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The 26 July coup d'état in Niger, led by General Abdourahamane Tchiani, thrusts Guinea into regional tensions and alliances, with the expectation that Comité national du rassemblement pour le développement (CNRD) leader Colonel Mamady Doumbouya (2021-present) would show support for Niger given his leadership of the coup d'état in Guinea that led to his current position.

The Simandou iron ore project achieves a key milestone in its development on 10 August after the project partners – the government, Chinese-led Winning Consortium Simandou (WCS) and Australia's Rio Tinto – sign the founding agreements for Transguinéen port and rail infrastructure. Finance and economy minister Moussa Cissé presents the Document de programmation budgétaire pluriannuelle (DPBP) 2024-2026 (multi-year budget programme 2024-2026) on 19 August, projecting a budget of \$15 billion for this period.

Niger looks to Guinea for support in post-coup environment

The 26 July coup d'état in **Niger**, led by General **Abdourahamane Tchiani**, has thrust **Guinea** into regional tensions and alliances, with the expectation that Colonel **Mamady Doumbouya** (2021-present) would show support for Niger given that he led the coup d'état in September 2021 that led to his current position (see *ARC Briefing Guinea Sep 2021*).¹ This expectation likely stemmed from the fact that **Burkina Faso** and **Mali** – also led by military juntas – have both thrown their support behind the junta in Niger, even offering to intervene if the regional bloc **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)** deploys its military stand-by force.²

In a statement released on 31 July, Guinea's ruling **Comité national du rassemblement pour le développement (CNRD)** noted that the suggested ECOWAS military intervention would not be a viable solution to the issue at hand and chose to dissociate itself from the ECOWAS-imposed sanctions on Niger and the suggested military intervention, advocating instead for dialogue.³ While the CNRD went against ECOWAS in this regard, it did not go as far as Mali and Burkina Faso, which both said that any military intervention in Niger would be considered a declaration of war against them, too.⁴ The CNRD instead suggested that **West African** leaders should focus on the strategic and socio-economic issues that lead to coup d'états.

In a bid to garner regional support, a delegation of the Nigerien junta, **Conseil national pour la sauvegarde de la patrie (CNSP)**, met with Doumbouya in **Conakry** on 12 August to ask for his support.⁵ Doumbouya took a pragmatic approach, affirming Guinea's position on the issue:

"As far as the Republic of Guinea is concerned, we are pan-African. When our peoples have problems, we are always present, we will always be there, and this was the case for our brothers in Burkina, Mali and Niger. For us, only we can find solutions to our problems."⁶

Doumbouya's approach is likely due to two reasons. First, Guinea remains suspended from ECOWAS (hence choosing not to apply sanctions) but re-joining the regional bloc is key for the country's access to trade benefits and regional alliances. Secondly, in Niger, there has been a rise in anti-**French**

¹ ARC Briefing Guinea analyst

² ARC Briefing Guinea analyst

³ Anadolu Agency, 1 Aug 2023

⁴ Anadolu Agency, 1 Aug 2023

⁵ Anadolu Agency, 13 Aug 2023

⁶ RFI, 13 Aug 2023

sentiment, which has also been evident in Mali and Burkina Faso. However, Guinea maintains good relations with France, and Doumbouya holds deep personal ties to France. He is married to a French gendarmerie officer and studied in France before starting a career with the French foreign legion, making it likely that he will emphasise not showing an overtly anti-French attitude.⁷

Progress on Simandou

The **Simandou** iron ore project achieved a key milestone in its development on 10 August when the project's partners – the government, **Chinese-led Winning Consortium Simandou (WCS)** and **Australia's Rio Tinto** – signed the founding agreements for the **Transguinéen** port and rail infrastructure.⁸ The Transguinéen will run over 600 km from Simandou to the port of **Morebaya** at a cost of \$15 billion, to be paid by WCS and Rio Tinto. The railway will be run by **Compagnie du TransGuinéen (CTG)**.

The shareholder pact for CTG was signed in March (*see ARC Briefing Guinea Mar 2023*) after the junta negotiated that it would hold a free 15% stake in the associated port and rail infrastructure of the project. The shareholder pact made official the commitment that the railway could be used to transport other goods and passengers in the region. The pact states that construction must be completed by December 2024.⁹ On 17 August, Rio Tinto signed a \$224m agreement with the West African subsidiary of the **Chinese Overseas Engineering Group (COVEC)**, a major building and public works company, marking another step in the preparation for construction.¹⁰

Simandou Project Strategic Monitoring Committee chairman **Djiba Diakité** noted the importance of the infrastructure at the signing, not only for the project but also for the wider region, as it will connect agricultural areas with urban areas and open the south-east and south-west corridor of Guinea:

"This phase should make it possible to accelerate the transfer of skills and technologies, build capacity and revitalise local economies by promoting local skills and businesses."¹¹

Diakité applauded Doumbouya and his efforts in relaunching the project in a manner that will truly benefit the Guinean population.¹² Rio Tinto was awarded the initial rights to exploit Simandou in 1997, but until Doumbouya entered negotiations, minimal progress had been made on what is Guinea's largest economic development. The CTG was established with Doumbouya's involvement, and the project partners committed to starting production by 31 March 2025, while setting the project up in a manner that will ensure continuity when a new president assumes office.

The Simandou mine – divided into four blocks – has a rocky history. The government of former president **Alpha Condé** (2008-2021) awarded WCS the mining rights to develop Blocks 1 and 2 in November 2019.¹³ Simandou Blocks 3 and 4 have mixed ownership, with Rio Tinto owning 45.05% of the deposit, and **Aluminium Corporation of China (Chinalco)** and the Guinean state respectively holding the remaining 39.95% and 15% shares.¹⁴ Rio Tinto was initially granted the concession in 1997.¹⁵

The companies party to the latest agreement are no doubt hoping that the pact will endure when the ruling military junta is no longer in power and a return to civilian rule has been implemented. Former president **Lansana Conte** (1984-2008) stripped Rio Tinto of its mining rights to the northern half of the Simandou iron ore deposits in 2008, days before he passed away (*see ARC Briefing Guinea March*

⁷ Le Journal de Afrique, 2 Aug 2023; The Africa Report, 17 Aug 2023

⁸ Agence Ecofin, 12 Aug 2023

⁹ Jeune Afrique, 14 Aug 2023

¹⁰ Vision Guinée, 17 Aug 2023

¹¹ Agence Ecofin, 11 Aug 2023

¹² Guinée Matin, 10 Aug 2023

¹³ VOA Afrique, 13 Mar 2022

¹⁴ Reuters, 11 Mar 2022

¹⁵ Reuters, 11 Mar 2022

2019).¹⁶ Condé launched investigations into the matter, which concluded in 2012 that **Guernsey**-headquartered **BSG Resources (BSGR)** had obtained the Simandou mining rights through bribery and corruption.¹⁷ In April 2014, Condé's government cancelled the rights of BSGR and **Brazil**-headquartered mining company **Vale**, which had acquired a 51% share of BSGR's Guinea assets in 2010, to their Simandou blocks 1 and 2 and **Zogota** iron ore concessions, alleging that BSGR had paid bribes in exchange for the licences (see *ARC Briefing Guinea Apr 2014*).¹⁸ In February 2019, BSGR agreed to relinquish its claims to blocks 1 and 2 (see *ARC Briefing Guinea March 2019*).¹⁹

2024-2026 budget emphasises infrastructure

Finance and economy minister **Moussa Cissé** presented the **Document de programmation budgétaire pluriannuelle (DPBP) 2024-2026** (multi-year budget programme 2024-2026) on 19 August, projecting a budget of \$15 billion for this period.²⁰ The **Conseil national de la transition (CNT)** (national transitional council) began debates on the budget on 16 August before the final DPBP was published. According to the DPBP, at least \$6 billion of this budget will be used for capital expenditure to help reduce the infrastructure and equipment deficit in the country.

The DPBP outlines that state revenue will amount to \$12.5 billion of the \$15 billion projected budget, of which 96.66% will be from domestic revenue, thanks to tax and customs revenue and revenues from mining production, with the budget is based on the Simandou iron ore project starting production in 2025 (see above). The DPBP forecasts growth of 6.1% in 2023 and anticipates annual inflation to average 9.2%. Looking ahead, it forecasts growth to reach an average of 6.5% with a peak of 7.4% in 2026 – post the start of production at Simandou – and that annual inflation will average 6.3%.²¹

Cissé highlighted in his presentation that sustainable development and economic diversification are key to helping Guinea reduce its dependence on commodities and create sustainable long-term economic growth. While the country's economic development is largely dependent on Simandou, Cissé said that using these funds to invest in other sectors will form a part of meeting these key priorities.²²

¹⁶ Financial Times, 25 Feb 2019

¹⁷ Financial Times, 25 Feb 2019

¹⁸ Radio Television Guineenne, 18 Apr 2014.

¹⁹ Financial Times, 25 Feb 2019

²⁰ Agence Ecofin, 22 Aug 2023

²¹ Vision Guinee, 17 Aug 2023

²² Vision Guinee, 17 Aug 2023

Planner

Jan 2025 **Guinea** General elections

31 Mar 2025 **Conakry (Guinea)** Expected start of exploitation at **Simandou** iron ore project;

Chronology

23 Aug 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Africa Guinee*. Authorities order the freezing of accounts of **France**-headquartered non-governmental organisation **Avocats Sans Frontières France**, which says it has received no official explanation for the action;

22 Aug 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Media Guinee*. Over 1,500 migrants who were arrested in **Tunisia** and **Algeria** before being expelled to a camp in **Agadez (Niger)** call on the government to help them return home;

20 Aug 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Vision Guinee*. Prime minister **Bernard Gomou** bans all forms of demonstration in public places, saying that demonstrations in Guinea are associated with violence, but says political parties and civil society organisations can demonstrate within their headquarters;

22 Aug 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Media Guinee*. **Association des Magistrats de Guinée (AMG)** (association of Guinean magistrates) stages a walk out, resulting in the closure of courts across Conakry;

20 Aug 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Media Guinee*. Prime minister **Bernard Gomou** says in an exclusive interview with local media outlet **TV5Monde** that the government has raised only \$40m of the \$600m it says it needs to assist the transition back to civilian rule, meant to happen within the next 16 months;

19 Aug 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Vision Guinee*. Foreign minister **Morissanda Kouyaté** holds an online working session with his **Ukrainian** counterpart, **Dmytro Ivanovytch Kouleba**, to discuss revitalising cooperation;

16 Aug 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Vision Guinee*. **Russia's** new ambassador to Guinea, **Alexey Popov**, says during his credential presentation ceremony that Russia wants to revitalise cooperation and relations with Guinea;

14 Aug 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Guinee News*. Head of the ruling military junta Colonel **Mamadi Doumbouya** is reportedly planning a government reshuffle ahead of 5 September, the second anniversary of the coup in which he took power;

12 Aug 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *RFI*. At least four people die in severe flooding across Conakry and **Sigiri**;

12 Aug 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Vision Guinee*. Former foreign affairs minister and **United Nations** special representative in **Central Africa**, **Louncény Fall**, declares his presidential candidacy for the upcoming elections, yet to be scheduled;

11 Aug 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *IT News Africa*. Transitional government and **African Development Bank (AfDB)** sign a \$28m loan agreement for agropastoral development, digitisation and market access;

7 Aug 2023 **Coyah (Guinea)** *RFI*. Heavy rains leave one person dead, causing several injuries and extensive property damage in Coyah prefecture;

5 Aug 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *APA News*. Prime minister **Bernard Gomou** presents the results of the evaluation of ministerial departments, revealing that one ministry scored zero points, two averaged between 51 and 61 points, 12 ministries scored between 61 to 70 points and 11 scored between 71 and 80 points;

4 Aug 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *North Africa Post*. Mining ministry gives mining companies until 31 August to repatriate at least 50% of the revenues from exports;

31 Jul 2023 **London (United Kingdom)** *Sika Finance*. United Kingdom-headquartered **World Gold Council** releases its 2022 gold production data, revealing that **Ghana** remains the top gold producer in **Africa**, followed by **Mali** and **Burkina Faso**, while **Guinea** ranks sixth and **Côte d'Ivoire** ninth;

27 Jul 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *APA News*. Prime minister **Bernard Goumou** finishes his mid-term evaluation on the performance of ministers and ministries, submitting the results to junta leader Colonel **Mamadi Doumbouya**;

25 Jul 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Guinee News*. Civic group **Front National pour la Défense de la Constitution (FNDC)** leaders **Foniké Menguè** and **Billo Bah** travel to the **United Nations** to discuss the situation in Guinea.

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