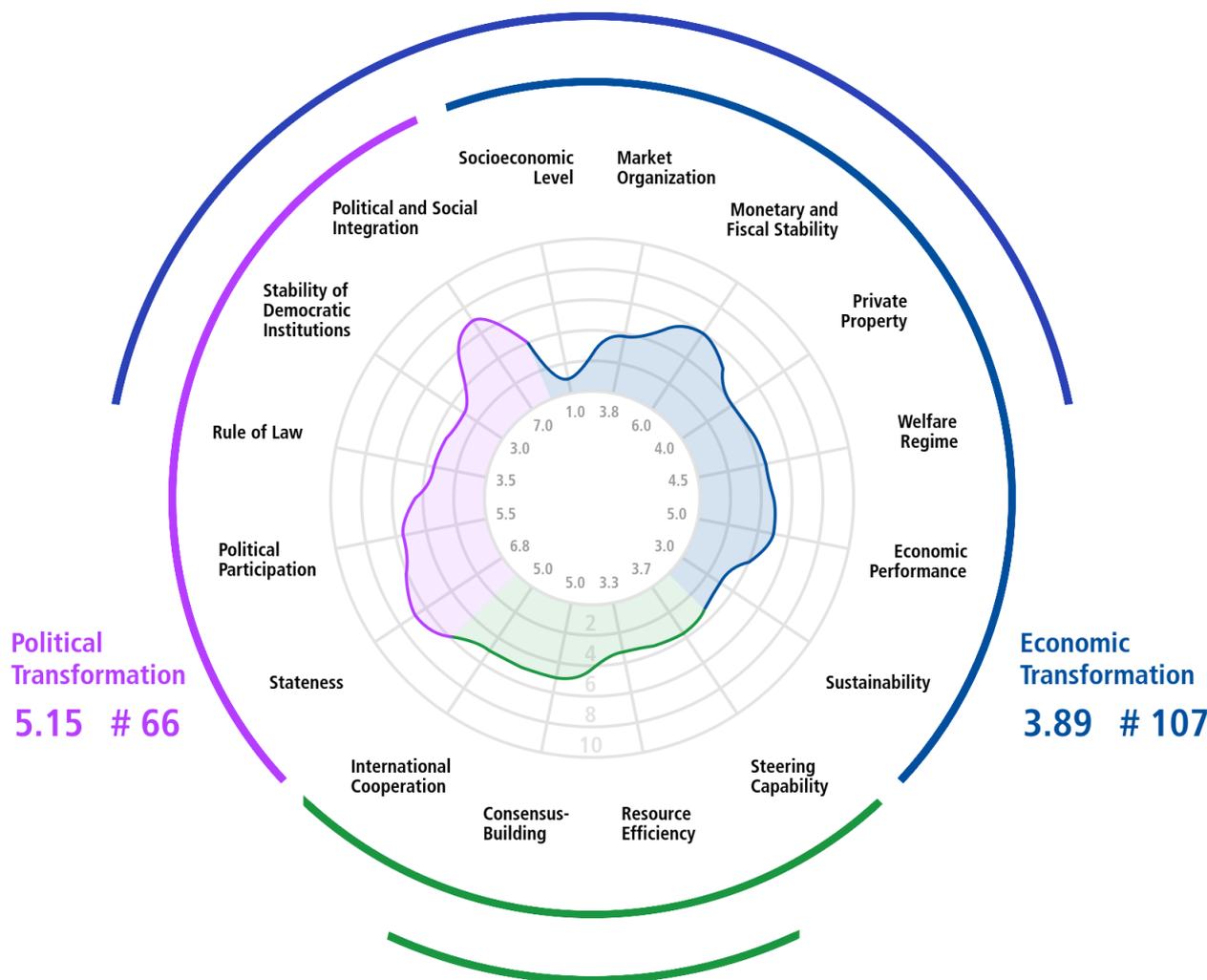


# Guinea-Bissau

## Status Index

**4.52 # 88**

on 1-10 scale out of 137



**Political Transformation**  
**5.15 # 66**

**Economic Transformation**  
**3.89 # 107**

## Governance Index

**3.95 # 96**

on 1-10 scale out of 137

This report is part of the **Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) 2024**. It covers the period from February 1, 2021 to January 31, 2023. The BTI assesses the transformation toward democracy and a market economy as well as the quality of governance in 137 countries. More on the BTI at <https://www.bti-project.org>.

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**Key Indicators**

Population	M	<b>2.1</b>	HDI	<b>0.483</b>	GDP p.c., PPP \$	<b>2190</b>
Pop. growth <sup>1</sup>	% p.a.	<b>2.2</b>	HDI rank of 189	<b>177</b>	Gini Index	<b>34.8</b>
Life expectancy	years	<b>59.7</b>	UN Education Index	<b>0.414</b>	Poverty <sup>3</sup>	% <b>56.8</b>
Urban population	%	<b>45.0</b>	Gender inequality <sup>2</sup>	<b>0.627</b>	Aid per capita \$	<b>80.6</b>

Sources (as of December 2023): The World Bank, World Development Indicators | UNDP, Human Development Report 2021-22. Footnotes: (1) Average annual growth rate. (2) Gender Inequality Index (GII). (3) Percentage of population living on less than \$3.65 a day at 2017 international prices.

## Executive Summary

During the period under review, developments in Guinea-Bissau were significantly influenced by several tensions.

First, the rule of President Umaro Sissoco Embaló was characterized by growing authoritarian tendencies, which have facilitated a deteriorating human rights situation. In 2021, under Embaló's directive, the military invaded the headquarters of the country's bar association and took control of the building. Opposition figures, including former prime ministers Aristides Gomes and Domingos Simões Pereira, both from the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), the largest parliamentary party, continued to face persecution from the authorities. The PAIGC's party congresses were repeatedly disrupted by security forces in 2022. Media outlets also faced mounting pressure, with radio stations attacked by masked and armed individuals. Furthermore, numerous journalists and human rights activists were subjected to threats, assaults, and intimidation. In May 2022, President Embaló dissolved the parliament, disregarding constitutional deadlines for new elections, which were eventually rescheduled for June 4, 2023.

Second, Embaló's authoritarian approach also created friction within the executive. Embaló's relationship with Prime Minister Nuno Gomes Nabiam (Assembly of the People United–Democratic Party of Guinea-Bissau, APU-PDGB) remained difficult as the president continued to claim competences (such as heading the cabinet meeting) that did not correspond to constitutional provisions. Moreover, the president tries to interfere in various ways in the internal life of political parties, aiming to control the formal and informal rules of the party-political game.

Third, unknown fighters invaded the government building on February 1, 2022, followed by hours of shooting. Although the government, and the president in particular, were quick to speak of a coup staged by individuals, this version was put into question. The exact events remained unknown and so did the objectives of those behind the attack. Although several individuals were killed and subsequently arrested, it remained unclear who were the masterminds behind the supposed coup. As a consequence, the regional power bloc Economic Community of West African States

(ECOWAS) decided to deploy a military peace force without approval from Guinea-Bissau's parliament. Critics regarded the new mission that started to be deployed in June 2022 as a means to secure Embaló's rule.

Despite these failings, the international community largely remained silent and complicit. Internationally, Embaló gained much prominence after he was elected ECOWAS president in July 2022. Embaló apparently maintained very good relations with Senegalese President Macky Sall – like Embaló belonging to the Fula/Fulani/Peulh ethnic group. Critics spoke of a dependent relationship, citing the deployment of the ECOWAS mission with Senegalese participation and the partition of the oil field off the coast between the two countries to the detriment of Guinea-Bissau in late 2021 as examples. Embaló also built relationships with French President Emmanuel Macron.

COVID-19 remained an issue in Guinea-Bissau, although at a lower level. A 30-day closure of schools was not declared until late January 2021 due to the rise in COVID-19 cases, although reported official case numbers continued to be low. The pandemic continued to impact the country's very fragile education system, with classes being cancelled for several months.

Meanwhile, Guinea-Bissau remains one of the least developed countries in the world. Although economic development has been very positive in recent years, low incomes and the low quality of government services – particularly education, health care and security – have contributed to the country's low overall performance. The economy remains poorly diversified and marked by multilevel corruption and narco-trafficking, in which – according to rumors and some evidence – high-ranking political figures, military officials and business men are involved. Political instability, due to the long political stalemate, was a major factor that prevented necessary reforms. Over the past two decades, Guinea-Bissau has attracted a large number of migrants from across the region, especially from Guinea, Senegal, the Gambia and Mauritania, many of whom work in the commercial sector. Simultaneously, Guinea-Bissau has become a transit country for and country of origin of migrants on their way north.

## History and Characteristics of Transformation

Portuguese colonization of Guinea-Bissau dates back to the 15th century but remained weak and limited to the coastlands until the late 19th century. Portuguese colonial exploitation contributed little to the country's socioeconomic and infrastructural development in the modern era. Excluded from political participation, the vast majority of the colonized population remained illiterate and without formal education. The liberation movement, the PAIGC, founded in 1956, launched a successful but bloody independence war in 1963. Guinea-Bissau declared independence from Portugal in September 1973, which the Portuguese did not recognize until September 1974. Following independence, a left-wing autocratic, centralized political system emerged that gained support not only from the Eastern Bloc but also from non-aligned countries. The state ideology – shaped by the charismatic founding father of the PAIGC, Amílcar Cabral – was based on a strong appeal to national unity. Growing authoritarianism, severe economic problems and a projected

intensification of cooperation with Cape Verde led to a coup in November 1980. This putsch brought to power a former independence fighter, João Bernardo “Nino” Vieira. Vieira managed to play rivals off against each other, thus surviving both actual and alleged coup attempts. From the mid-1980s on, economic structural adjustment led to economic liberalization, followed by political liberalization that resulted in the first multiparty elections in 1994. Vieira became the country’s first democratically elected president.

Nonetheless, Guinea-Bissau remained one of the least developed countries in the world with increasingly disintegrating, underfunded state structures and underpaid officials, as well as high levels of corruption. To date, the country remains heavily dependent on foreign assistance. In 1998, a conflict between President Vieira and dismissed general chief of staff Ansumané Mané resulted in an 11-month “military conflict.” From the end of the war until 2020, a U.N. peacebuilding mission was present in the country. Free and fair democratic elections in 2000 brought to power the opposition Party for Social Renewal (PRS), with its leader Kumba Yalá elected president. However, Yalá’s erratic and increasingly autocratic governance led to a coup in September 2003. A transitional government prepared for new elections, held in 2005, that resulted in Vieira returning from exile to become president. However, political instability continued, culminating in the assassination of President Vieira and General Chief of Staff Batista Tagme Na Waie in March 2009. This fragility was further compounded by the trafficking of drugs (in particular cocaine) from Latin America. Despite formally democratic elections in 2009, political tensions continued. In April 2012, conflicts over a security sector reform led to another military intervention. A transitional government brokered the deployment of an ECOWAS peace force until 2020. Free and fair elections were realized in mid-2014. They brought the PAIGC to power with an absolute majority. To underline the “new spirit,” PAIGC leader Domingos Simões Pereira formed a government made up of all the parties represented in the parliament. PAIGC candidate José Mário Vaz won the presidential elections. Indeed, subsequent developments were positive: governance was enhanced, political tensions decreased considerably, the economy grew and structural investments increased due to the substantial resumption of international cooperation, which had been largely suspended. However, crisis was back on the agenda in mid-2015 after deep political divisions emerged between President Vaz on the one side, and Prime Minister Pereira and the PAIGC majority on the other. In August, Vaz dismissed Pereira and, in the years following, unilaterally appointed prime ministers that did not enjoy parliamentary backing. Vaz continued to politicize the justice sector. Legislative elections took place in March 2019 and resulted in the PAIGC’s victory, despite minor losses. The presidential elections that took place in November and December 2019 were won by former prime minister and Vaz ally Umaro Sissoco Embaló although the results continue to be contested. To date, the PAIGC does not recognize Embaló’s victory who declared himself unilaterally president in early 2020. Embaló sidelined the PAIGC and formed a government on “presidential initiative,” thus violating the constitution. He dismissed Prime Minister Aristides Gomes (PAIGC) who had been appointed by predecessor Vaz as a consensus candidate in April 2018, nominating Nuno Gomes Nabiam (Assembly of the People United–Democratic Party of Guinea-Bissau, APU-PDGB) in February 2020. The overall human rights situation worsened, and narco-trafficking continued. New legislative elections were expected to take place in June 2023 – one year after the parliament was dissolved by the president.

The BTI combines text analysis and numerical assessments. The score for each question is provided below its respective title. The scale ranges from 1 (worst) to 10 (best).

## Transformation Status

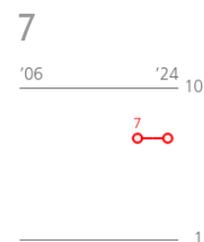
### I. Political Transformation

#### 1 | Stateness

The Bissau-Guinean state's monopoly on the use of force covers, in principle, its national territory, as there are no paramilitaries, racketeering mafias or clans in territorial enclaves that control parts of the country. However, drug-trafficking networks with links to the military and politics have emerged in the past two decades. Similarly, there is no systematic banditry. However, small forest areas along Guinea-Bissau's northwestern border with Senegal have served for decades as a retreat for guerrilla factions of the Senegalese Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC). During the review period, the MFDC continued to use areas along the border as a sanctuary zone, although their actions were directed against the state of Senegal, not against Guinea-Bissau. Since 2021, Guinea-Bissau and Senegal have taken joint action against the MFDC presence, establishing, inter alia, joint patrols. In August 2022, both countries signed a peace deal with one MFDC faction. More fundamentally, the capacity of Guinea-Bissau's security forces continues to be limited, and, in particular, remote, rural areas are characterized by the absence of state structures. Thus, although there are no political or armed groups that explicitly challenge the state's use of force, it is rather the state's lack of presence that impedes its monopoly on the use of force. However, narco-traffickers linked to politicians and high-ranking military officials have emerged as significant players. Drug trafficking is thus connected to the absence of the state's forces' control over the territory, on the one hand. On the other hand, is closely linked to state figures. Two major drug seizures (2.85 tons) in March and September 2019 by national authorities in cooperation with international support as well as another seizure in September 2022 drew attention to Guinea-Bissau. The constitutionally questionable assumption of the office of president by Umaro Sissoco Embaló in February 2020 was secured by the security forces and attended by civilian and military individuals with strong relations to international narco-traffickers. State security forces and unknown individuals subsequently intimidated and harassed politicians and journalists. PAIGC politicians, journalists and observers drew a connection between Embaló's "takeover" and narco-interests that challenge democratic state institutions (including the judicial and the security sectors) and procedures.

Question  
Score

Monopoly on the  
use of force

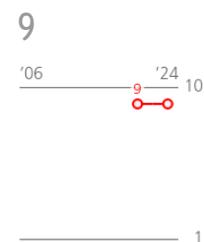


The vast majority of Guinea-Bissau's population accepts the nation-state as legitimate, and all individuals and groups enjoy the right to acquire citizenship without discrimination. Although there are political conflicts over governance and policy, the nation-state's validity is generally not questioned. Even if the Bissau-Guinean state institutions are widely known and regarded as "weak" and corruption is often lamented, all relevant groups in society accept and recognize state institutions in principle. Although sometimes isolated and minor conflicts occur between individuals and groups from various ethnic and religious backgrounds at the village level, there are no conflicts over the question of national citizenship. In fact, national identity and cohesion across ethnic and religious boundaries have been very strong since independence. This is a consequence of the war of independence against Portugal. Amílcar Cabral and the PAIGC used a national ideology as a unifier of different identities.

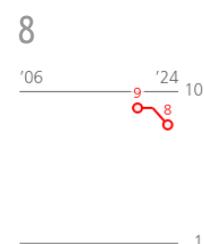
However, civil registration is an important issue to be resolved in the field of citizenship. In rural areas especially, due to the absence of administrative facilities, it is common for children to be registered only when they enter school or in later years.

Guinea-Bissau's population is very heterogeneous in religious terms. It is marked by "religious forum shopping" and parallel adherence to several religious faiths. According to the last census conducted in 2009, 45.1% of the population was Muslim (mostly in the eastern part of the country), 22% was Christian (mostly in the coastlands), and 14.9% were believers in local religions; both Islam and Christianity are represented by diverse denominations in Guinea-Bissau. According to the *Voices do Povo* survey of 2018, 47% of respondents identified themselves as Muslim, 39% as Christian, and 9% as "animist." In recent decades, as in other parts of Africa, evangelical churches (mostly from Brazil) have gained ground, while conservative Muslim countries have donated grants and scholarships, thus competing with firmly anchored Sufi Islam. The state is legally secular, and this is respected by the government. However, politicians have to respect religious feelings. Likewise, decisions by some politicians may to some extent be influenced by their respective beliefs, although this impact is not considerable. For instance, former President Vaz (2014 – 2019) was widely believed to rely on local religious practices of divination when making political decisions. Acting President Embaló is known to often rely on Muslim countries, mainly for financial reasons. Some Bissau-Guineans fear that Embaló might favor Muslim individuals and groups. There is a fear that religious issues will become more influential in politics, especially considering Islam, the religious belief of the current president. An example is the destruction of a natural park in Bissau in December 2022 and January 2023 (important for water dredging and biosphere conservation) to construct a mosque with Turkish funding.

#### State identity



#### No interference of religious dogmas



The state provides only very basic, barely effective administrative, health care, security, justice, infrastructural, and education services, which are particularly weak outside the capital. Although numerous attempts have been made to reform governance, security, and the rule of law in Guinea-Bissau, the state continues to be marked by an insufficient presence in the countryside. For example, registering a newborn within the timeframe defined by the law is highly complicated due to the lack of services, so many citizens are only registered when they enter primary school. Services are often inconsistent and personalized, and citizens often have to pay individual civil servants for services. This also applies to the security and justice sectors. The security forces are badly equipped, poorly paid, and often insufficiently trained, although a few model police stations have been created with international help. Moreover, a few prisons and justice buildings have been renovated. Access to justice centers has been established as part of international cooperation, yet, the state struggles to keep services running. A reliable road infrastructure is largely maintained through international loans and donations and only links the country's major centers. Access to villages can be difficult, especially in remote parts of the country. Mobility across the country is particularly difficult during the rainy season. Ship connections to the islands are very rudimentary. The state-run telecommunication company went bankrupt some years ago; currently, only private companies maintain a mobile phone network and slow, limited internet access outside the capital. Electricity is unreliable, and power cuts are frequent, sometimes lasting several days. Particularly the health care and education sectors are often hit by strikes due to low or unpaid salaries, and classes in public schools are often canceled, as in 2021/22. The public service went on strike over unpaid salaries in 2021/22. Education quality is insufficient, especially in the countryside. Even in cities, schooling can be offered by informal community schools due to the lack of public structures. The health care sector continues to be marked by significant insufficiency; even the main public hospital in the capital only provides basic services. As a result, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a real challenge, as patients face a lack of testing, treatment capacities, medical supplies and access to services. A reliable ambulance service does not exist, and the number of adequately trained specialists is very limited and concentrated in the capital. Guinea-Bissau's very low HDI confirms these observations. This is also true for basic services. Access to a basic water source (59% of the population), access to basic sanitation (18.2%) and access to electricity (33.3%) are partially severely limited.

Basic  
administration

3

'06 \_\_\_\_\_ '24 10

3

1

## 2 | Political Participation

Guinea-Bissau held free and fair multiparty legislative and presidential elections in 2014. Elections, which had been scheduled to take place in November 2018, had to be postponed several times due to an incomplete voter census. The delay was due to a lack of financial and material resources as well as quarreling over the legitimacy of voter registration. Legislative elections took place in March 2019, and the presidential poll in November and December 2019. The outcome of the presidential election has been heavily criticized, with some political and civil society actors alleging manipulation and fraud. After Embaló declared himself to be president in February 2020, it was only in September 2020 that the Supreme Court dismissed the opposition's appeal disputing the election results, following an intransparent process. This has led to doubts about the impartiality of the electoral commission, the registration of voters and polling procedures, as well as the fairness of media access. However, according to the U.S. State Department, international observers considered all elections in the 2019 cycle to be free and fair. Still, the party that won the 2019 legislative elections (PAIGC) was supposed to hold executive power but was dismissed by the newly sworn-in president, who appointed Nuno Nabiam, the leader of a party with low parliamentary representation. Despite being debated for 30 years, an increase in local autonomy is yet to be implemented and no local elections have yet been held, although the introduction of a customary leadership system has been discussed in recent years. Universal suffrage by secret ballot is ensured. Guinea-Bissau has an established multiparty system. However, both presidents Vaz and Embaló have tried to monopolize the appointment of prime ministers since 2016, thus idiosyncratically interpreting the constitution, and creating a political and constitutional crisis. Both Vaz and Embaló have ignored the right to participation by the leadership of the party with majoritarian representation in parliament, the PAIGC. Election management is barely effective and dependent on foreign aid. The opposition has accused the National Election Commission of partiality. In the period under review, voter registration started with much delay in December 2022 – after the parliament had already been dissolved in May 2022. Should the legislative elections finally take place in June 2023, the country would have been without a parliament for more than one year, thus violating the constitution. The National Election Commission's vacant chair position provided yet another negative image. Thus, again, voter registration was slow. In the past, transparency was criticized, and scattered double registration was reported. However, the polling processes were considered transparent, accessible, free, and fair, and so was formal media access for campaigners. Yet, due to insufficient inquiries, it is difficult to assess the extent to which elections were rigged in 2019. However, the transfer of power from Vaz to Embaló marked the first actual peaceful transfer of power in Guinea-Bissau's history. Still, the conduct of the election and subsequent transfer of power was not without controversy.

Free and fair elections

6

'06 '24 10

7 6

1

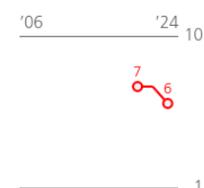
While the president and parliament were elected democratically in 2014, the presidential polls held in late 2019 left many doubts about the legitimacy of current President Embaló, despite independent international observers declaring the elections to be free and fair. Events after the elections suggest that the military – allegedly spurred on by politicians with close ties to individuals involved in narco-trafficking and other illicit activities – again exercised its veto power in politics. However, this is difficult to prove. Moreover, some politicians and officials were allegedly bought in order to strengthen support for the president’s politics. In the past, this also included the military’s ability to influence the appointment or dismissal of the general chief of staff and culminated in coups and coup attempts. The last successful putsch occurred in April 2012, although events in early 2020 implied that the military played a crucial role in securing the self-proclamation of Embaló as president. The role of the military in the alleged coup attempt of February 2022 remained unclear, and rumors about a pending putsch had emerged as early as October 2021. It appears that military figures like António Indjai and José Américo Bubo NaTchuto have found more subtle ways of accessing political power, as opposed to the coups of the past. While military interference no longer plays out in an open fashion, many people in Guinea-Bissau still think that the military remains influential behind the scenes.

Guinea-Bissau’s constitution and legal framework guarantee freedom of assembly and association. Formally, the government generally respects freedom of association. In the past, security forces met peaceful demonstrations with force and even prohibited demonstrations. During the review period, the justice department and the police repeatedly prevented the PAIGC from holding its congress, which finally took place with much delay in November 2022. In March 2021 the police fired tear gas at thousands of people who welcomed PAIGC leader Domingos Simões Pereira when he returned from exile. A demonstration by school students in front of the main government building in January 2021 was violently dissolved by the police. Since the beginning of the pandemic, critics have voiced that anti-COVID-19 measures were used by the government to restrict assembly rights. Anti-COVID-19 measures were also used to forbid PAIGC from holding its congress in 2022, but this was clearly a case of political harassment. Legal provisions thus limited social gatherings, which represents a curtailment of the right of assembly. The first massive demonstration without repression by security forces was organized by education and health professionals in September 2022.

The Bissau-Guinean constitution guarantees freedom of expression, and the state does not practice any formal censorship. Yet, journalists practiced self-censorship when “delicate” issues were touched upon, such as drug and timber trafficking involving public officials and influential businessmen. Conditions deteriorated considerably during the review period. Since Embaló’s takeover, leading politicians in the previous PAIGC-led governments were persecuted, sought protection in foreign embassies and foreign countries, or were prohibited from leaving the country. Human rights activists and journalists were repeatedly beaten by unknown armed and

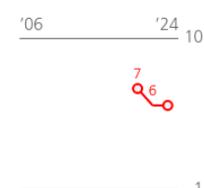
Effective power to govern

6



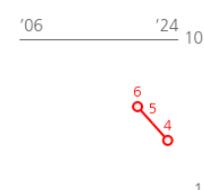
Association / assembly rights

6



Freedom of expression

4



masked men, intimidated and some prosecuted. Radio stations were raided (Rádio Capital and Radio Galáxia de Pindjiguiti) in 2022, thus threatening the freedom of expression. In April 2022, the government revoked the licenses of 79 radio stations for allegedly not having paid license fees; the Bissau-Guinean Human Rights League criticized that there was no legal basis for the decision and that the competent government authority had not been involved. The radio stations were allowed to go on air again in July 2022. According to the league, the decision had been driven by political motivations. Political discourse that encouraged the division of the population blossomed. Both opposition politicians, journalists and human rights activists repeatedly pointed to the severe deterioration of freedom of expression and the right of political participation while the Network of Human Rights Defenders spoke of a “climate of terror.”

### 3 | Rule of Law

Guinea-Bissau’s constitution stipulates the separation of executive, legislative and judicial powers. Although the separation of powers exists in theory, checks and balances are occasionally subject to interference. Since late 2019, presidents Vaz and Embaló have sought to dominate the legislature and the justice system, testing the limits of the constitution. Inter alia, they appointed attorney generals who were widely believed to act in their favor. After Embaló took office, the balance of power shifted even more to the executive, with the armed forces practically assisting Embaló in bypassing the Supreme Court and the parliament, persecuting opposition members, and intimidating dissenters. Most visibly, the president holds regular cabinet meetings, not the prime minister as stipulated in the constitution. The judiciary came increasingly under pressure in 2020 after Embaló declared himself the winner of the presidential election runoff in December 2019. President Embaló repeatedly stated that he stood above all other powers – contrary to the country’s constitution. The dissolution of the parliament in May 2022 was due to the fact that the members of parliament refused to discuss a constitutional revision proposal presented by the head of state; also, the government was asked by the parliament to clarify the presence of ECOWAS troops in the country, and the dissolution made it possible never to render accounts. Additionally, the setting of a very late election date – far beyond the constitution’s provisions – demonstrated a clear imbalance between the (silenced) legislative and executive powers.

Guinea-Bissau’s constitution and several laws establish that the judiciary is independent. An independent body, the Superior Council of Magistrates, composed of elected judges, administers the judiciary. Judges on the Supreme Court – which also acts as the Constitutional Court – are nominated by the Superior Council of Magistrates and appointed by the president. However, judges often fear retaliation and lament poor working conditions and a lack of security when involved in politically delicate cases, particularly those related to drug trafficking. Especially in the countryside, the judiciary often fails to function or operate effectively. As a result,

Separation of powers

3

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\_\_\_\_\_ 1

Independent judiciary

3

'06 \_\_\_\_\_ '24 10



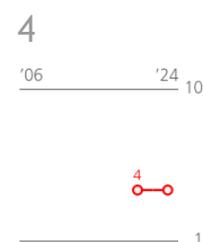
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parts of the population often turn to alternative providers of justice to solve family and local disputes (e.g., elders, qadis and traditional authorities). In June 2020, President Embaló called the judges of the Supreme Court “corrupts” and “bandits” after six of the seven judges stated their intention to discuss the presidential election case put forward by opposition leader Domingos Simões Pereira. In doing so, Embaló underlined his disrespect for the rule of law. In February 2021, the military, supposedly acting on behalf of the president, occupied the seat of the Bissau-Guinean bar association in the capital. Yet, a court ruled that the government had to return the building to the association. Critics interpreted the action as an attempt by the government to intimidate the lawyers’ association.

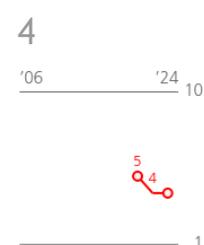
Public officeholders who benefit illegally from their positions are rarely held accountable by legal prosecution when they break the law and engage in corrupt practices. This concerns all the top government officials, including the president, but also minor-rank public officeholders. Public contempt depends on relatedness and the reputation of the officeholder. As a rule, corrupt officials are widely perceived as getting away with their crimes without consequences. Officeholders who break the law can be dismissed rather than prosecuted – or prosecution is impeded and delayed on political grounds. Whereas recent years have more and more shown that the government and attorney generals use allegations of corruption to silence, prosecute, and oust and exile opposition politicians, such as Aristides Gomes and Domingos Simões Pereira. Members of the government accused of corruption often return to official positions after an interim. Conflicts of interest and ethical misconduct are often not addressed. In general, the rule of law does not exist for the most part within the judiciary, and too many resources are devoted to political infighting. This allows space for corruption to thrive.

Generally, civil rights are codified in Guinea-Bissau. However, fundamental rights are only partially respected in practice. The police forces in particular have repeatedly been accused of torture and using excessive force, although this is not a mass phenomenon. Mechanisms and institutions for prosecuting, punishing and redressing violations of civil rights are in place, but they are not consistently effective. Conditions in the few prisons can be harsh. Discrimination based on sexual orientation is usually not an issue. Especially in areas dominated by Islam and customary law, women do not enjoy the same rights as men. Though legally prohibited, child marriage and female genital mutilation continued to be practiced in rural areas. Although the Bissau-Guinean Human Rights League reported in February 2018 a decline of 5%, almost 45% of all Bissau-Guinean women between the ages of 15 and 49 were reportedly affected by this practice. More generally, women still experience discrimination in political representation, employment, pay, and education. Women are also victims of moral and sexual harassment by different social actors. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, restrictions on freedoms of movement and assembly were temporarily imposed. Human rights activists, such as those linked to the Liga Guineense dos Direitos Humanos, are often harassed.

#### Prosecution of office abuse



#### Civil rights

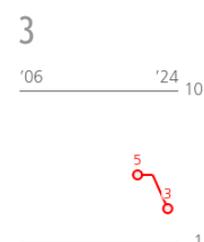


#### 4 | Stability of Democratic Institutions

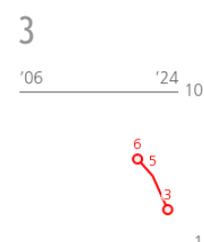
Democratic institutions exist and have been legitimized through popular votes, although the outcome of the runoff presidential election of December 2019 continues to be contested. However, in the past, key Bissau-Guinean institutions were hit by extensive, counter-productive frictions. This concerned the parliament – the National People’s Assembly – and the president. Partly due to the unclear provisions in the semi-presidential constitution, they engaged in a serious conflict, which left the parliament unable to operate. During the review period, the parliament continued to oppose government politics and was ultimately dissolved in May 2022 by the president who cited disagreements over his intended constitutional reform as the main reason. First scheduled to unconstitutionally take place on December 18, 2022, the elections were repeatedly postponed and ultimately set to take place on June 4, 2023. Some observers interpreted the dissolution as an effort to bring the parliament, with its shaky majorities, under Embaló’s control. Guinea-Bissau adopted the Parity Law in 2018, establishing quotas of 36% for the presence of women in the candidates’ lists, but this didn’t match the composition of the parliament that resulted from the 2019 elections. The remaining institutions (e.g., the judiciary and public administration) performed their functions only partially. The judiciary came increasingly under pressure after Embaló took office. In October 2020, he described himself as the only constitutional institution that possessed popular legitimacy – while admitting that a separation of powers existed. Embaló has repeatedly stated that he was “in charge” and that all other powers were answerable to him. These statements run counter to constitutional provisions, which state that the government is answerable to the parliament and that the head of state has no executive powers. However, President Embaló claims executive duties for himself. For instance, he heads cabinet meetings, not the prime minister. The president also did minor cabinet reshuffles at his will. Local governments independent of central state institutions do not exist.

In contrast to the past, the legitimacy of key democratic institutions – including the president and the parliament – seems to be less accepted by some relevant actors. In particular, the opposition has refused to recognize the president, accusing the president of having manipulated the presidential election runoff in December 2019. Similarly, Prime Minister Nuno Gomes Nabiam, unilaterally appointed by President Embaló in February 2020, is regarded as illegitimate by opposition forces. His party, APU-PDGN, had only won five parliamentary seats in the 2019 legislative elections. Also, opposition parties, mainly PAIGC, accuse him of having usurped the office and of buying parliamentary support. Commitment to democratic freedom and legitimacy was challenged by repressive measures by the government and unknown armed and masked actors against media, human rights activists, and opposition politicians throughout the period of 2021 and 2022. Notably, former Prime Minister Aristedes Gomes feared for his life after he had been returned from exile in November 2022

Performance of democratic institutions



Commitment to democratic institutions

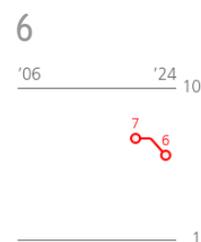


and was subsequently searched by the police while attending the PAIGC congress. PAIGC and its leader are the targets of constant harassment. For example, the party was prevented from holding congresses. Domingos Simões Pereira has been banned from traveling without any justification. The multiparty system was also challenged when the Supreme Court closed 14 minor parties in November 2022 as they had reportedly failed to prove that they existed. Thus, in contrast to previous years, since 2020, opposition and critical voices are increasingly regarded as illegitimate, and Umaro Sissoko Embaló acts arbitrarily in all political affairs.

## 5 | Political and Social Integration

Until some years ago, the party system consisted of two major parties competing for power. The oldest party is the PAIGC, which was founded in 1956 as an independence movement and continues to be associated with the successful independence struggle. After independence, it emerged as an authoritarian left-wing party in a single-party regime. To date, the PAIGC continues to be regarded as a political party that attracts voters from all ethnic groups and religions and pretends to embody more than other parties an inclusive state ideology. It is also popular among intellectuals, is considered to be best organizationally institutionalized, and is regarded as less personality-based – in contrast to the PRS, the Assembly of the United People-Democratic Party of Guinea-Bissau (APU-PDGB), and the Democratic Alternative Movement (MADEM-G15), inter alia. In the first multiparty elections in 1994, the PRS emerged as the second largest party, benefiting from its charismatic but controversial leader Kumba Yalá and from a strong implementation among the Balantas (the largest ethnic group) and the army. Following Yalá's death in 2014, the PRS did not repeat its earlier successes, although the party continues to build on a stable, mainly rural electorate and continues to be popular among many ethnic Balanta voters. New parties emerged after the general elections in 2014. Nuno Gomes Nabiam, who received a considerable number of votes in the 2014 presidential elections, founded the APU-PDGB, which is largely perceived as a competitor to the Balanta-dominated PRS. In mid-2018, MADEM-G15 was founded by leading PAIGC dissenters, headed by controversial businessman Braima Camará. The legislative elections of 2019 showed that the PAIGC continues to be the largest party, even though it lost support. The polls led to the ascent of MADEM-G15 as the main competitor to the PRS, with a substantial proportion of former PRS voters apparently switching support to MADEM-G15. APU-PDGB was able to establish itself as the fourth largest party, although it failed to meet expectations. Thus, voter volatility has apparently increased, and the party system, which previously consisted of two main parties, has transformed into a three-party system. Thus, the latest elections have led to a more fragmented political landscape. Moreover, President Umaro Sissoco Embaló attempts to control the internal lives of the parties, especially MADEM-G15, contributing to the erosion of their leaderships. In addition to this, there are several dozen (typically personality-based) parties, although only two of these minor parties

Party system

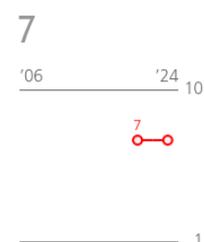


are currently represented in parliament. In December 2022, a group of PAIGC dissenters and civil society actors created the party Luz (“Light”) to better represent youth in politics. The rapid process of its legalization by the Constitutional Court, in contrast to the simultaneous dissolution of 14 political parties and preventing the PAIGC congress from being held, has raised suspicions that this may be an attempt by the president to co-opt political actors to weaken the PAIGC. In general, many citizens view political parties as clientelist networks, with the PRS and MADEM-G15 especially associated with clientelism. Programs are far less important than personalities. In the past, electoral violence has not been a prominent issue, although recent years have seen increasing polarization within society. Polarization peaked with the latest elections, which produced a sharp division between the two major political camps (MADEM-G15 and PRS vs. PAIGC, with APU-PDGB situated in between due to internal divisions).

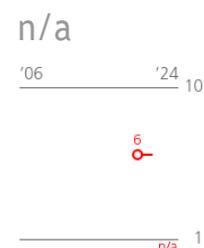
Guinea-Bissau features both a wide range of political parties and a highly differentiated civil society. The country also features a variety of trade unions – organized into at least two federations, the main platform dating back to the times of the one-party state – and professional organizations that pay lip service to fighting for better working conditions and salaries. Yet, because most formal employment is in the state sector and the financial resources of the state are very limited, the results of trade union activities are limited. At the same time, there are also employees’ and trade associations, such as a chamber of commerce. Apart from this, there are specialized non-governmental organizations that defend women’s rights and human rights, represent the various religious and local communities, veterans and traditional leaders, engage in environmental protection and the development of the country in general. On specific occasions, these groups can work together. In recent years, some groups have been founded that are nominally independent of any party influence but attempt to politically mobilize the population in favor of specific parties or party coalitions. Most organizations are, however, dependent upon foreign support and patronage from different donors, and are sometimes even created to tap foreign funding in sectors and on issues internationally deemed worthy of support. The Catholic Church repeatedly acted as a broker in political conflicts. Thus far, organizations that openly and effectively undermine democracy and civil society to mobilize particular ethnic or nationalist interests do not exist.

Quantitative surveys on the approval of the democratic system, performance, and institutions are very limited for Guinea-Bissau. Results from the first comprehensive quantitative EU-financed survey (Vozes do Povo) on public opinion ever in Guinea-Bissau, published in October 2018, showed that 53% of the respondents regarded democracy preferable to any other form of government – in contrast to 9% who favored a non-democratic government. 48% of all respondents associated democracy with freedom. Of all respondents, 61% agreed that political parties were necessary, while 33% opined that parties were unnecessary because they created dissent. Moreover, 66% agreed that the president should obey the law and court decisions,

#### Interest groups

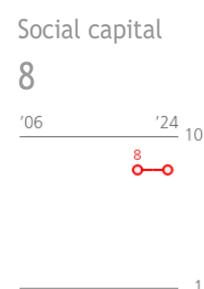


#### Approval of democracy



while 27% said that the president should not submit to court decisions. At the same time, 77% (against 14%) rejected a one-party system, 80% (against 11%) military rule, and 82% (against 8%) a presidential dictatorship without elections and parliament. Regarding democratic performance, 70% of respondents opined that one could say freely what one thought, 67% that one could join any political organization, and 75% that one could vote without being pressured. However, 43% agreed that they were living in a democracy with big problems, and 11% even said that Guinea-Bissau was not a democracy, while 14% were convinced that it was a democracy with small problems – only 7% believed that they were living in a complete democracy. Additionally, 77% of respondents were unsatisfied with the functioning of democracy. Democratic institutions were assessed negatively: the institution in which respondents had the lowest level of confidence was the treasury (77%), followed by the parliament (68%), the prime minister (61%), the courts (59%), the police (53%), the president (43%) and the armed forces (34%), which might suggest an authoritarian fixation. Many citizens lamented the absence of the state in various sectors: 64% felt abandoned by the state, and only 28% stated that they felt protected. Of the polled Bissau-Guineans, 59% associated politicians with corruption, whereas 78% believed the government's fight against corruption was insufficient; 51% said that the president always or frequently ignored the constitution, as opposed to 33% who said he never or rarely did so. Regarding corruption, 45% (as opposed to 48% who stated the opposite) opined that politicians involved in crimes always, or in many cases, went unpunished, while 88% were convinced that politicians were only serving their own interests. These results expressed ambivalence with a political system whose performance is considered insufficient while, at the same time, a majority welcomed democracy and enjoyed civic liberties. At the same time, the study revealed that citizens have difficulties coherently expressing their opinions.

Although Guinea-Bissau has been characterized by the legacies of authoritarian colonial and one-party rule, as well as the civil war in 1998/99 and social pressure, cooperation and mutual support for purposes of self-help among citizens are well established. This is also owed to an inclusive state ideology developed and popularized by the (former) ruling party, the PAIGC, but also to years of armed struggle that largely succeeded in uniting the population across cultural, ethnic, social and religious boundaries. Although ethnic and religious stereotyping exists, solidarity and trust among Bissau-Guineans are very strong. There is a lively, voluntary and autonomous organization of cultural and social associations across the country. According to the 2018 *Voices of the People* survey, 58% of the respondents took part in religious organizations, 42% in communitarian and sports associations, 30% participated in political parties, 23% in trade and agricultural unions, and 7% in professional or employee organizations. Civil society structures with different typologies develop relevant social roles in neighborhoods and villages, such as organizing lectures, supporting schools and covering community needs. However, tensions have risen since Embaló's assumption of office, particularly when, in



January 2022, the president caused controversy when he warned the Catholic bishop of Bissau, José Lampra Cá, to interfere in politics. A priest who publicly defended the bishop received death threats. In July 2022, a church was vandalized by unknown perpetrators in the mainly Muslim town of Gabu. Yet, civil society expressed broad support for the affected community. Civil society mobilizes around common causes confronting political power. A glaring example of this is the Guinean Human Rights League, which, for its initiatives, has suffered harassment from the security structures under President Embaló.

## II. Economic Transformation

### 6 | Level of Socioeconomic Development

Guinea-Bissau belongs to the poorest countries in the world and ranked 177 out of 191 countries in the 2021 (2022 report) U.N. Human Development Index (HDI), indicating no change since 2020. Like other post-socialist countries, Guinea-Bissau had an elevated Gini coefficient (34.8) as of 2018 (compared to 50.7 in 2010 = severe equality), indicating adequate income equality. In 2018, a very large percentage of Bissau-Guineans (56.8%) lived in poverty. The country relies mainly on foreign assistance, subsistence economy, and the export of cash crops (cashew kernels, fish); in 2020, aid per capita stood at \$74.8 while the official development assistance (ODA) accounted for 10.1% of the GNI. The processing industry remains underdeveloped, and many mineral resources (bauxite, phosphate and oil) remain unexplored. Women are relatively well-represented in the workforce (46.9% of the total labor force in 2020), a feature that can also be attributed to Guinea-Bissau's post-independence, socialist one-party era, when the social advancement of women was promoted. However, both girls and boys from disadvantaged social classes are vastly discriminated against by the failing public education system, marked by a low quality of schooling, limited years of schooling, and frequent cancellation of lessons or even entire school years (UN Education Index in 2021: 0.414). While the gross enrollment ratio was 118.7 (primary education sector), years of schooling were only 8.08 years in 2019 (age group 20-24). The Gender Inequality Index was a low 0.627 in 2021. Generally, women continue to suffer from disadvantages, sometimes due to sociocultural and religious restrictions. This also concerns the legal sphere; according to the civil code (Art. 1676), for example, married women cannot – at least in theory – conduct business without the permission of their husbands, according to the World Bank's Women, Business and the Law 2021 report. Further, Guinea-Bissau showed one of the lowest scores related to laws affecting women's pay.

Question  
Score

Socioeconomic  
barriers

1

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Economic indicators		2019	2020	2021	2022
GDP	\$ M	1439.6	1431.8	1638.5	<b>1633.6</b>
GDP growth	%	4.5	-2.4	3.8	<b>3.5</b>
Inflation (CPI)	%	0.2	1.1	2.2	<b>9.4</b>
Unemployment	%	3.2	3.6	3.7	<b>3.6</b>
Foreign direct investment	% of GDP	5.0	1.5	1.1	<b>1.3</b>
Export growth	%	8.7	-14.6	-	-
Import growth	%	14.1	-3.0	-	-
Current account balance	\$ M	-127.4	-38.7	-14.1	-
Public debt	% of GDP	65.3	77.7	78.8	<b>80.3</b>
External debt	\$ M	691.7	916.8	1112.0	-
Total debt service	\$ M	19.8	27.3	46.8	-
Net lending/borrowing	% of GDP	-3.9	-	-	-
Tax revenue	% of GDP	9.5	-	-	-
Government consumption	% of GDP	14.8	16.5	-	-
Public education spending	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Public health spending	% of GDP	0.5	0.7	-	-
R&D expenditure	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Military expenditure	% of GDP	1.6	1.7	1.6	<b>1.6</b>

Sources (as of December 2023): The World Bank, World Development Indicators | International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Economic Outlook | Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Military Expenditure Database.

## 7 | Organization of the Market and Competition

Market organization is very weak. Although various attempts and many promises have been made in the past to facilitate trade and enhance market-based competition, international assessments rank Guinea-Bissau very low (like the discontinued Ease of Doing Business survey). In the Heritage Foundation's 2022 Economic Freedom Index, Guinea-Bissau ranked 166th (out of 177 countries), a further decline in comparison to 2020, 2019 and 2018 when the country ranked 148th, 135th and 118th, respectively. According to the Heritage Foundation, the country has experienced a "staggering overall loss of economic freedom since 2017," resulting in a fall from the "mostly unfree" category into the "repressed" category. According to the Heritage

Market  
organization

2

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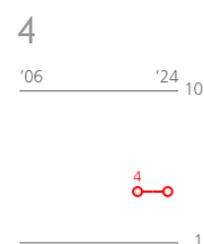
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Foundation, obstacles include a weak and painfully slow legal system, poor property protection rights, political instability, an opaque regulatory environment, illicit trafficking, a large subsistence economy, subsidies on electricity and energy, bureaucratic customs procedures, and high levels of corruption. Added to this scenario, the possibility of engaging in formal, gainful economic activity is almost limited to those who belong to the political and economic elite. The Bissau-Guinean market remained characterized by informality – expressed by vast petty trade; in 2018, about 94.8% of the total employment was informal. This indicates inappropriate institutional frameworks of economic and social policy, while existing rules are frequently applied inconsistently. Illicit trade is dominated by the trafficking of narcotics and is closely linked to the army. Oligopolies existed for the importation of specific products in some segments. In the past, the state set prices for cashew kernels – the country’s main cash crop – rice, and fuel, with limited success, however, as in the case of cashews. Another segment subject to state intervention is the export of (partly illegally lumbered) timber, in which leading officials are involved. Nonetheless, state intervention is not excessive. With respect to the market for mobile communication, Guinea-Bissau allows for partial competition through the issuance of a limited number of licenses and full competition in the wireless local loop. Principally, cross-border labor (many Bissau-Guineans work abroad and in neighboring countries) and the movement of capital is possible. Since 1997, Guinea-Bissau has been a member of the West African franc (CFA) zone. The CFA has been pegged to the euro since 1999 (previously to the French franc) and convertibility is guaranteed by France. However, in practice, it is difficult to exchange CFAs into major currencies outside the CFA franc zone.

According to the African Development Bank (AfDB) Guinea-Bissau does not have a national competition law and a national competition authority. However, it is a member of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) that adopted antitrust competition legislation in 2002 and has been operative since January 2003. Hence, as the AfDB reports, Guinea-Bissau applies the regional law of WAEMU to national anti-competitive practices. On paper, Guinea-Bissau had a planned economy from independence until the 1980s, characterized by state monopolies. Although these monopolies were largely abolished, some continue de facto to exist, such as the Bissau Port Authority and the Bissau water and electricity supply enterprise. Further, some market segments are dominated by a few entrepreneurs, indicating a partly concentrated market. Chinese influence is on the rise in this regard as Chinese firms monopolize the logging and fishing industries. Currently, Guinea-Bissau is not a member of the International Competition Network (ICN). In general, law enforcement and control capacities are weak in Guinea-Bissau and can be biased. Economic free zones do not exist. Public electricity and water supplies – de facto only in the capital – are subsidized by the state and donors.

Guinea-Bissau has been a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) since the liberalization of foreign trade on May 31, 1995 and a member of the West African

Competition policy



Liberalization of foreign trade

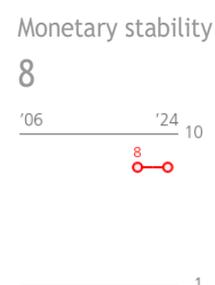
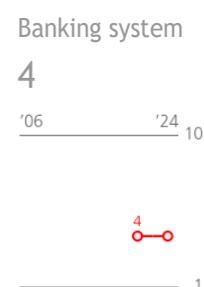
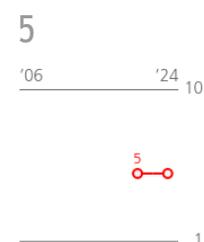
Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) since May 2, 1997. Given its dependence on the export of cash crops and foreign aid, Guinea-Bissau's integration into the world market is limited and one-sided. Chinese logging (quasi-) monopolies can be mentioned in this regard. Formal protectionist measures and limited market access resulting from non-tariff measures do not apply. In principle, both people and goods can travel freely across borders within the ECOWAS zone, of which Guinea-Bissau was a founding member in 1975. However, in practice, cross-border trade was time-consuming and costly, according to the World Bank assessments. Merchants can be exposed to bribe demands at borders. According to the WTO, the simple average of the most favored nation (MFN) status applied was, in total, 12.1% in 2021.

In socialist times, Guinea-Bissau's banking system was monopolized by the state; it was liberalized in the 1980s. However, only in the 2000s and 2010s have commercial banks become increasingly active in the Bissau-Guinean market. This development has also been prompted by the government's decision to switch from cash payments to bank transfers, including for salary payments to civil servants. In practice, there appears to be little supervision effected by the state. According to the Heritage Foundation, the financial sector remains underdeveloped and continues to provide a very limited, somewhat costly range of services. Many people rely on informal lending and have no bank accounts, although the number of account holders has increased in recent years and the presence of banks in the interior has greatly improved. Currently, there are several commercial banks present in the country: Banco da África Ocidental (BAO), Banco da União (BDU), Orabank (formerly Banque Régionale de Solidarité), Banque Atlantique Guinée-Bissau, Coris Bank and Ecobank. A great deal of economic activity remains outside the formal banking sector, including, for instance, rotating savings and credit associations, as well as money transfer companies (Western Union, MoneyGram) and informal money transfer services. Thus, both the banking system and capital markets are poorly differentiated. Currently, no data for the ratio of bank non-performing loans and the bank capital to assets ratio are available, according to the World Bank.

## 8 | Monetary and fiscal stability

On May 2, 1997, Guinea-Bissau abolished its own currency, the Bissau-Guinean Peso (GWP), in favor of the CFA franc (XOF). The peso had been devalued by high inflation. Since then, the Central Bank of the West African States (BCEAO) serves as the country's central bank. The exchange rate is pegged to the euro (€1 = XOF 655,957). Since the introduction of the CFA franc, inflation has been generally low. In 2019, the inflation rate was estimated at 0.2%, while the forecast for 2020 was 2%; for 2021 the inflation was expected to be 3.3%, and for 2022 the IWF projected an inflation of about 5% due to increased consumer goods and fuel prices.

The BCEAO is independent of political interference. In 2010, the bank assigned its monetary policy to the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC). Stability is expressed by



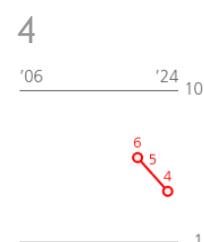
the BCEAO's interest rates as the minimum bid rate for liquidity injection tenders as well as the marginal lending window interest rate were raised to 2.25% and 4.25% respectively, as of June 16, 2022. Its communication with actors in the financial markets is comparatively transparent. The COVID-19 pandemic has also affected monetary issues in Guinea-Bissau. As early as April 2020, the BCEAO had taken steps on behalf of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) to satisfy banks' demands for more liquidity and to mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic on economic activity.

Guinea-Bissau's overall fiscal deficit increased from 4% of GDP in 2019 to 9.5% in 2000 and was expected to fall to 5.2% in 2021, according to projections from late 2021. This was due to higher recurrent spending on wages, transfers to the public utility company (water and electricity), interest payments, and, particularly in 2021, to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Tax revenues increased slightly from 9.4% of GDP in 2018 to 9.5% in 2019; no data were available for 2020, 2021, and 2022. It was expected that revenues would decline in 2020, given reduced economic activities. A pandemic-related, temporary slump in international prices and the expected halving in exports of cashew kernels (the country's main export product) restricted liquidity, lowered revenues and negatively affected the private sector. The fiscal deficit was estimated to have narrowed to 5.6% of GDP in 2021 from 9.8% in 2020, given higher tax revenues from the cashew exportation and cut expenditure.

For the current account balance, data for 2021 and 2022 was not yet available. However, external debt increased from \$425 million in 2017 to \$805.9 million in 2020. According to the World Bank, total debt service in 2017 amounted to \$10.9 million, and \$19.8 million in 2020. Net borrowing was -3.9% of GDP in 2019; newer data was not available. Government consumption increased from 9.3% in 2017 to 16.5% of GDP in 2020. No data on total reserves were available.

In April 2020, Guinea-Bissau was among the 25 beneficiary countries of IMF debt service relief provided through the Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust (CCRT). Owing to the pandemic, the government increased spending on purchasing medicines, food, services and medical equipment; however, this had no impact on the low quality of public health services, which have been worsening. A set of five controversial new taxes were introduced in January 2021 that subsequently affected the vast number of poor people in Guinea-Bissau, which has provoked popular unrest in 2021 and discontent throughout the period under review. Owing to spillover effects from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, economic recovery was stalling in 2022, as expenditure overran revenue mobilization; the pace of fiscal consolidation was thus expected to be constrained. The IMF projected in November 2022 an annual overall fiscal deficit of 5% of GDP for 2022 while public debt remained at high risk of distress at more than 80% of GDP.

Fiscal stability



## 9 | Private Property

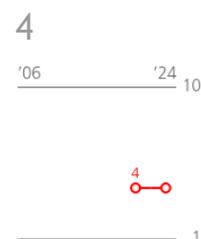
Property rights regulations (including acquisition, benefits, use, sale, and registration) are well defined legally, but the protection of property rights in Guinea-Bissau is generally weak, according to the Heritage Foundation. Because of this, there is a huge vulnerability in the way rights are implemented. After independence, property owned by foreigners (namely Portuguese colonial settlers) was nationalized. Some of these nationalized assets were later appropriated by politically influential actors. According to the African Development Bank, all land belongs to the people of Guinea-Bissau, that is, in practice, to the state, ruling out private property rights. This only allows the state to grant concessions to individuals and groups. A corrupt, nontransparent, and inefficient legal and administrative system hampered registration and ownership of property. The occupation of the seat of the Bissau-Guinean bar association – which legally owned the building since 2011 – by the military in February 2021 showed the vulnerability of property rights in the country, even if the building had to be returned to the lawyers' association upon court rule.

In Guinea-Bissau, private companies are legally allowed and can, in principle, operate in the country. A political office can be a gateway to the economy and business, and vice versa. One example is that of former President José Mário Vaz, who is considered to be one of the country's greatest entrepreneurs. However, private companies are often seen by the population primarily as mere providers of employment, not first as profit-oriented enterprises that compete for tenders and contracts. This is consistent with widespread expectations of a strong state that is supposed to provide welfare, even though its capacities are very limited in various ways – which negatively affects the population's human development. Earlier privatization processes as part of economic liberalization in the 1980s were often not conducted in a transparent manner and were inconsistent with market principles. Furthermore, foreign enterprises might further marginalize domestic private entrepreneurs. The legal protection of private enterprise is generally low and thus depends on personal contacts and/or corruption.

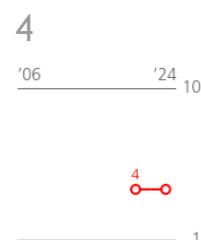
## 10 | Welfare Regime

The vast majority of Guinea-Bissau's population is at risk of poverty. Most people are forced to rely on extended networks of family, friends, colleagues and neighbors, as well as private charity, for social security. Despite some improvements (e.g., life expectancy has risen from 45.9 years in 1980 to 57.7 years in 2017, 58.0 years in 2018, 58.3 years in 2019, and 58.6 years in 2020, and public expenditure on health has remained at a low level (0.5% of GDP in 2017, 0.6% in 2018, and 0.5% in 2019; newer data was not available), social security remains highly precarious. The public National Institute of Social Security of Guinea-Bissau (INSS) is nominally responsible for providing social welfare (notably medical assistance and pensions).

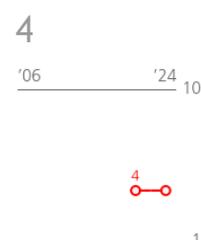
Property rights



Private enterprise



Social safety nets



However, it is incapable of doing so in an adequate way. In theory, all employees and employers must be registered with the INSS – but not all do so outside the state sector and in the large informal sector. In principle, both employees (8%) and employers (14% of the income) – citizens and non-citizens alike – are obliged to pay monthly social security contributions to the INSS. In 2018, only about 4,000 retirees received INSS pensions (out of a total population of about 1.8 million). To counter the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government increased spending on medicines, food, services and medical equipment in order to ease the situation, particularly for disadvantaged parts of the population. However, the country's health system is extremely precarious and dependent on foreign aid.

Profound gender inequalities continue to prevail in Guinea-Bissau, which affect access to education, employment and public office. Serious differences concern the literacy rate. According to World Bank figures, while 62.2% of men (aged 15 and above) were literate in 2014, only 30.8% of women in the same age group were able to read and write (total literacy rate: 45.6%). The ratio of female to male enrollment (GPI) was 0.9 in the primary and 0.5 in the secondary education sectors. The gross enrollment ratio was 118.7% in the primary, 34.2% in the secondary, and 2.6% in the tertiary education sector. Although the gross enrollment ratio in the primary education sector corresponded to a good rank, the quality of education is often below-average, and classes are often canceled due to strikes of teachers. During the pandemic, the academic years were canceled and classes suspended, with a huge impact on the vast majority of the population relying on public educational facilities. The female labor force accounted for 47.3% of the total labor force in 2017, 2019, and 2019, to 47% in 2020 and to 46.9% in 2021, thus showing a trend slightly to the detriment of women. Women generally faced pay gaps; they were less likely to be hired than men. However, women are the major labor force in informal economic sectors.

Although there is some discursive ethnic and religious stereotyping, there is no ethnic violence as isolated conflicts in villages usually occur not for ethnic, but rather for other reasons (e.g., property, access to land). However, favoritism based on kin and ethnic grounds may occur.

As the U.S. State Department wrote in its 2020 Country Report on Human Rights Practices, released in 2021, no law criminalized sexual orientation. However, anti-discrimination laws did not apply to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTQ+) individuals either. According to the report, LGBTQ+ persons faced discrimination in hiring, while persons with disabilities faced discrimination in both hiring and access to the workplace. In July 2020, a man was attacked because of his sexual orientation, the report said.

Equal opportunity

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## 11 | Economic Performance

GDP per capita (PPP) increased from \$1,925 in 2017 to \$2,057 in 2021.

Guinea-Bissau has experienced a positive trend of GDP growth in recent years. The annual GDP amounted to \$1,350.2 million in 2017 and increased to \$1,638.5 million in 2021. Mainly because of the country's dependence on natural resource exports, the pandemic has hit the country hard, which led to a temporary decrease in GDP: GDP per capita growth in Guinea-Bissau amounted to -4.7% in 2020 and 1.4% in 2021.

Inflation amounted to 0.4% in 2018, and 0.2% in 2019. The forecast for 2020 was 2%; for 2021 there was an expected inflation of 3.3%, and for 2022 the IWF projected an inflation of about 5%.

Net borrowing amounted to -1.6% of GDP in 2017 and -3.9% in 2019; other data was not available.

In recent years, the official unemployment rate has reported unrealistic figures (6.7% in 2020, and 6.8% in 2021) – the actual rate is certainly much higher.

Foreign direct investment is positive: 5% in 2019 and 1.5% in 2020.

The account balance has been negative in recent years, starting from a small surplus in 2017 (\$3.9 million) to -\$38.7 million in 2020.

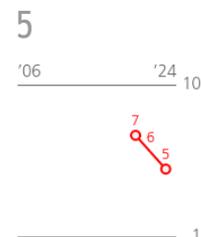
Public debt has also increased significantly in recent years (50.7% of GDP in 2017 to 78.5% in 2021).

Tax revenue amounted to 10.3% of GDP in 2017 and 9.5% in 2019. Gross capital formation increased from 9% of GDP in 2017 to 16.7% in 2020.

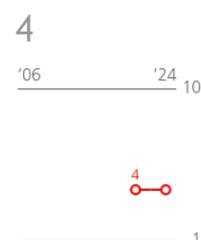
## 12 | Sustainability

Law 1/2011 lays the foundation for environmental policies. It defines basic concepts and specifies the norms and principles related to environmental protection and preservation in Guinea-Bissau. However, ecological awareness is not very pronounced in successive Guinea-Bissau governments, as politics and the general public primarily focus on socioeconomic issues. There is no special ministry concerned with environmental issues. Responsibility for the environment is shared between the Ministry of Fisheries, the Ministry of Energy, Industry and Natural Resources, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. Nonetheless, the government made an attempt to reduce public littering by prohibiting plastic bags in 2013; however, this prohibition is rarely observed. Guinea-Bissau is a member of the Organisation pour la Mise en Valeur du fleuve Gambie (OMVG), the projects of

Output strength



Environmental policy



which cover, among others, the construction of dams both in Guinea-Bissau and neighboring countries (Guinea, Senegal, and Gambia) to produce renewable electricity. Guinea-Bissau holds shares in the Kaleta hydroelectric dam in Guinea. Recent years have seen both legal and illegal timber logging in many parts of Guinea-Bissau. The country continues to possess one of the richest fishing grounds in the region, which is, however, threatened by illegal fishing vessels. Illegal activities are facilitated by corrupt practices and an incapable state administration. Although agriculture and the extraction of wood have contributed to degradation, Guinea-Bissau continues to possess a rich, biodiverse natural heritage of worldwide relevance. Supported by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Guinea-Bissau founded in 2004 the Instituto da Biodiversidade e das Áreas Protegidas (IBAP), which oversees the parks of Cantanhez, Cufada and Cacheu as well as those in the Bijagós archipelago. Phosphate mining close to the town of Farim was expected to start shortly, while the extraction of bauxite and oil may begin in the future, possibly affecting the country's natural environment.

In contrast with the government's inactivity in environmental protection, civil society has developed nature conservation projects and good economic practices linked to environmental preservation. For example, this happens in the Bijagós archipelago, which is particularly vulnerable to climate change. Under President Embaló, environmental protection measures are expected to worsen. Bissau's N'Batonha urban park is an important breeding ground for resident and migratory birds and was destroyed in December 2022 and January 2023. Activists trying to prevent this destruction were heavily repressed by security forces.

Guinea-Bissau does not deliver high-quality public education. Many teachers are poorly trained, schools are badly equipped, and teachers are often unpaid or underpaid. This leads to frequent strikes in the school sector, the loss of many school days and even the cancellation of entire school years. Moreover, one teacher may be placed in several schools, which prevents many pupils from accessing formal public education, having to rely on informal community schools. Private schools exist and provide a far better standard of education. Tertiary education has only been established relatively recently. The only public university (Amílcar Cabral University) was founded in 2003, restructured from 2010 to 2013, and opened to private capital after it had been closed in 2008 for quality and financial reasons. Few teachers have PhD degrees and are poorly paid. Additionally, a number of private universities exist (Jean Piaget, Lusófona, Universidade Católica, Universidade Nova, and Colinas do Boé Universities). Moreover, some technical training institutions exist, such as the National School of Health, the Higher School of Education, and the National School of Administration.

Guinea-Bissau's score in the U.N. Education Index has increased slightly over the years: starting from 0.405 in 2017, the score reached 0.410 in 2018 and has stagnated at 0.414 from 2019 until 2021.

Education policy /  
R&D

2

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1

Guinea-Bissau's government expenditure on education was 2.2% of GDP in 2017, 2.1% in 2018, 2.9% in 2019, and 2.7% in 2020, thus remaining at a comparably low level. Often, teachers are not sufficiently qualified and especially in the country's interior textbooks are rare, and buildings are partly in bad condition. The education sector partly depends on foreign donations. Many learners from well-off families therefore frequent private schools.

Data on expenditures for research and development (R&D) in Guinea-Bissau are not available but are supposedly very low. Funding of research and public tertiary educational institutions is often insufficient. For example, researchers at the National Institute of Studies and Research (INEP), once an R&D reference institution in West Africa, often have to rely entirely on third-party-funded projects (by the UN, development agencies, etc.).

The literacy rate was only 45.6% of the population in 2014, making Guinea-Bissau one of the least alphabetized countries in the world.

## Governance

### I. Level of Difficulty

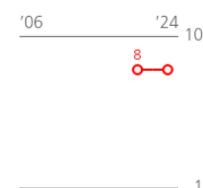
For a long time, Guinea-Bissau's government performance has been limited by several structural constraints that cannot be easily overcome and originate in the country's eventful history. Deep poverty, a very poor primary and secondary education sector, insufficient tertiary education, and an almost nonexistent vocational training sector have resulted in a poorly skilled labor force. This is complemented by a deficient infrastructure (e.g., roads, sea routes/ports, communication, health care service provision, and water and electricity supply), a large subsistence economy sector, and an undeveloped processing industry. Dependence on foreign assistance and cash crops as the backbones of the export economy prevails. HIV/AIDS is a severe issue, along with international drug trafficking and the outmigration of both skilled and unskilled labor. It remains controversial whether and to what extent the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the country directly. Indirectly, the pandemic led to the closing of educational facilities and worsening living conditions. The country's vulnerable position in the international economic system has contributed to constraints resulting from the pandemic's stronger impact on marginal communities. The pandemic coincided with President Embaló's tenure and his control over the seemingly democratic institutions, which has led to institutional weakening in different governance areas. In 2021, Guinea-Bissau's score in the U.N. Education Index was 0.414. In the same year, the GDP per capita based on purchasing power parity (PPP) was \$2,057, making Guinea-Bissau one of the poorest countries in the world.

Although Guinea-Bissau had multiple experiences with autocratic rule, both in colonial and postcolonial times, the country has developed a vibrant and diverse civil society, with some organizations showing long-term engagement since the early 1990s. Civil society has also stood up against anti-democratic developments in politics. However, many organizations depend on foreign support and assistance. Some non-governmental organizations are only created with the aim of tapping foreign money. For instance, newly created associations very often duplicate existing work in the country.

In addition, many Bissau-Guineans are active in various traditional civic associations, some of them dating even back to colonial and precolonial times. Trust in the state apparatus and its governance is quite weak, but trust – understood as national consciousness – among Bissau-Guineans is very high: citizens usually emphasize

Structural  
constraints

8



Civil society  
traditions

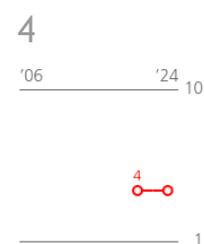
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their national identity and their pride in their country. Ethnicity and religious affiliation are subordinate to national identity, even though tensions on religious and ethnic grounds may occur. This consciousness can also be attributed to the still-powerful integrative national ideology developed by the PAIGC. The civil war of 1998/99 fostered a strong sense of solidarity among Bissau-Guineans, which has also been promoted by some traditional organizations and networks.

For decades, the armed forces have repeatedly intervened in politics. Despite selective outbursts of violence, including the assassination of politicians, politics have remained to a large extent nonviolent, although the potential for open conflict and thus polarization has increased in recent years. This has become evident in the politically motivated mass demonstrations that have repeatedly occurred in recent years. Some of these protests were prohibited by the authorities – citing anti-COVID-19 measures as reasons – while in other cases the security forces used limited violence against protesters who had remained peaceful. In contrast to the past, large segments of the population could be mobilized, signaling to those in power that their rule is not unlimited. Simultaneously, political polarization has increased and received a fresh impetus from Embaló's assumption of office in 2020, which has affected large segments of the population, especially in the capital. The use of violence by police forces is not generalized, while demonstrators defend the peaceful nature of their activities. Although isolated communal clashes occurred in the countryside, they have remained very limited in both scope and number. Both ethnic rhetoric and the ethnicization of politics remain limited, although occasional attempts have been made to mobilize people along ethnic (or religious) lines, particularly during election campaigns. Yet, mobilization and politico-economic alliances along ethnoreligious lines have become more important in recent years. Some Muslim countries have granted subsidies and scholarships for religious studies, which could contribute to the spread of a very conservative interpretation of Islam in Guinea-Bissau, which has heretofore been comparatively moderate. The spread of evangelical churches and sects may also contain potential for future intolerance.

Conflict intensity



## II. Governance Performance

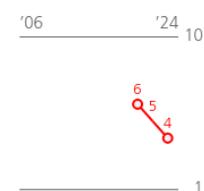
### 14 | Steering Capability

The democratically legitimate government led by Domingos Simões Pereira (PAIGC), which ruled between July 2014 and August 2015, developed, in cooperation with donors, the Terra Ranka program that was presented in 2015. To achieve fundamental social progress, the program intended to focus on sustainable and diversified economic development, drawing on agriculture and the agro-industry; the fishing, tourism and mining sectors; improvements in governance and infrastructure; and the streamlining of the business environment. Terra Ranka was welcomed both by the international community and Bissau-Guinean society as a strategic vision for Guinea-Bissau's development. However, the political capability and strategic capacity of subsequent governments remained restricted, as they lacked legitimacy due to the political crisis that largely paralyzed the country, hampered international cooperation, and prevented the adoption of a state budget from 2015 to 2018. Despite these obstacles, all governments have claimed to be committed to the strategy established in the Terra Ranka plan. Successive governments followed the path agreed upon with international institutions like the IMF, which recommended strengthening investment planning in 2018. However, President Vaz was often regarded as a defender of paternalistic clientelism and the status quo. He even developed a counter-program, the agriculture-focused Mon na Lama, thus challenging the government's executive prerogative. Regarding the Embaló government, which has been in power since early 2020, no clear strategic, programmatic priorities have been elaborated (including in response to the COVID-19 pandemic), except for statements of intent regarding reform of the inconsistent constitution and security surveillance. The dismissal of his advisers by President Embaló in October 2022 – allegedly on the recommendation of the IMF – as well as short-term government reshuffles during the period under review again demonstrate the shortsightedness of political decisions. The mentioned constitutional inconsistencies have been blamed for political crises by most political actors for years. Yet, the dissolution of the parliament in May 2022 by Embaló struck a blow to reaching a mutually satisfactory settlement on constitutional reform, removing the central player – the legislative – from the game for prospectively an entire year at least. Furthermore, thoughtful reforms of the security and justice sectors, the health care and education sectors, as well as in the fight against corruption have shown mixed results.

Question  
Score

Prioritization

4

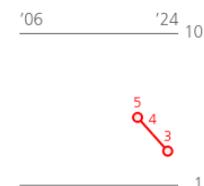


The government of Domingos Simões Pereira, which ruled the country until August 2015, was well underway with implementing its own policies and needed reforms. The government's good performance was rewarded at an international donors' roundtable in Brussels in March 2015, where high financial pledges were made to support the Terra Ranka program. In collaboration with the European Union, the government articulated a plan for achieving mid- and long-term goals that would benefit from the support of donor countries and institutions. Subsequent power games, political instability and paralysis, driven by the president, resulted in a decline of political will and thrust, and eventually in the non-resumption of cooperation by the European Union, suspended in 2012 (except for cooperation programs with civil society), for example. Nonetheless, policies as agreed upon with international institutions continued to be implemented – and this at least partially applies to the Terra Ranka program. The political instability that has prevailed since late 2015 was not halted – as previously hoped – by the elections that took place in 2019. Instead, the political crisis and power plays have continued under the new, hard-handed Embaló regime, which has exacerbated the lack of implementation of systematic, programmatic priorities. Policies during the period under review (2021/22) have, therefore, not led to the formation or implementation of any systematic or sustainable government program, except for largely short-sighted policies. The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the government's limited steering capability. Moreover, President Embaló has turned the government into a political institution stripped of its capacity and relevance and has unconstitutionally arrogated executive power to himself.

After 2015, much of the euphoria around the developmental opportunities inherent to Guinea-Bissau's political situation, which was widely regarded as an awakening after years of transitional rule, has vanished. During the review period, Guinea-Bissau's political elites (embodied by former President Vaz and current President Embaló) have shown little innovation or flexibility – apart from self-centered, power-oriented considerations and short-term “flash in the pan” projects (e.g., the planned installation of a public surveillance system in the capital, the highly controversial confiscation of buildings also in the capital city or the proposed construction of a new, externally funded international airport). Improvements have not begun to show since Embaló assumed office. Internally, they often followed old routines, paid little attention to effective monitoring and evaluation of their politics, and did not engage in best practices. Cooperation with international institutions and regular evaluations/reviews as part of the IMF's extended credit facility arrangement continued. This shows how international cooperation contributed to the adoption of new financial and macroeconomic measures and perspectives, despite the prevailing internal political conflict. At the same time, past and present governments have allowed democratic norms to come under increasing pressure.

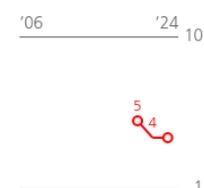
## Implementation

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## Policy learning

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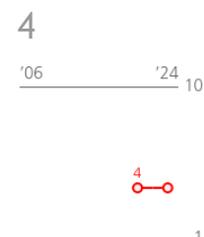
## 15 | Resource Efficiency

Government administrative personnel are used efficiently to a limited extent only. Many civil servants earn very little. Often, they are not paid on time. This leads to a low quality of service while, in comparison to the services offered, parts of the bureaucracy are bloated. In the past, “phantom officials” that were paid but had already left service, were retired or deceased have been reported. Repeatedly, public servants are appointed (and dismissed) for political or clientelist reasons. Recruiting procedures often lack transparency. Depending on grants and loans, as well as on revenues from the exportation of cash crops, the government budget has consistently been in deficit over recent years and public debt has risen continuously. Given enhanced revenue mobilization and expenditure control, the country’s public debt as a percentage of GDP has continued to grow. Foreign debt has been manageable since Guinea-Bissau reached the completion point under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, with \$1.2 billion in debt canceled by the IMF and the World Bank in 2010 – but has since increased again, particularly in recent years.

Auditing has improved in recent years but remains deficient. Budget planning has also become more transparent although past budgets were not formally approved by parliament due to the crisis. The dissolution of the parliament in May 2022 has affected the adoption of the 2023 state budget, which could only be approved once a new parliament has been elected in June 2023. Deviations in actual expenditures from planned ones are moderate. Nevertheless, public administration remains largely ineffective, especially in the country’s interior – which is also due to a lack of decentralization and local self-government and a lack of infrastructure and administrative staff. There have been ongoing discussions on reforming and modernizing the public administration, notably concerning decentralization. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the government had to increase spending on medicines, food, services and medical equipment. Both the BCEAO and the IMF provided assistance to the government in order to counter the impact of the pandemic.

Since decentralization has not been implemented to date, public administration can be regarded as not very resource-efficient. This is because the administrative structures depend on the centralized state government in the capital, which ultimately makes decisions that make administration cumbersome and slow and can often meet the needs of the local population only to a very limited extent.

Efficient use of assets

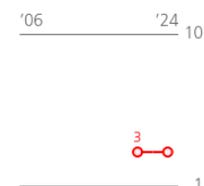


Both vertical and horizontal coordination within state administration are limited and so is the trade-off between different policy goals. Further, there are few or no consequences for failing to deliver results. Often, responsibilities within various parts of the public administration are not defined in transparent ways. Also, coordination with many sectors is a mix of hierarchical bureaucracies, usually highly centralized, informal and personalized, as, for instance, in the security forces. Policies are rarely, if at all, implemented in a coherent fashion and are complicated by political infighting. This concerns education, health care and security policies. For instance, the police and the military have repeatedly revealed conflicting interests and partly see each other as competitors. Concerning the armed forces, policies have not been congruent, oscillating between the recruitment of new, young soldiers, on the one hand, and the intention to downsize the oversized, overaged officers' corps (by introducing a long retirement scheme, discussed internationally for almost twenty years, and new recruitment) and to consolidate the military budget, on the other.

Anti-corruption laws exist but were rarely respected during the period under review. An independent audit court was established in 1992 but was inactive due to a lack of funding for most of its existence. Back in 2015, the court produced a report in which it critically assessed government spending from 2009 to 2010. In 2018, it released reports about several public companies. Although a national public procurement agency (Agência Nacional de Aquisições, ANAP) has existed since 2012, the implemented public procurement system is not transparent, and documents are not accessible to the public and the media. According to the World Bank, ANAP intends to centralize processes and competes with the Procurement Directorate (responsible for controlling), which wants to decentralize procurement. Although, in recent years, both the president and various administrations have expressed their commitment to effectively fighting corruption, results have been meager, although in September 2017, the government blocked the salaries of about 4,000 “phantom” civil servants. Sometimes, politicians reveal conflicting interests between the political positions they hold and their private businesses, and often they are not held accountable. Officials have not disclosed their personal finances before the Audit Court, as demanded by law, and the court is not authorized to impose sanctions. Since President Embaló assumed office in early 2020, the situation has not improved. Instead, rumors of money laundering stemming from shady foreign sources and increased narco-trafficking have circulated. In February 2020, the president of the Audit Court accused the Supreme Court of obstructing audits aimed at verifying court receipts. In August 2020, the Audit Court qualified the level of corruption in public administration as “concerning” and demanded that action be taken urgently. Since 1991, a legal framework has existed that regulates the financing of political parties. However, in practice, since the first multiparty elections in 1994, parties have not received any of the foreseen subsidies. They have neither reported expenditures to the Supreme Court (with the exception of Idrissa Djaló's National Unity Party in November 2022), nor have they released and submitted any financial status reports

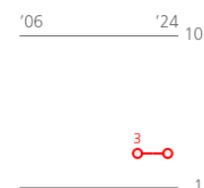
### Policy coordination

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### Anti-corruption policy

3



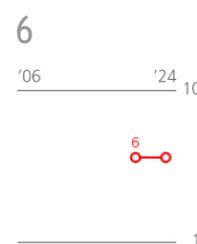
as required by law. Individuals supposedly involved in drug trafficking and other illicit activities carry on with impunity, suggesting incapacity, intimidation, and corruption within the responsible government bodies. President Embaló dismissed his ally, the controversial attorney general Bacari Biai, in November 2022, following accusations of misappropriation of confiscated drugs; however, this supposed consequent action was rather an exception.

## 16 | Consensus-Building

While all major political actors (e.g., parties, leading government officials) and other stakeholders in society (e.g., civil society, entrepreneurs and intellectuals) support democracy and a capitalist market economy in principle, there are differing interpretations of democracy. Some politicians conceive of democracy in a rather patriarchal and clientelist fashion; others regard it as an all-or-nothing affair. While some may consider it a self-service institution, others highlight the consensus character of democracy and endorse democratic and well-functioning institutions, freedom of expression and respect for fundamental rights. Still others advocate for the model of democracy attributed to the Global North. Since President Embaló's assumption of office in 2020, formal allegiance to democratic principles has gone along with factual, partly hard-handed action against critical voices from within the political system (opposition and parliament), civil society (notably human rights activists), and the media. Many Bissau-Guineans complain that democracy has not improved their lives. However, while most Bissau-Guineans verbally complain about corruption as something undemocratic, they nonetheless often take part in corrupt practices.

Similar observations can be made with regard to the market economy. Major actors agree on the surface, but beneath that disagreement exists. Some elder Bissau-Guineans remember socialist times as negative, with a lack of basic consumer goods. At the same time, they bemoan the decline of social cohesion, the advent of capitalist egoism and the lack of financial means to afford many of the products available on the market. Experiences with economic liberalization since the 1980s are thus mixed, as many were excluded from the blessings of the open market economy. Yet, President Embaló's formal affirmation of market economy principles is contradicted by the ongoing difficulties for enterprises to enter the Bissau-Guinean market.

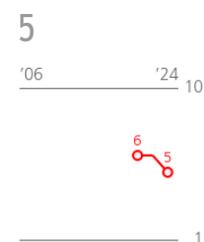
Consensus on goals



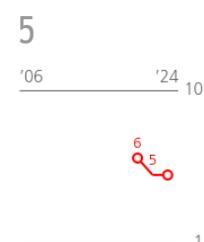
In Guinea-Bissau, various definitions and imaginings of democracy exist. Key actors openly arguing against democracy could not be identified during the review period. Instead, politicians often reveal attitudes and traits that could be characterized as anti-democratic, although they factually take actions as if doing so based on democratic grounds – such as President Embaló and his personal environment, segments of the military, etc. Sometimes, politicians from different backgrounds accuse each other of engaging in anti-democratic behavior, transforming “anti-democratic” into a category of mutual accusation. Even members of the military, which has in past decades repeatedly intervened in politics, often presented themselves as “democratic” as they claimed to defend the country’s independence, the people’s interests and the ideals of the independence war against colonial rule. However, it appears that in recent years the conviction has grown among members of the military that direct interventions in politics may not serve their best interests – although this growing conviction did neither prevent sections of the army from enforcing President Embaló’s takeover in early 2020 nor the alleged coup attempt of February 2022. Since Embaló assumed office, he has repeatedly called into question the separation of powers and has proceeded against political opponents. According to rumors, high-ranking officials and politicians have been “bought” in order to ensure support for the president’s politics, with the money coming from shady sources. Reform-oriented politicians, in collaboration with the international community, have contributed to restraining anti-democratic sentiments in the armed forces – although other politicians may continue to manipulate army factions. Often, citizens complain that they feel excluded from political participation. This holds especially true for women, youth and people in the country’s interior, as, to date, no form of democratically elected, autonomous local self-government exists as part of the state structures.

At present, the main political cleavages in Guinea-Bissau separate forces that often act as “reformers” (e.g., leading members in the PAIGC around former Prime Minister Domingos Simões Pereira, as well as allied parties and societal groups) and those who support President Embaló and his political supporters (e.g., the PRS, MADEM-G15, parts of APU-PDGB and some leading military officials). This polarization has increased considerably in the last few years. Yet, despite deep differences, political actors – pressured by international actors – in the past found peaceful ways to resolve their differences and find a political solution. As the country is very small and generally very poor, social segregation is not very pronounced. Ethnic and religious cleavages exist but are not prominent to such an extent that Guinea-Bissau could be described as an ethnically or religiously divided country. In sharp contrast, national cohesion across ethnic and religious boundaries is repeatedly pronounced, both by politicians and the general public, and this has contributed to depolarizing differences. Nevertheless, some politicians have repeatedly made appeals, especially during election campaigns, meant to mobilize voters on ethnic and/or religious grounds. In addition, local cleavages and their management appear to be largely disconnected from the political arena in Bissau, and part of the arena of

Anti-democratic  
actors



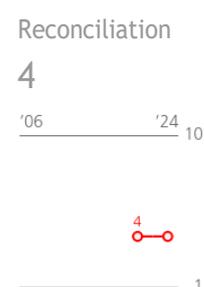
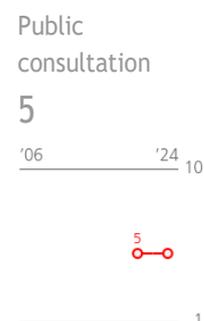
Cleavage /  
conflict  
management



religious and civil society actors. In the past, the activities of the Fórum de Paz revealed many examples of successful civil society engagement in the management of these local conflicts.

Civil society in Guinea-Bissau is able to participate in political processes to a limited degree and is concentrated in a restricted number of political fields. At present, the space for dialogue between the state and citizens continues to be highly centralized. This is also due to the fact that the government in general does not possess a vision or strategy that would allow for the coordination of actions between the state and civil society. The lack of communication channels became more critical after Umaro Sissoko Embaló took office and has implications for how collaboration between the state and civil society has improved in past decades. In specific political fields, government departments have worked together with civil society, international organizations, and members of parliament in working groups. Yet, the government has not invited civil society organizations to co-develop policies or to participate in high-level decision-making. However, human rights groups in particular are firmly established and collaborate with international partners, non-governmental organizations and foreign donor institutions (e.g., the United Nations, the European Union and foreign governments/embassies). In recent decades, journalists have increasingly gained ground and – despite financial constraints and political pressures – attempted to fulfill their role as the fourth estate, although the present government is not particularly supportive of the press. Intellectuals – some of whom simultaneously play important roles in civil society organizations – frequently comment on political issues in local media, and some, via their work with international organizations, contribute to politics by writing technical reports and assessments.

Since independence, various governments and heads of state, as well as the military, have committed serious human rights violations against citizens, which include military coups, the civil war, executions, assassinations and the disappearance of political key actors. Since the end of the military conflict in 1999, both national and international actors have repeatedly raised the issue of implementing a reconciliation process. However, results have been meager. A dialogue process known as Estados Gerais para a Guiné-Bissau, advocated by civil society in 2006/2007, was discontinued. A bottom-up reconciliation process initiated by the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) in 2010 was not completed; although some regional conferences were held, the national conference planned for 2011 did not take place. The establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission has never been seriously pursued. The deaths of President João Bernardo “Nino” Vieira and General Chief of Staff Batista Tagme Na Waie in 2009, as well as of the politicians Helder Proença and Baciro Dabó in 2012, inter alia, have never been properly investigated by the judiciary, nor have any charges been filed. Instead, proceedings in the cases of Vieira and Na Waie were conducted behind closed doors, presumably because prosecutors had been subject to threats or intimidation.



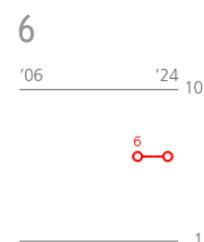
Similarly, the 2012 coup and the alleged attempted coup of February 2022 have not been properly investigated. Instead of coming to terms with the past, silence on these sensitive issues and impunity prevail. Problems such as weak governance, interpersonal conflicts and the unresolved constitutional problems (semi-presidentialism) further hinder a sound reconciliation process.

## 17 | International Cooperation

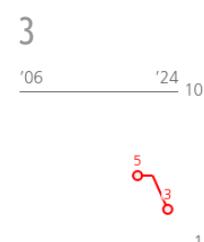
Guinea-Bissau has made use of international assistance since independence. Projects have involved both technical and personal cooperation. After independence, the country followed a socialist development agenda, encompassing nationalization to build a state-centered economy. To this end, the government received assistance from socialist, non-aligned and capitalist countries. After the shortcomings of this system became evident, Guinea-Bissau opted for structural adjustment and economic liberalization in the 1980s, as recommended by the World Bank. To date, the leadership accepts external advice regarding domestic realities; in the past two decades, it has adopted several strategies (e.g., the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers 2005 – 2011 and 2011 – 2015, the Istanbul Program of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011 – 2020 and the resulting 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015, as mirrored in the 2021 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2022 – 2026, which is aligned with national development priorities), albeit with mixed results. With the help of donors, the government integrated in 2015 its own visions and recommendations by external actors into the long-term strategy document *Terra Ranka* (which is, as of this writing, in a dormant state). This road map ties in with previous poverty reduction strategies and covers the years 2015 to 2025. It focuses on development in various areas (e.g., the economy, public administration, social and ecological development, security, agriculture, health care, education, infrastructure, and tourism) and has been endorsed by various governments since being implemented. Various projects, as listed in the operational plan (first phase: 2015 – 2020), have already been implemented or prepared. Yet, inconsistencies prevail among many of Guinea-Bissau's politicians and officials, as many continue to focus on short-term rent-seeking. In addition, the capacity of the country's authorities to devise strategies and road maps with autonomy remains limited.

As a consequence of the protracted political conflict, which began in late 2015 after President José Mário Vaz dismissed the government of Domingos Simões Pereira, much of the political process has been paralyzed, and confidence in Guinea-Bissau's governments, which was already low domestically and internationally, has eroded even further. The government of Aristides Gomes, which held power from April 2018 to February 2020, was primarily tasked with organizing fresh elections in order to overcome the political impasse. Despite these domestic conflicts, the governments worked closely together with international donor organizations, such as the IMF. The

Effective use of support



Credibility



2019 elections did not improve Guinea-Bissau's credibility. President Embaló appointed Nuno Nabiam as prime minister without complying with legislative election results (Nabiam's party had only won 5 parliamentary seats). Despite the lip service paid to fighting narco-trafficking and to ending the impunity from prosecution enjoyed by corrupt officials, the current government headed by Prime Minister Nabiam has failed to demonstrate a greater commitment to building credibility. Instead, rumors about high-level corruption and narco-trafficking have increased. The de facto elimination of the parliament in May 2022 through its dissolution does little for the positive perception of the country.

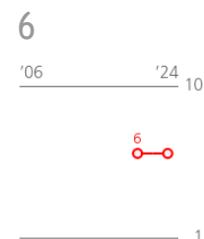
Guinea-Bissau's commitment to and compliance with trade accords and climate protocols remain limited and also depend on the practical added value for the government. The government should feel more committed to bilateral, practical trade agreements with the European Union and other countries than to the abstract trade standards of the Organisation pour l'Harmonisation en Afrique du Droit des Affaires (OHADA), which are sometimes interpreted or disregarded individually by customs officers, also as a result of ignorance and with corrupt intent. Practical implementation of climate measures is largely lacking."

Guinea-Bissau closely cooperates with its neighboring countries. Since 1975, it has been a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which unites most West African countries. In July 2022, Guinea-Bissau assumed the ECOWAS presidency for the first time. Guinea-Bissau joined the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) in 1997. Together with its neighbors, Senegal, Gambia and Guinea, it is a member of the Organisation pour la Mise en Valeur du fleuve Gambie (OMVG). Along with Cape Verde – to which it has historical ties as both countries fought Portuguese colonialism under the umbrella of PAIGC – it is a member of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP). Together with its neighbors Senegal and Guinea, it is a member of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF).

Although historically intimately connected to its neighboring countries, relationships with their (subsequent) heads of state have not always been positive.

For most of history, and especially during the period under review, Guinea-Bissau maintained a good relationship with Guinea for historical reasons, as Guinea's first head of state, Ahmed Sékou Touré, supported the PAIGC's struggle for liberation in the 1960s and 1970s. In 2017, however, the relationship became tense after leading politicians accused then Guinean President Alpha Condé of partiality, while blaming ECOWAS for interference in Guinea-Bissau's political crisis. In September 2022, Guinean head of state Colonel Mamady Doumbouya accused ECOWAS President Embaló of making decisions without consultation, referring to the imposition of ECOWAS sanctions on Guinea.

Regional  
cooperation



Guinea-Bissau's relationship with Senegal – an important trading partner – has been good. However, some politicians and segments of the population believe Senegal has attempted to keep Guinea-Bissau politically and economically dependent. These accusations

specifically refer to President Macky Sall of Senegal and presidents Vaz and Embaló, with the latter accused of “selling” Bissau-Guinean interests to the country's northern neighbor. Such accusations gained new impetus with a decision by the Bissau-Guinean government (bypassing parliament) to divide up oil deposits off the coast – to Senegal's advantage – in late 2020. In 2021 and 2022, Guinea-Bissau supported Senegal's military action against the rebel Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC), active in the Senegalese-Bissau-Guinean and Gambian border areas. In August 2022, Sall signed a peace deal with one MFDC faction in Bissau. In the 1990s and 2000s, it had been rumored that Guinea-Bissau supported the MFDC.

After relations with Cape Verde had been frosty since the 1980 coup, there was a rapprochement after the turn of the millennium, crowned by the opening of embassies and reciprocal state visits in 2021 and 2022.

Generally speaking, the administrations have been largely willing and able to cooperate regionally, especially in economic terms, as the country remains dependent on foreign investment, donations and lending. Political tensions continued throughout 2019, with international organizations involved in settling the conflict between the president and the majority in parliament regarding the legitimacy of the elections and the appointment of a new government. This produced some political tensions between Vaz and his followers and ECOWAS. Following the 2019 presidential election, ECOWAS hesitantly accepted the contested election victory of Embaló. Yet, these tensions did not call into question the government's willingness to pursue regional cooperation in principle, as also expressed by the assumption of the ECOWAS presidency in 2022. Moreover, the withdrawal of the ECOWAS mission, initially obtained by President Embaló in September 2020, and the redeployment of a force in February 2022, hastily concluded by the regional organization, showed that Embaló is interested in good relations with ECOWAS and that he changes positions when it serves his power interests.

## Strategic Outlook

Despite the political crises that the country has faced in recent years, society in Guinea-Bissau remains relatively well integrated. However, political antagonism, corruption and the recent increase in human rights violations have had a lasting impact on society and politics. National, regional and international actors have called upon domestic political and civil society actors to overcome an approach to politics that often serves only the short-sighted and egoistic interests of a few individuals, groups or networks. At the same time, it is up to international actors to support a democratically legitimate government with respect for human rights. In this context, donors should support a process of rewriting the semi-presidential constitution, which is arguably at the heart of many of the political problems between the president(s) and prime minister(s).

The international community should also closely monitor the elections in Guinea-Bissau that are scheduled to take place in June 2023 in order to guarantee transparency, fairness, and accountability. Furthermore, the international community should support Guinea-Bissau in areas such as education, training and health care, in addition to efforts aimed at laying the foundations for sustainable socioeconomic development, particularly for young people. This support should not create new dependencies but foster autonomy and accountability among Bissau-Guinean institutions and thereby help ensure that these institutions and government policies serve the needs of the population. In this way, the “dividend of democracy” could eventually become a reality for a considerable number of people.

In order to achieve this noble goal, international partners will need to collaborate with Guinea-Bissau to secure dignified working conditions for qualified civil servants. In addition, much more needs to be done to reform Guinea-Bissau’s security sector. Encompassing the military, police, judiciary and related fields, the country’s security sector has often been politicized, and involved in corruption and narco-trafficking.

International actors should also step up efforts to strengthen international development cooperation by no longer engaging in short-term project cycles with short-term objectives. Similarly, rushed, top-down planning and implementation processes and procedures should be replaced by bottom-up ones that merit the term “local ownership.” In addition, a broad, bottom-up, long-term reconciliation process should be implemented or reinitiated. Media-promoted participatory processes in which socially just, democratic governance is debated should accompany this reconciliation process. Over the past decade, the country has achieved profound progress with respect to fiscal and macroeconomic stability; efforts in this vein should continue but also focus on social issues.