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Russia's ambassador to Guinea, Alexandre Bregadze, stirs controversy in expressing support for President Alpha Condé (2010-present) to pursue a third presidential term. Opposition and civil society groups threaten to protest the amendment of the constitution to accommodate a third term. President Condé extends the mandate of parliamentarians following the failure of the Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante (CENI) (electoral commission) to organise legislative elections in 2018. Condé also concludes the appointment of 17 new CENI members. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) grants Guinea \$23.9m loan and projects a positive medium-term economic outlook.

Russian diplomat stirs hornets' nest over third presidential term for Condé ...

Russia's ambassador to Guinea, **Alexandre Bregadze** has renewed controversy over a third presidential term for President **Alpha Condé** (2010-present). Guinea's constitution currently permits only two presidential terms of five years each.¹ If Condé amends the constitution and attempts to contest the 2020 elections, this will almost certainly spark violence and add to an already tense political environment. Bregadze, in his capacity as dean of the **Conakry** diplomatic corps, read a speech on 10 January at the traditional New Year's reception offered to Conakry-based heads of diplomatic missions in which he expressed his wish for President Condé to seek another presidential term.² Bregadze praised the amount of development Guinea has achieved over the last eight years:

*"Let's be objective and realistic... we are witnessing a great achievement from Guinea, its president and his government."*³

Bregadze went on to criticise the logic of applying presidential term limits:

*"Constitutions are neither dogmas nor the Bible nor the Koran. Constitutions adapt to reality but the realities do not adapt to the constitutions. You do not change horses when you pass a river."*⁴

Bregadze's statement elicited strong reaction from the opposition and members of civil society. Opposition **Union des Forces Démocratique de Guinée (UFDG)** president **Cellou Dalein Diallo** denounced the statement, calling it a "*partisan stance and an indecent interference in the internal affairs of Guinea*".⁵ Diallo claimed that President Condé manipulated the ambassador to make the statement, which he said is not the official view of the Russian Federation.⁶ UFDG vice president **Fode Oussou** asked other ambassadors resident in Guinea to disassociate themselves from Bregadze's comments, saying the role of an ambassador is not to meddle in the internal affairs of an independent country.⁷ Former reconciliation minister and UFDG member **Bah Oury** said it is up to Guinean society to decide whether the constitution should be changed to that effect.⁸ Oury also claimed that

¹ DW, 28 Dec 2018

² RFI, 11 Jan 2019

³ RFI, 11 Jan 2019

⁴ RFI, 11 Jan 2019

⁵ Vision Guinée, 10 Jan 2019

⁶ Vision Guinée, 10 Jan 2019

⁷ RFI, 11 Jan 2019

⁸ Aminata.com, 10 Jan 2019

Bregadze's statement was made in his personal capacity and should not be confused with Russia's official position.⁹

While many prominent Guinean leaders limited their condemnation to verbal attacks, the **Reseau Afrique Jeunesse Guinée** (RAJG) mobilised a group to protest outside the Russian embassy in Conakry on 14 January to express their discontent at Bergadze's speech.¹⁰ RAJG spokesperson **Gabriel Haba** said the question of alternation is a question of sovereignty.¹¹ Haba went on to criticise ambassador Bregadze for being in contravention of Article 2 of Guinea's constitution, which stipulates that consular and diplomatic missions should not interfere in the internal affairs of the nation.¹² RAJG coordinator **Sekou Dore** demanded an apology from ambassador Bregadze and reiterated that the decision to amend the constitution will be undertaken by Guineans and not a resident ambassador.¹³

Despite the multitude of criticism, there is palpable support for the possibility of an additional presidential mandate by president Conde within the presidential majority. Parliamentary group leader of the ruling **Rassemblement du Peuple Guinéen Arc-en-ciel (RPG Arc-en-ciel)**, **Amadou Damara Camara** said the constitution allows for the president to propose a new constitution and believes it is important to have such a debate.¹⁴ Camara defended the possibility of Condé remaining in office beyond 2020 by citing **Germany** as an example of a country without term limits.¹⁵ Camara also used **United Kingdom** prime minister **Margaret Thatcher's** (1979-1990) uninterrupted 11-year rule as another example of the merits of extended rule.¹⁶ Nevertheless, Camara admitted that Guinea's current constitution does not allow President Condé to be eligible for another term.¹⁷

The possibility of a third presidential mandate has been a recurring topic in Guinean political circles for the past three years.¹⁸ When asked in a 28 April 2018 interview with **The Economist** whether he would consider pursuing a third term in spite of constitutional limitations (see *ARC Briefing Guinea May 2018*), Condé stated:

*"African presidents should not have term limits, because these get in the way of them carrying out ambitious long-term projects."*¹⁹

With Guinea only a year away from elections and 2019 being a year in which the various political groups will formulate their strategies for election campaigns, the question of whether President Condé will attempt to run for a third term is occupying the minds of the ruling party and opposition alike. Article 27 of the constitution sets the maximum number of terms of a sitting president at two and stipulates that any amendment must be made through a referendum.²⁰ Civil society group **Balai Citoyen** has already signified that it will launch court cases against individuals and groups that lobby for President Condé to run in 2020.²¹ UFDG president **Cellou Dalein Diallo** announced on 12 January that the UFDG will recommence street protests in opposition to a possible third term and to defend the constitution.²² Diallo warns that there will be violence if Condé attempts to run for another mandate.²³ His call for protests comes in spite of the ban that the government imposed in 2018 in the wake of a cycle of violence resulting from continuing protests. Regular incidents of political-related

⁹ Aminata.com, 10 Jan 2019

¹⁰ Aminata.com, 14 Jan 2019

¹¹ Aminata.com, 14 Jan 2019

¹² Aminata.com, 14 Jan 2019

¹³ Aminata.com, 14 Jan 2019

¹⁴ Vision Guinee, 22 Jan 2019

¹⁵ Vision Guinee, 22 Jan 2019

¹⁶ Vision Guinee, 22 Jan 2019

¹⁷ Vision Guinee, 22 Jan 2019

¹⁸ DW, 28 Dec 2018

¹⁹ The Economist, 28 Apr 2018

²⁰ DW, 28 Dec 2018

²¹ DW, 28 Dec 2018

²² Vision Guinee, 12 Jan 2019

²³ Vision Guinee, 12 Jan 2019

violence since the hosting of the 4 February local elections have led to several deaths (see *ARC Briefing Guinea* February to December 2018). The failure of the presidential majority to honour the 8 August political agreement relating to division of control of local councils between the RPG Arc-en-ciel and the opposition (see *ARC Guinea Briefing August 2018*) has exacerbated the violence. The government is also dragging its feet on implementing the terms of the 12 October 2016 political agreement, which was supposed to ensure broad-based political reforms.²⁴ An already tense political environment could boil over if Condé attempts to run for president in 2020. UFDG vice president Fode Oussou has warned President Conde that he should not allow himself to face the same fate as former **Burkina Faso** president **Blaise Compaoré** (1986-2014):²⁵ Compaoré was deposed by popular revolt in 2014 after attempting to change the constitution in order to extend his rule.

... as Condé extends parliamentarians' mandate and appoints CENI members

President Condé signed an executive order on 12 January prolonging the mandates of members of parliament (MPs), which were due to end on 13 January.²⁶ Conde's directive prevents a scenario in which legislators would have no legal justification to carry out their functions, including the examination and passing of legislation. In terms of the constitution, Guinea's MPs have a five-year term of office.²⁷ The current term began on 13 January 2014, following legislative elections held on 28 September 2013.²⁸ Legislation elections should have taken place in 2018, but the government's failure to implement the terms of the 12 October 2016 political agreement, including the reform of the **Commission Electoral National Indépendant (CENI)** (independent national electoral commission), resulted in political impasse (see *ARC Briefing Guinea* February 2016-December 2018).

The impending end of parliamentary mandates threatened an institutional crisis in the absence of legislative elections.²⁹ **Assemblée Nationale** (national assembly) president **Kory Kondiono** sought Condé's guidance with respect to dealing with the expiry of legislators' mandates.³⁰ Condé in turn asked the **Cour Constitutionnelle** (constitutional court), which advised him to extend the terms of the parliamentarians until elections are held.³¹

Guinea's two largest opposition parliamentary groups, the liberal bloc (UFDG) and the republican alliance of the **Union des Forces Republicain (UFR)**, have questioned the legality of President Condé prolonging MP's mandates.³² Both groups have said they will decide by February whether to boycott national assembly activities.³³ If the two biggest opposition groups do not participate in legislative activities, this will affect the functioning of the national assembly and may prevent the passing of bills to ensure the government can carry out its initiatives.

President Condé issued two presidential decrees appointing new commissioners at CENI on 10 and 14 January.³⁴ As a result, Guinea has a better chance of hosting legislative elections in 2019, which may quell tensions from the ongoing socio-political crisis (see above). CENI is responsible for reviewing the electoral register, designating elections dates, organising elections and proclaiming electoral results.³⁵

²⁴ Jeune Afrique, 12 Oct 2016

²⁵ Vision Guinée, 21 Jan 2019

²⁶ Jeune Afrique, 12 Jan 2019

²⁷ Jeune Afrique, 11 Jan 2019

²⁸ Jeune Afrique, 11 Jan 2019

²⁹ Jeune Afrique, 11 Jan 2019

³⁰ Jeune Afrique, 11 Jan 2019

³¹ Jeune Afrique, 11 Jan 2019

³² Vision Guinée, 15 Jan 2019

³³ Vision Guinée, 14 Jan 2019

³⁴ Vision Guinée, 15 Jan 2019

³⁵ Jeune Afrique, 11 Jan 2019

CENI reform was one of the terms of the 12 October 2016 political agreement between the opposition and presidential majority (see above).³⁶ The accord was meant to reduce tension between the two sides and institute a wide range of political reforms. However, CENI was at the centre of controversy during the 2018 local elections, when the opposition accused it of attributing opposition victories to the presidential coalition (see *ARC Briefing Guinea March 2018*). As a result of the ensuing violence, Condé established a commission of oversight under territorial administration minister General **Bourema Condé** in April (see *ARC Briefing Guinea April 2018*).³⁷ The commission was meant to ensure the implementation of the terms of the political agreement.

President Condé on 10 January confirmed the selection of nine CENI commissioners, including seven from the ruling coalition, two from civil society and one from the ministry of territorial administration.³⁸ An executive order on 14 January approved the designation of seven CENI commissioners from the republican opposition.³⁹ The UFDG has four members while **Sidiya Toure's** UFR was allocated two members.⁴⁰ Despite the positive move to appoint new CENI members, UFDG MP **Ousmane Diallo** criticised the fact that seven of the 17 appointed CENI members are returning to their functions as commissioners.⁴¹ Ousmane Diallo claims these individuals should not be allowed to exercise these functions as their shortcomings led to the chaos in Guinea.⁴² Nonetheless, the selection of new CENI members creates a better chance of legislative elections being organised in 2019.

IMF approves 23.9m loan with positive economic outlook for Guinea

The executive board of the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** completed the second review of Guinea's economic performance under the Extended Credit Facility (ECF) on 21 December.⁴³ The IMF approved a disbursement of \$23.9m, which Guinea will use to support its balance of payments and strengthen international currency reserves.⁴⁴ The successful review and subsequent loan reflects the IMF's positive sentiments regarding Guinea's economy.⁴⁵

Guinea's ECF arrangement was adopted on 11 December 2017 and was worth \$167.2m.⁴⁶ The ECF aims to strengthen resilience and scale up public investment in infrastructure, while preserving macroeconomic stability, creating social safety nets and promoting private sector development.⁴⁷ IMF acting chairman and deputy managing director **Tao Zhang** acknowledged that Guinea has performed well under the ECF since the last review in June.⁴⁸ Zhang said Guinea was implementing a host of macroeconomic policies and reforms that will assist in generating broad-based and high economic growth as well reducing poverty.⁴⁹

Zhang predicts Guinea will continue to register strong economic growth and the medium-term economic outlook is favourable.⁵⁰ Zhang has encouraged the Guinean government to improve tax revenue collection, so it can have a fiscal surplus and utilise these funds for infrastructure investment.⁵¹ The IMF encouraged Guinean authorities to accumulate financial reserves that it can use

³⁶ Jeune Afrique, 11 Jan 2019

³⁷ Jeune Afrique, 3 Apr 2018.

³⁸ Aminata.com, 11 Jan 2019

³⁹ Aminata.com, 15 Jan 2019

⁴⁰ Aminata.com, 15 Jan 2019

⁴¹ Vision Guinee, 15 Jan 2019

⁴² Vision Guinee, 15 Jan 2019

⁴³ IMF Press Release, 21 Jan 2019

⁴⁴ Financial Afrik, 31 Dec 2018

⁴⁵ IMF Press Release, 21 Jan 2019

⁴⁶ IMF Press Release, 21 Jan 2019

⁴⁷ IMF Press Release, 21 Jan 2019

⁴⁸ IMF Press Release, 21 Jan 2019

⁴⁹ IMF Press Release, 21 Jan 2019

⁵⁰ IMF Press Release, 21 Jan 2019

⁵¹ IMF Press Release, 21 Jan 2019

to develop buffers against internal and exogenous shocks.⁵² The IMF also advised prudence with respect to debt management and the maintenance of moderate inflation going forward.⁵³

Finance minister **Mamadi Camara** acknowledged that IMF support has enabled the government to carry out structural reforms in order to support economic growth and poverty reduction.⁵⁴ Camara noted the progress was in line with the objectives outlined in the **Plan National du Développement Economique et Social (PNDES)** (national economic and social development plan), which runs from 2016-2020.⁵⁵ Camara said that increasing domestic revenue mobilisation as well as rationalising non-priority expenditure and reallocating those resources towards infrastructure development and social spending will benefit all Guineans.⁵⁶

The IMF review reflects its previous positive assessments of Guinea's economy. The IMF approved a \$24.3m loan in June after a satisfactory review of its ECF (see *ARC Guinea Briefing July 2018*),⁵⁷ during which IMF deputy managing director **Mitsuhiro Furusawa** credited Guinea for maintaining strong growth in the aftermath of the Ebola outbreak in 2014.⁵⁸ Guinea registered economic growth rates of 6.6% in 2016, 8% in 2017, and 6% in 2018, due in large part to increased investments in the mining sector.⁵⁹ Despite the current socio-political crisis, Guinea's positive medium-term economic projection makes it an attractive investment destination.

Planner

2019 **(Guinea)** Government to hold legislative elections (date to be determined)

2020 **(Guinea)** Presidential elections scheduled

2020 **(Guinea)** **Plan National du Développement Economique et Social (PNDES)** (national economic and social development plan) ends

Chronology

16 Jan 2019 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Agence Ecofin*. The **Islamic Development Bank (IDB)** and Guinea sign a \$16.25m agreement to promote rice production;

14 Jan 2019 **Conakry (Guinea)** *RFI*. President **Alpha Condé** concludes appointment of 17 members **Commission Electorale Nationale et Independente (CENI)**;

12 Jan 2019 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Jeune Afrique*. President **Alpha Conde** signs an executive order prolonging the mandate of members of parliament;

26 Dec 2018 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Press Release*. The **Assemblée Nationale** (national assembly) ratifies three convention agreements related to mining projects to be undertaken by **China-based SMB-Winning**;

21 Dec 2018 **Washington D.C (United States)** *Press Release*. **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** approves \$23.9m loan to Guinea as part of the Extended Credit Facility programme;

⁵² IMF Press Release, 21 Jan 2018

⁵³ IMF Press Release, 21 Jan 2018

⁵⁴ Aminata.com, 28 Dec 2018

⁵⁵ Aminata.com, 28 Dec 2018

⁵⁶ Aminata.com, 28 Dec 2018

⁵⁷ IMF Press Release, 25 Jun 2018

⁵⁸ IMF Press Release, 25 Jun 2018

⁵⁹ IMF Press Release, 25 Jun 2018