

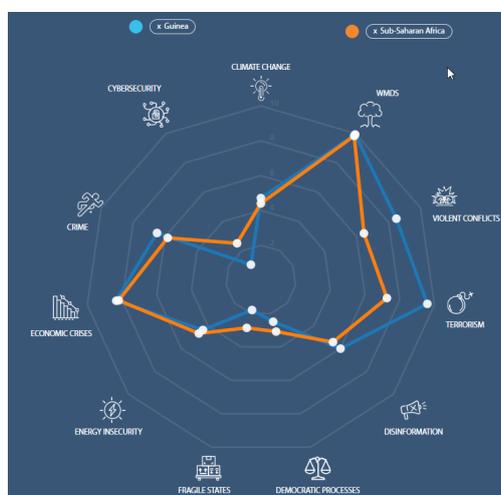
Political crisis in Guinea

On 5 September, a coup perpetrated by the military removed the President of Guinea, Alpha Condé, from power. The president was less than one year into his third term, obtained after a much-contested constitutional amendment. Under Condé, the administration yielded disappointing economic results and he was increasingly perceived as an authoritarian ruler who handled his opponents and critics with harsh repressiveness.

Political and economic situation

Guinea was the first French colony in sub-Saharan Africa to declare its independence, in 1958. For several decades afterwards, the country was governed by a single-party system under long-term authoritarian ruler, [Ahmed Sékou Touré](#); it adopted a multi-party system in 1993, almost 10 years after his death, but the transition to democracy was not smooth. A takeover by the military in December 2008 was tainted by the bloody repression of protesters demanding the return to civilian rule, particularly in the brutal [Conakry stadium massacre](#) of September 2009, for which [justice](#) is yet to be done. Under international pressure, presidential elections were held in 2010, ushering in the victory of the opposition candidate, [Alpha Condé](#).

Threats to peace in Guinea



Source: EPRS, [Normandy Peace Index](#), 2019. The closer to the centre a line runs, the more significant the threat is.

Guinea has considerable agricultural, water and mineral resources, but poverty remains [widespread](#). In 2020, it overtook China as the [second-largest producer](#) of bauxite, and production is expected to continue to rise. Other riches extracted in the country include gold and diamonds. [Minerals](#) extraction in 2019 generated US\$3.7 billion (more than a third of total GDP of US\$13.5 billion). Yet, bauxite mining has not contributed to reducing local poverty much; what is more, it has hurt the right to [land ownership](#) and caused pollution and environmental degradation.

In 2010-2020, Guinea experienced [sustained GDP growth](#). However, rapid population growth (from almost [6.5 million](#) in 1991 to over 13 million in 2020) has mitigated the positive impact on poverty. The 2014-2016 [Ebola virus epidemic in West Africa](#) also affected Guinea, and there is a [risk](#) that the disease might strike again. The [Covid outbreak](#) has been relatively mild.

The overthrow of President Alpha Condé

[Condé](#) had been a long-time opponent of the authoritarian regimes before he came to power as the opposition candidate in 2010, riding a wave of hope. He was re-elected in 2015 for a second and constitutionally last mandate. Before the end of this term, however, he oversaw an amendment to the constitution, driven by his [political party](#) (Rassemblement du peuple de Guinée, RPG, in power at the time), which would allow him to run for another two terms. The opposition qualified the move as a '[constitutional coup d'état](#)'. It was endorsed in early 2020, capturing [90%](#) of the votes in a national referendum that was boycotted by the opposition and held without [international observers](#). Voter turnout was estimated at [61%](#) of the registered voters. Condé [won](#) the subsequent October 2020 elections with 60% of the votes, but his re-election was marred by violent protests and [repression](#). Several dozen people were killed and many others imprisoned. Condé was increasingly seen as an [authoritarian ruler](#). The persistence of widespread poverty, corruption scandals, and tax and oil price hikes contributed to popular dissatisfaction.

The leader of the 5 September coup is [Mamady Doumbouya](#). Trained at a French military academy and a former member of the French Légion Étrangère, he returned to Guinea in 2018 to head the special forces.

The coup happened peacefully, without any fatalities, [unopposed](#) by the civil population and welcomed by the opposition and its supporters. The coup leaders announced the dissolution of the constitution and the government, imposed a curfew and closed the country's borders. They [released](#) political prisoners and promised to form a [national union](#) government within weeks.

International reactions and outlook

The [African Union](#), in its Constitutive Act, and the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS), of which Guinea is a member, in its [Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance](#), have established sanctions for unconstitutional changes of government, consisting mainly of the suspension of the country in question from these bodies. The [African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance](#), [ratified](#) by Guinea in 2011, disqualifies coup perpetrators from holding key government posts and bans them from participating in the subsequent elections. On 8 September 2021, ECOWAS members [decided](#) in a virtual meeting to suspend Guinea's membership. On 10 September, the African Union [suspended](#) Guinea too.

Condemnation of the coup has been quasi-universal. The African Union's president and the chair of its Commission swiftly [condemned](#) the coup, as did [UN Secretary-General](#) Antonio Guterres, France, the US, other African countries and third [countries](#). [Russia](#) and [China](#) also criticised the coup but insisted that their [business interests](#) should not suffer (companies from both countries are heavily involved in minerals extraction in Guinea). In a [tweet](#), the EU High Representative promptly condemned the takeover by force and called for the immediate release of the country's president.

The putschists were likely encouraged by the success of similar coups in two other Sahel countries – [Mali](#) and [Chad](#) – which have withstood international pressure. In Mali, for example, the coup leader took over in May 2021 as the transition president, in a clear breach of the [African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance](#), which Mali had ratified in 2013. The kind of security concerns that prevail in Mali and Chad are however not that deeply felt in Guinea. While ranked as one of the world's most [fragile countries](#) (14th place in 2021), Guinea had been spared the broad [instability](#) affecting the rest of the Sahel. This relative stability could [embolden](#) international opposition to the coup. However, some [commentators](#) see the coup as evidence of the reduced leverage exercised by international organisations, such as ECOWAS, the African Union, the EU and the UN, and claim it heralds a [return](#) to the 'tradition' of military coups in West Africa. On the other hand, the coup highlights the importance of observing the constitutional limits to [presidential terms](#). Guinea's move to amend its constitution (followed by that of [Côte d'Ivoire](#)), put an end to an increasingly popular [trend](#) in West Africa: of respect for the two presidential terms limit.

EU relations with Guinea

The EU is an important development partner and aid provider to Guinea. EU aid to the country was partially [suspended](#) after the military coup of December 2008, but was fully resumed after the 2013 legislative elections. The EU [observed](#) the presidential elections in 2010 and 2015, and the parliamentary elections in 2013, but not the 2020 referendum and elections. Strengthening the rule of law and building an effective administration were among the [three major objectives](#), jointly agreed with the country, of EU aid under the European Development Fund in 2014-2020. The EU has maintained close [political relations](#) with Guinea in line with the Cotonou Agreement (2000) and engaged with Guinean civil society under various forms. Being Guinea's biggest trade partner (accounting for [22.3 %](#) of its trade in goods), the EU grants all Guinean exports unilateral free access to its market under its Everything but Arms GSP scheme, pending the entry into force of the regional economic partnership agreement with West Africa. While this latter agreement was [signed](#) by Guinea, it remains blocked by Nigeria. To benefit from the Everything but Arms scheme, Guinea has to respect the principles of international conventions on human and labour rights, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Should it fail to do so, the EU can withdraw its trade preferences, as it has already done with [Cambodia](#) on similar grounds.

European Parliament position towards the country

In a [resolution adopted in February 2020](#), the European Parliament condemned the violence against protesters and the violations of human rights and basic freedoms such as freedom to assembly and freedom of speech. It also expressed regret over the plans of those in power to change the country's constitutional provisions on the presidential term limit and called on the president to respect the relevant constitutional provisions.

