious and fragile

at the same time. The preservation and consolidation of this role will depend on the promotion of a result oriented culture of pragmatism and that of boldness in the strategic approach which will help overcome major obstacles that policy makers and Member States could pose when their personal interest do not correspond to the general interest of their countries and the Community. West African civil society organizations have a key role to play in safeguarding gains in terms of democratic norms and respect for human rights and demanding from ECOWAS the strict observance of principles in specific crisis situations in Member States. External partners of ECOWAS, attracted by the organization's commitment to improve its capacity to manage conflicts and crisis in the region, must ensure that their financial and technical assistance does not lead to a proliferation of initiatives that will surely dilute objectives and priorities, weaken strategic reflections and lead to gaps between ambitious action plans and the Commission's capacity to implement.

ECOWAS member countries have political, economic, social and demographic characteristics and experience rapid changes that will continue to expose them in the coming years to potentially violent crises, but with varying degrees. As this study has shown, by reviewing facts and perceptions in two specific cases, ECOWAS has become very reactive to disturbing political and security developments within the community space. Its early warning system and recourse to preventive diplomacy have undoubtedly already helped in reducing significantly the potential of tensions being transformed into political crisis and later into violent conflicts. However, to address the structural causes of political instability, insecurity and violence, ECOWAS should be able to influence the real functioning of Member States. It cannot go beyond certain limits because of the sovereignty of countries and political will of their leaders. This is the reason why one must guard against perceiving ECOWAS as a possible substitute to the State, a means of getting round them or freeing themselves of responsibility for their weaknesses, dysfunction and lack of legitimacy of their leaders. With regard to conflict prevention and other issues, the strengthening of regional mechanisms must go hand in hand with the consolidation of mechanisms and institutions at the level of each and every Member State while giving priority to the most fragile among them.



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