

GUINEA SCENARIOS : ALPHA FORGES ON

Guinea faces a defining year in 2020, with legislative elections and a controversial constitutional reform tabled for 1 March, as well as a high-stakes presidential election set for October. President Alpha Condé's decision to pursue constitutional reforms, likely allowing him to stand for a third elected term will provide the central theme for the electoral cycle. In a country with a history of political instability, deep divisions in the political landscape will be fanned by the referendum controversy, triggering unrest, which could ultimately lead to a more far-reaching crisis.



President Alpha Condé

Under the current constitution, Condé will serve out his final mandate in December 2020. However, with the President set to force through the referendum alongside legislative elections in a fortnight's time, most analysts agree Condé now seems to have set his sights on a third term in office, using a new constitution as his route to remain in power. Mounting opposition protests and a threat to boycott the upcoming elections have not changed the President's course. But should the crisis escalate in the coming months, the prospect of deeper instability will increase.

In the meantime, while existing mining operators who form the backbone of the economy are watching with unease as opposition protesters threaten to shut down mining activity in the Boké region, new investments across the economy are also slowing down as investors adopt a cautious approach to the uncertain political outlook. Under most scenarios, a short-term drop in fresh investment over the next year appears inevitable. But if crisis sets in, the economic implications could be far more dramatic.





..... AN ELECTION FRAUGHT WITH RISK

On coming to power in 2010, the Condé administration focused on reviving an economy which had suffered from mismanagement and reduced investment during the preceding period of junta rule. Securing a landmark debt write-off, launching a revised mining code and improving domestic energy supply were some of its most notable early achievements. Since then, the government has begun to reap dividends from its strategy, with growth climbing to around 6% in 2019. However, development remains uneven and many citizens feel their lives have not significantly improved despite a booming mining sector. Socio-economic discontent is further complicated by the country’s polarised political landscape in which ethnic fault lines play a role in shaping perceptions around the haves and the have-nots.




Since October 2019, political tensions have grown considerably following the launch of constitutional reforms. At least 20 people have died during mass protests, and human rights activists have denounced violence and arbitrary arrests by the country’s security forces. An opposition boycott of the March legislative elections and constitutional referendum appears inevitable, damaging the legitimacy of the potentially momentous result.

The embattled and internally divided electoral commission (CENI) recently published the names of the 29 parties which will run in the legislative elections and almost all of them are part of the presidential movement. Opposition leaders such as Cellou Diallo and Sidya Touré have denounced the process, requesting that the electoral register be reviewed and that a new president of the CENI be appointed for them to lift their boycott. But past concerns of these nature have largely been ignored or subject to window-dressing reforms - and a change of course by the headstrong President seems unlikely at this late stage.

Human rights activists have criticized the international community for its mixed response. International actors have largely issued bland statements calling for inclusive dialogue and for due process to be followed, urging for calm whenever violence flares. Arguably the most outspoken has been the former Russian Ambassador who called controversially for Condé to have a third term. Meanwhile, the EU, US, ECOWAS and others have largely focused on the need for stability rather than getting pulled into a messy debate around national sovereignty, providing only veiled criticisms of the constitutional reform process and its underlying premise. The tone of this rhetoric could change however, as Guinea enters a critical juncture in its electoral cycle.



SCENARIOS SUMMARY

	Most likely: Condé forges on (45%)	Credible alternative: Legal limbo (35%)	Outlier: All change (20%)
Triggers 	<p>Despite stiff resistance and violent protests, Condé pushes ahead with constitutional reform and declares his candidacy for the October 2020 elections. Opposition boycotts and rising violence undermine the result legitimacy, but Condé ultimately emerges with a third elected term, exploiting his incumbency and opposition divisions.</p>	<p>Mounting protests and disruption as well as a strident opposition boycott result in repeated delays to the electoral calendar. The failure to hold a presidential election by December causes a constitutional crisis, and a period of transition occurs, with Condé still at the helm.</p>	<p>Amid mounting domestic and international pressure over the third term issue, Condé eventually agrees to stand aside and manage a succession. Despite his bid to enable a trusted acolyte such as Kassory Fofana to inherit the RPG-Arc-en-ciel political structure, the party fractures amid competing rivalries.</p>
Developments 	<p>The political landscape becomes increasingly heated and protests in Conakry are relentless. The government argues the referendum was a popular vote, and pushes ahead with its agenda. Despite some concerns over the potential for instability, Condé's control of the state apparatus averts a deeper crisis.</p>	<p>Concerns over the potential for a coup mount amid a major political crisis that pushes the government into unconstitutional grounds. The inability to find political compromise causes major setbacks and although Condé ultimately agrees to a managed transition under stiff diplomatic pressure, the potential for an opportunistic government overthrow raises major concerns.</p>	<p>Amid a divided playing field, Cellou Dalein Diallo manages to use his position as the candidate with the largest voter base to forge tactical alliances in a second round run-off, notably aligning with Sidya Touré to secure a narrow victory. Concerns mount over the transition to the opposition, given the scope for military intervention but a peaceful handover eventually happens.</p>
Outcomes 	<p>Despite a drop in investment in 2020, investors are cautiously content to continue engaging with a Condé administration they feel they have the measure of. Condé's third term is marked by increased insecurity and political rancour but policy and stakeholder dynamics remain broadly stable, enabling continued investment.</p>	<p>Investor confidence is severely dented and although mining projects are able to continue operating, new investments largely freeze. The prolonged uncertainty damages growth and stalls progress in many parts of the economy.</p>	<p>Following a tense electoral cycle, the new government seeks to conduct sweeping reviews of past agreements signed by its predecessor, also reviewing legislation in some areas. Significant changes in personnel create disruption and expose the inexperience of the new government. Investor unease rises though the government eventually settles in, restoring some continuity.</p>

1 } CONDÉ FORGES ON: Condé pushes through constitutional reform & secures re-election

45%

TRIGGERS



- > Constitutional referendum and legislative elections take place on 1 March with the ruling movement securing a resounding victory on both fronts
- > Opposition boycotts and stages violent rallies but fails to stop the process
- > Constitutional reforms are advanced amid resistance and Condé declares his candidacy for the October presidential election
- > International community criticisms are muted and action is limited to supporting dialogue
- > The lead-up to the October election is volatile but Condé's control of the state apparatus and national profile ultimately enable him to secure victory
- > Despite some post-electoral violence and state abuses, the authorities maintain control and prevent a major escalation in unrest

IMPLICATIONS & ANALYSIS



- Despite accusations of irregularities and fraud amid large-scale protests, the opposition fails to galvanise enough domestic or international support to challenge or overturn the results. Protest fatigue and a diplomatic corps focused on stability gradually reinforce the legitimacy of Condé's presidential authority, even if this is significantly reduced from his prior mandates. The opposition comes out of the presidential elections significantly weakened.
- Despite a dip in investor confidence around the elections, political continuity and a belief in Condé's development vision ultimately sees international interest revive. Existing operations continue to operate largely undisrupted while there is an increase in new investment, including beyond traditional mining sources. Institutional continuity helps in this regard. However, concerns over Condé's age and the lack of succession plans grow over the course of his third mandate, providing scope for instability to cause disruption over the longer term.

2 }

LEGAL LIMBO:

Protests trigger state of limbo and potential crisis

35%

**TRIGGERS**

- > Opposition protests grow increasingly tense and frequent in the run-up to the presidential election, requiring security force interventions and causing sustained shutdowns in Conakry and key mining areas such as Boké.
- > The government and opposition struggle to find common ground and most opposition parties announce that they will boycott both the referendum and the presidential election
- > The international community calls vocally for a mediated political solution outside of the traditional electoral roadmap
- > A deepening political crisis disrupts electoral planning and financing
- > Opposition leaders face arrest and imprisonment for inciting violence
- > The presidential poll is postponed past the December constitutional limit, causing a constitutional crisis
- > Condé continues to rule in a state of legal limbo and political unrest increases. A transitional roadmap back to elected rule is developed with Diallo and Touré at the table
- > The risk of a coup increases in conjunction with escalating violence

**IMPLICATIONS & ANALYSIS**

- Amid a mounting political crisis and growing international pressure, Condé is forced to negotiate with the opposition but the two sides struggle to find compromise. As the constitutional term ends, Guinea enters a period of legal limbo with Condé still at the helm. Faith in the country's political system is severely damaged and social divisions increase amid economic stagnation and political rancour. Protests are sustained as Condé promises a transition back to elected rule but debate over his candidacy continues. Eventually he accedes to pressure, paving the way for a transition with opposition leaders forming part of the mediated solution. But this drags out over more than a year, prolonging uncertainties.
- Under this scenario, it is credible that the state of limbo escalates into a full-blown crisis, triggering a coup. Against the backdrop of escalating violence, the military steps in to guarantee law and order, and restore national stability. However, the move is condemned by domestic political actors and the international community alike. A lengthy and fraught transition back to elected rule begins. Guinea's economy suffers the consequences with donors suspending support and foreign investors stalling investment plans - some businesses even shut up shop. Mining projects in operation are only moderately affected, providing a vital fiscal lifeline to the government but Guinea's economy struggles.

3 } ALL CHANGE: Condé backs down & RPG splinters

20%



TRIGGERS

- > In the face of mounting protests and stiff diplomatic pressure, Condé opts to stand aside
- > In an alternative and less likely trigger, the referendum process sees high turnout of opposition supporters who manage to block the necessary majority for constitutional reform
- > Once Condé decides not to stand for re-election, the RPG fractures, creating a divided playing field with several high-profile figures running for the presidency
- > Despite some concerns, the military does not intervene in politics, allowing a landmark transition



IMPLICATIONS & ANALYSIS

- Following a period of politicking marked by a backdrop of mounting protests and diplomatic pressure, Condé chooses not to stand for re-election and instead appoints a dauphin, most likely current prime minister Ibrahima Kassory Fofana. Others within the party including RPG parliamentary leader Amadou Damaro Camara, covet the presidency and the RPG splinters. Cellou Dalein Diallo is the lead candidate in the presidential election and politicians like Sidya Touré and Lansana Kouyaté also run in the first round. Ethnic allegiances play a crucial role in the result of the election though unlike in 2010, Diallo has more luck securing tactical allegiances in a second round run-off to emerge as the narrow victor.
- The election is followed by a brief period of uncertainty, but the overwhelming feeling is of relief that the country has navigated a potentially volatile transition. Should a Diallo administration secure power, an extensive and highly politicised anti-corruption drive and review of past contracts is likely, fanning tensions. The risk of a coup over the course of the administration will also increase, with the military's relationship with government being marked by mutual distrust.

Investor confidence is knocked due to the government's efforts to unpick some of the networks and failings of the previous administration in what is widely perceived as a political witch-hunt. The new leadership's lack of government experience also shows, slowing key processes and complicating decision-making throughout the bureaucratic apparatus. However, after a turbulent first year, the government begins to settle into its role and growth picks up again, albeit not at the pace of what was witnessed from 2016-20.