

Guinea Coup Leaders Reject ECOWAS Initiatives

Weaknesses within regional structures in Africa portends much for the coming period of economic distress and political uncertainty.

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A delegation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a 15-member regional organization, visited the Guinean capital of Conakry on September 17 in a bid to have the leaders of a military coup return to the diplomatic fold mandated by the broader African Union (AU).

One demand of the regional body was to allow ousted President Alpha Conde to leave the country pending the outcome of a possible political transition.

Other issues included a timetable for the holding of multiparty elections and the appointment of an interim government. The coup leaders, who were members of the special forces, took control of the state on September 5 while participating in a United States military training exercise coordinated by the Pentagon-based Africa Command (AFRICOM).

What became apparent from the statements made by the ECOWAS delegation was that there was no agreement on any of the key issues raised in the discussions. Although the heads-of-state involved in mandating the mission to Conakry were seeking to reach some level of understanding with the Committee for National Rally and Development (CNRD), the name of the special forces grouping gave to themselves, the regional organization was rebuffed knowing that the capacity of ECOWAS was extremely limited in forcing compliance.

The day before the ECOWAS delegation travelled to Guinea, September 16, the regional organization held an extraordinary summit to discuss the situations in Conakry as well as neighboring Mali, where two military coups have been carried out since 2020. Similarly, as in Mali, ECOWAS and the AU have not been able to remove Col. Assimi Goita after he and other military officers seized power from an elected, albeit unpopular, political leader.

Even the interim administration endorsed by ECOWAS which included military and civilian officials, was later removed by Goita making himself the sole leader of the Malian state, a country which holds tremendous mineral resources despite the continuing poverty and underdevelopment of its people. The military forces of Guinea and Mali are heavily

penetrated by AFRICOM and the French Operation Barkhane under the guise of “counter-terrorism” training and preparedness. Washington and Paris have publicly opposed the CNRD coup while not having much to say about its close relationships with the soldiers in Mali and Guinea.

An ECOWAS Communique was issued on September 16 reiterating its position on Guinea while announcing the imposition of sanctions against the CNRD. The text of the communique reads in part:

“The Authority reiterates its unreserved condemnation of the coup of 5 September 2021 and reaffirms its demand for the immediate and unconditional release of President Alpha Conde. It also reminds members of the National Committee for Reconciliation and Development (CNRD) that they are individually and collectively responsible for the physical safety of President Alpha Conde. The Authority was apprised of the current socio-political situation in the Republic of Guinea and of the apparent commitment of the National Committee for Reconciliation and Development (CNRD) to work towards a swift return to constitutional order. It also took note of the CNRD’s decision to hold consultations with all national and international stakeholders on the socio-political situation in the Republic of Guinea. The Authority expressed its concern about the resurgence of coups after the coups in Mali in 2020 and 2021.” (see [this](#))

The actual sanctions against the CNRD includes the continued suspension of the coup makers from ECOWAS structures and deliberations. In addition, members of the CNRD are prohibited from traveling while their assets are frozen. Members of the junta, according to ECOWAS, are banned from running for public office in the event of national elections.

This communique concludes by emphasizing that:

“The Authority calls on the African Union, the United Nations and development partners to endorse the decisions and support the restoration of constitutional rule in the Republic of Guinea. Members of the Authority request the Chair of the Authority to visit the Republics of Guinea and Mali as soon as possible to convey in person the decision of the Authority. The Authority decides to remain actively seized on the matter.”

Mining, Industrialization and Economic Dependency

Guinea has maintained a tradition of mining and international trade since the pre-colonial kingdoms and states which developed long before the period known as the Middle Ages. The people of Guinea conducted explorations for gold and salt exchanging these commodities with other neighboring states and through routes which extended as far as North Africa and West Asia.

During the period of the Atlantic Slave Trade the area now known as Guinea was targeted by the European merchants seeking free labor. Colonialism emerged after centuries of slave capturing where Africans were exported to Latin America, the Caribbean and North America.

France colonized Guinea after years of resistance by the people, the most notable being Almamy Samori Toure who took up arms against the imperialists in the late 19th century. Under colonialism the mining industry was dominated by Paris where the resources and labor of the African people were super-exploited.

Of course, the mass liberation movement led by the Democratic Party of Guinea (PDG) from the post-World War II period to independence in 1958, fostered an ideology of national development and socialist construction. The early phase of independence witnessed the restructuring of the ownership and profit distribution to provide more benefits to the Guinean people. Joint ventures between the Guinea government and multinational corporations were designed to channel the bulk of ownership and profits to the national entities set up by the PDG government.

However, there was much resistance to the African unification and socialist project of the first President Ahmed Sekou Toure. After his death in 1984 and the subsequent military coup, reactionary social forces within and outside the military moved closer in their alliances with France and the U.S.

As mentioned in a previous report, Guinea is a leading producer of bauxite and iron ore. These minerals have been extracted for decades inside the country without any significant benefit to the masses of the Guinean people. The industry has been marred in recent years by corruption involving bribes, nepotism and embezzlement.

Since the September 5 putsch, the mining industry has not ceased to operate. The CNRD leader, Lt. Col. Mamady Doumbouya, after taking over the government, immediately encouraged the mining firms to continue with their business operations in the usual fashion.

Interestingly the CNRD implored the mining firms, many of which are based in the U.S., Britain, Australia and France, to build factories in Guinea and to prioritize the hiring of nationals from the West African country. Whether this was a serious call by the coup makers remains to be seen. What is clear is that historically mining firms operating in Africa have done almost nothing as it relates to fostering industrialization aimed at establishing import substitution sectors that could enhance economic development. (See [this](#))

Class Character of the Military and Politicians

By observing the nature of the measures enacted so far by the CNRD there does not appear to be any significant break with the policies of the administration of former President Conde. The CNRD leader, Lt. Col. Doumbouya, was trained by France and the U.S. in various military colleges and through maneuvers such as Operation Flintlock.

Concurrently, Conde built his reputation as an opponent of the PDG government under the late President Toure. As a purported “human rights” campaigner and professor in France, Conde was groomed for the ascendancy to state power in Conakry. His administration was characterized by financial impropriety, political repression and a foreign policy orientation towards the western imperialist countries.

Conde does not stand alone in this regard among the ECOWAS states. The president of Ivory Coast, Alassane Ouattara, was installed by France with the endorsement of Washington in 2011, resulting in the kidnapping and attempted prosecution by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Netherlands of his predecessor President Laurent Gbagbo. Ouattara as well, altered the Ivorian constitution to extend his tenure in office.

Togolese President Faure Gnassingbe Eyadema has been leader of his country since 2005 after being appointed by his father prior to his death. All together the Gnassingbe family has maintained control of Togo for the last 54 years. In 2017, mass demonstrations demanding

the resignation of Gnassingbe were met with extreme repression involving mass arrests, assassinations and the shutting down of the internet.

Therefore, the CNRD and the opposition parties within Guinea who have rallied to their support, believe that ECOWAS has no moral standing in making demands on the military regime. Pointing to the events which have transpired in Ivory Coast, Togo and other regional and African states in recent years, the Guinea military regime believes it can defy other heads-of-state in the current period.

The only way out of this cycle of dependency, societal underdevelopment and political instability is the resurgence of a people's revolutionary movement which can organize the masses of workers, farmers and youth inside of Guinea and throughout the entire ECOWAS region. Profits from the mining of bauxite, iron ore, gold, diamonds and other natural resources could then be utilized for the national development of Guinea setting an example for other regional states in the quest for genuine independence and sovereignty.

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