

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

Country briefing – Guinea

March 2013

Summary

Opposition street protests and ethnic clashes during late February and early March further increases Guinea's risk profile. There are increasing calls for foreign mediation to resolve the legislative election impasse. President Condé continues to focus attention on the military, carefully attending to its power bases. But the risk of a coup remains significant, particularly due to friction between Condé and General Sékouba Konaté, who led the 2010 transition process. Major mining projects, including the Simandou iron ore projects, are on hold. Rio Tinto raises concern over the government's ability to raise finance for infrastructure. Vale-BSGR negotiations over corruption allegations are ongoing. The security situation has deteriorated, but crucially the soldiers remain in the barracks, which limits civilian fatalities.

Widespread unrest leads to calls for foreign mediation

The political environment has further deteriorated due to violent opposition protests and localised ethnic violence. The opposition renewed street protests on 18 February over the organisation of the legislative elections scheduled for 12 May. The protests gained momentum on 26 February and continued daily in Conakry for two weeks into March. Nine deaths, including one policeman, were recorded in clashes between youths and security forces as well as between gangs of President **Alpha Condé's** ethnic **Malinké** community and the ethnic **Peul** community, which largely support leading opposition figure **Cellou Dalein Diallo**.¹ Ethnic tensions remain high. "This is the worst violence in at least a year and a half... there is growing mistrust between the Malinké and Peul."² International partners including **France** and the **European Union (EU)**, as well as neighbouring countries **Côte d'Ivoire**, **Liberia** and **Sierra Leone** called for restraint and dialogue.³

¹ Source, Western embassy security official, Guinea

² Source, Western embassy security official, Guinea

³ Reuters, 11 March 2013

Several local sources outside of government highlight the urgent need for similar foreign mediation that assisted the transition process in 2010. The **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)** led a coalition that included the EU and **United Nations (UN)**. The opposition agreed to negotiations with the government after election preparations were suspended on 15 March.⁴ It claims the review of the electoral roll by South Africa company **Waymark** is fraudulent – 400,000 of 540,000 new voters on the updated electoral roll were from President Condé’s stronghold and Malinké base, the Upper Guinea region.⁵ The opposition also disputes the exclusion of Guineans abroad, totaling 120,000, in the new voter list.⁶ However, the mediation process is currently stalled as the opposition rejects the government’s attempts to appoint a local mediator and threatens further protests.⁷ There are “*moves in the direction of foreign mediation*”⁸, which the government may “*reluctantly accept due to fears of further unrest.*”⁹

...as Condé moves to appease the military

President Condé moved quick to install Brigadier General **Namory Traoré** as permanent Army chief of staff on 26 February despite foreign partners questioning his experience for the role.¹⁰ Traoré was the former assistant to the ex-chief of staff, General **Souleymane Kéléfa Diallo**, who died in a plane crash in **Liberia** on 11 February.¹¹ The loss of Diallo and rise of Traoré is unlikely to cause major friction within the military hierarchy.

“Diallo was a placeholder. He was not really a player, he had little following within the military and while it’s a terrible tragedy it probably won’t cause a ruckus.”¹²

“Traoré was next in line to take over. It is viewed as a relatively smooth transition in the hierarchy....Condé didn’t want to rock the boat.”¹³

Moreover, Traoré is described as “*just one of the power bases*” in the military¹⁴. A key power base in the military remains another Malinké, General **Aboubacar Sidiki Camara ‘Idi Amin’**, the cabinet

⁴ Reuters, 15 March 2013

⁵ RFI, 6 March 2013

⁶ International Crisis Group, 27 February 2013

⁷ Source, Guinea security and political researcher, Senegal

⁸ Source, Guinea security and political researcher, Senegal

⁹ Source, foreign consultant working in the mines ministry, Conakry

¹⁰ See ARC Guinea briefing February 2013

¹¹ See ARC Guinea briefing February 2013

¹² Source, diplomat, United States

¹³ Source, Guinea security and political researcher, Senegal

¹⁴ Source, Guinea security and political researcher, Senegal

director within the ministry for defence.¹⁵ Camara's military rank was upgraded in February 2012.¹⁶ A foreign advisor to the security reform process describes Camara as "*reliable, helpful and reasonably trustworthy.*"

That said, the risk of a coup remains high particular due to the "*well-known friction*" between Condé and former President of the transition in 2010, General **Sékouba Konaté 'El Tigre'**¹⁷. Konaté is based in **Addis Ababa, Ethiopia** as **High Representative for the Operationalisation of the African Standby Force (ASF)**. Konaté believes he was "*shortchanged*", or "*not taken care of properly financially*" after seeing through the transition.¹⁸ "*Condé told him: you done your job and goodbye. Condé renegotiated a lot of contracts that Konaté was involved in.*"¹⁹ Konaté told the Guinean press on 15 March 2013 that he was disappointed over the imprisonment of his military allies for the 19 July 2011 attempted coup.

*"Konaté will speak out because he can...without fear. He still knows what's going in the barracks. He doesn't want to be president himself. He's shown that, but I don't think he'd mind if someone else from the military was."*²⁰

*"It's difficult to see Konaté engage in a coup now. He owes his status, his position to stepping down from power. Being implicated in a coup would undermine that status. But it's possible some soldiers may use the image of the Konaté to try something. Some say that under Konaté the armed forces were more united."*²¹

Though Condé mitigates the coup threat by appeasing the military hierarchy.

*"There were some rumours Malinké soldiers were starting to resent Condé. But Condé has done well to keep the military onside. He goes to great lengths, with pay rises, promotions, and manages to keep them in the barracks. If the military want to do something now is good timing because of the opposition protests. But they know they will not have any international support for a coup. The international community put a lot of efforts into the transition and is not prepared to start again."*²²

¹⁵ Source, Guinea security and political researcher, Senegal; Guinean Peul United Nations (UN) official, Senegal

¹⁶ Radio Kankan, 7 February 2012

¹⁷ Source, diplomat, United States

¹⁸ Source, several

¹⁹ Source, Guinea security and political researcher, Senegal

²⁰ Source, diplomat, United States

²¹ Source, Guinea security and political researcher, Senegal

²² Source, Guinea security and political researcher, Senegal

....and mining stalls....

A dispute with **Rio Tinto** over infrastructure financing has stalled the government's showpiece Simandou iron ore project. **Sam Walsh**, appointed Rio Tinto CEO on 17 January 2013, met with Condé and Mines Minister **Mohamed Lamine Fofana** on 8 March in Conakry. Government sources claim that Rio Tinto put its Simandou iron ore project on hold until an investment agreement and infrastructure financing was in place.²³ Condé's pet project, the proposed Trans-Guinean railway, and port infrastructure for Simandou is estimated to cost at least \$10 billion. The government has an option to take a 51% stake in the mines' infrastructure. This is according to a \$700m 'Settlement Agreement' signed in April 2011 that boosted relations between the government and Rio Tinto. The former military junta administration was hostile towards the company. Under the 2011 agreement, Rio Tinto faces cancellation of its contract if it fails to meet the 2015 production deadline date. A foreign consultant working in the mines ministry claims the parties will "*discuss an agreement in the next couple of months*". The source also claims the development is "*nothing to do with the political situation*." A government source involved negotiations around the mines' infrastructure claims, "*relations are still ok...but there is no movement forward*."

The northern half of Simandou, owned by a **Vale-BSG Resources (BSGR)** joint venture is also on hold since the government detailed allegations of corruption against BSGR in November 2012. Vale, BSGR and the government are currently in negotiations and BSGR has threatened legal action.²⁴ "*BSGR wants to fight back*."²⁵ Relations further deteriorated following confirmation that the government banned BSGR President **Asher Avidan** from entering Guinea, citing a "*measure of domestic security*."²⁶ Avidan is a long-standing figure within the **Israeli** foreign affairs and intelligence network in Africa. Avidan joined BSGR in 2006 as the Guinea country director and operations chief. He is responsible for cultivating contracts within the military and political leaders.

Despite these disputes, the government is keen to promote a positive outlook for the mining sector. It claims that bauxite output will increase from 7% (20m tonnes in 2012²⁷) to 25% of global production by 2020.²⁸ There are eight projects under development totalling \$24 billion, according to the presidency. Guinea holds two-thirds of global bauxite reserves. Several local sources say the political and security situation needs to stabilise first for Guinea to realise its mining potential.

²³ Financial Times, 12 March 2013

²⁴ See ARC Guinea briefings January and February 2013

²⁵ Source, government source involved mining negotiations, Guinea

²⁶ Reuters, 21 March 2013

²⁷ Finance minister, 6 March 2013

²⁸ Presidency statement, 15 March 2013

Security deteriorates, but the military stay inline

As noted above the security situation has further deteriorated in Conakry, but also in the **Fouta Djallon, Middle Guinea** region predominately populated by the Peul. There are a number of reports of live ammunition used during the ethnic clashes.

“Both sides are accusing each other of guns...someone has guns. The two year old daughter of a local employee here was shot in the head by a stray bullet.”²⁹

However, the military stayed in the barracks throughout the unrest in Conakry and is cautious not to escalate problems for the government.

“With protests for two weeks nine were killed. In Guinea standards that is a low amount taking the military’s history of indiscipline into account. The soldiers know that another 28 September 2009 [massacre in which the military is accused on killing 160 civilians] will be the final nail in the coffin for this government.”³⁰

There are also ongoing small, localised but violent youth protests over power cuts in Conakry. *“There were three last week...they expect the power to come on at certain times and when it doesn’t there’s trouble.”³¹* These protests are focused between the **Bambeto** and **Hamdelaye** neighbourhoods.

1 Implications

The risk of further protests and ethnic violence is significant due to the political deadlock over the legislative elections. Businesses in Conakry are required to update security provisions and monitor the situation hourly. International Guinea watchers are making inquiries with the government and international partners to instigate foreign mediation. If this occurs it will help to stabilise the situation. The risk of a military coup also remains high. Condé’s efforts to appease the military will mitigate this risk in the immediate term. However, further street clashes, or the involvement of soldiers in clashes, will heighten the risk of a coup. The halt of major projects weakens Condé’s position, given the need for finance to improve economic conditions such as electricity provision.

²⁹ Source, Western embassy security official, Guinea

³⁰ Source, Guinea security and political researcher, Senegal

³¹ Source, Western embassy security official, Guinea