

## **BRITTLE GUINEA-BISSAU: A QUEST FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STABILITY**

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### **Abstract**

This research paper analyzed a fundamental challenge facing the Republic of Guinea-Bissau (GB) — political instability. Since GB declared independence on September 24, 1973, the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde (PAIGC) has failed to bring political stability to what is now one of the poorest countries in the world. Reviewing GB's political history from its first head of state Luís Cabral (1974–1980) to 2022, we see that there have been 16 heads of state, 30 heads of government, a considerable number of ministers, numerous failed national economic development plans, a year-long civil war, two suspensions of the constitution, and at least four successful coups d'état (and numerous failed attempts). Today, GB remains one of the least developed countries in the world with poor spatial development initiatives, is located in a challenging regional environment, and has a politically relevant diaspora. However, GB is home to approximately two million inhabitants, holds a remarkable range of fauna and flora, and has a unique immaterial heritage that must be protected — which can only be achieved with political stability. The protection of this heritage was an important reason that, in 1996, UNESCO classified the Bolama-Bijagós region as a World Biosphere Ecological Reserve. Considering all of these aspects, we posed and answered the following research question: How can Guinea-Bissau overcome its governance instability as a condition to disentangle itself from its impoverished status? This research question is particularly important in the context of avoiding being exposed to the economic interests of



external actors. Methodologically, we use Dahl's democracy model (2015) and a qualitative approach in the context of a data triangulation involving primary sources, official sources, and media reports.

### Keywords

Guinea-Bissau; Factionalism; PAIGC; Semi-presidential System; Political Instability; Least Developed Country

### Resumo

Este trabalho de pesquisa académica analisa um desafio fundamental enfrentado pela República da Guiné-Bissau (GB) - a sua endémica instabilidade política. Desde a independência da GB, em 24 de Setembro de 1973, o Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde (PAIGC) não conseguiu criar, afirmar e sustentar uma estabilidade política duradoura, naquele que é hoje um dos países mais pobres do mundo. Revendo a história política da GB desde o seu primeiro chefe de Estado Luís Cabral (1974-1980) até 2022, verificamos que assumiram funções 16 chefes de Estado, 30 chefes de governo e um número considerável de ministros, tendo existido diversos e infrutíferos planos de desenvolvimento nacional, uma guerra civil, duas suspensões da constituição e, pelo menos, quatro golpes de Estado bem-sucedidos (e inúmeras tentativas fracassadas).

A GB continua a ser um dos países menos desenvolvidos do mundo, com um número de iniciativas de desenvolvimento espacial por implementar, localizada em um ambiente regional difícil e com uma diáspora politicamente relevante. Nos dias de hoje, a GB abriga cerca de dois milhões de habitantes, possui uma notável diversidade de fauna e flora, bem como um património imaterial (e material) único que deve ser protegido — facto que só pode ser alcançado com estabilidade política. A proteção deste património esteve na base da decisão da UNESCO que, em 1996, classificou a região de Bolama-Bijagós como Reserva Ecológica Mundial da Biosfera. Considerando todos estes aspetos, colocamos e respondemos à seguinte pergunta de investigação: como pode a Guiné-Bissau superar a sua instabilidade governativa, como condição para se desvencilhar da sua situação de empobrecimento endémico? Esta pergunta de investigação é particularmente importante no contexto de evitar que a GB seja exposta aos interesses económicos de actores externos. Metodologicamente, utilizamos o modelo de democracia de Dahl (2015) e uma abordagem qualitativa no contexto de uma triangulação de dados envolvendo fontes primárias, fontes oficiais e, para colmatar a falta de dados oficiais, um número de reportagens publicadas na comunicação social nacional e internacional.

### Palavras chave

Guiné-Bissau; Faccionalismo; PAIGC; Sistema Semipresidencial; Instabilidade Política; País em vias de desenvolvimento

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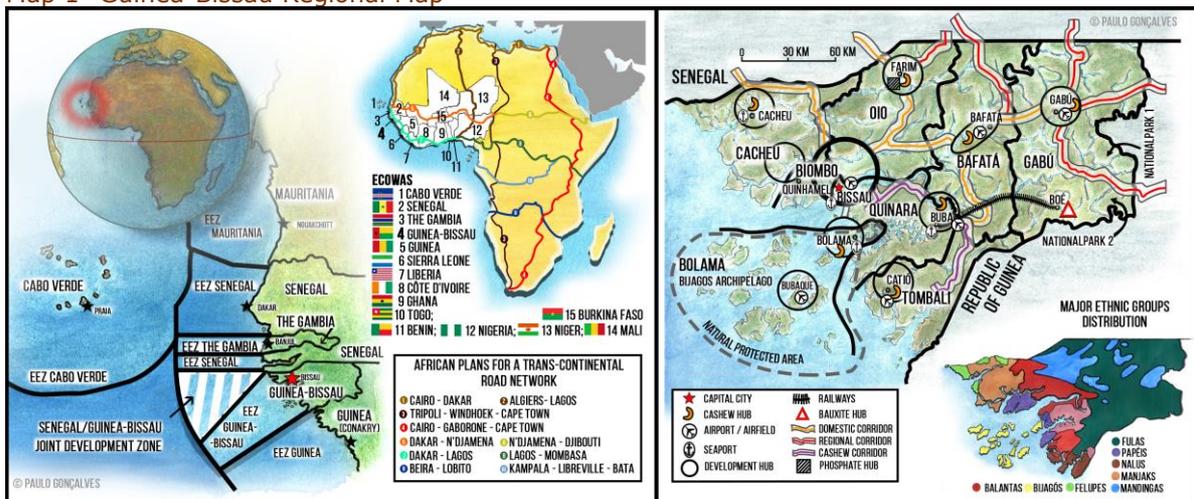
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### 1. Introduction

Guinea-Bissau (GB) is a small (slightly smaller than Switzerland) coastal, archipelagic state, covered by lush vegetation, located in the westernmost part of the African continent, halfway between the Tropic of Cancer and the Equator. The country is heavily irrigated by rivers and marshy areas, with more than 80 islands and islets forming what is called the “Bijagós Archipelago” (only 17 out of the 80+ islands are inhabited) just a short distance off its coast. GB is bordered by the Republic of Senegal to the north (341 km), the Republic of Guinea (421 km) to the south and east, and the Atlantic Ocean to the west (with 350 km of coastline).

Map 1- Guinea-Bissau Regional Map



Source: Paulo Gonçalves (2022)

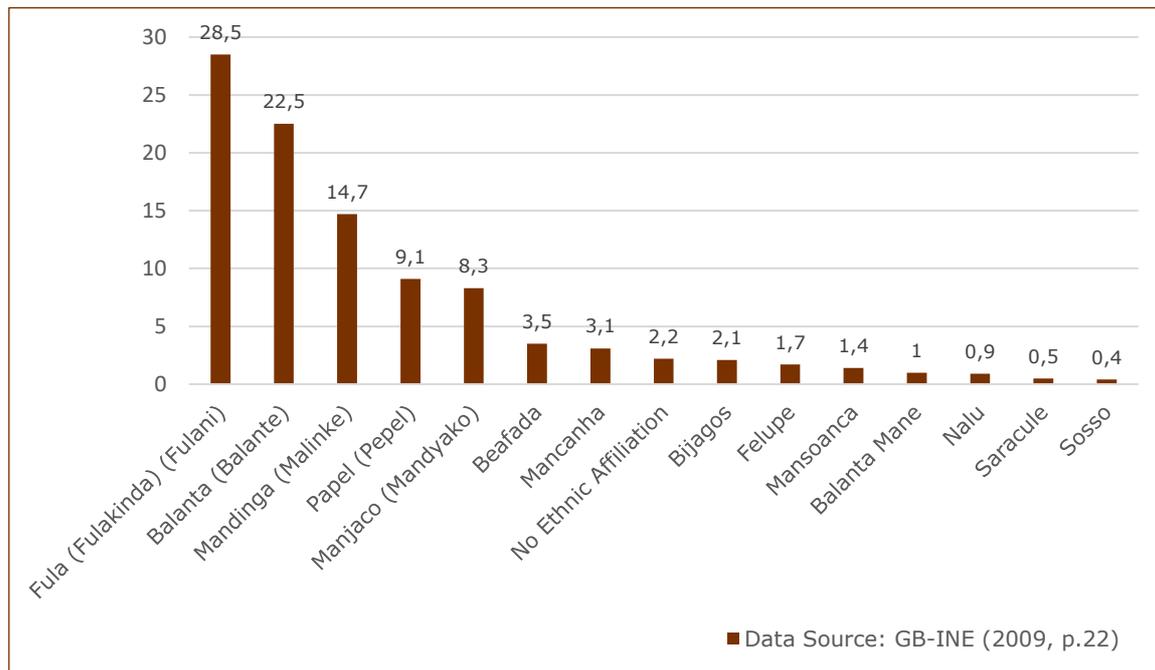
Regrettably, this Portuguese-speaking state is internationally known for its high political-military instability, and has been characterized as a “failed state” and a “narco state”



(Clarke, 2017). In an early essay on the power struggles and consolidation of political power in GB, Forrest stated the following: "Guinea-Bissau's greatest strength is precisely the diversity and energy of its people, who constitute the 'human silver lining' piercing through the harsh reality of pervasive poverty and unceasing political conflict" (1992, p. 2).

Ethnicity is an important aspect of the GB identity, and is especially relevant in the context of political affiliation. Guinea-Bissau's population is dominated by more than 20 African ethnicities, including the Balante (one of the largest ethnic groups), and the Fulani and its numerous subgroups (Diola, Nalu, Bijagó, Landuma, Papel (Pepel), and Malinke). Chart 1 presents a partial breakdown of the GB population according to ethnicity. The Fulas are GB's most populous ethnic group (28.5%), followed by the Balantas (22.5%) and the Mandingas (14.7%). The Papel and Manjaco ethnicities correspond to 9.1% and 8.3% of the population, respectively. There is also a small part (2.2%) of the population that does not belong to any ethnicity. People belonging to the Nalu, Saracole, and Sosso ethnic groups account for proportions below 1% (GB-INE, 2009).

Chart 1 - Guinea-Bissau Ethnic Groups



The basis of our theoretical model is Dahl (2015, pp. 146–147) where he distinguishes between conditions that are essential and those that are favourable to the stability of democracy. The essential conditions include: (1) democratic control of the armed forces and police, and (2) democratic beliefs and political culture; favorable conditions include: (3) a modern market economy and society, and (4) either weak or outright absence of cultural conflicts (p. 149).



To understand the instability of GB's governance, one must first look at its political and economic history after the PAICG was founded in 1956. According to Chabal (2003, p. xiii), Amílcar Cabral "was not just one of the many nationalists from Lusophone Africa. He was a dominant member within the CONCP (Conferência das Organizações Nacionalistas das Colónias Portuguesas), which coordinated their activities." We therefore pose this research question — How can GB, by overcoming its governance instability, provide the conditions to disentangle itself from its impoverished status? Answering this question requires that we learn the root causes of the political instability in GB as a post-colonial Portuguese-speaking state. We therefore examine its political and economic timeline since its declaration of independence in 1973.

## 2. Discussion and Analysis

The foundation of the leading political formation in GB, the PAIGC<sup>1</sup>, was enshrined with a vision designed to achieve economic and political sovereignty of a bi-national state (GB and Cabo Verde). Since its inception, despite having had a stranglehold of the political leadership and obtaining, with a single exception in 1999, parliamentary majorities (some of which absolute majorities) and an overwhelming number of HoS<sup>2</sup> mandates, PAICG failed to either ensure political stability or lay down the foundation for sustainable development.

Table 1 - Guinea-Bissau Selected Socio-political Indicators (2022)

Indicator	Observations	Comments and Sources
1 Population	2,064,921 (estimate)	(WM, 2022)
2 Population Median Age Young Literacy (15-24 Years old)	18.8 Years old 60.4% (2019)	(WM, 2022). Literacy rate for adult male population is 71.78% (UNESCO, 2022)
3 Male and Female Distribution Life Expectancy at birth	Female 50.4 % and Male 49,6 % Male 46.8 and Female 50.7 years	(UN, 2022)
4 Current Type of Political System	Multi-party Semi- Presidential	Since the Constitution of 1991, there was an evolution from a presidential to a semi-presidential system.
5 Parliamentary Representation Ratio	102 Seats and 1seat/19,755 voters	(IPU, 2022)
6 Constitution and Amendments	1973	1984, amended in 1991 1984 amended in 1993, 1996, 1996 and 2001 (not promulgated)
7 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections	Refer to Table 2	
8 Gender Parliamentary Representation Total Fertility Rate	14 Seats/13,73% (2022); No electoral quota for Women; No electoral quota for youth (IPU, 2022). 4,4 (UNESCO, 2022)	
9 Specialized Permanent Commissions	Eight	(GB Assembleia Parlamentar, 2022)
10 Ibrahim Index of African Governance	41.4 (out of 100)	Comparative Overall Performance GB ranks 41 out of 54. Cabo Verde ranks 2 out of 54. Absolute trend since 2010 = +2.8 (IIAG, 2022)

Source: Authors

Tables 1 and 2 offer an overview of GB's major socio-political indicators, clearly indicating the existence of a poor, young, and illiterate population, a majority of women, and efforts

<sup>1</sup> PAIGC – African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde (Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde).

<sup>2</sup> HoS – Head of State or President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.



to improve the constitution towards a more democratic system. Also shown are a high frequency of elections, gender imbalance, and poor levels of governance.

Table 2 presents the three overall phases through which GB developed its political systems, and a timeline of electoral events since its formal recognition as a sovereign state. From 1974 to 1980, during Luís Cabral's term as HoS, GB's political elite was very much focused on keeping their unity and, at the same time, on a sort of ideological bi-national socialist vision for the state and the economy, based on a centralized, planned economy. During this period, the political leadership attempted to engage the country in a process of industrialization, particularly in areas of agriculture, vehicles, dairy, lumber, plastic, and steel (Sucuma, 2012, p. 135). Forrest (2002, p. 239) refers to this process as a "rudimentary form of African Socialism" run by state officials and grounded in nationalized production and distribution centres. The model failed, due to poor decision-making, shortage of goods, and general corrupt practice among government officials. As a result, GB became increasingly dependent on foreign aid.

Table 2 – The Evolution of the Political System and Presidential Elections in GB

1974-1980 Independence Consolidation and Bi- national State Project		1984-1993 Centralism and Transformation		1993-2022 The Democratic Project						
1973 Constitution		1984 Constitution		The 1984 Constitution, amended 4 times 1991, 1993, 1995 and 1996						
				Suspended in 1998/99		Suspended in 2003		The 2001 Amendment has not been promulgated		
Presidential Elections in GB (HoS)										
Year		1984	1989	1994	2000	2005	2009	2014	2019	
Majority		PAICG	PAICG	PAICG	PRS	PAICG	PAICG	PAICG	Madem G-15 <sup>3</sup>	
Parliamentary Elections in GB (HoG)										
Year	1977	1984	1989*	1994	1999	2004	2008	2014	2019	2022
Majority	PAICG	PAICG	PAICG	PAICG	PRS	PAICG	PAICG	PAICG	PAICG	TBD <sup>4</sup>
Single-party system			Presidential		Semi-presidential System					
			Multi-party system							
*From 1989 to 1991 the position of HoG did not exist.										

Source: Authors based on IPU, 2022

The coup d'état of November 14, 1980 resulted in Luís Cabral being imprisoned, and all existing state institutions overthrown and replaced by a Revolutionary Council composed predominantly of military personnel. This also triggered the formation of a new party – the African Party for the Independence of Cabo Verde (PAICV), thereby effectively ending the bi-national project, which Munslow (1981, p. 109) considered to be "a serious setback both for Pan-Africanism and for socialism on the continent." The leading causes of this action were the political alienation of the reality, abject poverty, bureaucracy, the ethnically-motivated political divide, the democratically-elected government's failure to grasp the problems relating to the armed forces and to keep them under control. Munslow

<sup>3</sup> MADEM G-15 – Movement for Democratic Alternation, Group of 15 (Movimento para a Alternância Democrática, Grupo dos 15).

<sup>4</sup> TBD (To Be Determined) - Media has announced 18 December 2022 as the new election date, as the country faces logistical and economic challenges (source: <https://lejournaldeafrique.com/en/lack-of-money-the-Guinean-legislative-elections-postponed/>)



continued to state: "Rice shortages, the swallowing up of resources by the capital and neglect of the rural zones in the south and a wastage of resources on a few large scale development projects were only some of the economic difficulties experienced" (1981, p. 109). As regards the armed forces, Munslow added:

*A further internal cause of the coup was discontent within the Armed Forces over the provisions made for demobilisation, which included schemes for ex-soldiers to work on farms opening up the most remote regions of the country [...] The system of promotions introduced with the ranking of the Armed Forces was another grievance, with the lesser educated Guinean fighters considering that those better educated but with less combat experience were being promoted over them" (1981, pp. 111–112).*

Munslow concluded his research by saying that "there [was] no doubt that there [would] be many continuing internal struggles by those wishing to return to the political line of Amílcar Cabral" (1981, p. 113). In the same vein, Forrest (1992, p. 55) suggested the existence of a sort of "extended clientele," stating that the real political opposition "was no longer a brutal foreign power but rather individual competitors within the ruling political elite" (p. 56). Forrest named "intergovernmental factionalism," "behind-the-scenes interpersonal antagonisms," and "the claims of Balanta soldiery ignored by the President" as the leading causes of the successful coup d'état of November 14, 1980.

"Nino" was the guerrilla's name of João Bernardo Vieira (Pepel by ethnicity), who was regarded as a leading figure in the armed struggle against the Portuguese colonial presence. "The war preparations conducted by Cabral from Conakry also entailed military training abroad for the liberation fighters, particularly in the communist countries of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the USSR, and Cuba. The first batch of ten young fighters departed for the PRC in February 1961 to train at the Nanjing Military Academy. They included João Bernardo "Nino" Vieira, Osvaldo Vieira, Domingos Ramos, Francisco "Tchico Te" Mendes, Constantino Teixeira, and Vitorino da Costa" (Mendy, 2019, p.117). Indeed, Nino Vieira was trained in China and became the leader of the Catió area in the Tombali region. After GB's unilateral proclamation of independence in September 1973, elections were held in the liberated areas, and Nino became president of the national assembly. After GB's independence was formally recognized in 1974, Nino became Minister of Defence, and in 1978 took on the post of HoG<sup>5</sup> (PAIGC's principal commissioner). It is believed that Nino was behind the crisis that led to the end of Luís Cabral's presidency. What triggered the crisis was the president's attempt to eliminate the position of principal commissioner, occupied at the time by Nino. After the deposition of Luís Cabral in 1980, Nino was the next strong political figure to lead GB and the father of the so-called "Readjustment Movement"<sup>6</sup>. The preamble of the 1984 GB constitution mentioned that "With the Movimento Reajustador of November 14<sup>th</sup>, the Party has reoriented its actions, correcting the mistakes that were hindering the edification of a united, strong and democratic society." Such a political scenario prompted the country to adopt a development plan that resulted in an Economic Stabilization Program in the years 1983–1984 in order to encourage agricultural production and economic growth.

<sup>5</sup> HoG – Head of Government or Principal Commissioner or Prime-Minister of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

<sup>6</sup> Readjustment Movement" (Movimento Reajustador).



Forrest (2002, pp. 240–241) mentioned the beginning of a number of privatization reforms backed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The development strategy was organized in three phases: economic-financial stabilization; rebalance of the economy, and, finally, autonomous economic development (Sucuma, 2012, p. 139). However, after Nino came into power, there were several armed coup attempts, such as in March 1982, June 1983, and November 1985. In addition, the 1984 constitution eliminated the position of a HoG, thereby concentrating all political power within the presidency of the State Council. The conflict within PAIGC continued, and in 1986, General Paulo Correia (of Balanta ethnicity) along with six others were executed, accused of staging a coup, and the State Council Vice-president Vitor Saúde Maria escaped in exile to Portugal (Forrest, 1992, pp. 58–62). In the following year (1987), approximately 200 armed forces officers were arrested and convicted for conspiring against the regime. The economic situation did not improve, so in 1986–1987, the GoGB<sup>7</sup> presented a new Structural Adjustment Program with the aim to continue with the liberal development policy supported by the IMF and World Bank (Sucuma, 2012, p. 139). This new program included promotion of private enterprises, reduction of governmental spending, and cuts on food subsidies. As Forrest (2002, p. 241) mentioned, the GoGB received US\$ 31.2 million from the IMF between 1987 and 1990 as an incentive to proceed with the reforms. But, despite all of these measures, general discontentment continued to spread in the public and private sectors, caused by the formation of conflicting groups of interest. Along this line of reasoning, Forrest (1992, p. 62) once again asserted that “factionalism continued to pervade the government ministries between 1987 and 1990...”

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Nino accepted the idea of a transition for a multi-party system. In January 1991, during the II Extraordinary Congress of the PAIGC, Nino announced the beginning of the democratization process, with amendment to the constitution to accommodate political pluralism, freedom of expression, association, meeting, and press. Between 1992 and 1993, several political parties appeared, and 13 legalized parties ran for the 1994 legislative elections. Interestingly, of these, only two – the National Liberation Front of Guinea (FLING) and the Resistance Guinea-Bissau-Bafatá Movement (RGB-MB<sup>8</sup>) – did not result from splits or dissidence from the PAIGC, nor were created by former militants or leaders (Sangreman et al., 2008, p. 15). The cashew production peaked in 1992–1993 at 30,000 tonnes, when the world prices were still reasonably good, but declined thereafter (Forrest, 2002, p. 242). Remarkably, in the context of the establishment of new political formations, Sangreman et al. asserted:

*[...] in the struggle and construction of the nation, everyone considers the cleavages of ethnic origin as enemies of this process [...]. However, in the interviews carried out, the reasoning of the ethnic motivation of the vote is always present in the predictions and in the analysis of the results. Of the parties with the most votes in the legislative elections, the term ‘Balanta party’ applied to the Social Renovation Party (PRS) is a generalized designation, and only the PAIGC appears as the formation that addresses all ethnicities, along with some parties made up of urban cadres such as the*

<sup>7</sup> GoGB – Government of Guinea-Bissau.

<sup>8</sup> RGB-MB – Resistance of Guinea-Bissau – Bafatá Movement (Resistência da Guiné-Bissau- Movimento Bafatá).



*Union for Change (UM) and the United Social Democratic Party (PUSD).*  
(2008, p. 7)

Interestingly, the previously mentioned Vitor Saúde Maria returned to GB from exile toward the end of the year 1990, and in 1992, established the PUSD<sup>9</sup>. He ran for president in 1994, but was not elected. He led the PUSD until his assassination in 1999.

Bearing in mind that the 1984 constitution had established a presidential system on a single-party basis, it was expected that a completely new constitution would be prepared. Instead, the PAIGC put forth a proposal to amend the existing constitution by creating a multi-party system and the position of HoG (1991). Forrest observed that the state-society de-linkage and the leaders' lack of attention to issues of social concern continued to "be manifested by repeated incidents of bureaucratic illegality" (1992, p. 65). Despite the new legal provisions, abuse of office, clienteles, bribes, and corruption on the banking system, in the ministries, in the armed forces, and in international aid distribution were frequent and tolerated. Unfortunately, the persistent arrears in the payment of the country's debt service convinced the IMF to halt its provision of financial payments to the GoGB between 1990 and 1994 (Forrest, 2002, p. 244).

In 1993, the constitution was amended for a second time, with a more democratic design, under the semi-presidential model, recognizing the principle of separation of powers and a bill of fundamental rights (which abolished the death penalty). In December 1994, the GoGB obtained a total of US\$ 357 million during a Special Donors' Round Table held in Geneva. In 1995 and 1996, under Nino Vieira's presidency, the GB constitution was again amended to create the municipalities and to allow GB's accession to the CFA franc zone, respectively. With Nino as GB's HoS, on July 17, 1996 in Lisbon (Portugal), GB became one of the founding members of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP).

In May 1997, GB became the eighth member of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), adopting the CFA franc, with the political purpose of bringing economic stability and attracting foreign investment. On June 2, 1998, the first headquarters of the National People's Assembly, the "Colinas de Boé," was inaugurated in the industrial area of Brá, built from scratch with funding from the government of Chinese Taipei.

The year of 1998 was particularly troublesome for GB. During the VI PAIGC Congress held that year, Nino was re-elected president of the party. However, in the sequence of military incidents related to the Casamance (Senegal) (Casamance was part of the Portuguese Guinea until 1886), separatist group ousted Chief of the Army Staff General Ansumane Mané on grounds of corruption and illegal trade of weapons (to Casamance separatists), alongside problems related to the organization of the parliamentary elections and the popular dismay with Nino's poor economic leadership over the last 18 years (E-Global, 2018), another coup d'état was staged. In addition, the fact that the Senegalese government was convinced that Ansumane Mané was in fact supporting the separatists led to Senegalese troops getting involved in support of Nino. The period is known as the June 7, 1998 armed conflict, which terminated on May 10, 1999, in the sequence of the Abudja Peace Agreement (Nigeria) (November 1, 1998), with the support

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<sup>9</sup> PUSD – Social Democratic United Party (Partido Social Democrático).



of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the United Nations, Gambia, Angola, and Portugal. According to Forrest (2002, p. 256), in July 1998, Senegal and Guinea-Conakry sent troops to support the regime of Nino Vieira. The massive popular support to Mané, and the rural base of recruitment of the GB army, the failure of the Senegalese troops, and the demise of the Nino government led to the occupation of Bissau by troops loyal to Mané. Nino fled, first to Gambia, then to Portugal. In September 1999, Nino Vieira was expelled from PAIGC at a party congress for, allegedly, “treasonable offences, support and incitement to warfare, and practices incompatible with the statutes of the party.”

The Abudja Peace Agreement established the organization of parliamentary and presidential elections in 1999, and based on it, the UN Security Council approved the establishment of the UN Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS) on March 3, 1999. The mission was actually deployed on June 25, 1999. On January 1, 2010, it was replaced by the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), which completed its Security Council mandate on December 31, 2020. The June 7, 1998 armed conflict had partially destroyed the national parliament, and during this period, the 1984 constitution (revised in 1993) was suspended, and in 1998, the World Bank recorded the lowest gross national income (GNI/per capita) in GB, measured between 1990 and 2020.<sup>10</sup> Following the June 7, 1998 armed conflict, general parliamentary elections were held for a second time on November 28, 1999, with a presidential runoff on January 16, 2000. With the popular dismay relating to the long-term PAIGC leadership, Kumba Yalá defeated the PAIGC candidate and Acting President Malam Bacai Sanhá, who had taken office (interim) to replace Nino (Table 4). For the first time, a new political party, the Party for Social Renewal<sup>11</sup> (PRS), emerged as the largest party in the parliament, but held only 38 of the 102 seats, which fell short of a majority (Table 3). Nevertheless, the PAIGC finished third (with 24 seats) behind the Resistance of Guinea-Bissau–Bafatá Movement (RGB-MB) (with 29 seats), and for the first time in GB political history, the opposition parties had a parliamentary majority.

Table 3 – GB Parliamentary Elections (1994-2019)

Number of seats, Proportional representation											
Main Political Parties	1994	Main Political Parties	1999	Main Political Parties	2004	Main Political Parties	2008	Main Political Parties	2014	Main Political Parties	2019
	7/8		28/11		28/3		16/11		13/4		10/3
<b>PAIGC</b>	62	<b>PAIGC</b>	24	<b>PAIGC</b>	45	<b>PAIGC</b>	67	<b>PAIGC</b>	57	<b>PAIGC</b>	47
<b>RGB/MB</b>	19	<b>PRS</b>	38	<b>PRS</b>	35	<b>PRS</b>	28	<b>PRS</b>	41	<b>G15</b>	27
<b>PRS</b>	12	<b>RGB/MB</b>	29	<b>PUSD</b>	17	<b>PRID</b>	03	<b>PDC<sup>12</sup></b>	02	<b>PRS</b>	21
<b>Others</b>	07	<b>Others</b>	11	<b>Others</b>	3	<b>Others</b>	02	<b>Others</b>	02	<b>Others</b>	07
<b>Total</b>	100	<b>Total</b>	102	<b>Total</b>	100	<b>Total</b>	100	<b>Total</b>	102	<b>Total</b>	102

Electoral system - 100 seats are elected from multi-member constituencies, with one single-member constituency representing citizens living abroad in Africa, and single-member constituency representing citizens living in Europe (102). Voters are required to be at least 18 years old and hold Guinea-Bissau citizenship, whilst candidates had to be at least 21 years old.

Source: IPU and CNE, GB (2022)

<sup>10</sup> Retrieved in July 2022, from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.PP.CD?locations=GW>

<sup>11</sup> PRS – Party for Social Renovation (Partido para a Renovação Social).

<sup>12</sup> PDC – Party for Democratic Convergence (Partido de Convergência Democrática).



The victories of President Kumba Yalá (2000–2003) and the PRS started a new political cycle. In 2001, a draft was prepared to once again amend the 1984 constitution (there had been a revision in 1996). The draft proposed changes to the composition and powers of the Council of State. According to the proposed changes, the Council's members would include ombudsmen and former presidents of the republic who had not been removed from office. As for powers, the text proposed that the Council of State should be consulted when the President wished to dismiss the government, as had already been the case in the dissolution of the parliament. To end governmental instability, the dissolution of the government by the President should be set out in detail. The changes proposed in the 2001 text (from UNIOGBIS's standpoint) were steps in the right direction, in particular regarding consultation with the Council of State in the event of a desire to dissolve the government. The dissolution of the organs of the state, such as the parliament and the government, should only occur in exceptional circumstances, and the requirement of prior consultation of a body comprising the highest state authorities should help to ensure an appreciation for these exceptional circumstances. Although opinions were not binding upon the President of the Republic, the views of other state representatives and the general interests of the nation should have an influence on his decision (UNIOGBIS, 2018, p. 7). On April 5, 2001 the amendments were adopted, but were never promulgated by President Kumba Yalá. In 2003, in support of a Chinese initiative, GB also became a founding member of the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries (Forum Macao).

Unfortunately, this cycle (2000–2003) was also marked by worsening economic and social crises, the loss of credibility of GB at the international level, the decline of institutions to perform as part of an organized state, disrespect towards the constitution, and an open and unceasing conflict between the presidency, the parliament, and the courts. This scenario led to the September 14, 2003 coup d'état, staged by General Veríssimo Seabra, which brought Henrique Rosa temporarily to the presidency. The 1984 constitution (revised in 1996) was suspended again. In this context, legislative elections were held on March 28, 2004, and the presidential elections on July 24, 2005. Interestingly, as mentioned previously, Nino Vieira was ousted at the end of the June 7 war (1998–1999) and went into political exile in Portugal. However, in 2005, he made a comeback, winning the presidential election, this time as an independent candidate. In 2005, a new building of the parliament was inaugurated with support from the government of the People's Republic of China.

According to official results (Table 4), Nino Vieira officially defeated Malam Bacai Sanhá in the run-off on July 24, 2005 with 52.3% of the votes and was sworn in as president on October 1, 2005. A few days later, the new elected president announced the dissolution of the government, led by Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Junior (PAIGC), elected on March 28, 2004, and appointed Aristides Gomes (PAIGC until 2008, and PRID<sup>13</sup> ever since).

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<sup>13</sup> PRID – Republican Party for Independence and Development (Partido Republicano para a Independência e Desenvolvimento).



Table 4 – GB Six Presidential Elections 1994-2019 (Two-rounds system)

After the 1993 amendment of the 1984 Constitution											
1994		2000		2005		2009		2014		2019	
7/8		16/1		24/7		28/7		20/5		29/12	
Nino Vieira (PAIGC)	52%	Malam Bacai Sanhá (PAIGC)	27% <sup>14</sup>	Nino Vieira (Independent)	52,3%	Malam Bacai Sanhá (PAIGC)	63,1%	José Mário Vaz (PAIGC)	61,9%	Domingos Simões Pereira (PAIGC)	35,4%
Kumba Yalá (PRS)	48%	Kumba Yalá (PRS)	69%	Malam Bacai Sanhá (PAIGC)	47,6%	Kumba Yalá (PRS)	36,7%	Nuno Gomes Nabiam (APU-PDGB)	38,0%	Umaro Sissoco Embaló (G-15)	64,6%

Source: IPU and CNE, GB (2022)

In March 2007, PAIGC organized a three-party coalition with the PRS and the United Social Democratic Party (PUSD) to form a new government. The new political arrangement led to a successful no-confidence vote against Prime Minister Aristides Gomes, who resigned soon after. On April 9, 2007, the coalition advanced a new name for the position of HoG — Martinho Ndafo Kabi (PAIGC). Later, after PAIGC withdrew from the three-party alliance to protest Kabi's actions, Nino Vieira once again dissolved the parliament. Later, on August 5, 2008, President Nino announced the dissolution of the parliament to replace Kabi with Carlos Correia, who became GB's 12th serving Prime Minister since 1980, following the 15-month term of Kabi's government (The New Humanitarian, 2008).

Despite all these facts, PAIGC held the majority of the seats in the parliament, but had no confidence in Nino, an antagonism compounded by the party of Kumba Yalá (PRS), which drew strong support from the Balanta ethnic group (some 30% of the population). The Balanta people, who had been one of the main bulwarks of the war against the Portuguese, became Nino's main opponents. These tensions, as well as the inability of the government to control the influence of Colombian drug barons, who were using Bissau as a transit point, led to several plots against Nino (Guardian, 2009). On November 16, 2008, amidst political instability and physical violence, a parliamentary elections took place, in which PAIGC won an absolute majority of the seats (Table 3). However, soon after the elections, the instability turned into physical violence, and there was yet another serious coup attempt. An increasing feud with Army Commander General Batista Tagme Na Waie and some of his Balanta supporters led to the events of March 1–2, 2008, in which First General Waie was killed by a bomb at the army headquarters. Hours later, Nino, too, was shot dead (Guardian, 2009).

The 2009 political assassinations plunged GB into a new period of turmoil and led to the call for an early presidential election. On July 28, 2009, Malam Bacai Sanhá won the second round with 63.1% of the vote. Though Sanhá passed away on January 9, 2011 in Paris, he has always been considered the one president who made a real effort to establish better institutional relations, particularly with the armed forces. Furthermore, Sanhá attempted to exercise an influence in the fight against corruption, drug trafficking, and other forms of organized crime. He also took the opportunity to send a message to the armed forces, a major destabilizing element in the country: "It is not the Government

<sup>14</sup> Rudebeck (2001, p. 71).



that is at the service of the Armed Forces, but the Armed Forces that are at the service of the State.” This achievement reduced considerably any possibility of a coup d’état or violation of the constitutional order.

On January 9, 2012, Raimundo Pereira, a member of the PAIGC, became GB’s interim HoS, based on his experience as the speaker of the parliament. On April 12, 2012, on the eve of the start of the campaign for the second round of the presidential election, the military, led by Major General Mamadu Ture Kuruma, occupied the national radio and the PAIGC headquarters, and attacked the residence of the outgoing Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Júnior. Interim President Raimundo Pereira was arrested at his residence by the military, as was Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Júnior. These events were consequent of the 2010 military conflict and 2011’s failed coup attempt (The Telegraph, 2011). In light of these events, Manuel Serifo Nhamadjo, a PAIGC dissident and vice-speaker of the GB parliament at the moment of the April 12, 2012 coup, became President on May 11, 2012.

José Mário Vaz (PAIGC) won the 2014 presidential election. In the first round, held on April 13, 2014, Mário Vaz received 40.9% of the vote, and entered into a runoff with second-place vote-getter, Nuno Gomes Nabiam (APU-PDGB<sup>15</sup>). Gomes Nabiam is believed to have majority support of the armed forces. In the second round, on May 20, 2014, Mário Vaz received 61.9% of the vote. Gomes Nabiam initially contested the result, but conceded the election on May 22, 2014. Remarkably, Mário Vaz was the only president to be able to finish his five-year term. During the election, Mário Vaz promised to focus on reducing poverty and increasing investment in agriculture. He also promised pardons for participation in the sorts of criminal activities that had turned Guinea-Bissau into a haven for drug traffickers (Dabo, 2014). President José Mário Vaz and the government of Prime Minister Domingos Simões Pereira, with support from OECD, designed the first serious developing plan for the country. According to the World Bank (2015), “Terra Ranka” (fresh start) was a strategic and operational plan for 2015–2020, issued by the Republic of Guinea-Bissau based on the vision of a positive Guinea-Bissau, to achieve political stability through inclusive development, good governance, and preservation of its biodiversity. On March 25, 2015, the GoGB convened an international donor conference in Brussels in order to lay out its new strategic vision 2015–2025 “Terra Ranka.” The conference’s final communiqué spoke of a pledge of over 1 billion euros to support the country to transition out of fragility and build the necessary resilience for development (AfDB, 2015).

On June 27, 2019, four days after the end of his term, José Mário Vaz was replaced by the president of the parliament, Cipriano Cassamá, who, until the elections, had remained as acting president. On June 29, 2019, ECOWAS decided that Mário Vaz would stay in office until the elections. Mário Vaz ran for office again as an independent in the 2019 elections but received only 12% of the vote in the first round and failed to advance to the second round.

The latest political developments in GB have not been encouraging. In fact, General Umaro Sissoco Embaló (leader of the Madem G-15 party) won the 2019 presidential elections with 64.6 % in a controversial environment, in an open (political) conflict with

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<sup>15</sup> APU-PDGB – Assembly of the People United – Democratic Party of Guinea-Bissau (Assembleia do Povo Unido – Partido Democrático da Guiné-Bissau).



the country's Prime Minister, amongst a constitutional law amendment process. During his mandate in 2020 and 2021, on several occasions, Sissoco Embaló engaged in political decisions supposedly to be on the sphere of the government and the parliament, allegedly acting as if GB would have a full presidential regime. Moreover, he took steps to make sure the armed forces were under his direct control. Within this scenario, relations between the government and the presidency deteriorated. On May 17, 2022, Umaro Embaló dissolved the parliament, took control of the country with a government of presidential initiative, and called for legislative elections, to be held on December 18, 2022.

Table 5 - Guinea-Bissau Selected Economic Indicators (2022)

Indicator		Observations and Comments								
1	Dimensions and international agreements for the delimitation of EEZ <sup>16</sup>	Land: 28,120 Km <sup>2</sup> ; Coastline: 350Km - The Maritime Border between GB and Guinea, was established by the Arbitral Tribunal Award on the Maritime Delimitation between Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, February, 14 1985 - Senegal Guinea-Bissau Joint Development Zone was created in 1993 following an agreement that was signed in Dakar on October 14, 1993.								
2	Population	Rural Population 56% (UNESCO, 2022). 5.3 % of total population established themselves overseas. 41% has moved to European Union and 30,570 to Senegal; 28,905 to Portugal, 13,792 Gambia, 5,562 Spain and 5,263 Cabo Verde (EUTF-IOM) (2010).								
3	GNI per capita	2,060 (2021)	WB, 2022 (Overall positive trend since 1991)							
4	Human Development Index	0.480 (175) (2019)	GB HDI value for 2019 is 0.480 — which put the country in the low HDI - positioning it at 175 out of 189 countries and territories. The rank is shared with Democratic Republic of the and Liberia. Between 2005 and 2019, Guinea-Bissau's HDI value increased from 0.403 to 0.480, an increase of 19.1 percent, but remained in approximately the same global ranking (UNDP, 2022)							
5	Social Progress Index	158 out of 168	Tier 6 - Tier 6 countries are generally low income, and several are fragile states where instability has hindered social progress (SPI, 2021).							
6	Doing Business Index	174 (190)	Start Business	Permits	Getting Power	Register Property	Getting credit	Taxes	Trade across borders	Enforcing Contracts
			<b>161</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>171</b>
7	Least Developed Countries	Included in 1981	GB is part of the economies with a very high percentage of the population, living in extreme poverty ( $\leq 50\%$ ) (UNCTAD, 2021, p. 97). GB is not expected to graduate from LDC status soon (UNDESA, 2022)							
8	Regional Economic Integration	0,32	The Africa Regional Integration Index measures the extent to which African countries meet their commitments under various Pan-African integration frameworks, such as Agenda 2063 and the Abuja Treaty. ARII covers five dimensions of regional integration: trade integration, productive integration, macroeconomic integration, infrastructural integration, and the free movement of people. GB is a low performer as the score is below the average of ECOWAS states.							
9	Exports Imports Profile	(2020) Exports GB: Coconuts, Brazil Nuts, and Cashews (\$130M), Non-fillet Frozen Fish (\$8.2M), Refined Petroleum (\$1.49M), Other Oily Seeds (\$1.11M), and Gold (\$833k), exporting mostly to India (\$127M), Democratic Republic of the Congo (\$5.19M), South Korea (\$2.09M), Portugal (\$1.99M), and Turkey (\$1.11M).								
		(2022) Imports GB: Rice (\$52.2M), Refined Petroleum (\$35.2M), Wheat Flours (\$9.95M), Soups and Broths (\$8.58M), and Beer (\$7.33M), importing mostly from Portugal (\$83.9M), Senegal (\$57.1M), China (\$51.4M), Pakistan (\$25.2M), and Netherlands (\$19.8M).								
10	Fragile States Index	27 91.3 (179)	-0.7 when compared with 2021. Countries that score between 90.0 and 120.0 are classified in the red "Alert" category. All countries in the red, orange, or yellow categories display features that make significant parts of their societies and institutions vulnerable to failure.							

Source: Authors

<sup>16</sup> EEZ - Exclusive Economic Zone.



As summarized in Table 5, we believe that the current economic status of GB is strongly associated with the protracted political and institutional instability. The best way to depict the economic situation of GB is perhaps to quote the following passage from the World Bank Report (2015, p. xii):

*Guinea-Bissau is one of the poorest countries in the world. It is also one of the most fragile. In 2013, the Gross National Product per capita was US\$ 590. Poverty in terms of purchasing power parity of US\$ 2 is above 70% and extreme poverty is around 33%. The economy is poorly diversified and dominated by the production of unprocessed cashew nuts. Average annual growth has barely kept up with population growth, which is partly due to a difficult governance environment, often interrupted by political turmoil, including military coups [...] Political fragility in Guinea-Bissau has constrained private sector-led growth and poverty reduction.*

### 3. Conclusion

Based on Dahl's theoretical model (2015, pp. 146–147), we have observed a failure to exercise (1) democratic control of the armed forces and police; (2) a general disregard for the institutionalizing policies of a standing democratic culture, often we observe a sort of ethnic political clientele-exclusivism; (3) an inability to establish the grounds of modern market economy where the private sector can operate and invest; (4) and perhaps more worrying, there are protracted cultural conflicts backed by an enduring ethnic divide. Looking back to GB's political history, it seems clear that the dominance of PAICG, at the level of the HoS and the parliament, over three phases: unipartyism with a socialist economic model; multi-party presidential system adjusting the political and economic model; and multi-party semi-presidential system coping with a global market economy. This political dominance was interrupted between 2000 and 2001 by the PRS, and again in 2019 with the election of President Embaló (Madem G-15). However, it appears that the transformation process into a democratic system has not yet been concluded, as the latest attempts to amend the constitution failed, and, above all, there is no rationale of political equity, tolerance, or inclusiveness.

This research paper has envisaged to answer this question: How can Guinea-Bissau overcome governance instability as a condition to disentangle itself from its impoverished status? The answer seems both simple and complicated. On one hand, it is simple because it is based on the need to avoid past challenges which have brought GB to economic dismay, bringing hardships to its people and danger to the protection of its heritage. Among these challenges were frequent, unjustified dissolution of parliament, unilateral replacement of the HoG, designation of the interim HoS, suspension of the constitution; military coups d'état, and political assassinations. On the other hand, it is complex because identifying those political challenges and implementing remedies is far more problematic. In the course of this paper, we have reiterated *three challenges* that can and should be avoided: Firstly, we have noticed a persistent political ethnic-factionalism, particularly within the GB's leading political party PAIGC, with sub-factions and power blocks tailored to their own clientele and political agendas. Most of the conflicts have stemmed from this first challenge. In the GB political society is a certain level of



political-economic tribalism which is often backed by the different ethnic groups and generates political nepotism and political clientele. Such political clientele function as indirect links to illegal activities, namely narcotics and weapons trade.

Secondly, competition among GB elites, as well as the different degrees of presidential authoritarianism failed not only to pursue the promotion of an institutional balance (especially between the presidency and the parliament), but also to establish successful democratic control over the armed forces. Likewise, the armed forces need to improve their democratic culture, and being able to economically sustain themselves, without any other economic involvement. Again, the non-politization of the armed forces and their ethnically-balanced composition, the better representation of women in parliament and in all state institutions, and the ability to establish institutional mechanisms to “decide by consensus” (Dahl, 2015, p. 153) are perceived as strong contributors to stability.

Finally, the level of human social capital associated with the abject poverty and social inequality has pushed social groups into easy political associations, as a quick means to profit from those in position of power, namely to obtain their complacency to illicit activities, which brings short-term economic relief. In this area, the fight against illiteracy, the urgent relief of poverty, and the creation of ethnic equity are absolutely decisive for ending the easy formula of the ethnic political nepotism. The economic recovery of GB must be the top priority and involve both the public and private sectors, as well as relevant international partners, and it must be perceived as transversal to all political factions, and be seen as the top national interest.

GB’s political stability is probably the major national interest, a decisive achievement that helps the state, namely to regain international trust, to promote better regional integration, and to attract sustainable investments. All of these must be built on greater inter-ethnic cooperation. It is indeed the best way to protect the material and immaterial heritage and Guinea-Bissau’s greatest strength — diversity and energy of its people.

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