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FROM MILITARY POLITIZATION TO MILITARIZATION
OF POWER IN GUINEA-CONAKRY

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This historical analysis of state-military society relationship in Guinea focuses on Sékou Touré's political survival due in part to his political indoctrination of an army constantly involved in Pan-African battles and overshadowed by the National Militia. It also addresses this army's transition from a single-party regime to multiparty politics via a bloodless coup. Particularly underlined in the discussion, Touré's intelligent exploitation of Cold War localized maneuvers lays the ground for a conceptual framework envisioning the Guinean military as a revolutionary army. This theoretical argument is made in light of the sociological debate on the military and politics as sustained by specialists such as Amos Perlmutter, Valerie Bennett, and Claude E. Welch, Jr. The article finally examines the political strategy applied by General Lansana Conté's current semi-military "democratic" regime and its major achievements while exposing the tactic of ethnic alienation and psychological manipulation of the army used by both leaders.

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This article is a historical analysis of the relations between the state and the military in the Republic of Guinea (Conakry). It focuses on the regime of the Parti Démocratique de Guinée (PDG) under the late President Ahmed Sékou Touré by addressing the following central questions. How did the regime manage to contain and use the Guinean military for its own survival in a political and diplomatic environment deliberately destabilized by France, its Western allies, and African satellite states? This survival is especially remarkable in light of the fact that seemingly more stable and secure regimes easily succumbed to repetitive coups across Africa. Why did Touré's enduring regime succumb so fast to its own indoctrinated and supportive military soon after his death? Has it succumbed anyway? What was the true nature of the military's relation with Sékou Touré the leader, on the one hand, and with the Guinean people under Sékou Touré on the other hand?

Secondly, the analysis includes the current regime of General Lansana Conté and focuses on the changes and challenges undergone by yesterday's "Revolutionary Armed Forces of Guinea" in the last fifteen years of semi-military and/or semi-civilian "democratic" rule.
THE GUINEAN ARMY AS A REVOLUTIONARY ARMY

The armed forces created from scratch on November 1, 1958, in the newly independent Guinea, bore most of the characteristics sociologically attributed to "revolutionary armies" by specialists such as Amos Perlmutter and Valerie Plave Bennett. The soldier exemplifying them to some extent fits Perlmutter and Bennett's description of a revolutionary as being "neither a bureaucratic agent of the regime (as is the professional soldier) nor the menacing praetorian guard; he is rather an independent and co-equal part of the government." (1980:4).

As such, those forces differed from their praetorian counterparts and resembled anything but Claude E. Welch, Jr.'s stereotypical description of African armies as "the remnant of a time of 'national shame' in the eyes of prominent politicians" (1970:7). The Guinean armed forces fell into the category of "revolutionary armies" by their strict observance of the national agenda set by the legitimate state in place. Their revolutionary nature also fits the universal positivity and the intellectual characterization of the concept. Therefore they ought to be envisioned in a perspective incorporating all considerations of the scientific and societal status of the military versus its political influence upon society and upon the state in history.

According to leading advocates of the historical legitimacy of "revolutionary armies" like Amos Perlmutter and Valerie Plave Bennett, despite the differing contexts in which they have historically existed, and despite their political distinctions, revolutionary armies have served noble purposes in a like manner. "The only type of soldier that has achieved professional proficiency and pride, as well as a high status in his society and state, is the professional revolutionary soldier" these authors argue. This also implies that "the existence of the revolutionary soldier demonstrates that professionalism and corporatism are not necessarily linked, and that one is not needed to advance the other." It furthermore implies that "a professional stance does not necessarily prevent intervention; nor does a corporate orientation (as the case of Nazi Germany illustrates) necessarily bring about intervention." Finally, in history, "high professional performance and corporate pride have been enhanced by the least corporate-oriented of all soldiers, the revolutionaries" (Perlmutter, Amos and Bennett 1980:21).

Thus, whether in Revolutionary America under General George Washington or in Vietnam under Ho Chi Min, such forces fought revolutionary wars. While also agreeing with these authors that revolutionary armies are not limited to those fighting against foreign occupation, we may well consider their following characterization of the revolutionary soldier.
The most distinguishable characteristic of the revolutionary soldier is that he will not defend the principle of exclusivity, as will the historical professional and praetorian soldiers. He is anti-corporate or non-corporate. Whereas the motivation of the corporate professional is often defensive, the political motivation of the revolutionary soldier is integrated with a revolutionary movement. The revolutionary soldier is dedicated to mass military mobilization; he represents no social class. Successful revolutionary soldiers are not necessarily those trained to be professional soldiers; lateral integration of other professional skills into the military can introduce valuable innovations in military organization format, strategy, and tactics. (Perlmutter, Amos, & Bennett 1980:21)

Recruited and trained not by colonial officers but by Guinean veterans of WWII, the Indochina, and the Algerian wars, the primary members of Guinea's armed forces mobilized under the national flag as proud products of the "Guinean Revolution" (Touré 1967:279). In *The Doctrine and Methods of the Democratic Party of Guinea*, Sékou Touré profiled them as follows: "The Army of the Republic of Guinea is not an army of conquest and domination, it is the army for building Guinea's sovereignty." Conscious of his function as Commander in Chief of the Guinean army, Touré emphasized: "Bound to the Nation and its People by the liberation pact, which every Guinean soldier subscribed to, it is not intended for bloody destruction, for unjust wars, for brutal repressions." He furthermore insisted that "we want it [the Guinean army] to be a part of our emancipation movement and to retain its fraternal ties with the People of Guinea; it will share their burdens and troubles, pleasures and happiness, and it should also become one of their principal creative forces" (Touré 1967:279).

With such a task at stake, those forces could only be in Touré's view "citizens in uniform who have the honor at all times of being at the forefront of the Revolution" (Touré 1967:279). According to him, this is why when we celebrate People's Army Day every year on November 1, there is a communion of thought among all the strata of the Nation's workers. This is because the creation of an armed force which is and will remain the dynamic sector of the national defense is not an outgrowth of the selfish interests of our military brothers, but grew out of the overriding need to provide the country with an
appropriate tool to be the constant safeguard of its integrity, liberty and security [sic]. (Touré 1967:282)

Never allowing the National Armed Forces to dissociated from the rest of the Guinean people, President Touré maintained that “our people’s army is not and could not be...a mercenary army destined to make force triumph over right. Its role is identical with that of the people...of Guinea, mobilized in the building of a prosperous and just society” (1967:279). It is clear that, in order to identify the methods Sékou Touré used to manipulate and control his army, any discussion must be historical.