

Leadership and Peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau: Examining the coup of 14 September 2003

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ABSTRACT

Leadership is rarely interrogated in the analysis of peacebuilding contexts. The dominant peacebuilding approaches focus on institutional building rather than on the relationship between leaders and the wider society. This paper examines the conceptual and practical connection between leadership and peacebuilding by examining the 14 September 2003 Coup in Guinea-Bissau. The coup presented a significant leadership conversation to be had between the elites and the wider society in Guinea-Bissau about transforming the instability that characterises Guinea-Bissau to date towards a common vision of lasting peace. The paper examines the response to the coup to determine whether the response reflected the needs and aspirations of the wider society in Guinea-Bissau. It does this in order to determine where leadership resided and therefore whether the responses reflected a mutual relationship between the elites and the wider society. It argues that the response to the crisis did not produce durable peace for the society as the exchange of influence occurred between the elites and the international actors rather than with the wider society. The coup remains significant even today not least as an important milestone in Guinea-Bissau's statebuilding process. Failure to build mutually held goals between governing elite and wider society at a critical juncture in the country's post-colonial history led to the continuation of fragile governance arrangements for more than a decade.

Introduction

On September 14, 2003, the military in Guinea-Bissau overthrew the democratically elected government of President Kumba Yala. Led by the Army Chief of Staff, General Verrissimo Correia Seabra, the coup followed the postponement of elections for the fourth time by Kumba Yala the previous day. The coup leader claimed that he was taking over in order to solve the country's problems which had become unattainable.¹ Kumba Yala's poor governance had resulted in massive deterioration of the economy, a constitutional crisis after he dismissed three of the supreme court judges, the dissolution of parliament following a vote of no confidence against him, violation of human rights, and subversion of the independence of the media and of the judiciary. This state of

¹ BBC News (2003a), Amy Chief takes over in Bissau. September 14. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3107960.stm> (Accessed 17 March 2015)

chaos resulted in growing dissatisfaction with his government. Upon seizing power, General Seabra declared himself president pending the organization of elections, which would lead to the return to constitutional rule.² He also announced the setting up of a transitional government that would guide Guinea-Bissau towards these elections.

The coup was significant for a number of reasons. First, the people of Guinea-Bissau welcomed with relief the ouster of President Kumba Yala. Second, the coup occurred at a period in which the African Union (AU) was bound by the Lomé Declaration and Article 30 of its Constitutive Act that rejects unconstitutional change of government.³ Additionally, the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance enacted in 2001 reinforced this principle within the ECOWAS region.⁴ Third, the coup unmasked the legacy of military interventions in African politics and in particular in Guinea-Bissau. The predominance of military coups in post-colonial Africa in which 88 successful military coups occurred between 1952 and 2012⁵ precipitated reversals in development and governance in the region. The normative frameworks by AU and ECOWAS presented attempts to stem such reversals by entrenching a culture of democracy that would allow African societies to meaningfully participate in democratic processes in which they choose those who will lead them. Lastly, regional leaders, the AU, and the international community including the United Nations (UN) tacitly accepted the coup. Although the international community initially condemned the coup and called for the reinstatement of Kumba Yala, there was a general admission of his abysmal governance, the dire economic and political conditions in the country, and an acknowledgement of the popularly supported coup. These economic and political conditions highlighted the leadership and peacebuilding challenges that confronted those who responded to the coup.

This paper examines the response to the coup d'état of September 14, 2003, and the nature of the response. It seeks to identify the ideas that shaped this response and rationale behind those ideas, whose ideas these were, and whether and how

² BBC News (2003a)

³ The Declaration was adopted in Lomé Togo during the Thirty Sixth Ordinary Session of the Heads of State and Government, 10- 12 July 2000. See Lomé Declaration and Organization of African Unity, and African Economic Community (2000)

⁴ See Article 1(b-e) of ECOWAS Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance Supplementary to the Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, Dakar, Senegal, December 21, 2001. Available at: <http://www.comm.ecowas.int/sec/en/protocoles/Protocol%20on%20good-governance-and-democracy-rev-5EN.pdf> (Accessed 3 July 2016) p.6

⁵ Souaré, Issaka K., (2014), 'The African Union as a Norm Entrepreneur on Military Coups D'état in Africa (1952-2012): An Empirical Assessment', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 52, pp.69-94

these ideas were broadly accepted by the society in Guinea-Bissau. The paper addresses these questions primarily to determine how leadership emerged, where it emerged from and as such whether the mutuality that was required to produce effective leadership for durable peace existed at this time. It argues that the response to the crisis did not lead to durable peace since a meaningful exchange of influence did not occur between Guineans and those who offered solutions to the crisis. Rather it was an exchange of influence between the new elites produced by the coup, and international actors. Arguably, this failure to build lasting peace at a critical juncture in Guinea-Bissau's post-independence history, in part contributed to a string of fragile governance arrangements in the country for more than a decade.

Despite popular opinion that leadership is at a deficit in developing societies, the concept is rarely interrogated in the analysis of peacebuilding contexts. To be certain, there is no commonly recognised definition of leadership. These multiple perspectives and definitions of what leadership is can be categorised into four encompassing typologies.⁶ First, person-based approaches focus on particular personalities and the charismatic traits that make an individual a leader. However, the variety of conflict situations means that such traits do not generalise across all situations and the peacebuilding focus on elite personalities (elite bargaining) disregards the needs of the conflict-affected wider society. Second, position-based approaches focus on the position of authority an individual occupies within a hierarchy. In conflict contexts, such approaches fail to consider the influence from 'below' that is exerted on those in positions of authority and represent top-down impositions of external ideas of peace. Third, results-based approaches focus on the outcomes of leadership. These results-based approaches are consistent with the rubric of peacebuilding activities with its focus on particular peacebuilding outcomes such as the establishment of safety and stability and strengthening justice.⁷ However, this focus on results obscures how these results are achieved not least the lack of inclusivity and local considerations, short-termism and ahistoricism that have plagued international peacebuilding efforts.⁸ Leadership as process, on the other hand, implies a mutual relationship between leaders and

⁶ Grint, Keith (2010), *Leadership: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press: Oxford)

⁷ UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2007), *The Challenges of Restoring Governance in Crisis and Post-Conflict Countries*, UN-DESA and UNDP, 7th Global Forum on Reinventing Governance Vienna, 26-29 June. Available at: <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan025512.pdf> (Accessed 13 January 2017), pp. 14-17

⁸ Paris, Roland and Sisk, Thomas, D., (2009), 'Introduction', in Paris, Roland. & Sisk, Thomas .D. eds., *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations* (London: Routledge); Roberts, David, (2008), 'Hybrid Politics and Indigenous Pluralities: Advanced Lessons in Statebuilding from Cambodia', *Journal Of Intervention And Statebuilding*, 2 (1), pp. 63-86

followers bound together by common purposes or goals.⁹ Leadership as process offers a more effective approach to altering the peacebuilding context. It implies that both those offering *peace ideas* and the affected society will work together towards a common goal of lasting peace.

The coup remains significant even today not least as an important milestone in Guinea-Bissau's statebuilding process. Military coups in Guinea-Bissau have had redoubtable impacts on the historical development of the state. They unmask elite contestations, and deepen Guineans' disillusionment with these elites. Examination of the coup also offers important leadership lessons for altering current dominant approaches to peacebuilding especially in Africa. To be certain, the dominant institutional peacebuilding approach obscures the building of common goals between those responding to the conflict situation and the affected society. It fails to focus on relationship building in ways that lead to a culture of peace. As the case of Guinea-Bissau will demonstrate, the focus is on ending violence without a fundamental transformation of relationships in society not least the relationship between leaders (governing elites) and the society. Lastly, the coup is an important landmark event in Guinea-Bissau because it presented a significant leadership moment for a whole of society conversation that would have transformed the trajectory of political instability in Guinea-Bissau that continues to date.

This paper is organized in four substantive parts. Following this introductory section, the second part examines the roots of conflict in Guinea-Bissau. It assesses the historical origin and the nature of the instability in the country and therefore the leadership and peacebuilding challenges in the country. Given this historical context, this section further examines the leadership approach of Kumba Yala, the factors that led to the September 2003 coup and the responses to the coup. The third part interrogates the nature of leadership that emerged in response to the coup. The objective of the fourth part is to analyse whether peace was built from the type of leadership that emerged in response to the coup. The fourth section draws the conclusion from the discussions.

The roots of conflict in Guinea-Bissau: Historical trajectories of leadership failures

Structural conflict has characterized the post-independent political system in Guinea-Bissau. These structural problems can be traced back to the Portuguese colonization process. Due to the lack of financial means, ability and willingness to

⁹ Northouse, Peter, G., (2013), *Leadership: Theory and Practice, 6th Edition* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage); Burns, McGregor, J., (1978), *Leadership* (New York: Harper & Row); Rost, Joseph (1991), *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Praeger)

invest in the Guinean colony the Portuguese hardly created the administrative and social infrastructure akin to a modern nation-state.¹⁰ This resulted in an increasing detachment of the colonial public administration from the population mainly located in the rural areas. The colonial administration was not only dislocated from the local people but was brutally violent and exploitative through its use of forced labour. The economic exploitation of the colony however did not result in social and economic development.¹¹ The lack of Portuguese investment in the colony was evident in the neglect of key social and economic infrastructure including poor road networks, and rudimentary health and education facilities.¹² The Portuguese established an *indignant* system that absolved themselves of any social and economic investment in the colonies.¹³ This colonial doctrine, established under the dictatorship of Antonio de Oliveira Salazar in power in Portugal from 1936, further compartmentalized the Guinean society into four social groups comprising the *civilizados* (civilized) *nao civilizados* (uncivilized) *assimilados* (the assimilated) and *indigenas* (natives) and the *gentios* (heathens).¹⁴ This established a racially conscious social stratum that privileged the highly educated *Branços* (whites), and *Mesticos* (mixed race) over the under-skilled and impoverished indigenous population (*the Pretos*).¹⁵ It also included the social and economic privileging and staffing of Cape Verdeans (mainly *Mesticos*) in public administration.¹⁶ The Portuguese colonialization process laid the basis for the institutional fragility and the social fragmentation of the Guinean society into class, ethnic, racial, urban and rural divides that continue to reverberate throughout post-colonial Guinea-Bissau.

The ideological liberation struggle of the *Partido Africano da Independencia da Guine e Cabo Verde* or the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) under the visionary leadership of Amilcar Cabral, sought to change the Portuguese political order and with it the distribution of resources, power and authority to the masses in Guinea-Bissau. Cabral envisioned a nationally conscious multi-ethnic society built around political accountability of its leaders and the

¹⁰ Embalo, Birgit, (2012), 'Civil-Military Relations and Political Order in Guinea-Bissau', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 50 (2), pp. 253-281, p.255; International Crisis Group, (2008), Guinea-Bissau: In Need of a State, *Africa Report*, 142, July 2, (Brussel: ICG). Available at: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/africa/west-africa/guinea-bissau/Guinea-Bissau%20In%20Need%20of%20a%20State.pdf> (Accessed 10 February 2016), p.2

¹¹ Mendy, Karibe, (2003), 'Portugal's Civilizing Mission in Colonial Guinea-Bissau: Rhetoric and Reality', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 36 (1), pp. 35-58

¹² *Ibid*, p.49

¹³ *Ibid*, pp.42-47

¹⁴ Mendy, Karibe, (2006), 'Amilcar Cabral and the Liberation of Guinea-Bissau: Context, Challenges and Lessons for Effective African Leadership', *African Identities* 4 (1), pp. 7-21, pp. 10-12

¹⁵ *Ibid*, pp.10-12; Mendy, 2003

¹⁶ Mendy (2006), pp.10-12

welfare and security of its people.¹⁷ Until his assassination on January 20, 1973, Cabral remained convicted and committed to the transformation of Guinea-Bissau into a society in which each Guinean had an equal opportunity '...to win material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward, to guarantee the future of their children.'¹⁸

Following Guinea-Bissau's independence on September 24, 1973, the political leaders were however unable to articulate and translate the ideals, values, principles and vision of the liberation struggle. Indeed, much of the political instability in Guinea-Bissau is largely attributable to the chronic mismanagement of the post-independent political project by the political elites. Institutional weakness both in the state and in the leading party, PAIGC embedded much of the structural problems.¹⁹ The failure of the PAIGC to develop administrative structures as effective links between the national bureaucracy and the party communities in the rural villages resulted in de-linkage of the political elites and party nomenclature from major parts of the population.²⁰ As a result, the party depended on clientelist networks, and the distribution of state resources to shore up its legitimacy.²¹ Despite the introduction of political liberalization in the 1990's, political infighting for control of this democratic transition contributed much to the political instability. The resultant poor governance process was characterised by the violation of human rights including torture, and assassinations of political opponents and party dissidents by the PAIGC and successive regimes. The political elites undermined the independence of the judiciary and the media instilling a culture of impunity. Endemic corruption and an overlapping of state and personal networks further eroded Guinea-Bissau's institutions of governance.²²

The institutional crisis has also been both cause and consequence of the near collapse of the country's economy. The introduction of economic liberalization by the presidency of Nino Vieira in the late 1980's reduced the state's capacity and position to distribute resources.²³ The implementation of the structural adjustment programme in 1987 and the pegging of international financial aid to

¹⁷ Mendy (2006)

¹⁸ Quoted in *Ibid*, p.18

¹⁹ Ostheimer, Andrea, (2000), 'Guinea-Bissau's Rocky Path to Peace and Democracy', *South African Journal of International Affairs*, 7:1, pp.107-121, p.108

²⁰ Embalo, Birgit, (2012), 'Civil-Military Relations and Political Order in Guinea-Bissau', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 50 (2), pp. 253-281, p. 264; Ostheimer(2000); Forrest, Joshua, (1987), 'Guinea-Bissau since Independence: A Decade of Domestic Power Struggles', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 251, pp.95-116, pp.97-100

²¹ *Ibid*

²² Bordonaro, Lorenzo, (2009), 'Introduction: Guinea-Bissau Today—The Irrelevance of the State and the Permanence of Change', *African Studies Review* 52 (2), pp.35-45

²³ Ostheimer (2000), pp.108-110

good governance further worsened the economic situation.²⁴ By 1999, the country's external debt totalled about \$709 million, about three times its GDP, which stood at \$218.3 million.²⁵ The mismanagement of the economy including increased state corruption manifested itself in growing poverty, massive underemployment, delays in payments of government salaries and of those of the military. Guinea-Bissau is constantly ranked lowly in United Nations Human Development Index, and remains heavily reliant on international financial aid.²⁶ This massive impoverishment of its citizenry is a constant source of social dissatisfaction and political mobilization.

Politics of identity continued to feature in post-colonial Guinea-Bissau. A multi-ethno-linguistic society, Guinea-Bissau comprises five major ethnic groups without a single community commanding a majority. The Balanta comprise 28 percent, the Fula 23 percent, the Madinga 13 percent, the Manjaco 11 percent and the Papel 7 percent.²⁷ The continued occupation of the positions of public administration by the Mesticos (a majority of whom were Cape Verdeans) contributed to increasing suspicion and tensions by the indigenous population.²⁸ This was especially so within the Balanta community who played a key role in the armed struggle and comprised the majority in the military. However, the presidency of Nino Vieira, a Papel, resulted in the marginalization of the Balanta community both in the military and in public administration.²⁹ The Balanta as a result became increasingly dissatisfied with the ethnic imbalance of power.³⁰ The first parliamentary and presidential elections that were held in 1994 marked the re-introduction of ethnicity as a major force in Guinea's politics.³¹ The 1998/99 civil war illustratively manifested itself in the emergence of ethnic militias popularly known as *Aguentas*.³² Kumba Yala's regime in turn reintroduced the dominance of the Balanta in the military and in public administration.³³ Politicians

²⁴ *Ibid*, pp.108-110

²⁵ Ostheimer, Andrea, (2001), 'The Structural Crisis of Guinea-Bissau's Political System', *African Security Review* 10, pp.45-58, p.54

²⁶ Embalo (2012), p.264; Gacitua-Mario, Estanislao, Aasland, Sigrun, Nordang, Hakon, and Wodon, Quentin (2007), Institutions, Social Networks, and Conflicts in Guinea-Bissau: Results from a 2005 Survey, *World Bank Working Paper*, January. Available at: <http://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/11087/> (Accessed 10 February 2016), p.23

²⁷ Gacitua-Mario et al. (2007), p.24

²⁸ The predominance of the Mestizo in the PAIGC, the army and in public administration ultimately led to the failure of the Amilcar's binationalist project between Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau. The 1980 coup by Major Joao Bernardo Viera ended all hope of unification. See, Ferreira (2004), p.46

²⁹ Temudo, Marina, P., (2009), 'From the Margins of the State to the Presidential Palace: The Balanta Case in Guinea-Bissau', *African Studies Review*, 52 (2), pp.47-67, pp.57-59

³⁰ Forrest (1987), pp.100-101

³¹ Temudo (2009), p.58

³² Embalo (2012), p.266

³³ Temudo (2009), p.58

as such instrumentalise ethnicity in order to shore up their declining legitimacy and to maintain loyalty within the military.

Within this context of a self-degenerating state system, the military's interference in political and civil affairs has further resulted in a cyclical pattern of political instability, economic stagnation and social dissatisfaction. The military's claim to legitimacy is rooted in their historical role in the armed liberation struggle.³⁴ Following independence, however, the guerrilla army was never transformed into a professional national armed force.³⁵ The army continued to play a central role in political decision-making. Deep internal factionalism over control of power within the army, and convergence of ethnic and personal interests resulted in the politicization of the military and the militarization of politics. Ethnic imbalances in the army corps, poorly paid soldiers and struggles over control of material resources have also undermined the democratic control of the armed forces. The subsequent chronic political crisis and civil-military relations is embedded within a political configuration characterized by competing and fluid centres of power, and mutable intertwining of state and non-state relations.³⁶ The role of the military in Guinea-Bissau has resulted in various army mutinies, coups and attempted coups, assassinations of senior military and political figures, and the involvement of the army in criminal networks.

Stuck in a pattern of cyclic instability grounded in institutional weakness and degenerative civil military relations, the post independent politico-military elites have continued to be alienated from the broader society. The elites have subsequently relied on patronage networks as the basis of their legitimacy resulting in the personalization of politics and further impoverishment of most of the population. At its most rudimentary level, conflict and political instability in Guinea-Bissau is triggered by interpersonal rivalries between personalities in the government and in the military, most notably between the president and the army commander. Factionalism both in the army and in the political leadership over the control of power and resources including criminal networks is illustrative of the lack of decisive leadership. Conversely, weak, fragmented and inexperienced political parties without a programmatic approach and a cohesive internal discipline that can sustain the democratization process characterize opposition politics in Guinea-Bissau.³⁷ Political instability, rather than leading to actual socio-political change, leads to the change in the groups holding access to resources.³⁸

³⁴ Embalo (2012)

³⁵ *Ibid*, p.256

³⁶ *Ibid*, p.255

³⁷ Ostheimer (2000), p.53

³⁸ Vigh, Henrik, (2009), 'Conflictual Motion and Political Inertia: On Rebellions and Revolutions in Bissau and Beyond', *African Studies Review*, 52, pp.143-164, p.157

To be certain, each successive government, whether military or civilian, has faced the difficult task of responding to the structural problems inherited from its predecessor as well as challenges arising from its leadership. The exercise of effective leadership in responding to these structural problems might have entailed among other things, a regime's understanding of the primary needs of the broader Guinean society, the sharing of a common interest in meeting those needs and a clear articulation of a strategy aimed at meeting those needs.

The Kumba Yala regime: Reinforcing leadership ineffectiveness in Guinea-Bissau

The task that confronted the government of Kumba Yala after winning the 2001 presidential elections was no different. The social and economic problems, which were amplified by the 1980 coup and the 1998-9 civil war, continued to reverberate throughout his tenure. When Kumba Yala won the presidency with a 72 per cent of the vote after the second round of elections on 16 January 2001, there was much expectation that his party, *Partido da Renovacao Social* or Party of Social Renewal (PRS), would usher in a new era of radical change.³⁹ There was hope that his rule would end decades of political, social and economic problems caused by the civil war, incessant coups and political instability. However, the democratic transition that was envisaged never occurred as Yala's government failed to meet the basic needs of its main electorate.

The socio-economic and political conditions in Guinea-Bissau under Yala's leadership deteriorated massively as his governance pattern and leadership approach became increasingly erratic. Kumba Yala's unpredictable behaviour manifested itself in disputes with the arbitrary sacking of his ministers including the dismissal of three of his Prime Ministers in a space of less than two years. He was also involved in disputes with judges, opposition figures and trade unions. Since the return to civilian rule under Mr. Yala, there were two attempted coups. Yala's irrational behaviour became a national debate with MPs questioning his mental capacity after he threatened to sack up to 60 percent of the country's civil service workers and replace them with members of his Balanta community.⁴⁰ Yala accused the government workers of large-scale corruption and embezzlement.⁴¹ His irrational public announcements including his intention of moving the capital to Buba – a small city 200 kilometres away – and his threat to invade Gambia raised doubts about his mental health.⁴² Subjected to a vote of no confidence, Yala

³⁹ International Crisis Group (2008), p.14

⁴⁰ Ferreira, Patricia, (2004a), 'Guinea-Bissau', *African Security Review* 13, pp. 44-56, p.48

⁴¹ BBC News (2001), Jobs move raises Tempers in Bissau, October 22. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1614191.stm> (Accessed 3 July 2016)

⁴² Ferreira (2004a), p.48

simply dissolved parliament and ruled by Presidential Decree.⁴³ His erratic behaviour also resulted in a constitutional crisis after he dismissed and arrested three Supreme Court judges. The government became bankrupt leading to delays in the payment of civil servants for five consecutive months. President Yala presided over a government that was institutionally decaying and whose direction he failed to articulate.

Yala's erratic behaviour led to massive disruptions in the country. His rule entrenched ethnic fragmentation and introduced religious dynamics to Guinean politics.⁴⁴ This was after the assassination of the army general, Ansumane Mane who was a Mandika, following internal disagreements between the General and Mr. Yala over legitimacy and power control within the government. The Mandika are mainly Muslims. The Muslims of the whole region went to pay homage to the slain General.⁴⁵ Yala also increased the polarization between the military and the political spheres. His continued interference in public administration contributed to the weakening of the already fragile institutions of governance. Yala's leadership style reinforced the undemocratic political culture, established by the autocratic regimes of Luis Cabral (1974-1980) and Nino Vieira (1980-1999) characterized by the subversion of the independence of judiciary, the legislature and of the media, and the violation of human rights. Kumba Yala's behaviour became not only a national and international concern but also an embarrassment. With such critical and desperate conditions, it is no surprise that the people of Guinea-Bissau and the regional and the international community (albeit tacitly) readily accepted the coup.

The failure of Kumba Yala's government stems from its inability to respond to the needs of society at such a critical time within a fledgling democratic transition. His reliance on political support from the army, which comprised mainly the Balanta community contributed to the direct involvement of the military in politics and consolidation of patronage networks.⁴⁶ Indeed, there were strong concerns with the '*balantazition*' of all the spheres of power as a potential major source of destabilization.⁴⁷ The staffing of public administration with members of his patronage networks who lacked the technical and managerial skills to manage public affairs deepened the institutional paralysis. The government was, for

⁴³ BBC News (2002), Bissau to Hold Early Elections, November 15. Available at:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/2479929.stm> (Accessed 3 July 2016)

⁴⁴ Ferreira (2004a), p.47; Ferreira, Patricia, (2004b), Guinea-Bissau: Perspectives on the Upcoming Elections, *Institute for Security Studies Situation Report*, March 26. Available at:

<http://dspace.cigilibrary.org/jspui/bitstream/123456789/31355/1/GUINEAREPMAR04COMPL ETE.pdf?1> (Accessed 10 February 2016), pp.3-4

⁴⁵ *Ibid*

⁴⁶ International Crisis Group (2008), p. 14

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 15

example, unable to assure the supply of water and electricity throughout Bissau.⁴⁸ The suspension of budgetary assistance by international donors further weakened Yala's grip on power and worsened the social misery.⁴⁹ The IMF suspended its budgetary assistance and abandoned efforts to reintroduce its poverty reduction plan resulting in delays in payment of the salaries of civil servants for ten consecutive months.⁵⁰ Despite the goodwill placed on him by the people of Guinea-Bissau, he failed to forge or articulate a collective vision and inspire political direction for the Guinean people that would form the basis for political action. Kumba Yala's regime's inability to respond to the structural weaknesses arising from the deep historical trajectories of leadership failure ultimately led to the downward spiral of his government and the subsequent political and economic crisis.

Responses to the coup

Notwithstanding the principle of rejection of unconstitutional change of government that bound AU and ECOWAS member states,⁵¹ the coup received tacit approval from regional and international actors. The principle of rejection of unconstitutional change of government is enshrined through the Lomé Declaration, the AU Constitutive Act and the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Good Governance and Democracy. These normative texts articulate the principles for the consolidation of democracy in Africa and enact a set of responses in the event of a reversal of this democratization process. The Lomé Declaration was adopted at a time of great concern with the resurgence of coups and their retrogressive impact on the democratization process in Africa. The framework establishes a set of common values and principles for democratic governance, and includes definitions of the different situations that constitute unconstitutional change of government. Article 1(c) of the ECOWAS Protocol on Good Governance and Democracy subsequently reiterates this shared constitutional principle for the Zero tolerance of power obtained or maintained by unconstitutional means.⁵²

In line with these normative frameworks, the AU chair at the time, President Joaquim Chissano, condemned the coup saying that it constituted a denial of the

⁴⁸ Ferreira (2004b), p.4

⁴⁹ *Ibid*

⁵⁰ *Ibid*

⁵¹ See the Lome Declaration and Article 30 of the Constitutive Act of the AU, Organization of African Unity, and African Economic Community, p.17

⁵² The ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol was signed by the ECOWAS Heads of States and Government on 21December 2001 in Dakar, Senegal

principles and objectives of the AU.⁵³ President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal called for the reinstatement of President Kumba Yala declaring that the AU would not recognize whatever government General Seabra planned to install.⁵⁴ The United Nations, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, and Portugal are among the countries that condemned the coup. Despite this public condemnation, there was recognition within the regional and international community of the deteriorating political, social and economic conditions in Guinea-Bissau.⁵⁵ It was no surprise therefore that the coup was implicitly welcomed.⁵⁶ This understanding of the abysmal governance failure by Yala's government conferred credibility and legitimacy on the coup.

Furthermore, the Lomé Declaration also includes various measures of actions for responding to unconstitutional change of governments and their mechanisms for implementation. Article 30 of the Constitutive Act of the AU stipulates the suspension of governments, which have achieved power through unconstitutional means from the activities of the Union.⁵⁷ Article 45 of the ECOWAS Protocol further sets out a number sanctions following unconstitutional change of government including the suspension of the concerned government from participation in ECOWAS decision-making bodies. However, even though Article 30 of the Constitutive act of the AU recommends the suspension of a member state for a period of six months from participation in AU activities pending the restoration of constitutional order,⁵⁸ Guinea-Bissau was not suspended. ECOWAS also got an explicit agreement by military leaders that if the military headed the transitional government, Guinea-Bissau would be suspended from ECOWAS and

⁵³ Xinhuanet (2003), AU Chairperson Condemns Coup in Guinea-Bissau. September 14. Available at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2003-09/15/content_1080704.htm (Accessed 13 January 2017)

⁵⁴ BBC News (2003b), Guinea-Bissau 'back to normal', September 15. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3109648.stm> (Accessed 15 March 2015)

⁵⁵ *Ibid*

⁵⁶ The secretary general of the United Nations had indicated before the coup that the country was on a downward spiral see, BBC News (2003c), Bissau Junta set to step down', September 18. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3113572.stm> (Accessed 15 March 2015); Foreign donors complained of Yala's erratic leadership, corruption and erratic shifts in Policy see, The Economist (2003), Coup in Guinea-Bissau: Farewell to the Red Bobble-hat. September 18. Available at: <http://www.economist.com/node/2076889> (Accessed 15 March 2015)

⁵⁷ The Constitutive Act of the AU was adopted by the Thirty Sixty Ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government on 11 July 2000 in Lome, Togo. See, Organization of African Unity, and African Economic Community (2000), Constitutive act of the African Union. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 11 July 2000, Organization of African Unity. Available at: <http://www1.uneca.org/Portals/ngm/Documents/Conventions%20and%20Resolutions/constitution.pdf> (Accessed 13 January 2017)

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p.17

AU.⁵⁹ The lack of suspension of Guinea-Bissau and the tacit acceptance of the Coup indicates a contradiction between the stated illegality of the coup and legitimacy of a popularly supported coup.

Leadership as a Process in Peacebuilding

Leadership is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. The extensive literature on leadership reveals multiple interpretations of what constitutes leadership.⁶⁰ These include perspectives that view leadership as a psychological endowment, as result oriented, as a position or as a sociological phenomenon.⁶¹ While these numerous perspectives provide valuable insights, this paper adopts the notion of leadership as a dynamic process of interaction between leaders and followers and the situation in which they are part of.⁶² Leadership is therefore 'a function of the whole situation', an interaction between the group or society and the situation confronting them.⁶³ Leadership as such is a dynamic process that is not generalizable across all situations. It is the nature of the situational demands placed on a group or society that defines the type of leadership needed and therefore who will lead.⁶⁴ Leadership therefore is the facilitative element in the situation that allows for a societal exchange of influence in seeking solutions or responses to the situation confronting that society. This exchange of influence involves a process of interaction in which the whole society is involved in seeking solutions to their mutual situation.⁶⁵ Such an exchange of influence is a sustained process that is built overtime.⁶⁶

Some individuals emerge as leaders because they 'frame experiences in a way that provides a viable basis for action.'⁶⁷ Leaders in this sense structure meaning for a common understanding of what needs to be done to change the situation.⁶⁸

⁵⁹ Olonisakin, Funmi, (2004), 'Windows of Opportunity for Conflict Prevention: Responding to Regional Conflict in West Africa', *Conflict, Security and Development*, 4(2), pp.181-198, p.195

⁶⁰ Pierce, Jon, L., and Newstrom, John, W. (2008), 'Readings : The Conceptual and Empirical Leadership Literature', in *Leaders & the Leadership Process: Readings, Self-Assessments & Applications*, 5th ed., eds. Pierce, Jon, L., and Newstrom, John, W.(Boston: McGraw-Hill), pp.2-26

⁶¹ *Ibid*, pp. 7-11

⁶² *Ibid*, p.5 For a visual and conceptual representation of leadership as a process

⁶³ Murphy, Albert (2008), 'A study of the Leadership Process', In Pierce, Jon, L., and Newstrom, John, W.(eds.), pp.12-14, p.12

⁶⁴ Pierce and Newstrom (2008), p.4

⁶⁵ Hollander, Edwin, P., and Julian, James , W., (2008), 'Contemporary Trends in the Analysis of Leadership Processes', in Pierce, Jon, L., and Newstrom, John, W.(eds.), pp.15-21, p.16

⁶⁶ *Ibid*

⁶⁷ Smircich, Linda, and Morgan, Gareth (2008), 'Leadership: The management of Meaning', in Pierce, Jon, L., and Newstrom, John, W.(eds.), pp.22-26, p.22

⁶⁸ *Ibid*

While there are various perspectives through which leaders emerge,⁶⁹ notions that view leader emergence as a social influence process⁷⁰ offer the most useful approaches to understanding the role of leadership in peacebuilding contexts. Leaders emerge through three distinct pathways.⁷¹ The first is the appointment path in which forces outside the group assign leadership to an individual and assert their influence in the acceptance of the individual as a leader. The second is through a voluntary path in which an individual steps up to the position of leadership. The third is because of 'forces within the group and the working relationship that connect group members and result in the acceptance of an individual as a leader.'⁷² Adopting this later distinction of leadership emergence offers a better lens for understanding conflict and peacebuilding dynamics.

Embedding peacebuilding in the local context by understanding the local historical, cultural and political specificities,⁷³ allows for the emergence of an organic process of building stable peace. Similar to leadership, peacebuilding is a context-dependent and sustained process of active and inclusive engagement. Leadership as a process in peacebuilding in turn provides for a societal exchange of influence for addressing the underlying issues of conflict. This societal conversation builds the foundations for enduring peace. The goal of peacebuilding is not only to end violence through elite bargaining, but should necessarily be about transforming the relationship between the elites and the society towards a common future.

Guinea-Bissau represents an excellent empirical study of a historical lack of a leadership process that has engendered political instability, violence and disillusionment of the society. The dominant leadership approach in the country, both historically and contemporaneously, centres on elite control of the state and its resources. It is an approach to leadership that is based on shoring up the dysfunctional state in order to maintain clientele and patronage networks. The militarization and personalization of the state have also entrenched hierarchical modes of leadership approaches that are based on amassing power and authority by the elites rather than exchanging influence with Guineans. Elite contestations for control of power have created a rift between the elites and the society underscoring the challenges for peacebuilding in the country. Building lasting peace at the very least requires the arduous task of transforming the political

⁶⁹ Pierce, and Newstrom (2008), 'Leader Emergence: A dynamic Process', in Pierce, Jon L., and John, Newstrom, W. (2008), pp.126-128

⁷⁰ Hollander, Edwin, P., (2008), 'Emergent Leadership and Social Influence', in Pierce, Jon, L., and Newstrom, John, W.(eds.), pp.133-136, p.133

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p.128

⁷² *Ibid*

⁷³ Berdal, Mats, (2009), 'Chapter One: The Peacebuilding Environment', *The Adelphi Papers*, 49(407), pp, 29-94

military dynamics and elite mindsets in the country to reflect the interests and needs of the population. The 14 September 2003 Coup in Guinea-Bissau provides an instructive basis for locating the mutuality between leadership and peacebuilding.

Leadership Emergence: Shifting mutuality

After seizing power, the coup leaders' immediate task was to form a transitional government that would guide the people of Guinea-Bissau into elections.⁷⁴ In a radio broadcast, the coup leader, General Seabra declared that he did not intend to stay in power.⁷⁵ He subsequently announced that he would hand over power to a transitional government made up of 'all national political orientations.'⁷⁶ Despite this declaration, observers indicated that a faction within the military prevailed upon General Seabra not to retain the presidency by telling him that he could not be both the president and the chief of staff of the armed forces.⁷⁷ It was only after a realization that his position would be weakened if he became president that he gave up wanting to head the transitional government.⁷⁸

The agreement on the formation of a transitional government was based on the need for an 'exclusively' civilian government, 'a reasonable' transitional period, the need for the head of the government to be a 'civilian of high repute' and the need for credible, free and fair legislative and presidential elections.⁷⁹ This agreement was reached through consultations between the coup leaders and an ECOWAS ministerial delegation.⁸⁰ The delegation additionally obtained the recognition of the resignation of President Kumba Yala and the assurance of the armed forces that they would not assume political power.⁸¹

The immediate step in the process of forming a transitional government involved consultations among various actors in Guinea-Bissau including political parties, trade unions, representatives of religious communities, and of the armed forces.⁸²

⁷⁴ Legislative elections in March 2004 and presidential elections within eighteen months

⁷⁵ BBC News (2003c)

⁷⁶ BBC News (2003d), Coup in Guinea-Bissau, September 14. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3107308.stm> (Accessed 15 March 2016)

⁷⁷ BBC News (2003e), New Bissau PM Rejected, September 23. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3129990.stm> (Accessed 3 July 2016)

⁷⁸ *Ibid*

⁷⁹ BBC News (2003c)

⁸⁰ The ECOWAS delegation included ministers from Ghana, Senegal, Guinea, Nigeria, Gambia and Cape Verde.

⁸¹ Olonisakin (2004), p.194

⁸² The Ad-Hoc Commission comprised of 12 civilians and 4 military. See, Ferreira (2004b), pp.5-7

These consultations resulted in the creation of an ad hoc Commission that defined the terms of reference of the transitional government and of the Consultative Council.⁸³ However, the task of the formation of the ad hoc Commission represents a brief instance in which a representative group of the population in Guinea-Bissau was involved in the process of the formation of the transitional government. Negotiations and consultations during the next phase in this process involved the coup elites and international actors.

The process leading up to the formation of a 'broad-based' transitional government involved discussions between the coup elites and an ECOWAS ministerial delegation in Guinea-Bissau.⁸⁴ The main objective of these negotiations was the formation of an interim government that would be tasked with organizing elections. This process resulted in the signing of the Charter of Political Transition on 28 November 2003 that envisaged the holding of legislative elections within six months and of presidential elections one year later.⁸⁵ The Charter provided for the establishment the *Conselho Nacional de Transição* as the supreme organ for state administration until elections were conducted.⁸⁶ However, political pressure from the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) and ECOWAS resulted in the acceptance of the Charter by 23 of the 24 legalized political parties and the consensual nomination of Businessman Henrique Rosa for the presidency of the interim government.⁸⁷

Although the early and involved political intervention by ECOWAS served as a window of opportunity for the prevention of an escalation of the crisis by engaging key civil society actors,⁸⁸ the elections only served as a stopgap measure for the prevention of a larger crisis. The process did not therefore include discussions on the structural causes of the coup. The process only involved negotiations and dialogue on the immediate planning of elections as a resolution to the trigger causes of the crisis.⁸⁹ The signing of the transitional pact in the presence of regional leaders, including the Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo and Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade, gave legitimacy to the idea of a transitional pact as the solution to the political crisis. The lack of representation of the society at the negotiation table further excluded Guineans from the process of choosing

⁸³ Ferreira (2004b), p.6

⁸⁴ Ferreira(2004b), pp.6-7. This was the first consultative meeting between the coup leaders and the international actors. The meeting was supported by the Ambassador of Brazil in Guinea-Bissau (representing the CPLP) and UN representatives.

⁸⁵ Ferreira (2004b), p.6

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p.7

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p.6

⁸⁸ Olonisakin (2004), pp.194-195

⁸⁹ The constant postponement of elections by President Yala was not the actual structural cause of the crisis in Guinea- Bissau but was rather the trigger to the coup.

the leaders that would guide the society during this transitional period. The exchange of influence during this stage therefore took place between the coup leaders and the external actors.

Furthermore, the process of selecting the transitional government leaders involved discussions between the political and military elites with ECOWAS playing a supportive and mediatory role. The selection of Antonio Artur Sanha of the PRS as head of the transitional government delayed dialogue between the political and military elites and resulted in a wave of protests.⁹⁰ The military's proposal of Antonio Artur Sanha was rejected by 15 of the 17 political parties consulted by the military leaders.⁹¹ His name was also rejected following a meeting of political parties, civic groups and others groups; which the military had promised to consult as part of the task of the transition process because there was an agreement that the new Prime Minister should not be politically affiliated to a political party.⁹²

The choice of the interim President and the interim Prime Minister was dictated by the need for impartiality and non-partisanship.⁹³ Sub-section 4 of article 11 of the Charter of Transition also prevented all those who formed part of the transitional government from participating in legislative elections. The military also selected businessman Henrique Rosa, as interim President. However, his selection was only rejected by one of the parties. It is instructive to note that the choice of Antonio Artur Sanha and Henrique Rosa as possible transitional leaders was the sole decision of the military. Their selection as leaders was through a path of appointment and assertion of influence by the military rather than through a national conversation that would have allowed for an adequate assessment of their competence and suitability to the demands and needs of the post-coup situation. The choice of Henrique Rosa by the military was interpreted as an attempt by the military to guarantee the interests of the Balanta Community, which dominated the armed forces.⁹⁴

The creation of the ad hoc commission and the meeting of the political parties and civic groups in the approval of the selection of Antonio Artur Sanha as the head of the transitional government represents the slightest of moments in which a broadly consultative process in the selection of the post-coup leaders occurred. These two instances increased the scope for interactions in terms of the numbers of those who offered solutions and the issues they represented. Despite the inclusive nature of these social transactions, the intensity of the interaction was

⁹⁰ Ferreira (2004b), pp.5-7

⁹¹ BBC News (2003e)

⁹² *Ibid*

⁹³ *Ibid*

⁹⁴ Ferreira (2004a), p.49

minimal and greatly shaped by electoral politics. Indeed, the process of the formation of the transitional government represented an excellent opportunity for the emergence of nationally conscious, legitimate and competent leaders.

In this process, two stages of leader emergence were observable. The first was the emergence of General Verissimo Correia Seabra through the wide acceptance of the coup particularly within Guinea-Bissau. The coup plotters and the people of Guinea-Bissau mutually desired the removal of Kumba Yala. As such, the exchange of influence took place at that moment between the people and the coup leaders. However, the mutuality of this situation shifted. With the entry of ECOWAS and regional actors, the interaction shifted and was largely between the regional actors and Guinea's elite, and the situation under focus was largely the issue of who becomes leader of the transition. Mutuality in the situation and the exchange of influence was therefore between regional and national elites. The issue of how to deal with the structural causes of the problem in the country was not part of the immediate focus. Rather, the politics of elections occupied the elite's attention. Thus in this situation, leadership emerged from the ECOWAS region. This pattern of leader emergence significantly influenced the effort to achieve lasting peace. Any emergence of leadership that connected the aspirations of the people of Guinea-Bissau with the ruling elite was short lived. A new situation (a selection of political leaders) rapidly emerged, which only connected elite groupings within and outside the country.

Disconnecting Leadership and Peacebuilding

The transitional government was tasked with the main aim of guiding Guinea-Bissau to elections. However, the constant postponement of elections was not the only problem that faced Guinea-Bissau. In fact, the organization of legislative and presidential elections was only one aspect of responding to the structural fragility in Guinea-Bissau. What was needed was a holistic response that would lead to the resolution of the myriad political and socio-economic problems that faced the country. Such a response could not be an imposed formula. Instead, the solution needed to be arrived at through popular consultations in which the whole society was represented at the negotiating table and actively involved in the political process. Such popular consultations would then require the emergence of leaders who could articulate meaningfully and effectively the society's positions or the solutions emerging from such discussions.

The main task and outcome of both the negotiations for the formation of a transitional government and those of the transitional government was not the result of an exchange of influence between Guinean citizens and those leading these processes. As a result, national conversations that would have led to the resolution of the structural crisis in Guinea-Bissau did not take place. The coup

and the transitional process represented a significant window of opportunity for such national conversations. As such, leadership did not emerge organically because the exchange of influence occurred between the military and the political elites and external actors. Since an exchange of influence that would make meaning for the society in Guinea-Bissau did not occur, durable peace consequently was not built.

The 2005 elections were supposed to mark the end of the transitional period. The international community had made clear beforehand that a legitimate government in place was the prerequisite for any additional financial and technical assistance to Guinea-Bissau.⁹⁵ Inevitably, however, the imposition of time bound activities such as the organization of elections impaired the dynamic nature of the leadership process. Subsequently the elites' preoccupation with elections undermined the process of building societal relations that would have anchored an enduring process of peacebuilding. Equally, much of the donor assistance resulted in supporting the fragile institutions of government that have failed to manage the chronic instability in Guinea-Bissau.

The lack of a substantive and enduring exchange of influence within the Guinean population served as the basis for subsequent conflict as the future incentives for conflict were not reduced. The exchange of influence should have focused on reconciliation, relationship building and addressed the structural causes of the conflict. However, many efforts, including time and resources were expended on the building of institutions of governance and the organization of elections. Less proportionate efforts were expended on the building of a mutual relationship between the leaders and the society that would frame meaning for the society in Guinea-Bissau. This process of relationship building involves a search for ideas or solutions to the situation at hand. Those with these ideas assert influence by sharing them with the society, which in turn accepts this assertion of influence if and when they are seen to offer a relevant solution. This exchange of influence entails the framing of meaning for the society. This process should be inclusive; however, in Guinea-Bissau the interests of the political and military elites took centre stage. This process of relationship building is built over time and cannot be bound by time specific activities such as the holding of elections. It is a process of active engagement. The process involves the search for long-term solutions and not reactionary responses such as elections. This, however, does not mean that elections are not important. Rather, the process, which precedes elections, is what determines the meaning and sustainability of a democratic process.

⁹⁵ Nuno, Vaz and Rotzoll, Iris, C.,(2005), 'Presidential Elections in Guinea- Bissau 2005: A Stabilizing Factor in a Fragile Democracy or only a Spot Test of the State Of Affairs?', *Afrika Spectrum*, 403, pp. 535-54

The society in Guinea-Bissau was excluded from the exchange of influence and therefore the scope for interaction was reduced. The political and military elites asserted influence amongst themselves pushing for their own interests. The transient leadership that emerged served only to articulate the positions and achieve the objectives and interests of the politico-military elites. It lacked the competencies and skills to respond adequately to the structural problems in Guinea-Bissau. The assertion of influence was not dynamic as the interlocutors were the elites and the external actors rather than these elites and the larger population of Guinea-Bissau. To be certain, since effective leadership suitable and meaningful to the society did not emerge following the coup lasting peace was not built. As a result, the nature of the peace that was built was fragile peace characterized by '*stable instability*'⁹⁶ Indeed, the chronically unstable and fundamental inert political system in Guinea-Bissau is as a result of the replacement of political leaders without any real political change.⁹⁷ This represents change in *positions* of power rather than the *structures* of power.

Conclusion

The September 2003 Coup presented an opportunity for the Guinean Society to address the structural problems made dire by Yala's ineffective leadership. However, the emergence of effective leadership that would build stable peace consequently did not occur. Retrospectively, the political chaos that followed the 2005 elections and the current crisis in Guinea-Bissau⁹⁸ instructively demonstrate that a meaningful exchange of influence between the political and military elites and the people of Guinea-Bissau has never occurred in post-independent Guinea-Bissau. Elections are mainly characterized by the recycling of the same crop of ineffective leaders responsible for the initial structural problems. This replacement of leaders in positions of authority offers no real transformation of Guinea-Bissau's chronically unstable political system in ways that are meaningful to the whole of the society.

The response to the crisis in Guinea-Bissau has focused mainly on supporting the institutionally weak state structures that continue to be detached from popular support. Rarely has the exchange of influence occurred between the political and military elites and the people of Guinea-Bissau. The exchange has rarely focused on addressing the structural issues that have characterized post-independent

⁹⁶ Vigh (2009), p.145

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p.157

⁹⁸ The military seized power on 12 April days before a presidential runoff was scheduled to take place. See: Hirsch, Afua (2012), Guinea-Bissau Coup Suspected as Military Seizes Parts of Capital, *The Guardian*, April 13. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/apr/13/guinea-bissau-coup-suspected> (Accessed 10 February 2016)

Guinea-Bissau. Instead, the focus has been on addressing issues such as the organising of elections. Where this has happened, for instance during the process leading up to the formation of a transitional government after the 2003 September Coup, the exchange has been brief, minimal, ineffective and externally driven. Leadership as an approach to building lasting peace means that those responding to the conflict will work with the whole of society towards a common path of lasting peace.

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