

## **Military coup on September 5, 2021 in Guinea**

On September 5, 2021, a military coup took place in Guinea, as a result of which the 83-year-old President Alpha Condé was ousted from power and a group of the military led by Lieutenant Colonel Mamady Doumbouya, commander of the Guinean Special Forces, seized power in the state. The putschists dissolved parliament and government, revoked the constitution, announced the replacement of civilian governors, prefects and other officials with army officers, temporarily closed land and air borders, and issued the now common appeal accusing the previous regime of human rights violations, mismanagement, connivance of corruption and other sins, promising citizens peace, tranquility and increased material well-being.

The coup, realized literally « at the speed of light » was considered as a peaceful one by the international community: it's true as, during the process, « only » from 3 to 13 people has lost their lives; the president was put under home detention in a hotel in the capital, with a doctor's surveillance and nothing seems to put his life in danger. Members of the government « peacefully » gave up their passports, or in other words, they lost a possibility to leave the country, but weren't arrested.

Presidential guard appeared to be unable to protect the head of State. The parts of regular army which didn't take part in the coup (approximately 12 thousand soldiers and officers), chosen by Alpha Condé himself, who believed in the loyalty of the members of his ethnical group - Mandingo, ended up swearing allegiance to Doumbouya (even if there were reports of small confrontations in some peripheral regions) which belongs to the same ethnical group, what is not surprising as Condé named him commander of special task forces! That means that in this case, there is no place to the disagreements between ethnical groups, which are often one of conflicts' reasons, including in army.

18 opposition parties published a collective statement, in which they supported the army and its ambition to launch « deep constitutional reforms ». Guineans massively saluted military's coup. Thousands of people in Conakry and other cities came on streets, to celebrate Condé's dethronement, which has really lost his popularity the last few years. So, the coup wasn't unattended.

Usually the operative commentaries, concerning such cases in Africa, suggests as the reasons of military coups the « pauperization of the population », « unfair distribution of an income », « political instability », « repressive character of a regime », « government which is unable to ensure the basic services to the citizens », « army's disturbance by the conditions of its service », « a struggle for a power and the access to the resources by the fractions », « impressive corruption » etc. and everything of this is true and was observed the last years in Guinea, as in many other African countries, where the regimes' discontent doesn't necessarily leads to the violent change of a regime; and a leader, even which one was violating constitutional limitations on the presidential terms, won the elections every time, obtaining the majority of votes of the electors. That means that every coup, in pair with « common », has its « particular » reasons, which could be connected with the relationship between a government and an army, with the behavior of regime's leaders, conspirator's personal offenses etc, their motives being clear, only some time after, due to the lack of necessary information.

It's possible to point a lot of reasons of September's coup- social-economical, political and others. It is true that under the Condé's rule, Guinea remained one of the poorest countries in Africa, even if during the last 10 years (he became president for the first time in 2010 and was re-elected in 2015 and 2020) of his leadership, the country obtained a relative economical stability: the growth of GDP in the pre-COVID period was at 6% per year and had to overcome 8% in the next years. But the IMF characterized the situation in 2019, in Guinean economy, as « a growth without development ». This is explained by the success in the mining industry in the sacrifice of the other sectors. And even if the macroeconomic success didn't influence a lot a material situation of the majority of Guineans before, with the beginning of COVID-19 they became more and more forgotten.

In 2020, the GDP's growth- despite the pandemic, due to the unstoppable export of bauxite, remained at the level of 5,2%- what was bigger than in many other African countries, but the social-economic situation in Guinea, depending from the import of many goods, including provision became to degrade. In the January 2021, the prices on imported flour, grains and sugar have raised and under the pressure of the National Union of Bakers, the government raised the bread's prices from 1500 to 2000 Guineans francs (0,2 US dollars) for a 250 g. bread, that has conducted the wave of protests which forced the administration to cancel its decision. However, this has led to the lack of bread in many regions, as the bakers refused to product the goods for the same, regulated tariffs. The confrontation between them, the authorities and the population has ended by the even bigger growth of the prices and, obviously, by the growth of discontent.

One month before the coup, a raise of gasoline's price from 9 to 11 thousands of Guinean francs (1,12 US dollars) per litre was announced. An introduction of new and the raise of previous taxes was approved to « equalize the budget ». With the epidemic on the background, which obligated the government to increase the assignments on the social security and to order the millions of doses of the vaccine, the Guineans could possibly put up with the growth of prices and taxes, if Condé, which seems to be confident in the solidity of his position after the 2020's elections, would not suggest in parallel to increase the financing of the Parliament and the presidential services (including the raise of salaries of the high-level functionaries) and to cut the resources, emitted on the army and police, that had to conclude to the lowering of the soldier's and officer's revenues. The army could not ignore that, and, in general, they took advantage of the dissatisfaction of situation in society.

The bread riots and other conflicts continued during all the first half of 2021. That means that at the moment of the coup, the situation in the country was so unstable, that many of Guineans, could totally suggest the intervention of the army as a solution of many problems.

One of the reasons of the coup could be considered the residents of the country's dissatisfaction by the results of October 18, 2020 presidential elections, where Condé won for the third time, obtaining 59,5% of the votes of electors (the results could be falsified). At the time, the electoral campaign took place with the active protests on the background, against Condé's candidature on the state post, because this was violating the statement in the constitution on the limitation of the presidential competence by only two terms. As the result, the officials organized a referendum, where 91,6% of participants agreed the amendments in the Constitution to prolong the presidential term for 6 years (it was 5 years before), maintaining the two possible terms, and Condé has used these modifications to set two zero his first two terms of rule.

Consider that, the introduction of the changes in the Constitution to keep the power is not something new for Africa: Condé was just « yet another one » in the list of heads of State which has done so. Even more, the population, in its majority, usually supports the leader which rules for decades and which guarantees a relative political stability and a growth of living conditions (example - Yoweri Museveni in Uganda) and which ignores the lessons of « political literacy », offered by the opposition. But this is not the Condé's case: the injustice in the share of revenues from export of precious materials (bauxite and gold) was too obvious as the growth of corruption and the cruelty to the regime's opponents.

So, the army could be assured in the population's support, which is often seems to be forgetting. Some Guineans, which surrounded the members of coup at the streets, cried that they are proud of the special forces and are blaming the « killers », suspecting the president and his entourage, but that was the army, together with police forces, who was actively participating in repressions during the 2020 elections, when during the confrontations with the security forces 30 people has died. By the way, Doumbouya is one of the 25 Guinean officers, which were threatened by the European Union's sanctions for the suggested violations of the human rights, exercised during the last years of Condé's rule.

When the army has captured the power they have formed a National committee for rally and development (CNRD), which, according to Doumbouya, had to « take the responsibility for the future of Guinea » which is « in a difficult political situation ». The new leader, declared the

president of the country on the 5th of September, is a regular army soldier, graduated from Paris military school, completed with perfection. He has more than a 15 year military experience, colonel, commander of a group of special task forces (*Groupement des forces speciales*)- an elite military division, created by Alpha Condé in 2018.

Doumbouya was born in 1980 (he is actually 41 years old) in the region of Kankan in the east of the country, at the border with Mali et Cote d'Ivoire. He has followed military trainings in Israel (at the Security academy), Cyprus, Great Britain, Senegal and Gabon; participated in the international military missions in Afghanistan, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Central African Republic. During his service in the French Foreign Legion he exercised the functions of instructor of the risks analysis and the emergent decision makings; then he was a member of United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM) where he participated in the February 2020 in the military (anti-terrorist) exercises « Flintlock » (by the way, with one of the organizers of military coups of 2020 and 2021 and the actual president of Mali, Assimi Goita). Doumbouya has become second the most youngest of the actual African leaders, after Goita.

It seems that he is really a high-qualified officer- one of those, that African armies need so much, but not in the head of State. But his ability to conquer the power so fast witnesses about his organizer skills and leadership qualities which could be useful for him to rule the country.

However, Doumbouya has a Master degree in the sphere of military industry, obtained in the University Panthéon-Assas (« Paris II »), in other words the new Guinea's president is a well-educated man, with whom it could be easier to establish the relationship, than if he was a simple regular army soldier: everything will depend from his political views.

As a commander of a special task group, Doumbouya was firstly showed to Guinean community on the 2 of October 2018- during a military parade celebrating the 60th anniversary of Guinean independence. For two years he tried to transform his unit in an independent military structure, but Condé was not agree, seemingly understanding a threat of an autonomous, specially trained- mostly abroad- military group, composed of, according to the different sources, barely 100 persons, but able to affront the regular army, presidential guard, which soldiers as seemed later were « still sleeping » during the presidential palace assault.

On the spring 2021 the rumors of a soon arrest of Doumbouya appeared, as a tension between him and the minister of defense Mohamed Diane, which, as more, transferred the special task group from the capital to the city of Forecariah's base, located in the couple of hours from Conakry. There is no doubts that these circumstances- in the context of the cuts of the military budget (Doumbouya complained many times that his unit is in a lack of resources) - could be the possible reasons of the coup. It is possible that the anger of the population due to the economical situation and the reset to zero of the presidential mandates were the favorable background to accomplish a coup.

The international community - General secretary of the UN Antonio Guterres, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrel, heads of African States, high representatives of the European countries, the USA and the others has collectively blamed the coup leaders and reclaimed to free the president. ECOWAS and the African Union stopped the membership of Guinea at these organizations.

Meanwhile, the Doumbouya's long stay abroad, exercises in the various international forces, leaded by the French and the Americans suggest an idea that the external forces are responsible for a coup. As so, from mid-July a group of American special task soldiers (« Green Berets ») trained in Forecariah approximately one hundred Guinean soldiers from Doumbouya's special task group. And from that city, Sunday, 5 of September, early in the morning, members of the coup would arrive at the capital, to organise an overturn. Later the Americans declared that they had no information that such event is possible and that the Guineans just « squeezed » away from the base, but on the photos of the crowd, greeting the members of the coup, it is possible to spot smiling American soldiers. The interest of the USA in Guinea's precious materials and to push out China and Russia from Guinean mining sector makes no doubt. That means that the United States' condemnns are partly craftiness. Anyway, it is a first case in Africa when a coup was realized during the military training under the control of the Americans.

The massive entry of the Chinese in Guinea was unpleasant for France - former metropole, during all the postcolonial period (Guinea gained its independence in 1958) which unsuccessfully tried to take the country back, which is not even a member of The West African Economic and Monetary Union, unifying former French regional colonial territories. Moreover, Doumbouya's service in the Foreign Legion, French nationality and the French wife- officer of a military police- gives an opportunity to suggest that Paris has a role in Septembers' coup, as France is in need of the African raw material.

China and Russia has also spoke and condemned the coup. This time, China has even refused from its principle of non-intervention in the affairs of the African States and harshly reclaimed the return in power for the overthrown president. That does not surprises: PRC is one of the biggest investors in the Guinean economy with the invests superior than 35-45 billions of dollars, according to various evaluations. Alpha Condé was accused that he « sold the country to China », which the last years was buying more than just mine shafts and infrastructure objects, but also the media. In 2017 in the counterpart of a 20 billion dollars loan, China obtained a concession to extract the mine of bauxite of 20 billion tons. Just after the information about the coup, the actions of Chinese bauxite extraction company- the first victim of a coup- *China Hongqiao Group Ltd* has lost 4% of its value. 14 Chinese companies are charged in bauxite extraction; in 2020 PRC has imported from this country 52,7 millions of tons of bauxite. As the biggest producer of aluminium in the world, China as none other State in the world is interested in a stable Guinea.

Russia is also interested in this. The last years was actively developed the military cooperation between Russian Federation and Guinea just like in the other domains as mining, exploration, energy, fish industry and others. In 2020 the amount of trade turnover was at the 155,2 millions of dollars (153,5 millions of dollars in 2019). (The structure of Russian export is dominated by the machines, equipment, vehicles, nutrition goods and farming raw. Import from Guinea in 2020 was at 100% composed of bauxite).

Guinea's has the largest bauxite reserve in the world. It has 26,4% of the world's reserves and 20% of extraction, which is from 2015 to 2020 has grown more than 4 times. Bauxite represents 60% of Guineans exports (19% - gold, the rest - agriculture). In 2020 the country has shipped 84,2 millions of tons of bauxite, the largest part in China. The wealth in natural resources of Guinea explains the agiotage in the world caused by the September's coup.

United company RUSAL, which founded in 2001 « Company of bauxite of Kindia », invested more than 300 millions of dollars in the Guinean economy and supplies by the raw the Russian factories, ensuring approximately 25% of national production of aluminium. In April 2018, RUSAL launched the extraction of one of the largest mines of bauxite « Dian-Dian » (confirmed reserves- 564 millions of tons); in June of the same year it has launched the production of aluminous factory « Frigia » in the city of Fria. RUSAL is responsible for more than 40% of bauxite extracted in Guinea, knowing that the company has not only the economic activity in the country: in terms of cooperation against coronavirus on base of Frigia in June 2020 was opened a multi-functional medical centre to treat the inflectional diseases.

Even if Doumbouya declared that under his leadership all the international obligations of Guinea would be respected, the aluminium prices on the London Stock Exchange has raised to the record amount on the 6th of September- 2745 dollars per ton. That means that the stock started to include in the price on aluminium the possible perturbations with shipping, which could impact the global production chain of aluminium, RUSAL and other industries operating in the country. However, on the Moscow Stock Exchange the RUSAL's actions raised in price by 7%, that means that it is too soon to speak about the company's losses.

A probable control on the bauxite's/aluminium's market could be one of the targets of the coup; in this case the members of the coup should not permit the interruption of shipping on the worlds raw markets, which is important for the country and the regime survival. It is also possible that that is why army keeps peaceful rhetoric and the industry keeps a normal way of work, but it should not be excluded that the labor and fiscal legislation will be modified, just like the agreements conditions, concluded under Condé.

Guinea's political situation could impact all of the Western Africa. Surely, the « merits » of Doumbouya were partially encouraged by the « successes » of his colleague A. Goita in the neighbor Mali. In the web-blogs has already appeared- on the background of greets designated to the Guinean rebels- the appeals to change the power in the African countries. The successful coup can destabilize the West-African region even more, which already knows the growth of Islamic extremism and the crisis in economy and social security.

The most deplorable in all of this is that social-economical and political situation in the countries, surviving a military coup, usually does not become better and rarely positively influences the situation of the most vulnerable segments of the population. The most often, the army, declaring having the « good intentions », captures the power only to « redistribute the state resources », and as the junta is not responsible to anyone (except the sponsors and investors), there is only the hope that the common sense of the new Guinean establishment would be superior on the personal interest.

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