



Situation Report

Date Issued: 26 March 2004

Author: Patrícia M Ferreira¹

Distribution: General

Contact: asap@iss.co.za

Guinea-Bissau: Perspectives on the up-coming elections

Introduction

Guinea-Bissau is currently living through a decisive period in its political history. Marked by governmental instability since 1998, Guinea-Bissau will hold legislative elections on 28 March 2004. According to various government bodies and the main political parties, these will be “the most important vote in the history of Guinea-Bissau”. As a background to the elections and in the context of the many political and economic challenges facing the country, this situation report will analyse the country's political evolution, as well as provide a discussion of possible outcomes of the election.

Guinea-Bissau is one of the poorest countries in the world, ranked 167 th out of a total of 173 countries on the Human Development Index of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). With social indicators well below the Sub-Saharan average, almost 90% of the population lives on an income of less than US\$1 a day. Although a small country of 36,120 km with a population of only 1,3 million, Guinea-Bissau is one of Africa's most diverse in ethnic and religious terms. Guinean society comprises some forty ethnic groups, which are generally classified under five headings: Balanta (30%), Fula (20%), Mandingo (13%), Papel (13%) and Manjaco (14%). In terms of religious affiliation some 45% of the population practice traditional religion, 40% are Muslims (mainly the Fula and the Mandingo) and 13% are Christian. Even at a linguistic level, the diversity is evident, various local languages being spoken. Although Portuguese is the official language, French has been increasingly used in recent times.

The economy is dominated by subsistence agriculture, principally rice (which is the staple food), bananas, cassava and maize. The main export crop is cashew nuts, which contribute more than half of the country's export revenue. The fishing industry has grown rapidly and its economic contribution has also increased. The manufacturing sector is limited to the processing of raw materials and the production of basic consumer goods.

From independence to 1997

Guinea-Bissau became independent in 1974, following a 13-year liberation struggle against Portuguese colonial rule by the *Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Capo Verde* (PAIGC – African Party for the

Historical Overview

Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde), which had been formed in 1956 and was led by Amílcar Cabral until his assassination in 1973. Between 1974 and 1980, Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde were governed as separate countries by the PAIGC, under the presidency of Luís Cabral, Amilcar's brother. The intention was that the territories would soon unite, although the reconciliation of interests between the two was not particularly easy, not least because the party, public administration and armed forces were dominated by the mestiço intellectual minority, which represented only 2% of the Guinean population.

On 14 November 1980, the Prime Minister, Major João Bernardo Vieira ('Nino') mounted a successful coup in Bissau following disagreements with Luís Cabral over proposed constitutional amendments. This ended all thought of union with Cape Verde, relations were severed and a few months later the Cape Verdean wing of PAIGC renamed itself and formed a new government for the islands.

The first decade of the regime was marked by power struggles within the single party, by the abolition of the post of prime minister, by the concentration of power in the office of the president. In 1985 Vice-President Paulo Correia was among six leading figures executed for attempting a coup. Pressured by the international community – especially France and Portugal – Nino Vieira allowed for a gradual internal liberalisation of the regime to take place, with a view to implementing democracy. In 1990 he would accept the principles of a multi-party political system. The years that followed represented a period of transition, during which new political parties were formed, the right to freedom of the press was established, trade union activity was permitted and the death penalty was abolished. Though the first multi-party elections, held in July/August 1994, did not lead to any change in power,² they did mark an increase in political activity on the part of opposition forces.

The 1998-1999 conflict

Notwithstanding the economic progress made from the mid-1990s onwards, the regime of Nino Vieira was weakened by its ingrained authoritarian political culture, which stimulated discontent among both opposition and the military forces. Attempts to modernise the armed forces (by promoting younger soldiers and demobilising the veterans of the liberation struggle who constituted the armed wing of the PAIGC), delays in the payment of salaries, and political interference in the management of the military were all important issues in the developing conflict. The trigger for actual revolt was the forced retirement of the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, Brigadier Ansumane Mané, for his alleged assistance to the separatist rebel movements of Senegal's neighbouring Casamance province.

The military revolt of 7 June 1998 precipitated nine months of civil war, during which some 2,000 people died, economic and social activity was paralysed and most of the existing infrastructure destroyed. Despite the intervention of the troops from neighbouring Senegal and Guinea (Conakry) in support of the President, as well as prompt international condemnation of the revolt against the democratically elected government, the military junta leading the insurrection had the support of the population and the bulk of the armed forces.³

After various attempts at negotiation and failed accords⁴ the armed conflict ended with the signing of the Peace Accord of Abuja, in November 1998, following the combined mediation of the *Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa* (CPLP – Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries)⁵ and of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The Accord envisaged power sharing between the belligerent forces, the creation of a government of national unity that would facilitate the holding of elections, the withdrawal of foreign troops from the territory of Guinea-Bissau and the establishment of small ECOMOG (ECOWAS Cease-Fire Monitoring Group) peace-keeping force to support the implementation of the agreement.

The creation of the new Government of National Unity in February 1999 failed to prevent the continuation of tensions between the president and the military, however, especially over the disarming of the presidential guard. After several violations of the cease-fire and meetings between Nino Vieira and Ansumane Mané, the former was deposed in May and was granted political asylum by Portugal. In the meantime, the military junta announced that it had no intention of assuming power and reiterated its confidence in the leader of the transitional government, Francisco Fadul. The steady improvement in political and security conditions culminated in the withdrawal of the last ECOMOG peace-keeping forces in July 1999.

The positive internal political signs from the transitional government – including transparency in the management of state resources, the introduction of human rights monitoring mechanisms, the reduction of military interference in the political sphere and the involvement of civil society in the reconstruction of the country – were not, however, complemented by a clear international financial and political support. Of the US\$220 million promised at the May 1999 roundtable meeting of donors for Guinea-Bissau held in Geneva, only 6 million were transferred to the country between the end of the conflict and the holding of elections. This led to frustration and disappointment and the international community was regarded as having reneged on its commitments.

Multi-party elections and Kumba Ialá's government

Kumba Ialá and the *Partido da Renovação Social* (PRS – Social Renewal Party) won the legislative and presidential elections held at the end of 1999. This victory was largely due to the vote of the Balanta, an ethnic group that had made up Amílcar Cabral's principal fighting force during the national liberation struggle, but which had subsequently been marginalized by the regime of Nino Vieira.⁶

The internal disagreements that were to impede the normalisation of Guinean political life, however, demonstrate that just as the existence of a formal peace does not necessarily imply stability, so the formal holding of elections does not guarantee a successful democratic transition.

After the elections, the duality of legitimacy contested between a democratically elected government and a military junta (whose leader continued to have a status equal to that of the President of the Republic), led to the deterioration of an already very fragile political equilibrium. The problem was "resolved" by the assassination of Brigadier-General Ansumane Mané in November 2000 in the course of an unsuccessful attempt by the government to re-assume control of the military forces. This

raised new issues within Guinean society, and instantly produced a new martyred hero in the eyes of the population. On the one hand, it brought the issue of religious identity into the public domain, since the Muslim leaders of the whole region went to Bissau to pay homage to the Brigadier and mourn his death. On the other hand, this incident contributed to the creation of new “Ansumanes” within the heart of the military – individuals capable of exercising a great deal of power over the political situation.

At a governmental level, the relationship between the two parties that formed the base of the elected government (the PRS and the RGB-*Movimento Bafatá* (RGB-MB) was, at best, complicated. The constant replacement of ministers and the permanent rotation of high-ranking officials,⁷ many of them chosen according to political and not technical criteria, weakened the stability and legitimacy of the recently-formed government, culminating in the collapse of the coalition. The dissolution of the alliance occurred in January 2001, after another unexpected ministerial re-shuffle ordered by the president, and which led to the mass resignation from the government of all RGB-MB members. This aggravated the atmosphere of political instability (given that the PRS lacked the parliamentary majority necessary to govern). Since there had been no consolidation of a democratic culture at the level of public institutions, these events exacerbated tensions between the rival political forces.

Between April and May 2001, the country operated practically without an effective government, because of the prolonged friction between the legislative and executive branches of the administration. The dismissal for political reasons of senior judges of the Supreme Court – a clear violation of the Guinean Constitution and of international law – illustrated the threats to the independence of the judiciary and to the rule of law.⁸ The occurrence of various unsuccessful *coups d'état* during 2001 also reflected the fragility of the democratisation process in Guinea-Bissau, affecting the internal and external credibility of the government.

The competence of the government to manage the transition effectively came increasingly into question, just as the incapacity and inexperience of the various members of the administration affected its ability to satisfy the most basic needs of the population.

During 2002, the criticism levelled against the rule of Kumba Ialá increased and social dissatisfaction manifested itself in constant protests and strikes throughout a capital city in which not even the provision of water and light was assured. At an external level, the apparently unconditional support of international bodies that had responded positively to the formation of a democratically-elected government, started waning from 2002 onwards, because of bad governance of the country.

An example of this was the suspension, by the IMF, of budgetary assistance to the Guinean government, and the abandonment of all attempts at implementation of the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRSP), an essential instrument in the dialogue between the Guinean government and the community of donors.

As for the president, he could only count on a progressively narrower political base and relied evidently on an ethnic support base. In effect, the 1998 conflict and the uneasy post-electoral equilibrium of power led to an increase in the visibility of ethnic identities, with the Balanta ethnic group

occupying the overwhelming majority of the high-ranking and intermediate posts of the public administration, to such an extent that various specialists spoke of a “Balantisation” of Guinean political life.

The constant violations of human rights also contributed to the deterioration of internal stability. The government had virtually no resources or capacity to provide appropriate conditions for the numerous military prisoners or for the hundred or so rebels of the *Movimento das Forças Democráticas de Casamansa* (MFDC) captured in November 2000 for supporting Ansumane Mané. Various people had also been detained during the last three years of Kumba Ialá’s rule for their alleged involvement in attempts to oust the president or for challenging the political powers of the day, as was the case with various journalists.⁹ The limitation of access to newspapers, experienced by some of the opposition parties, the closing of radio stations or the prohibition of television transmissions reflected the constraints that were placed on the media in Bissau. Moreover, the dissolution of the National Assembly by Kumba Ialá on 14 November 2002, illustrated the predominance of the executive over the legislature and judiciary, and the fragility of institutions and democratic norms. The fall of the government in the same month dragged the country into a situation of total paralysis, in which the presidential nominated executive seemed unable to offer a viable alternative.

In this situation, the holding of early elections was seen as the only way out of the profound crisis in which Guinean society found itself. Nevertheless, the elections set for 6 July 2003 were delayed several times because of the lack of an accurate voters’ roll. The delays started to compromise the legality of the deadlines stipulated in the Electoral Law. Moreover, opposition accusations of fraud perpetrated during voter registration, which were confirmed by the National Electoral Commission, could have drawn into question the validity of the voting process and easily could have resulted in a complete breakdown of order. In light of this, in June 2003, the UN Security Council warned of the strong possibility of the country sliding into military conflict.¹⁰

At the beginning of September, various factors converged to exacerbate the internal situation. On the one hand, Prime Minister Mário Pires, publicly declared that an electoral victory for the opposition would result in civil war, which observers interpreted as proof that the government, and at least a part of the *Partido da Renovação Social* (PRS), would refuse to relinquish power. On the other hand, it was rumoured that weapons were being distributed among the population and that youths of the Balanta ethnic group were being recruited into the armed forces, in case the PRS was defeated in the legislative elections.¹¹

In this regard, the decision to promote the military command was interpreted as an attempt by Kumba Ialá to attract the support of the military, whose confidence and control he had long since lost.¹²

The coup d’état of 2003

Considering the deteriorating living conditions of the population and erratic behaviour of President Kumba Ialá,¹³ the coup d’état carried out by General Veríssimo Correia Seabra, was to be anticipated. Various Guinean political actors had prior knowledge of the preparation of the coup d’état, and although the international community officially deplored the

unconstitutional seizure of power, this seemed the lesser evil to an endless postponement of elections and the resulting climate of heightened instability. The Secretary-General of the United Nations himself recognised that the *coup d'état*, as reprehensible as it had been, occurred after a series of norms had been violated and represented the culmination of an unsustainable situation. He warned further of the need to prevent democratically-elected governments in post-conflict situations from transgressing the basic practices of good governance.¹⁴

Immediately after the *coup d'état*, political parties, trade unions, representatives of the religious communities (Catholic and Muslim) and of the armed forces created an Ad-Hoc Commission, comprising 12 civilians and 4 military, to define the terms of reference of the transitional government and of the Consultative Council.¹⁵ With the support of the Ambassador of Brazil in Guinea-Bissau (representing the CPLP) and of UN representatives, an ECOWAS ministerial delegation visited Bissau and met with military leaders and with the deposed president. As a result of these consultations, a broad based transitional government was agreed upon to prepare the holding of credible, free and fair legislative elections. On 17 September, Kumba Ialá declared that he was resigning in order to allow the nomination of a civilian government and appealed to the international community to provide material and financial support for the electoral process. Similar appeals were issued by the United Nations Peace-Building Support Office (UNOGBIS) and by the ECOSOC Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea- Bissau.¹⁶

The internal security situation remained stable during the weeks following the *coup d'état*, with the exception of an incident that occurred at Mansoa barracks, where a group commanded by Saliu Dafé – an officer with links to Brigadier Ansumane Mané – tried to remove weapons and ammunition from the barracks.

Despite rumours that suggested an attempt to seize power by force, the incident was limited to a small group of soldiers faithful to Ansumane Mané (some of whom had been recently demobilised in terms of the program supported by the World Bank), who had exploited the internal political and military situation with a view to revenging the death of the Brigadier in November 2003.¹⁷

General Veríssimo Seabra's intention of rapidly transferring the interim presidency to a civilian, combined with the almost immediate return of the military to barracks, contributed to the speed of negotiations. The Charter of Political Transition was signed on 28 November 2003, and envisaged the holding of legislative elections within six months and of presidential elections one year later.

Nevertheless, dialogue between the political and military forces was affected by the selection by those involved in the military coup of Artur Sanhá (of the PRS, the party of the deposed president) for the post of interim Prime Minister, a decision that provoked a wave of protest.¹⁸

After intense negotiations, the pressure exercised by the CPLP and by ECOWAS – mandated by the leadership of the Africa Union itself – resulted in the acceptance of the Charter by 23 of the 24 legalised political parties. The nomination of the able businessman Henrique Rosa for the presidency was more consensual, in great measure because of his noted impartiality and lack of party affiliations.

The president was installed on the day the Charter of Political Transition was signed. The Charter established the *Conselho Nacional de Transição* (CNT – National Transition Council) as the supreme organ of State administration until the holding of legislative elections. The governmental team which took office on 3 October 2003 included no well-known Guinean politicians, a clear consequence of sub-section 4 of article 11 of the Charter of Transition, which prevents all those who form part of this transitional government from participating in the legislative elections.

In his inauguration speech, the Prime Minister stressed that the priority of his Government would be to regain credibility, internally through an improvement of public finances, and externally by broadening co-operative relations with other countries and international institutions. The new Government immediately undertook swift measures to re-establish the normal functioning of democratic institutions; the regulation of the media; the nomination of a new Attorney-General (on 27 November); the election of the Chief Justice and Deputy Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (on 16 December); the payment of part of the salaries owed to civil servants. In addition, the president prioritised the strict management of State resources, through the preparation of the General State Budget for 2004.¹⁹ The issue of the payment of salaries, arrears of which had reached unsustainable levels during the regime of Kumba Ialá (about 10 months' salaries owing), was particularly problematic, partly because of the existence of thousands of "ghost civil servants" or because of the reluctance of international bodies to release funds for this purpose.

Another of the issues that remains outstanding has to do with the regularisation of accounts between suppliers and the State, derived in large part from the incapacity of the latter to generate the internal means to pay for certain basic services – such as food for the armed forces and fuel for the Bissau power station.

The *coup d'état* thus revealed the poor financial management of the previous regime, which had incurred major domestic and foreign debts, the great fragility of the democratic institutions of Guinea-Bissau and the lack of material means to provide for the basic needs of the population. Despite this grave situation, the response of the international community, which had blocked a large part of its aid during the last year of the regime of Kumba Ialá, was timid and cautious. President Henrique Rosa, who was tireless in his contact with the outside world, was exceptionally critical of the transitional period of only 6 months imposed by the international community, accusing donor organisation and countries of demanding of Guinea-Bissau – as a condition for aid – the same macro-economic conditions as would be "conceived for normal situations".

Introduction

The legislative elections to be held on 28 March will be contested by 13 political parties and 3 coalitions (see table below). According to various government bodies and the principal political parties, these will be "the most important vote in the history of Guinea-Bissau". The election campaign, which began on 6 March, has taken place without any political violence. The recent conflict in the northern territory, however, allegedly perpetrated by dissident groups of the *Movimento das Forças Democráticas de Casamansa*, was interpreted by some as an attempt to destabilise the country and postpone the elections, since there were

unconfirmed reports that the Guinean armed forces failed to oppose the action of these groups.²⁰

At the end of the six-month period provided for in the Charter of Political Transition, the minimum required conditions for the holding of elections had been reached and the voter registration process (thought to have been manipulated by Kumba Ialá) was now completed. In the meantime, various political parties expressed their concerns about external election observation (co-ordinated by the UN in conjunction with the UNDP) as this would occur only during the election itself and not throughout the voter registration process when fraud was most likely to take place.

The National Electoral Commission has recently admitted certain flaws in the process, including the double registration of voters, the transfer of others to constituencies outside their area of residence, as well as registration omissions. Nevertheless, these flaws are not at a level that could jeopardise the election. Portugal supplied the 660,539 ballot papers, and other support material, for some 510,000 voters. The European Union equipped the Regional Election Commissions with radio-telephones to communicate the results with greater speed.

At an internal level, controversy erupted following the transitional government's public recognition that it lacked the means to finance the election campaigns of the various political parties. This was also a result of successive election postponements, involving considerable expense for the parties. In terms of civil servants' salary arrears – an issue that needed to be resolved to avoid corruption during the election campaign – the UNDP announced a few days before the start of the elections that funds were available to settle the salaries of January and February.

*Parties and coalitions in the legislative elections
(as selected for the ballot paper)*

Party/ Coalition	Candidate for Prime Minister
<i>Partido Socialista</i> Guineense (PSG – Guinean Socialist Party)	Cirilo Rodrigues
<i>Aliança Popular Unida</i> (APU – coalition of 2 parties -United Popular Alliance)	João Tátis Sá
<i>Partido Democrático Guineense</i> (PDG – Guinean Democratic Party)	Eusébio Silva
<i>Partido da Renovação e Progresso</i> (PRP – Renewal and Progress Party)	Mamadou Uri Balde
<i>União Nacional para o Desenvolvimento e Progresso</i> (UNDP – National Union for Development and Progress)	Abubacar Balde

Party/ Coalition	Candidate for Prime Minister
<i>Partido da Renovação Social</i> (PRS – Social Renewal Party)	Unknown candidate
<i>Plataforma Unida</i> (PU – coalition of 5 parties and a group of independent citizens – United Platform)	Hélder Vaz Lopes
<i>Partido Democrático Socialista Guineense</i> (PDSG -Guinean Socialist Democratic Party)	João Seco Mane
<i>União Eleitoral</i> (coalition of 4 parties – Electoral Union)	Joaquim Balde
<i>Partido Unido Social Democrático</i> (PUSD – United Democratic Social Party)	Francisco Fadul
<i>Resistência da Guiné-Bissau</i> (RGB – Resistance of Guinea-Bissau)	Salvador Tchongó
<i>Movimento Democrático Guineense</i> (MDG – Guinean Democratic Movement)	Silvestre Alves
<i>Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde</i> (PAIGC – African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde)	Carlos Domingos Gomes
<i>Fórum Cívico Guineense/Social Democrata</i> (FCG/SD – Guinean Civic Forum/Social Democrat)	Antonieta Rosa Gomes
<i>União para a Mudança</i> (UM – Union for Change) Amine Saad Partido da Unidade Nacional (PUN – National Unity Party)	Idrissa Djaló

At the beginning of March, the internet website sponsored by the official Guinean radio carried an opinion poll suggesting that the PAIGC would win the election with 51.3% of the vote. Were this trend to be confirmed, the next Prime Minister would be businessman Carlos Gomes Júnior, the present leader of the party that governed the country from 1974 to 1999. The same poll predicted that the runner-up would be the *Plataforma Unida* (PU – United Platform) of Hélder Vaz Lopes, with 19,7% of the vote submitted by the users of this website, and the *Partido Social Democrata* (PUSD – Democratic Social Party) of Francisco Fadul with 12,1% of the vote. It is obvious that the poll's accuracy is limited, however, not least because

the elections will be contested not only in Bissau, but in the rest of the country where election outcomes are far less predictable.²¹

It is also difficult to anticipate the voting intentions of the Guinean diaspora, which though carrying far less demographic weight than the Cape Verdean communities abroad (which had proved decisive in the victory of Pedro Pires in the presidential elections in that country) could, nonetheless, play an important role in Guinea-Bissau's election results.

The election campaign

An analysis of the manner in which the election campaign is taking place and the current socio-political situation in Guinea-Bissau would suggest that the two principal parties that will emerge from the elections will be the PAIGC and the PUSD. However, both parties have been very critical of the performance of the National Transition Council. The PAIGC maintains that this organ has altered the provisions of the political transition charter, and that the salaries and the honours bestowed upon its members are completely inappropriate to the economic situation of the country. For his part, the PUSD's leader, Francisco Fadul, has been one of the main critics of the manner in which the negotiation process was carried out after the *coup d'état*, especially the nomination of Artur Sanhá, which gave the transitional government an aura of unconstitutionality and illegitimacy. The PUSD opposed various aspects of the transition process, such as maintaining as administrators the governors who had belonged to the PRS and to the former regime, and the appointment of a director general of customs who had been accused of the misappropriation of funds from the institution. They also considered the election period to be too long.

The PAIGC has conducted a sober election campaign and has not responded to provocations and accusations from competing political parties. In addition to the traditional promises of improving the infrastructure, health and education systems (common to the electoral programmes of all parties), Carlos Domingos Gomes has stressed the need for far-reaching reform of the public administration of the country. The possibility of this party winning the elections has increased with the return of many former leaders of the PAIGC who had defected to other political groups.

The main banner of the PUSD for these elections is something its leader has labelled "a culture of work", with "fair salaries paid on time", the eradication of ghost workers and corruption.

Indeed, Francisco Fadul, who led the executive from December 1998 to February 2000, managed to guarantee the salaries of the civil servants during this period, and has exploited this to boost his popular credibility. The likelihood of a positive electoral outcome is further strengthened by the considerable external support for the party – from Portugal, Spain and France – as a result of the personal contacts of its leader.

The party's election manifesto stresses the positive promotion of the State: an "honest" State and a social partner to other stakeholders in Guinean society (parties, churches, trade unions, media, businessmen and teachers); a State visible in the infrastructure of the country; a State with rigorous management; a State that is a "good father" and accepts its responsibilities in providing for the material and moral needs of its citizens; and the rule of law in which powers and responsibilities are clearly defined and separated.²² Furthermore, Francisco Fadul argues for the institutionalisation of a

presidentialist regime as a means to strengthen the role of parliament. He argues that this system is most favourable to institutional stability, transparency of power and economic rationalisation.²³

Possible scenarios

The possible victory of the PAIGC or the PUSD in a situation where there is no large percentage difference between the two could raise doubts about political and social stability in the post-election period. If the results are not disputed and the elections are considered to be free and fair, and in the event of the lack of a clear majority, one cannot exclude the possibility of the creation of a coalition government between the PAIGC and the PUSD, provided that Francisco Fadul is guaranteed the post of Prime Minister.

The negotiation of a coalition, however, would be almost impossible if the party with the second highest number of votes were the *Partido da Renovação Social* (PRS) of the current interim Prime Minister. If the PAIGC or the PUSD were to win the elections, neither of these two parties would co-operate with a party linked to the previous regime they have criticised so vehemently.²⁴

This leads to a third possibility: an election victory for the *Partido da Renovação Social* (PRS), since Kumba Ialá has announced his intention of returning to active politics.²⁵ The ethnic question would then take on considerable significance. The appointment of Artur Sanhá (ex-Secretary General of the party of the deposed president) as Prime Minister of the interim government, could be interpreted as an attempt by the military to guarantee, to an extent, the retention of power by the Balante and the projection of this power during the transition period, given that the military is composed mainly of members of this ethnic group. If the ethnic factor came into play during the elections, this would favour the PRS, as the Balante comprise 30% of the population. In this event, however improbable at this stage, a PRS victory could lead to the rejection of the election results by the other political parties, and accusations of fraud. Ultimately, the political and social stability of the country would be compromised, since all the dissatisfaction about the *coup d'état* last September would be re-ignited.

In terms of the other political groups, it is unlikely that the *Plataforma Unida* (PU), a coalition of Helder Vaz and Vitor Mandinga of the *Partido da Convergência Democrática*, could win the elections. Despite being a well-respected personality of the Guinean elite and having created a solid opposition to Kumba Ialá, Helder Vaz has little standing among the population. Besides, his credibility was affected by his public support for the appointment of Artur Sanhá as interim Prime Minister, a stance he adopted without consulting the grassroots of his party (the Guinean diaspora). It is important to note that the PU is the only political group to print posters in Arabic in an attempt to capture the Muslim vote in the eastern and northern regions of the country.

Even less likely is an election victory for the MDG of Silvestre Alves, the former spokesperson of the military junta headed by Ansumane Mane and one of the “ideologues” of the revolt that ousted Nino Vieira in 1998. Silvestre Alves, the former deputy chairperson of the Bar and Minister of Social Protection in the Government of National Unity headed by Francisco Fadul (February 1999 to February 2000) rose to prominence during the period after the *coup d'état* of September 2003, as the spokesperson of the Ad-hoc Commission set up to establish the transition route.

The PU and MDG, along with others which considered to have no chance of winning the elections – such as the *União Eleitoral* of Joaquim Baldé or the *União para a Mudança* of Amine Saad – could play a significant role in the balance of post-election power, should no party win with an absolute majority.

In the past, the agricultural nature of the Guinean economy and its mainly rural social organisation have contributed to a certain degree of national cohesion. It has also guaranteed basic food security and minimum conditions of survival for the population in the rural areas, despite recent conflicts. Guinea-Bissau's relative national cohesion may also be considered a legacy of the national liberation struggle of the PAIGC, which resorted to a concept of national identity that valued inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue. In the majority of cases during Guinea-Bissau's post-independence history, this prevented social differences from degenerating into violent conflict, ethnic or otherwise. In fact, the chasms that led to the deposition of Nino Vieira were essentially military in nature, as was the *coup d'état* in September 2003, which had political differences and social dissatisfaction as its basis, more than ethnic divisions. In this sense, the country is different in social and political terms from the other countries in the region. However, in practice, the challenges it faces are recurrent and common to many of its neighbours: the desire to achieve political stability and security, the need to consolidate democracy and to reinforce democratic structures, the need to re-establish its domestic and foreign credibility, and the need to guarantee basic social services for its population. What follows is a discussion of these challenges.

Democracy consolidation and the strengthening of democratic structures

The new government that will emerge from these elections will face numerous challenges in attempting to build of a stable and efficient administration.

The persistent violation of human and civil rights under the Kumba Ialá regime has demonstrated that the mere holding of elections will not be sufficient to overcome a long undemocratic institutional culture and decades of authoritarian governance. This will require the new government to show political determination to introduce profound reforms.

The institutional capacity of the county is very fragile at present, even when compared to other countries of sub-Saharan Africa. First, the public sector expanded after independence but was excessively centralised, with few incentives for the civil servants and inadequate training. These factors were aggravated by the recent non-payment of salaries.²⁶ The legal system is also faced with a shortage of resources, and can provide neither adequate legal assistance for those accused nor impartial and fair trials. Third, the role of the police as a purely repressive agent, rather than an impartial body operating in the interest of the community needs to be considered within a legal framework and existing force regulations. Fourth, the weakness of the judiciary in the face of the abuse of power by the executive is evident. Fifth, the salary structure is unable to provide adequate living conditions for magistrates, lawyers, police and correctional service employees, thereby creating an environment conducive to corruption and undermining the credibility of the legal system.

Within this framework, it is fundamental for the democratic transition of Guinea-Bissau that support be given to the creation and development of

skills, in general, and political reform, in particular, to strengthen the independence and the power of democratic institutions, such as the Parliament and the Courts. In addition, investment in the training of public administration officials; in the promotion of the impartiality of government media bodies; and in the restructuring of the police (in terms of recruitment, training and practices of responsibilities), are critical to guarantee the normal functioning of government institutions.

To this end, it is not only necessary to have strong internal political will, but also considerable commitment from donors. Until now, all the co-operation programmes in the field of governance have been interrupted by the volatile political situation or the lack of adequate co-ordination among donors to assist with alternative solutions for the lack of institutional capacity without weakening the State itself.

Restructuring of the Armed Forces

Guinea-Bissau's armed forces face two main challenges: on the one hand, the need to restructure and redefine the duties of what in essence is a disproportionately large army; on the other, the need for a process of demobilisation, reintegration and social reinsertion of former combatants, fundamental to the internal stability and security of the country.

In essence, there is a consensus among Guinean political circles on the point that the consolidation of democracy requires a reduction in the number of troops and a re-definition of the military's role, so it can become an agent of democracy and not oppression or destabilisation, as was the case in the past.

Although the restructuring process was agreed to in principle during the regime of Kumba Ialá, it has been affected by various factors: border security problems; an escalation in the tensions between the forces as a result of the detention of officials allegedly involved in the events of November 2000; delays in the payment of salaries; and, finally, the divisions within the armed forces along ethnic, religious or party lines. The critical shortage of financial resources for training so as to allow for their transformation into a professional republican force is also identified as a reason for the delay in the reform process.

In November 1999, special demobilisation, reintegration and reinsertion units for ex-combatants were created. They were tasked with establishing the criteria for demobilisation and to supervise the registration of the armed forces. The objective was to reduce the number of permanent soldiers from 23,000 to some 11,000.²⁷ In December 2000, the government announced that more than 10,000 soldiers and para-military volunteers who had taken part in the military revolt would be integrated totally into the armed forces, to replace others who had been demobilised.²⁸ Nevertheless, the demobilisation programme that followed the 1998-1999 conflict included soldiers of various ethnic groups, but no Balante, the largest ethnic group in the armed forces, in absolute and relative terms, as it includes the highest number of General Staff posts, strengthening their specific weight.²⁹

The *Programa de Desmobilização, Reinserção e Reintegração dos Ex-Combatentes* (PDRRI – Program for the Demobilisation, Reinsertion and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants) inspired great hope at first. It even served

as an innovative example of co-ordination among donors, who were committed to financing specific parts of the programme. However, soon it was realised that its implementation would be difficult for various reasons – a large part of the funds given to the PDRRI were diverted for other government expenses, which delayed the implementation of the programme during 2001 and 2002.³⁰

The programme is currently in its third phase and is scheduled for completion by June 2004. Fourteen civil society organisations were contracted to offer training and work opportunities at various localities. In the meantime, the Multi-Donor Trust Fund (administered by the World Bank), only has the capacity to reach 4,372 beneficiaries out of a total of 20,000 registered ex-combatants.³¹ Confusion was exacerbated by the failure of the PDRRI to distinguish administratively between the various categories of ex-combatant – former soldiers of the liberation struggle, ex-combatants of the 1998 conflict, and so on. The management of the programme is currently accused of discriminatory selection criteria and of making financial compensation promises it cannot keep.³² In this context, the recent meetings in Bissau led to the creation of a “ *Comissão Nacional para o Recenseamento Definitivo dos Combatentes da Liberdade da Pátria*” (“National Commission for the Definitive Registration of the Combatants of the Liberation of the Nation”), which aims to carry out a definitive registration to correct the errors of the previous processes.

In addition, cases such as the attack on the barracks of Mansoa in September 2003 could mean that the intentions of pro-Ansumane Mane or pro-Nino Vieira elements are not totally dormant or neutralised, despite these soldiers having been removed from barracks.

This means that, as opportunity presents itself, these groups could create instability in the country, assisted by dissident members of the Casamance movement. The Military Committee that led the *coup d'état* last September, has detained ten individuals who were close to the head of the former military junta, despite pressures from civil society organisations for their release and its own commitment to the reconciliation of the Guinean Armed Forces, with the reintegration of the dismissed officials.³³

A recent debate on granting amnesty to the insurgents associated with the *coup d'état* of September 2003 has created much controversy, as many permanent soldiers remain in jail. Representatives of the former combatants argued for the granting of amnesty to all soldiers linked to the *coups d'état* and their complete reintegration into the army, or demobilisation to allow for their readmission into society.

Involvement of Guinea-Bissau within regional integration dynamics

One of the main challenges for Guinean foreign policy has been how to balance the need for increasing involvement in regional economic dynamics, while minimising the negative effects of the political instability of neighbouring countries. Years of civil war in Liberia, Sierra Leone and other countries in the sub-region have resulted in the widespread destruction of the physical and economic infrastructure of those countries, drastically affecting the capacity for regional economic recovery.

As a small country, Guinea-Bissau can only benefit from large-scale investment in regional complementarity and co-operation. On the political

level, greater co-operation with neighbouring states to agree on regional issues (such as the flow of arms or refugees) could help reduce the negative effects of instability. The participation of the country in regional mediation and peacekeeping would contribute positively not only in terms of the conflicts it may help to resolve but also for Guinea-Bissau itself, capitalising on its domestic experience and its foreign credibility. The recent participation of hundreds of Guinean soldiers in Liberia – in the peacekeeping forces of ECOMIL and UNMIL – is a positive sign. At an economic level, its participation in the dynamics of regional integration could also bear fruit: on the one hand, the accession in 1997 to the West African Economic and Monetary Union was an important step towards achieving greater monetary stability; on the other, Guinea-Bissau, by virtue of the location of its harbour, could develop into a port of entry for a regional market of millions of people.

Economic diversification and development priorities

It is difficult to understand and characterise the catastrophic situation in which the Guinean economy finds itself in without a brief analysis of the policies adopted in the past. At the beginning of the 1990s, as was the case in the majority of the African countries, the failure of centralised economic policies and strategies implemented in the first years after independence, led eventually to the adoption of economic reforms characterised by the implementation of stability and economic liberalisation programmes, under the guidance of the IMF and the World Bank.

It is curious to note that immediately before the conflict of 1998, the country experienced a period of economic growth, registering improvements in all macro-economic indicators (exchange rate, inflation, external deficit) and reducing the imbalances in public finances. Guinea-Bissau had achieved considerable progress in carrying out structural reforms, particularly the rehabilitation of key economic sectors and private sector incentives. The possible benefits, which should be reflected in the living standards of the population, however, were jeopardised by the conflict of 1998-99, which destroyed the socio-economic infrastructure and resulted in a serious economic set-back in Guinea-Bissau. GDP declined by about 28% in 1998.

To make matters worse, the government of Kumba Ialá pursued disastrous macro-economic policies, largely destroying revenue-generating capacity in the country.

Against this background, the IMF, World Bank, African Development Bank and UNDP supplied the technical assistance to develop an emergency economic management plan for a period of six months (December 2003 to June 2004), pending the holding of a Round Table Conference scheduled for mid-2004. Over the medium and long-term, however, the sustainability of any economic programme that the newly-elected government might propose will depend, first, on its capacity to move from public finance stability and structural reforms to economic growth based on the diversification of its export base. Guinea-Bissau has the potential to become self-sufficient in certain food products (such as rice and other basic crops) and to increase the production of export goods through the intensive use of fertile land, the effective use of agricultural inputs, and greater investment in the transport infrastructure. It also has significant fishery resources that are not fully exploited, and transformation could

promote the development of agro- industrial activities. To this end, it would be important to note the attempts to implement various projects in the area of rural development and support to small and medium enterprises involved in the processing of agricultural products, some on a regional basis, which in the past were not sustainable because of the fluctuations in external financing, to domestic unsustainability or simply a lack of continuity.

Foreign aid dependence and ways of overcoming it

Foreign aid makes up more than half of the GDP of Guinea, making it the sub-Saharan country with the second highest level of dependence (after São Tomé and Príncipe). Despite being the Portuguese-speaking African country to have received the highest aid *per capita* since independence, results have often failed to meet expectations in terms of sustainability. In most cases, projects implemented by donors lack a long-term perspective and a focus on local dynamics to allow for their continuity.

Furthermore, the economic situation and the high levels of poverty have compelled the different Guinean governments to accept proposals made by donors, regardless of their conditionalities, their relevance to national strategy or to co-ordination with other activities. Since the government has been unable to refuse aid, this sometimes results in a duplication of efforts and a lack of co-ordination of development actions, increasing the possible negative impact of the aid itself.

A key challenge for the State, therefore, lies in it becoming more selective and developing the capacity to co-ordinate the multiplicity of donor offers and proposals. State bodies need to work in conjunction with one another to develop their internal resources and increase revenue so as to reduce aid dependence. In future, the creation of a single government structure with qualified staff to co-ordinate and manage aid, may have positive effects.

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- 1 Researcher at the *Instituto de Estudos Estratégicos e Internacionais* (IEEI - Institute of Strategic and International Studies) and guest assistant lecturer at the *Instituto Superior de Ciências Sociais e Políticas* (ISCSP - Institute of Social and Political Sciences), Lisbon.
 - 2 João Bernardo Vieira of the PAIGC was legitimised by winning 52% of the votes in the second round of the presidential elections, against the 48% obtained by Kumba Ialá of the *Partido da Renovação Social* (PRS). The PAIGC won 62 of the 100 seats in the National Assembly.
 - 3 It is estimated that 90% of the armed forces threw in their lot with the rebels in 1998.
 - 4 The first cease-fire was signed on 26 August 1998, but renewed fighting broke out in October. The peace accord signed during November 1998 also failed to prevent the occurrence of violence between January and February 1999. For a detailed analysis of the evolution of the conflict, refer to Amnesty International, *Guinea-Bissau: Human Rights in War and Peace*, July 1999.
 - 5 The CPLP was formed in 1996 and its members are: Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea- Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, São Tomé and Príncipe and Timor.
 - 6 In the legislative elections held on 28 November 1999, the PRS won 38 seats in Parliament, followed by the RGB-Movimento Bafatá and the PAIGC, with 28 and 24 seats, respectively. In the presidential elections, Kumba Ialá contested the second round on 16 January 2000, winning 72% of the votes. See www.electionworld.org.
 - 7 From January 2000 until September 2003, Kumba Ialá dismissed five prime ministers and replaced more than fifty ministers and secretaries of State.
 - 8 Amnesty International, *Guiné-Bissau: Attack on the Independence of the Judiciary*. Nov.2001.
 - 9 For a detailed analysis of the deterioration of the political and human rights situations in Guinea-

- Bissau, see the Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, S/2003/621, of 9 June 2003.
- 10 Ibid.
 - 11 Público, *Coup d'état in a country that had nothing to lose*, 15 September 2003.
 - 12 It is widely thought that the way in which Kumba Ialá was able to guarantee increased salaries and benefits for the military commanders (with funds obtained during his visits to Libya and Nigeria) contributed to the postponement of the *coup d'état* that was already then being prepared.
 - 13 The constant substitutions of prime ministers and other members of the government (depending on the mood of the president), unstructured speeches, irrational public declarations or certain announced measures – such as the intention of moving the capital to Buba, a small city 200 kms away from Bissau – lead to some doubt concerning President Kumba Ialá's mental health – particularly from 2002 onwards.
 - 14 Speech made by Koffi Annan on 18/12/2003, on the occasion of the presentation of another report about the situation in Guinea-Bissau.
 - 15 The PAIGC and the *Plataforma Unida* immediately announced their willingness to participate in the transition government; the *Partido Unido Social Democracia* (PUSD), having been the only party to refuse outright to, disagreed with the manner in which the negotiation process was conducted. *Diário de Notícias*, 16 September 2003.
 - 16 ECOSOC's Ad Hoc Advisory Group was formed in 2002 and comprises the permanent representatives of Brazil, Guinea-Bissau, the Netherlands and Portugal, being chaired by the chairperson of ECOSOC (representative of Guatemala), the chairman of the *Group of Friends of Guinea-Bissau* (representative of the Gambia), the chairman of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Security Council on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa (representative from Angola). Its objective is to examine the humanitarian and economic needs of Guinea-Bissau, review its support programs and make recommendations for a more effective, coherent and coordinated international aid.
 - 17 *Lusa*, 26 September 2003.
 - 18 The passage of Artur Sanhá through the Ministries of Internal Administration and Fishing is seen as an example of bad governance in Kumba Ialá's team. Moreover, many of the protests were based on the fact that Sanhá had been accused of homicide in a case yet to be explained. *Público*, 29 September 2003.
 - 19 The financing of 81% of the budget, which totals 88 million euros, has already guaranteed by international donors. The state budget is expected to come into force after the legislative elections, to be held on 28 March 2004.
 - 20 It is still puzzling that the rebels attacked from the magazine; it is rumoured that the army permitted their entry into the barracks.
 - 21 On a large part of the territory, the population is unfamiliar with the election programmes and often is unable to associate the faces of the election campaign with the party symbols that will appear on the ballot papers. There are rumours the S.Domingos activists of PAIGC may have shown the population a symbol of the party saying it was of PUSD, so that those who considered voting for the latter would in reality be casting their vote for PAIGC.
 - 22 *Africanidade*, *Interview with Francisco Fadul*, 23 December 2003
 - 23 Ibid.
 - 24 In addition to the clear personal animosity between Francisco Fadul and Artur Sanhá or Kumba Ialá.
 - 25 Kumba Ialá was under house arrest until 8 March, announcing then his intention to return to active politics, stating in an interview to RDP-Àfrica that 'now it would be the atom bomb'. Even under house arrest, the voice of the ex-president was often heard accusing General Veríssimo Seabra of having appropriated US\$6 million from donations by partner countries. In October 2003, pamphlets with similar accusations against the members of the Military Committee were circulated in Bissau. No current Guinean government structure assumed responsibility for freeing Kumba Ialá, a situation which the National Transition Council considered to be 'ambiguous'. The return of Ialá is illegal according to the text of the Charter of Political Transition, which prevents him from submitting his candidature in the next 5 years.
 - 26 In the West African sub-region, Guinea-Bissau is one of the least populous countries, with 1,2 million inhabitants, and the one with the highest number of civil servants. Guinea-Bissau has at present 20 civil servants for every 100 inhabitants, while in neighbouring Senegal, with a population of 14 million, the civil service represents only 7%.
 - 27 IRIN-WA Update 588, *Guinea-Bissau: First Step of Demobilisation Programme underway*.

- 28 IRIN-WA Weekly Round-up 49,4, *Guinea-Bissau War Volunteers to be reintegrated*, 10 December 1999.
- 29 Público, 26 September 2003.
- 30 The current debt of the Government of Guinea to the PDRRI is over USD 2,5 million.
- 31 This situation has led to a protest by ex-combatants who were excluded from the process on 20 November 2003.
- 32 Diário Bissau, *Former combatants demand reintegration subsidies*, 16 February 2004. 33 Público, 14 February 2004.