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Voices of People

Society, Politics and Public Opinion in Guinea-Bissau

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Editors

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Introduction

Miguel Carter and Carlos Cardoso

This volume offers a broad assessment of society and politics in Guinea-Bissau. The study is the outcome of a pioneering research project designed to gather, process, and analyze public opinion data on the country. As such, it strives to answer the following key questions:

- What do the people of Guinea-Bissau think of their country? What are their main perceptions, frustrations and hopes?
- How do people get along with each other and participate in public life?
- What is the impact of history, geography, social conditions, and the political environment on their perceptions?
- How do Bissau-Guineans deal with religious, ethnic and gender issues?
- What are the similarities and differences between the experiences and opinions shared by Bissau-Guineans and people in other African countries?

The scientific research and writing that led to the preparation of this volume took almost four years to complete. The undertaking involved dozens of researchers and close to 1,300 interviews with Bissau-Guineans of all walks of life, who shared their experiences and outlook. This large collective undertaking reflects a basic commitment to generate novel insights on how Guinea-Bissau works and is perceived by its citizens, and thereby, create knowledge that can be used to empower civic engagement and advance democracy in this small West African nation.

The first part of the volume presents a synthesis of the findings produced by the Voices of the People research project. The second section offers various analytic assessments derived from this data. This segment involved the collaboration of ten Bissau-Guinean and international scholars, with noted expertise on the country.

Our introduction outlines the Voices of the People initiative, sets it in the context of the literature on Guinea-Bissau and provides a synopsis of the book's content. It closes by underscoring the deep popular angst resulting from the nation's chronic misrule and endemic poverty.

A Comprehensive and Innovative Study

The Voices of the People initiative was designed by DEMOS, an independent research center, to generate knowledge and foster greater awareness in support of Guinea-Bissau's democratic development. It organized the country's first public opinion survey in 2018. A second project phase was adopted the following year to pursue scientific research based on the survey findings and disseminate the new information through publications, presentations, and trainings. These undertakings were devised to produce actionable knowledge for development strategies, democracy promotion and political risk assessments. These activities were conceived to strength scientific capabilities in Guinea-Bissau and create instruments for social accountability and evidence-based public dialogue and policy-making.

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In pursuit of these objectives, DEMOS carried out four substantive investigations that were used to prepare this volume: a national public opinion survey, a data mining inquiry based on this data set, a focus group study and a comparative review of public opinion data with other African nations; briefly described below.

• Public opinion survey. This poll, conducted in mid-2018, drew on Afrobarometer's methodology and shared the same questionnaire developed by Africa's leading public opinion research network. All told, the survey included 340 questions. The national sample drew on Guinea-Bissau's 2009 census. The survey included 1,184 valid responses, obtained in 148 census districts, including remote and isolated parts of the country. The poll had a 95% confidence level and a 2.85% margin of error.

• Data mining and analysis inquiry. This study generated unique insights from the 2018 survey data set. It devised an original method using statistical instruments to develop 55 indexes and subcomponents, clustered around six themes: social strata, support for democracy, engagement in public life, capacity for social coexistence, disposition towards social equality, and risk of religious sectarianism. All these indexes were combined with a variety of demographic and identity indicators, to produce an informational 'gold mine' of exceptional value for understanding life conditions, perceptions, opinions, values and practice among the Bissau-Guinean people. This report includes nine annexes (mostly Excel tables) that amount to 6,190 pages.

• Focus group study. This enquiry helped contextualize and enrich the findings produced in the 2018 survey. Focus group interviews were carried out in ten different localities across the country and among people of varying social backgrounds, between October and November 2019. This research, involving 89 Bissau-Guinean citizens, led to open-ended conversations over the main survey results. It allowed participants to discuss the country's general situation, people's capacity for social coexistence, women's participation in public life, and popular perceptions of the state, its rulers and the nation's political elites. The report includes four transcripts of 16,5 hours of recorded interviews, in Creole and Portuguese, two of which are organized thematically.

• Comparison between Guinea-Bissau and other African countries. This is the first study to contrast Bissau-Guinean public with views shared by citizens across the region. It integrates the results of the Guinea-Bissau survey with those produced by Afrobarometer in 17 African countries. This assessment encompasses all member countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and all Portuguese-speaking African countries, except for Angola. The inquiry includes 193 questions, covering a wide array of topics. This report contains 314 tables and graphs, based on 83,817 survey interviews and the processing of close to 4.7 million data points.

The inquiry undertaken to produce these four studies proved to be complex, time-consuming, innovative, and ambitious. Complex and time-consuming due to the scope of the research. Innovative in its methodology, and ambitious in the breadth and qualitative wealth of the knowledge produced. So far, no other country in Africa has carried out a public opinion study of this scope and originality.

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The Voices of the People initiative represents a remarkable undertaking for a country that had never conducted a national public opinion poll until 2018. Once a laggard in this field of inquiry, Guinea-Bissau can now take pride in the fact that it has produced one of the most advanced studies of its kind in all of Africa. Students of this country, development practitioners and scholar interested in this area of research can access the Voices of the People reports and main databases – an 'informational goldmine' – prepared by DEMOS via its online portal.[1]

Knowledge Production

Guinea-Bissau's war of national liberation, between 1963 and 1974, and post-colonial developments in this country attracted the attention of several foreign scholars, and students of politics in particular. The political organizations created to support the struggle for independence stirred political imagination at home and abroad owing to their originality and success. Above all, the role of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (*Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde,* PAIGC), and its leader Amílcar Cabral, his global stature and contributions to debates on Pan-Africanism and popular resistance against colonialism, raised Guinea-Bissau's international profile.

The country's struggle for self-rule was set in a broader regional saga that encompassed three territories once colonized by Portugal: Angola, Guinea, and Mozambique. Like Algeria in 1962, all three nations gained independence through wars of liberation, though in the case of the Lusophone colonies, this took place in the mid-1970s, more than a decade after most nations in Africa had secured home-rule. These liberation wars galvanized opposition to the Portuguese Estado Novo, established under the authoritarian rule of António de Oliveira Salazar, eventually leading to the regime's downfall in 1974 and the end of the Portuguese empire in Africa, which had stood nearly five centuries. The continent's decolonization process provided a rich tapestry for the invigorated study of Africa's social and political history.[2]

Scholarly efforts to register and interpret Guinea-Bissau's struggle to create a new nation-state drew on a number of studies produced during the late colonial era. After World War II, Portuguese authorities adopted a number of far-reaching administrative and economic reforms throughout its colonies, funded by different development plans. These measures included a policy to establish research institutions in each territory and send technical-scientific missions to advise overseas administrators. This led to the "scientific occupation" of these colonies.[3] But in the process triggered a flux of new studies and generated considerable information on its Guinean territory and people.

After 1945, compared to Angola and Mozambique, tiny 'Portuguese Guinea' stood out for the relative quantity and quality of these scientific undertakings. Two developments in particular contributed to this achievement: the establishment of the Center for the Study of Portuguese Guinea, in Bissau, in 1945, and the creation of the Cultural Bulletin of Portuguese Guinea, in

[1] See DEMOS (2023). The bulk of the Voices of the People study was prepared in the Portuguese language to facilitate access to Bissau-Guinean students, activists, researchers and public officials.
[2] For a comparative analysis of the Lusophone cases with other African countries – namely, Cameroon, Kenya, and Congo – see Chabal (2002), and case studies like the one prepared by Joseph (1977).
[3] Carvalho (2004).

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1946. Led by its founding director, Avelino Teixeira da Mota, the center's Bulletin gained respect for covering a wide range of topics. Many of the of contributors to this publication were Portuguese colonial staff and thus inclined to reproduce colonialist ideas. Still, these studies were able to generate valuable data, often cited by researchers on the colonial period.[4] The Bulletin was published four times a year, totaling 110 issues, between 1946 and 1973. Its last number was published in April 1973, on the eve of Guinea-Bissau's independence.

Another source of information on the colonial state and its policies, especially the effort to thwart the liberation struggle, can be found in the publications prepared by foreign observers and academics. These reports documented abuses perpetrated by the colonial regime and the campaigns waged by the PAIGC guerillas in the bush.

Many of these studies were produced by a group of academics who, enthused by the Bissau-Guinean liberation movement, had established ties with the PAIGC. Some during the war, others shortly after independence. This cohort included Basil Davidson, Mário Pinto de Andrade, Ronald Chilcote, Gérard Chaliand, Christian Sigrist, Lars Rudebeck, Stephanie Urdang and Shirley Washington.[5] Intellectual debates at the time revolved around issues related to post-colonial state formation, the different models involved and contrasts between Guinea-Bissau and other Portuguese colonies. The 1980 military coup that deposed president Luís Cabral, Amílcar's half-brother, led to schism between the PAIGC's Bissau-Guinean and Cabo Verdean wings. Both territories had shared a common history of Portuguese rule and struggle for freedom. The different paths taken by each of these newly independent nations triggered added debates among these scholars.

A new generation of researchers, which included Richard Lobban, Rosemary Galli, Jocelyn Jones, Joshua Forrest, Anne-Marie Hochet, Carlos Lopes and Patrick Chabal, enriched discussions in the 1980s over Guinea-Bissau's political trajectory. This led to the production of important studies on the country's social, economic and political development.[6] During this period, according to Philip J. Havik, field researchers began to cover a wider array of topics in an effort to understand past failures, address present problems and support policies designed to overcome these challenges. Debates during the 1980s and early 1990s were influenced by a climate of discontent over failing development strategies, the PAIGC's authoritarian turn after the 1980 coup, and budding signs of political instability under General Nino Vieira's rule. Intellectual arguments stirred around the role of the party-state and its capacity to oversee the economy; the impact of economic liberalization measures adopted under Structural Adjustment Programs; the lack of economic progress and dependence on foreign aid; the agricultural shift to cashew mono-cropping and crucial role played by small producers; linkages between rural, industrial and service sectors in an economy dominated by the former; and the complex relations between the PAIGC, the state and the Armed Forces, among other topics.[7]

Lars Rudebeck, Carlos Lopes, Joshua Forrest and Richard A. Lobban Jr. made significant contributions to the study of Bissau-Guinean politics. They pioneered an analysis of the country's political evolution, including its democratization process, and generated critical

[4] Carvalho (2004).
[5] Havik (1990).
[6] Lobban (1996), Rudebeck (2001), Galli and Jones (1987), Forrest (1992), Lopes (1982), Chabal (1983).
[7] Havik (1990).

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insights on the nature of state-society relations after independence. Their scholarly work explores issues that go well beyond the scope of the country's multiparty system and electoral process, focusing on people's broader political engagement and views of 'democracy'.[8] In his classic book, *Lineages of State Fragility: Rural Civil Society in Guinea-Bissau*, Forrest sheds light on the fragility of the post-colonial state and situates this in its historical context, paying close attention to the impact of country's resourceful rural society.[9] Richard A. Lobban Jr. authored the country's first historical dictionary, with important references to the production of historical-scientific knowledge on the country.[10] On the other hand, Rosemary Galli and Jocelyn Jones' volume on *Guinea-Bissau: Politics, Economics and Society*, offers a thorough account of the nation's political, economic and social development from the colonial era to the mid-1980s, when economic liberalization was introduced. The study presents a detailed review of sectoral achievements and multiple adversities following independence. Collectively, these scholars shed light on the great challenges encountered by new nations like Guinea-Bissau, which emerged victorious after its liberation struggle, only to face the harsh reality involved in overcoming its deep colonial legacies.

The surge of academic interest in Guinea-Bissau was strongly influenced by local efforts to establish a national research institute, the *Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisa* (INEP). Since its founding in 1984, INEP has served as focal point for national and international scholars involved in carrying out research on politics, economics and socio-cultural aspects of the country. This has strengthened the local scientific community, thanks in no small part to its international sponsors. INEP's flagship journal, *Soronda*, and book publications such as the *Kaçu Martel* series have helped fill crucial knowledge gaps on the country, while serving as a reference for critical academic research. More recently, foreign universities that set up branches in Bissau have created opportunities for social research, by publishing journals such as *Sintidus*, sponsored by the Universidade Lusófona.

After the first multiparty elections of 1994 and the outbreak of a Bissau-centered civil war in 1998, the country gained a reputation for chronic political instability and underdevelopment. Weak adherence to the constitutional regime, armed conflicts, multiple coups d'états and political assassinations, widespread corruption and drug trafficking, created a general sense of political disorder and decay.[11] These developments sparked more pessimistic views of Guinea-Bissau, which underscored its entrenched problems. Patrick Chabal and Toby Green's anthology*, Guinea-Bissau: Micro-State to 'Narco-State'* reflects elements of this outlook. Its historical review of different manifestations of this crisis – from a political economy, anthropological, sociological and institutional perspectives – provide a significant contribution to the academic literature on Guinea-Bissau.[12]

Yet another set of studies, of an anthropological bent, has focused on issues dealing with national identity, the role played by the creole language and grassroots organizations, like the

[8] Rudebeck (2001).
[9] Forrest (2003)
[10] Lobban (1979).
[11] Forrest (2002).
[12] Chabal and Green (2016)

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majuandadis, formed under colonial rule. The emphasis on societal relations and identities have allowed these analyzes to present a more uplifting view of Guinea-Bissau.[13]

In terms of methodology, however, none of these publications were able to make use of public opinion studies, developed through national surveys or focus group interviews. Prior to the Voices of the People initiative, fieldwork and data gathering was generally produced through archival research, ethnographic inquiry, direct participation, and interviews carried out with key stakeholders. As a result, their assessments of public opinion provided a fragmented picture, based upon partial data sets pertaining to specific social groups or geographic areas.

The Voices of the People project has helped fill a long-standing gap in the study of Guinea-Bissau. The use of public opinion survey techniques, grounded in international scientific standards, and the artful combination of survey results through quantitative and qualitative research methods, has allowed us to develop an exceptional data trove, offering unique information on the country. This 'informational gold mine' can be explored in a myriad of ways. The data presented in this volume are but mere 'nuggets' of this 'gold mine', a synopsis of the reports and data sets prepared by DEMOS.[14]

This volume builds upon the research carried out under the Voices of the People initiative to provide an original and in-depth analysis of Guinea-Bissau's politics and society. Our anthology is the result of a collective undertaking by ten African, European, North and South American scholars, from various academic fields and notable contributions to the literature on Guinea-Bissau. Thanks to these investigations, the nation can offer a major contribution to the social sciences in Africa and beyond, given the research model's potential use in other settings.

Knowledge is a source of power; it defines what is possible and allows people to make strategic decisions based on the appraisal of opportunities and risks. A correct diagnosis and solid empirical evidence are crucial for this. Public opinion studies can generate knowledge in support of democracy. They can empower ordinary citizens by uplifting their voices and allowing leaders a chance to understand how people view and interact with their polity.

Among experts, attention devoted to democracy's *kratos* – its authority structures, rules, processes and elite actions – has long overshadowed academic interest in democracy's *demos*. By listening to people and making sense of their habits and sentiments, this volume underscores the need to 'elevate the *demos*' in the study of democracy. In an age of rising autocratic peril, devising better strategies to address popular needs and foster civic education and engagement may well be essential to the future of democracy.

Content of the Book

This anthology includes an introduction and 13 chapters divided into two sections. The first section presents the Voices of the People research project and its main results. The second part sets these findings in the broader historic, societal, and political context and provides novel perspectives on contemporary developments in Guinea-Bissau.

[13] Trajano Filho (1998, 2003) and Kohl (2018).
[14] See Carter (2018, 2020a, 2020b, 2021).

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Part I. Voices of the People: The Study and Results

The volume's first section presents an overview of the Voices of the People project and its main findings, with all six chapters authored by Miguel Carter. Together, they attest to the scientific quality and political relevance of the information produced in the course of this initiative.

Chapter 1, "Public Opinion Study in Guinea-Bissau: Highlights and Methodology," summarizes the main findings of the Voices of the People study and explains the research methodology used. These discoveries provide insights on how Bissau-Guineans' perceive their nation, its state apparatus, the country's political affairs and societal relations. This is followed by a detailed explanation of the scientific methods used to carry out the 2018 public opinion poll, the data mining and analysis inquiry based on this survey, the focus group study, and the comparative review of public opinion data in Guinea-Bissau and other African countries. The text sheds light on the methodological rigor and transparency with which the information presented in this book was prepared.

Chapter 2, "Public Life: Democracy, Civic Engagement, and Political Parties," explores the social bases of support for democracy in Guinea-Bissau. There is stronger support among Bissau-Guineans for the egalitarian dimensions of democracy than for its liberal framework, in particular the rule of law and full respect for dissent. The affinity between those who favor democracy and gender equality is quite expressive. The chapter also explores different patterns of civic engagement in public life. Those who participate most tend to be men, residents of the capital Bissau, better educated and more religious in their outlook. Education levels, however, matter less among party activists. Two-out-three party activists are men, with high levels of religious engagement, linked, mostly, to the Muslim community. Among the country's main ethnic groups, the Mandinga stand out for their greater involvement in party politics, while the Manjack exhibit low levels of party activism.

Chapter 3, "Social Attitudes: Gender Equality and Interpersonal Trust," shows widespread agreement with the idea of gender equality in Guinea-Bissau, despite several obstacles to women's full public engagement. In demographic terms, support for gender equality is greater among younger people, with higher education levels and social status, residing in urban centers. Those who explicitly oppose this social change are a minority section of the population. Their main objection is to equal participation of women in the country's political life. Carter also examines various forms of trust among Bissau-Guineans. A quarter of the population displays high levels of interpersonal trust, while a bit less than a quarter exhibit low levels of trust. People with greater trust tend to have higher levels of confidence in public institutions and authorities and are thus more inclined to participate in civic life.

Chapter 4, "Ethnicity, Politics, and Religion in a Heterogeneous Society," examines the social traits and dispositions of the country's main ethnic and religious groups. The analysis draws on cross-tabulation using the Voices of the People data set to generate a wealth of information on the living conditions, practices, and preferences of the seven largest ethnic groups in the country, which constitute almost 90% of the national population. Forming a complex mosaic, ethnic groups in Guinea-Bissau are far from homogeneous. Even so, it is possible to discern some inflections and, in doing so, offer novel insights on the nation's ethnic landscape.

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Interethnic relations among Bissau-Guineans are deeply embedded in the country social landscape. These ties are generally peaceful and constructive, but susceptible to the threat of political 'tribalization'. The chapter also assesses the risk of religious sectarianism and the conditions that favor religious ecumenism. The data presented is quite revealing. In Guinea-Bissau, religious life tends to reduce the risk of sectarianism and fosters social toleration. In fact, it is the less religious or secular citizens who are more likely to adopt sectarian attitudes.

Chapter 5, "Popular Perceptions about Politics and Society," offers a synopsis of the results of the focus group study. The exchanges carried out with citizens from different social origins in Guinea-Bissau converge on a critical concern for the regime's chronic instability and general sense of political degradation. According to the interviewees, this political situation renders the state incapable of promoting the country's development. Political disputes, in their view, engender distrust and divisions in society, and can lead to violence. They exacerbate the problems of corruption, impunity, and inequality, leading to people's mistreatment under frail legal institutions. All this generates feelings of helplessness, resentment, and resignation, which finds expression in the national saying: '*Djitu ká ten*' (there is nothing to be done). The deterioration of the country's political life after independence brought much disappointment and a sense of failure. Amid the country's widespread poverty, people's anguish and feeling of abandonment by the state nurtures a sense of indignation. The sessions, nonetheless, detected elements of change regarding the role of women in Guinea-Bissau, which form part of a broader effort to overcome various historical limitations.

Chapter 6, "Public Opinion in Guinea-Bissau and West Africa," compares the results of public opinion polls carried out in the 15 countries that comprise the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This research draws on data produced by Afrobarometer. Guinea-Bissau stands out in the region for its pervasive apprehension over the country's direction and sense of misrule. No other ECOWAS country conveys the levels of discontent, poor living conditions, and climate of personal insecurity depicted by the Bissau-Guinean people. Along with Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau stands out in the region for its high level of party identification and electoral participation. At the same time, Bissau-Guineans exhibit a strong reluctance to engage in acts of civic participation that involve making complaints to government authorities or claims on the state. This disposition, no doubt, is related to the general dissatisfaction with the country's public management, which presents the lowest scores in all the region. Furthermore, within ECOWAS, no nation thinks that its political leaders put their personal interests above the needs of the people, in a proportion as high as that found in Guinea-Bissau.

Part II. Analysis and Reflections

This section includes seven chapters authored by ten contributors to this volume. These texts deal with society and state politics and conclude with an assessment of their severe disconnect in Guinea-Bissau.

Society

Chapter 7, "Ethnicity, Religion, and the Popular History of Power," by Toby Green, underscores the importance of historical analysis to decode the results of the Voices of the People study. He draws attention to the importance of social pluralism in the construction of ethnic and

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religious identities in Guinea-Bissau. This form of pluralism does not stem from a liberal sense of toleration, but rather originates from a longstanding tradition of interethnic and religious coexistence. According to Green, in Western political science, this type of toleration is often portrayed as a product of modern societies and liberal values. However, in Guinea-Bissau, they are not associated with the diffusion of liberal ideas. In Africa, liberal ideology was used, in its crudest and most duplicitous expression, to justify the expansion of exploitative and violent imperialism, especially in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Among Bissau-Guineans, social toleration derives essentially from the country's historical conditions, which have made it a meeting point for different peoples and religions.

Chapter 8, "Life Conditions, Territory and Social Coexistence", by Miguel Carter, Carlos Cardoso and Nafiou Inoussa, draw on the findings of the Voices of the People inquiry to present a multifaceted analysis of Guinea-Bissau's society. The development model adopted since colonial times, and centered on primary exports, has had a significant impact on living standards, territorial dynamics, and people's capacity for social coexistence. In Guinea-Bissau, the material well-being of the population is associated with access to education, skilled employment, and remittances from abroad. The concentration of wealth and educational resources in the capital Bissau, and the meager earnings among the peasant population, have created strong imbalances in the nation's territorial development. Urbanization and rapid growth of the capital have exacerbated these contrasts, radically transforming various aspects of social life and survival strategies. In the religious domain, Christianity and Islam have experienced significant expansion, to the detriment of traditional African religions. In Bissau one can observe distinct patterns of sociability, compared to the rest of the country. Its inhabitants tend to be more apprehensive, though more likely to adopt modern views, including greater acceptance of sexual diversity. Precarious living conditions and deep frustration with the state of their nation explain a high disposition in favor of emigration among the Bissau-Guinean populace.

Chapter 9, "Gender Relations," by Birgit Embaló, probes the underlying causes of gender inequalities and discrimination in Guinea-Bissau. These include sociocultural norms, traditional rural settings, and the predominance of patriarchal power relations. Embaló discusses various forms of discrimination against women in this country and presents relevant evidence of this. Actual living conditions for women underscore the fact that the goal of gender equality remains an enduring challenge. Still, she argues there are various trends favoring greater fairness in gender relations, including a shift in popular attitudes corroborated by the Voices of the People study. The development of an environment conducive to greater gender equality and women's empowerment require that men act as partners in various spheres of life, including the household, youth groups, civic and political activities, and traditional power structures. According to Embaló, Bissau-Guineans will need to overcome the culture of *matchundadi* – or exaltation of masculine virility – to consolidate these changes.

Politics and the State

Chapter 10, "Big Man Politics and Regime Instability," by Miguel Carter, reviews Guinea-Bissau's checkered political history and examines the factors that have led to the regime's chronic instability. This volatility has had a detrimental impact on the nation's prospects for development, good governance, and sense of self-confidence. These problems derive from the

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country's big man politics and the broader conditions that underpin this pattern of political behavior. Big man politics is guided by informal rules and the prevalence of community-oriented politics, which nurture a patrimonial and clientelist praxis. These strongmen display a discernable element of toxic masculinity and instigate a zero-sum, winner-takes-all politics. This fuels a fierce struggle to attain power and gain access to its privileges. All of which contribute to notable disregard for public policy. Carter's chapter provides a comparative assessment of Guinea-Bissau's regime and discusses its protracted and precarious democratic transition since the 1990s. It probes the institutional, political, economic, and cultural context that enables the big man's modus operandi. The closing comments allude to various measures that could be taken to mitigate this political dynamic.

Chapter 11, "State Fragility and Corruption," by Carlos Cardoso and Ismael Salidú Sanhá, addresses the close relations between these two obstacles to Guinea-Bissau's political development. They examine evidence showing that widespread perceptions of corruption have eroded people's trust in the rule of law. Corrupt practices have a long history in Guinea-Bissau that date back to the colonial regime and the struggle for national liberation. The authors review this trajectory in the light of the country's political economy. As revealed in the Voices of the People survey, corruption contributes in a significant way to the general feeling of malaise and neglect by the state widely shared among Bissau-Guineans. Given the country's reputation for high levels of corruption, at all levels of the state, successive national leaders have promised to attack this institutional menace. Yet most of these attempts have countered obstacles and experienced serious shortcomings. Efforts to tackle corruption in Guinea-Bissau need to be waged in tandem with other public management reforms and elicit the involvement of civil society actors. Cardoso and Sanhá believe these endeavors must be part of a comprehensive agenda designed to foster political transparency and integrity.

Chapter 12, "Political Parties, Elections and Citizen Participation," by Rui Jorge Semedo and Paulina Mendes, probe the ways in which political elites affect electoral participation and hinder other forms of civic engagement. The study underscores significant levels of popular discontent with the country's politicians and their perceived impact on the country's record of poor governance, a weakened party system, and the politicization of societal cleavages. According to the authors, ethnicity is a key variable in explaining people's support for existing political parties and specific candidates. Electoral participation in Guinea-Bissau is not influenced by party platforms or political ideologies, but centered mostly on ethno-religious identities, assumed in more explicit or implicit ways. Civic engagement in this country is undermined by the lack of a responsive and credible state, and the fear of repression among many who would join a protest demonstration. The demise of the country's single party regime, in the 1990s, and adoption of a multiparty system, created an opportunity to strengthen basic citizenship rights and involve political parties as a conduit for societal demands. In Semedo's and Mendes' view, however, this chance to improve state-society interaction appears to have been squandered.

Conclusion

Chapter 13, "State-Society Disjuncture," by Philip J. Havik and Joshua B. Forrest, revisit the Guinea-Bissau's intricate political trajectory since independence and dissect its historical gap between state and society. This analysis builds on an appraisal of the findings produced by the

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Voices of the People study. The authors contrast deep popular mistrust towards public institutions and political actors with the people's remarkable confidence in their 'own' community organizations and leaders. The strength and legitimacy of these local institutions offer a venue for building state capacity from the bottom-up. Such efforts would require policies designed to decentralize Guinea-Bissau's political system and redress the dysfunctionality of its institutions. If done appropriately, these could reinforce communities' autonomy and improve access to basic services. Havik and Forrest explore several ideas to this effect, including the notion of syncretic institutions. At the local level, elected municipal councils could be set up in ways that create synergies with existing endogenous traditions. This would enable these state bodies to benefit from local syncretic leadership practices. The representatives elected to these local bodies would operate through respected community associations. This approach, according to the authors, would minimize the overlap between local authorities and help to preserve existing community structures.

Popular Angst and Opportunities

This volume underscores Guinea-Bissau's deep popular frustration with the nation's chronic political instability. In the eyes of its citizens, endemic conflicts among political elites have rendered the state incapable of fostering development. Nine out of ten Bissau-Guineans fear that elite power struggles could lead to political violence. No other nation in West Africa exhibits a comparable level of anxiety and resentment over the nation's misrule and endemic poverty.[15]

The lessons, here, are as clear as they are urgent: Guinea-Bissau needs to prioritize its political development in order to undertake effective development policies. Bissau-Guineans are painfully aware of this, as our research findings show. Attempts to address this predicament must capitalize on this social energy. Popular anger need not lead to feelings of helplessness. If adroitly framed, it can inspire creative solutions and hearten their pursuit with vigor.

Efforts to stabilize the country's polity through appropriate democratic formulas are crucial to this task. Various chapters in our volume discuss relevant institutional reforms.[16] The critical change, however, will need to address issues of political behavior and culture. This requires a clear grasp of how politics works in Guinea-Bissau and full awareness of the influential role played by its political parties, factions and movements. Altering conditions and norms that sustain problematic political practices call for a sharp assessment of what is to be done and a mid-to-long-run theory of change. Investments made to prepare a new generation of Bissau-Guinean leaders will be of crucial importance. Much can be done to reinforce democratic values, hone leadership skills and improve capacity for public deliberation among aspiring political and civil society activists

Undertakings of this kind should be viewed as part of a broader effort to foster civic engagement, especially among youth and women. The country's broad sensibilities around environmental issues suggest these concerns could offer an attractive venue for such actions.[17]

[15] See chapters 1, 5 and 6 in this volume.
[16] See chapters 10, 11 and 13 in this volume.
[17] See chapter 1 in this volume.

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Civic activities can produce various short-term benefits. Most importantly, though, they can set in motion a broader process of transformation by nurturing new patterns of social behavior and leadership, grounded on alternative values. These changes can, over time, steadily undercut support for harmful practices and pave the way for necessary political reforms.

Our research has revealed that Guinea-Bissau offers great potential for working with women and empowering female leaders.[18] Women can bring a distinct dynamism, practical acumen and ethics of care to the nation's public arena. The future of Guinea-Bissau hinges significantly on its ability to develop a stable and open government. To succeed, this transformation must rely on the resilience and wisdom that women can bestow on the nation's political life.

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[18] See chapters 3, 5 and 9 in this volume.

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