

(Intermittent) Poverty and Peace in Guinea-Bissau

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Abstract

The research on the correlations between poverty and conflicts in Guinea-Bissau has allowed to put in evidence not only the direct implications of the effective war of 1998/1999 over the living conditions of the country's population, as well as the effects the conflicts - either effective or eminent - have over life in general, individual investments of different kinds and on reliance on the state and institutions. Although the fundamentally qualitative investigation highlighted the diversity of individual and family situations, it allowed identifying a denominator seen as common in most of the collected accounts : war and, in the case study of Guinea-Bissau, the perpetuation of an insecure environment, constitute causes for the increase in poverty and concur simultaneously to its reproduction through time.

Introduction

The present analysis concerning the Guinea-Bissau case study is integrated in the research project *Poverty and Peace in the PALOP*, sponsored by the Foundation for Science and Technology. This project is focused on the relation between poverty and peace, according to the standpoint of several social actors. Despite the multiplication of research projects about either one or the other phenomenon in several African countries – and namely in the Portuguese-speaking African countries (PALOP) – the occasions in which are explored and established causal relations or mutual implications among them are quite uncommon yet. Even less usual is the systematic collection of empirical data about the correlations between poverty/wealth and peace/war under the perspective of the social actors who experience these situations along their lifetime. Having taken into consideration this sort of information and the opportunity to compare data between countries with distinctive backgrounds in terms of poverty and conflicts, this article integrates the results of the field research conducted in Guinea-Bissau, while simultaneously outlines comparative research subjects within the framework of the PALOP and of other African cases.

The foreseen comparison involves African countries which, while sharing some common ground – specifically a colonial background, the period when the independences took place, type of social and economic systems adopted following the independence – also distinguish much from each other: regarding the processes and rates of development in the colonial and post-colonial periods; regarding the manner how situations of peace/conflict have evolved after the independence. The focus on the correlation peace/poverty, in the sphere of broader researches on the causes for the high rates of poverty registered in these countries, places this project within a scope of studies whose purpose is to clarify the processes affecting development. The research purposes of this project concern the research of a differentiated influence of conflicts in several countries (including its absence). It aims to confirm if can be established a direct connection between these two types of condition – poverty and peace/war – or if, quite the contrary, there are other factors to consider along the processes of development and fight against poverty.

This global research has entailed an analysis of the available information regarding the mentioned correlation, however focusing a fundamental part of the investigation in the consubstantiation of information, by means of an empirical exploration centered on life stories of individuals who, in these countries, have seen their living conditions improve or degrade due the occurrence of peace or war. The collection of information in the field was made not only alongside institutions working directly on matters related to poverty and with substantial knowledge on the subject, but equally through a range of individuals possessing distinctive characteristics who, by open interviews and extensive life narratives, have accounted their life paths and created correlations between their experienced socioeconomic situations and several stages of peace and conflicts endured in their respective nations.

The project engages on partnerships with local research institutions. In the case of Guinea-Bissau, the research was associated to the INEP – Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisa (National Institute for Studies and Research), with Alfredo Handem as the corresponding researcher participating as a consultant and conducting interviews locally. The advantage of this collaboration goes beyond the strengthening of scientific collaboration between institutions and multinational research teams, since the skills in specific local matters and language were of an extremely important added value. They have, likewise, permitted a better adaptation of research tools to the reality of each chosen country and chosen region, as well as the selection of relevant social actors.

Therefore, the elements here presented concern the analysis and description of the evolutions of war and poverty according to the collected narratives. These narratives are, for the purpose of this article, gathered together with existing theoretical and methodological information on these subjects, in addition to records concerning national backgrounds produced for various purposes. The comparative goal in the project is followed through the presentation of relevant information, taking into account the use of shared methodologies and research tools, adapted to the diverse national contexts.

Contextualization of conflicts

Two recent wars have shaped in a rather direct manner the generations living nowadays in Guinea-Bissau: the colonial war, for independence, and the recent war, from ten years ago (1998- 1999).

There are fair wars – e.g. the national liberation war – and unfair wars – e.g. the November 14 th 1980 and June 7 th 1998. These last two actually had legitimate grounds in the beginning, in other words, the uprising intended to reinstate social justice and equity. Instead they brought more social disorder and inequality (<i>M.J., INEP, Bissau</i>)

The political situation in Guinea-Bissau may be considered, since the first conflict, as characterized by constant instability and intermittent periods when it occurred in fact. This intermittency regards the occurrence of “almost war” or potentially war-inducing episodes, such as government overthrows, attempted coups, murders, several disturbances. Concerning the colonial war and the first years of Independence in the country, the records mark the beginning of the colonial war in February 1st 1963 (preceded by a rebellion headed by the PAIGC in 1956), a conflict which opposed Portugal and the PAIGC – Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde) and ended officially in December 31st 1973. It is estimated that in the period from 1962 to 1974 may have occurred around 15,000 deaths resulting from war. However, during the

subsequent independence the political and military situation did not become more stable. An uprising in 1980 removed Luís Cabral from the country's leadership, replacing him with Nino Vieira. During the following years, Nino Vieira and his government became the targets of some overthrow attempts, in 1983, 1985 and 1993.

With regard to the second conflict, taking place in 1998-1999, it began in June 7th 1998 – opposing the government of Guinea-Bissau (supported by Guinea and Senegal) against the Junta Militar para a Consolidação da Democracia, Paz e Justiça (Military Committee for the Consolidation of Democracy, Peace and Justice) – and finished in May 10th 1999.

The civil war was launched by an attempted coup against the government headed by João Bernardo “Nino” Vieira, conducted by Brigadier Ansumane Mané in June 1998, following military confrontations between the national army and Senegalese separatists from the region of Casamance (January 1998) in two locations near the northern border of Guinea-Bissau (where the military contingents were afterwards reinforced), having caused the accusation and suspension of the then Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, Ansumane Mané, for diverting weaponry to support the separatists. At April 1998, after a public demand for national elections and an accusation made by Ansumane Mané against the Minister of Defense for supplying weaponry to the separatists, the president gives him the resignation (June 6th) and, in the next day, takes place the attempted military coup. The combats lasted until the 26th of June, causing a massive population exit from the capital and even from the country, until the mediation of CPLP office was able to establish truces between the factions. In August 25th, under the supervision of the CPLP and the ECOWAS is settled a cease-fire (Sal), and the negotiations are resumed in September (Abidjan) leading to the rebel's acceptance, in October, of the creation of a demilitarized separation area in the capital, which however was never formalized, since the combats reignited in the capital and in other cities. In October 21st, after the government's unilateral declaration of cease-fire, it was believed that almost all governmental troops had already passed to the rebel's side, controlling 99% of the country. New conversations took place in October 29th and in the 1st of November was signed a peace accord under the mediation of the ECOWAS (Abuja), having then established a deal for the composition of a joint executive committee to implement the agreement. In November 3rd Francisco Fadul is appointed Prime-Minister, then announcing in January 1999 that the elections to be supposedly carried out in March would be postponed until the end of the year. In the end of January the hostilities reignited in the capital, and in February 9th is once again settled another ceasefire accord, and at February 17th Nino Vieira and Ansumane Mané agree not to return to combat (Lomé). The new Government of National Unity is proclaimed at the 20th of February, and in the beginning of May 1999 the president announces a presidential election during the following December. In May 6th conflicts were started in Bissau and the next day Nino Vieira is deposed by the Military *Junta*, subsequently taking refuge in the Portuguese embassy and having signed an unconditional surrender. The president of the National People's Assembly, Malam Bacai Sanhá, is then appointed interim president. Nino Vieira is accused of arms trafficking in favor of the Casamance rebels and is determined that he should face a trial. He is, however, authorized to leave the country for medical reasons in June 1999. In 2000 the national presidential and legislative elections take place, resulting in the election of the PRS – Partido de Renovação Social (Social Renovation Party), and Kumba Yalá becomes president. In 2003 a new coup takes place, positioning Henrique Rosa (PRS) as the provisory president. In March 2004, the PAIGC wins once more the elections and in October 2005 Nino Vieira returns to the presidency. New legislative elections take place in November 16th 2008, which are won by the PAIGC with 49.8 % of votes. In June 2009 takes place the presidential election that nominated Malam Bacia Sanhá.

Although the (Abuja) Peace Accord had been settled in November 1st 1998, this agreement only lasted for six months. With an extremely intense beginning, the conflict diminishes in scale during 1999 and ends with the Government's victory, resulting in an

estimated tally of 6,000 deaths explicitly related to it¹. The armed conflict of 1998/1999 remained fundamentally an urban war, while the population searched for protection in rural regions where they could count on the support of family and local solidarity nets (Temudo, 2006).

The precariousness of peace has been, therefore, a constant since 1998, a latent menace in the Guinea-Bissauans' conscience. Guinea-Bissau is typically included in the group of Fragile States, according to the CPIA classification (Country Policy and Institutional Assessments) for the World Bank, characterized by generalized poverty and potential destabilization caused by poverty at national and regional levels. Regarding the internal dynamic of this instability, some reports have detected the role played by the ethnicization of State in Guinea-Bissau (Temudo, 2006) and by the differences between urban and rural dynamics. Concerning the latter, in Guinea-Bissau there is a clear distinction between the urban elite and the rural populations in regards of political matters and this tendency for political division happens mostly among the urban elites (Temudo, 2006). Despite this fact, war and instability have affected the structure of organization and development of the country, creating at the same time perceptions of insecurity, distrust towards the state and politicians, disbelief in the possibility of improved living conditions.

In all, there were three effective coup d'état and three overthrown presidents, three attempted overthrows (officially declared as such), numerous governments brought down, several assassinations, an unsustainable drug traffic situation, thousands of Guineans migrating daily to escape the absolute poverty affecting over 80% of population, etc. These and other factors, namely the generalized corruption of state institutions and the tendency for tribalism, have placed Guinea-Bissau in the center of attentions. Could war and institutional conflicts be a resource for enrichment or could they be the result of the destructuralization of society, caused by a state and Governmental incapacity to promote sustainable policies for fighting poverty? (Handem, 2008).

In addition, already in the 2nd of March 2009 Nino Vieira was murdered following the assassination of the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, General Tagme Na Waie, in the previous day. More recently, in June 4th 2009, the ex-Minister of National Defense, Helder Proença, and the candidate to the presidential elections and ex-Minister of Territorial Administration, Major Baciro Dabó, were assassinated during an alleged attempted coup. Finally, in the second turn of the presidential elections, taking place at July 26th 2009, Malam Bacai Sanhá wins the presidency of the country with over 63% of votes.

The consequences of these conflicts and instability in Guinea-Bissau are multiple. First, there is a notorious *weakening of the state*. The state has been losing authority and can not expand its influence over the entire national territory. There are regions where most of the transactions are made without any governmental awareness. Land is sold, rented or borrowed without state interference. Some events causing impact on the mobilization of population are also conducted without the presence or knowledge of the state, which

¹ Boubacar-Sid and Wodon (2007) estimate this figure to be between 2,000 and 6,000, having caused around 350 thousand internal refugees.

has only intervened when conflicts and disputes lead to physical violence. For instance, in the conflict dated from three years ago between the Fula and the Mandinga² ethnicities, it was necessary a great deal of mediation to solve the conflict, carried out by religious and communal individualities since the state felt incapable of imposing its authority on its own.

Second, it is noticeable the growing *opposition and parting between state and the remaining elements of society*. The weakening of state as the result of conflicts has steered to a radical position by the state regarding certain aspects, such as charging taxes and fees in an exaggerated and abusive manner at land and sea borders, the most common being taxes over the trade of coal, firewood, artefacts, etc. which constitute a large burden on the common population and seldom result in better revenues for the state. On the other hand, the use of force by the state has perceptible raised, as a way to impose social order. The reaction, both to the weakening of the state as to the growing antagonism against the population, is made apparent in repeated refusals to pay taxes, in attempted corruption of authorities or in the rejection of fees by means of unconventional transportation and trade of merchandises, illicit or non-declared trips across the borders, etc. This situation is frequently confirmed in popular markets (“lumu”), where the communities make their commercial transactions without or any sort of state regulation or registration.

War has equally contributed to the increase in *illegal emigration and rural exodus*. Today, in the rural areas of Guinea-Bissau, the habitants are in the largest part elder people. The “bolanhas”³ are almost paralyzed because of the shortage of labour force. The first destiny for the youngsters is the city of Bissau, where they search for ways to emigrate, mostly to Europe. Overall, and throughout the years, emigration and rural exodus have caused the decline of rural production, leaving many families dependent on seasonal businesses (from February to July) of cashew farming. On account of the insufficiency of labour available for these hard rural tasks, hunger afflicts almost the entire rural population; the income provided by the cashew is not sufficient to cover for basic expenditures. The poverty rates presently affecting the Guinean population are quite high, given that over 80% of the population survives on less than two Dollars a day. In rural surroundings, poverty is even more accentuated than in Bissau, being Bafatá, Gabú, Cachéu and Quinara the poorest regions. The private sector, which endured most of the consequences caused by this last war, still has not re-established enough to produce and provide employment to the younger population. Families purchasing power has declined significantly: nowadays, for instance, a 50kg sac of rice (the basis of domestic nourishment) costs around €30 (Euros), comparing to €18 a few years ago. The activities conducted by NGOs and churches have become almost exclusively the only interventions in favor of the community in several rural locations in Guinea, principally in matters of water supply, construction of schools, healthcare, among others.

Finally, it must be mentioned another important consequence of war and instability in Guinea-Bissau, which is a clear tendency to the ethnicization of public institutions. The placement of staff in several ministries, ascension to positions with responsibility and the nominations to service missions has become increasingly reliant on standards of

² A conflict with historical origins, due to the famous conquest war of the Mandinga Empire – which extended from Mali up to the south of the Sahara and Guinea – focused on the dispute of territories in the Bafatá region, in the east of Guinea, that ended with the Fula’s victory over the Mandinga, however with significant death tallies for both ethnicities.

³ A very labour demanding extension of land dedicated to the cultivation of rice.

ethnic and cultural affinities. This practice transformed the Guinean public administration into an arrangement of patronage with recurrent consequences noticed at the level of state weakening and departure of population. Indeed, the Guinean ethnic mosaic is portrayed by its diverse groupings, marked by the large autonomy of idioms, values and conventions within its geographic area, although there is an elevated spatial mobility (Feliciano et. al., 2008: 59-60). This tendency should be interpreted as a fragmentation of the ruling structures, being also noticeable a tendency at the political level for the continuation of instabilities and numerous disputes.

Poverty in Guinea-Bissau

It is certain that statistical data produced in Guinea-Bissau have always been associated to frailty and low liability of information. However, in most cases, they stand for the definition of policies and the research of socioeconomic questions, with due reserves, given the extreme relevance in obtaining international funding for development, combat poverty and promote the socio-political stabilization of the country. Therefore, it is pertinent to inquiry about the effective implementation and interiorization of the policies and measures related to the fight against poverty in Guinea-Bissau. Given the absence of objective results, there are many voices associating the definition of policies and production of strategic documentation for accessing international funding to the simple fulfilment of requisites demanded by these institutions: “fight against poverty in Guinea-Bissau should be viewed by two standpoints: a) pretending to care about the situation of poverty only to acquire funds (for example, the elaboration of the DENARP – Documento Nacional para a Redução de Pobreza (National Document for the Reduction of Poverty) and b) elaborating a strategic vision to fight the food deficiency as, for instance, is being done in Senegal. This is one factual concern and has nothing to do with the first standpoint” (*M.J. INEP, Bissau*).

Despite these hesitations, some broad considerations would mostly allow to establish a global outline for the evolutions of poverty and Guinean economy. Further below, it is also presented some quantitative data regarding this situation, trying to focus on the critical analysis, derived from more reliant sources.

Since the 1980s, the foundations of economic structures in Guinea-Bissau have been submitted to a substantial transformation, going from a model of socialist economy to a liberal free market model. This change had an immediate effect over the behaviours and attitudes of the economic agents and operators, resulting in fast and extensive growth of the informal economy with no corresponding growth of the formal economy. The political instability has been, since 1998, a recurrent event in Guinea-Bissau, contributing to the high poverty rates in this country, where is estimated over half the population is part of a poor household. Furthermore, the extreme poverty rates are also extremely high. According to the official records, poverty is much more alarming in rural than in urban areas. However – as previously mentioned – households in rural areas were able to provide for the subsistence of its members relocated in the capital during the conflict of 1998/99. This contradiction once again puts in evidence the need to reassess the available data on poverty and, conversely, the need to analyze more profoundly the population’s survival strategies – whether in rural or in urban areas – which are not always understandable by means of statistical records and standard indexes of poverty.

For the most part, according to available data, what characterizes poverty in Guinea-Bissau is its extension.

	Absolute Poverty			Population		Extreme Poverty	
	%	Figures	Year	Figures	Year	%	Year
Angola	68.0	11,000,000	2001	16,500,000	2005	26.0	2001
Cape Verde	36.7	172,727	2002	467,200	2004	20.5	2002
Guinea-Bissau	64.7	764,672	2003	1,181,641	2003	20.8	2003
Mozambique	54.0	11,000,000	2005	19,700,000	2005	20.5	2003
Sao Tome and Principe	53.8	100,000	2001	187,410	2005	15.1	2001

Source: Feliciano et. al., 2008: 84

Poverty afflicts more frequently not only rural family units, but also units whose head of the family has a low educational level (Creppy and Wodon, 2007: 50-1). Consistent with the calculations performed by Boubacar-Sid and Wodon (2007: 20) – based on data collected by the ILAP – Inquérito Ligeiro para Avaliação da Pobreza (Light Household Poverty Survey) in 2002 – the absolute poverty rate (less than two Dollars a day) in Guinea-Bissau is around 65.7% while extreme poverty (less than one Dollar a day) represents 21.6% of the population. Poverty has a larger incidence over households headed by men (61%) than over those headed by women (51%), given the larger percentage of women's insertion in the informal economy, allowing them to generate better incomes.

This enlarged poverty rates have been systematically mentioned during these last decades. Guinea-Bissau, considered to be one of the poorest countries in the whole world, has adopted its National Document for the Reduction of Poverty (DENARP) in 2004, thus following the requisites defined by international donors. This strategy document is derived from two studies, one about the perceptions of the population on poverty (a qualitative study of poverty), and the other about numeric statistics (a quantitative study on poverty), supplemented by additional national and international information about this country. The largest obstacle to the practice of a strategy of combat against poverty in Guinea-Bissau is nonetheless the recurrent institutionalized political instability. Most actions proposed to fight poverty, as well as the previsions of inversion of some tendencies of economic nature, are continually compromised by changes at a political level, the occurrence of conflicts, the instability rooted in violence. This correlation is continually mentioned by a diversified collection of actors, ranging from the state itself, analysts and experts, to common citizens.

Analytic outlook on the correlation poverty/peace

It was proposed, in the project Poverty and Peace in the PALOP, to establish correlations between the occurrence of poverty and war, peace, effective and eminent conflicts, and security. These correlations are usually considered bi-directional. Peace is seen as a condition for the elimination of poverty and the fight against poverty is seen as a way to achieve peace and reconciliation (Smith, 2005; Bush, 2004; Green & Hulme, 2005; Narayan, 2000; Bernard, 2002; Solomon & Cilliers, 1996; Bryant & Kappaz, 2005; Murshed, 2002; Collier & Hoeffler, 1998).

In both perspectives, there is consensus regarding their close reciprocal implication. Approaching conflicts as “development in reverse” puts in evidence the high costs entailed in social and economic terms, leading to the continuance and increase of poverty (Collier, 2003). The economic costs are normally to be found at the level of a reallocation of national resources towards warfare, destruction caused by conflicts and transfer of wealth to outside the country or region (idem, p.15). In social terms, the costs are objectively related to the casualties resulting from the conflicts and the ensuing dislocated people (refugees and IDPs). Overall, war and conflicts have aggravated a set of consequences that seriously contribute to violence and at the same time elucidate the reason why the economic growth in these contexts is inconsistent and has been recurrently in serious decline since the 1970s (Rodrick, 1999).

But the “inverse” causal perspective is frequently mentioned as well: poverty has the ability to cause war and conflicts, although there is an insufficient amount of research in this field yet (Bryant and Kappaz, 2005: 25). Conversely, it is possible to determine the existence of some factors which, in specific circumstances, could steer to war in a poverty background: “catalyzing events, networks, local collective actions, agitators, pillaged resources, transference of vindictive diaspora groups” (idem, p.26).

Another line of investigation for this correlation concerns the UN’s Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and their connection to the Fragile States (Torres & Anderson, 2004). With reference to this subject, Guinea-Bissau has been placed for decades in the worst rank positions, being frequently pointed out as the reason for the non-attainment of the MDG its weakness as a state.

But the definition of a concept of poverty has been facing quite a few difficulties, mostly related to the multidimensionality of the phenomenon. In several cases, as a manner to overcome these difficulties, the option is to employ quantitative data and statistical analysis. From these, it becomes evident a clear prevalence of the monetary approach in most descriptions and researches on poverty (Stewart et.al., 2007: 1). Other paths for the definition of poverty include a capacities perspective, social exclusion and a participative approach (idem, p.2). The monetary approach is mostly focused on the definition of poverty as a need in terms of consumption (or income) related to a line of poverty. The capacities perspective – in accordance to the works by Amartya Sen – concentrates on features of deprivation, associated to determinate minimal or basic capacities. In contrast, there is the approach of poverty through social exclusion, referring to socially defined processes of marginalization and deprivation. Regarding the participative approach, it is outlined through a notion of poverty defined by the individuals themselves, instead of externally (idem, p.24). In line with this notion, the study conducted for the project Poverty and Peace chooses issues of self-definition from the repercussions of war and peace on the processes of impoverishment and, therefore, on the self-definition and self-perception of poverty itself.

In the PALOP, particularly in those countries where war and peace paths are “intermittent” – such as Guinea-Bissau – there has not been given enough attention to the influence of conflicts over the increase or decrease of poverty, even though there are several references about poverty (Kovsted & Finn, 1999; UNDP, 2003; Inec, 2002; Republic of Guinea-Bissau, 2004). There is, however, a fundamental reference that supports the statements made in an original national scale survey about households (2002) and one more qualitative and quantitative survey (2004), that allows to partially overcome some difficulties related to the lack of informative sources and shortage of reliable and updated information about the events which have been inflicting the country for so many years.

In a collective publication by the World Bank (Boubacar-Sid, 2007), these records are handled with some detail, being given special attention to the correlation war/poverty in the Guinea-Bissauan background. To these authors, the conflicts and political hostilities from the last three decades have been the main constraints to the economic development and fight against poverty (Boubacar-Sid and Wodon, 2007: 11). The research on this correlation is founded on the quantification of the conflict's impact (1998/99) over the GNP (gross national product) *per capita* of the country, which was estimated to be around 42 or 43% higher nowadays if there had been no conflict, which implies that around one third of the present population is poor because of the conflict (idem, p.12).

Among the economic consequences mentioned by the authors ought to be emphasized the reduction of income (manifested in the decreased GNP) and the destruction of assets: damages to the public infrastructures (including the airport, water and electricity supplies, sanitary and educational infrastructures, roads, markets, public corporations and administration buildings), which have ascended up to 25-30 million Dollars (idem, p.12). The capital city experienced damages more deeply, especially pertaining to housing (about 5,000 buildings affected) and to the destruction, requisition, confiscation and pillages. This type of outcome might have approximated the poverty rates in rural and urban areas during the stage following the war, although there are no sufficiently enlightening records on this matter. Nevertheless, and overall, it was noticed a reduction in investments (both national and international) and the suspension of financial support from donors.

Given this global analysis of the consequences of conflicts on poverty, it remains yet to comprehend the manner through which it is perceived by an assortment of actors.

Perceptions and experiences of poverty and war

For the field research produced in Guinea-Bissau between June and September 2008 were made interviews of qualitative nature. It was given preference to open interviews done to several types of individuals capable of narrating their experiences and the manner how war and conflicts have affected and still affect their living conditions.

The personal narratives are from eight individuals, aged between 27 and 72 years old (the average age interval is between from 35 and 45 years), equally parted in terms of gender, mostly residing in Bissau (6) and also in Gabu. Some other interviews were produced in Bafatá as well. Most of Bissau's residents were not born in this city, so they speak diversified languages. The educational levels go from those who do not know how to read/write (2) to higher education attendance (1), with half the participants having attended the 10th grade or above. On the subject of professional occupations, four are retailers, two are skilled workers (one teacher and one bank teller), one is a student and another is a washerwoman. Regarding their parents' occupations, most of the participants mentioned activities related to commerce and/or agriculture, as in most cases these are linked to lower educational levels. Concerning their own children, the majority is attending school and a significant part is attending university.

As a complement, were made some interviews to a number of experts, whose global vision on both phenomena could contribute to this research. Although the separation into distinctive types of participants had the main purpose of obtaining as much inclusion as possible in terms of representative groups from the Guinean social fabric, it is assumed, given the conditions in which the field work was produced, that many groups have been under-represented. However, there is significant diversity in the collected sample, likewise ensuring the possibility of comparison to other PALOP case studies in the realm of the project supervising this research.

One of the main preoccupations while collecting data was to comprehend these individuals' perceptions about the evolution of their socioeconomic conditions, taking into consideration the occurrence of conflicts and war. The relationship between their parents' situation and their childhoods, and the perception these individuals have of the evolution in their living conditions rarely coincides with the expected in terms of a correlation between educational and professional capitals and wealth. Both individuals who have mentioned that the parents had skilled professions⁴ also declared that "poverty was more noticeable during childhood" or that "childhood was very tough" (E3, E6). Concerning those whose parents were farmers or traders, with low educational qualifications (the remaining), their personal perceptions on living conditions varied from "childhood was harder" (E7), "poverty was worse during childhood" (E2), "since my childhood until today I consider myself poor" (E1) and "my relatives don't starve anymore" (E4), to an opposite outlook which considers that "during childhood we had enough food" (E5), "my childhood and youth were normal" (E8).

On the subject of personal evolution – before and after the 1998 war – concerning employment and income, in most cases it is seen in a negative sense: "I am a washerwoman; I don't enjoy it, but I have no choice (...) the present income is lower than it was in the period before the armed conflict" (E1). Contradictorily, there are constant references to the current existence of more employment offers and income producing opportunities, and to individuals having more liberty to pursue economic activities: "the end of the war has the advantage of bringing in more clients now" (E1). However, this kind of perceptions goes against the narratives – also recurring – about the growing degradation of living conditions in Guinea-Bissau during the last decades, which points to a redirection from the causes of poverty to other factors.

On the contrary, most individuals refer to other conditions which had been changed, influencing the ability of maintaining some quality of life, derived from modern incomes. These new conditions are generally related to the increasing costs of living in several sectors – housing, transportation, etc. – and to changes concerning security, fiscal pressure from the state, social and political instabilities, which are obstacles to the development of economic activities; "life is more expensive now" (E1); "I was a prosperous trader, in the Old Town; but now I have closed my business (...) because of the lack of security and abusive tax charges by the state, I decided to shutdown my business" (E2); "If it were not for the war I would have build my house" (E5).

Among the participants, those transitioning or returning to activities in the formal economy or in the public sector (teacher, bank teller) and some retailers declare to get more income from their labor nowadays, comparing to what they got before the war. Although not exclusively unidirectional, it is clearly made an association linking war to the differentiated paths their lives have taken. The evolution of their economic conditions has always been linked to the evolution of socioeconomic conditions in the country. In one case, it is even mentioned an improvement of personal living conditions: "meanwhile, war has given my father a better living standard; now he is a colonel and has a better salary and other perks; (...) he met key personalities, such as Ansumane Mané" (E3). The reference to this type of ascending life-path is often related to a tendency to reproduce advantageous situations by contributing to the maintenance of an unstable situation or any specific interest involved: "there are some people who have benefited from war. Those people can not solve their problems in a situation of social

⁴ One whose father is a military officer with a college degree, another whose father is a public servant who attended the 11th grade.

order, since mobility in such a situation demands corresponding to (certain) requirements, to be able to ascend (...) Social mobility in disorder becomes chaotic. This situation has made us believe there is an eagerness for conflict in Guinea (...). In the Bafatá region, there are wealth signals from people who have benefited from war. Many lands were sold without regulation, money that was not paid to the state. These days, in Guinea, power has become a profession, for that reason there is war, to control the power” (D. F, Bafatá). The perception about this situation includes in addition a true notion of “specialization” in situations of war and the appearance of social groups related to it: “war only has been privileging the ascension of a small group of people, «war lords» and their nets of friendships” (M.J., INEP, Bissau).

According to the interviewed individuals, the impact war had globally over their perceptions can be analyzed under two distinctive perspectives. On one hand, a direct association links war to determinate objective effects and, on the other hand, an association links war to personal events, related to experiences closely or remotely connected to war.

In terms of direct effects identifiable by these individuals, in some cases the emphasis falls upon the effect of war over basic survival conditions: “my children and I felt so much hunger” (E1); “in the past I endured situations of starvation” (E4); “we went through hunger sometimes” (E6). For most participants, it appears that poverty has a direct connection to situations of hunger or abundance: “I don’t consider myself poor, not before nor after the war, because thank God I manage to have my daily meal” (E2). It is frequently heard in many areas of Guinea-Bissau that “... I was kicked out from home thinking I was going to starve, but thank God I have someone who provides me lunch and dinner” or “ ... I was fired from my job, but thank God I am not starving” (Handem, 2008).

Another impressive negative effect related to war is the restriction to education, their children’s and their own: “war has caused a delay (in children’s education)” (E1); “war has provoked a recoil in learning” (E6); “departure from every life feature (including) education” (E7). Meanwhile, the remaining narratives display an absence of war effects over learning and education. In these cases, the interviewed bring up the difficulties in accessing education as a result from numerous conditions (domestic, economic), war or instability being a condition without real influence over their personal paths. Once more, the qualitative analysis allows recognizing the existence of numerous combinations in terms of poverty situations and causes partaking in it.

The third effect that comes into evidence during the narratives regards the impact of war over income-producing activities and over resources: “only my husband worked during wartimes” (E1); “several traders had good lives and had prosperous businesses before the war, but it destroyed everything, today they can not prosper as they did before” (E2); “war has only brought damages” (E6); “it brought losses to everybody” (E7); “to the family, war has caused a huge economic loss” (E8). Although the descriptions of the effects war had over the survival conditions and over the possibilities of affordance to education diverge from one individual to another, according to the specific combination of conditions, in regard to economic resources and possibility of accessing and producing them it is, in that case, recorded a clear and direct correlation established by most of the interviewed individuals. Consequently, there is a recurrent correlation linking the decrease of income and war.

In a systematic manner, the narration of changes which had taken place during the war is frequently coupled with some references to less subjective personal and individual

experiences, events unrelated to war (or just remotely related) which the interviewed attribute to this period and the negative aspects from that period of their lives.

One of the main references concerns the occurrence of diseases during wartime. They always seem to coincide naturally with the conflict and all lingering problems attributable to it: “during war I endured hunger and diseases” (E1); “I suffered from some diseases” (E2); “the family went through an illness” (E3); “my daughters caught an illness” (E4); “we endured some diseases, mostly malaria” (E6); “(I had) an illness, I caught meningitis” (E7); “during the war there were many diseases (meningitis, malaria) (...) during war, the opportunities are scarce, people face hunger, diseases” (E8). In some other cases, the connection of personal events to wartime happens in a correlated manner, linked to all the environment of negative consequences inflicted by war: “War has improved my father’s living situation (...) but he divorced from mother and built a house to live with his new wife. In this instance, war has brought dismay into the family. (...) I had a unplanned pregnancy (...) As to me, war has deferred me a lot, because I got pregnant and after giving birth I did not have anybody to take care of my child” (E3). Once more, it becomes clear that their individual paths and a combination of certain factors have shaped the way these individuals regard the correlation between war and poverty. An exempt feature regards the conditions of income promotion and generation which were objectively and directly altered by war.

Regarding the perceptions these individuals have about the resolution of problems linked to war and poverty, in most situations it seems to require the socio-political stabilization of the country and the role attributed to the government in this realm. There are several examples of individuals who mention they could have avoided the outcome of war by moving to other places, for example: “during the wartime, I was in Portugal” (E2); “I relocated to Calequisse and got in touch with my family” (E4); “I was in Bafatá (...) was living with relatives and they provided for our food” (E5); “there were many moves for my family, in search of peace” (E6). In other cases, the integration in international organizations has allowed to avoid the consequences of war: “during war I worked with humanitarian organizations, distributing provisions among the refugees” (E3).

On the subject of the long-term strategies more frequently used to cope with uncertainty and instability in the country, the most emphasized are the investments in education and instruction, especially those focused on children, as the method to ensure more gainful politic standings or, alternatively, to guarantee better migration conditions. For once, the alternatives found by the participants facing these circumstances of instable and deficient governance are usually focused on education and instruction, in many cases highlighting the investment they made on the education of their children: “if I had gone to school, maybe my situation was different; I could have found a better job. I have faith that my children will keep attending school so that, in the future, they can become somebody important, instead of washerwomen” (E1); “At this point, my only concern is my son who is studying in Brazil, he gets some support from his brothers too (...) now my children are contributing with clothing, medicines and some gifts when it’s mine or my wife’s birthday” (E2). Regarding the stability of the country, the overall perception is that the volatility and systematic alterations at political and administrative levels are still causing an effect over Guineans’ lives: “peace and stability are important to Guinea” (E3); “the poverty in this country is attached to these constant political and military disturbances (...) the present situation is still quite hard. To overcome this situation, the country needs to have better governance, to attract the international community and construct peace and stability” (E6); “the courses which would improve

this situation are paying the wages of public servants on time and creating stability in the country” (E7); “we all want peace and governmental stability. Poverty is very reliant on political and military stability” (E8).

Instability is straightforwardly blamed on the government, furthermore the resolution of problems related to poverty and the prospects of the country are also placed under the responsibility of better governance: “To fight poverty, the government should increase wages, so that we (washerwomen) could make more money washing clothes too” (E1). It is overtly mentioned that this governance ought to provide better living conditions: “my relatives, neighbours and colleagues are equally living in worse situations than before the war. The reason for this situation is that there were no investments made in the neighbourhood” (E1). Conversely, the government should invest in rural economy: “The Government must invest in the development of rural locations, to help those poor people struggling for survival” (E4), “the alternative for a more effective fight against poverty is to invest in the rural regions, giving the farmers more opportunities to produce” (E5).

Facing the common perception that this situation has been degrading over the years, the notion that development and fight against poverty can only be done by “a credible government and credible elite who are able to institute trust in the populations. Severe measures are mandatory, for example, the judiciary system should be exempt and objective, it should punish the guilty and crimes against the public treasury. There can be no development and coherent programs if there isn’t a credible and transparent government” (D.F., Bafatá).

War and instability have generated rising perceptions of doubt and departure from the state and politicians. According to D.F. (Bafatá), “there is a complete mistrust and disbelief with the political and military forces”. For instance, an evidence of this situation is the fact that “many people does not want to register to vote, because they don’t have any hope that things can change for the better”. The consequences are multiple though, including a partition growing in the relationship between state and population: “if the state does not fix the road this year, we will not vote in the election of November 2008, said the farmers [who I’ve talked to in Mansaina] (idem)”.

In line with the study based on the data collected during the surveys mentioned by Boubacar-Sid and Wodon (2007), carried out in 2002 and 2004, the citizens have a clear perception of the conflict having aggravated the decline of their welfare and having been no improvements since then, which contributed to the increase of insecurity and to the common perception of having no signs of improvement. The population has no trust in the national institutions (Gacitua-Mario et. al., 2007). These negative perceptions are shared by impoverished individuals as well as by those with better socioeconomic conditions (Creppy and Wodon, 2007: 45).

It should also be taken into consideration that the fight against poverty is anchored in investments on the reorganization of the national economy, together with socio-political stabilization: “To fight poverty are required two things: to guarantee governmental stability so it can be possible to have a stable government long enough to create a strategic vision for development; and to invest in the productive sector, even if it entails external supports and resources” (M.J.; INEP; Bissau).

Conclusions and thematic research lines

Considering the data collected in the field, the participant individuals recognize a direct and profound influence of war and instability over their life paths and over their socioeconomic conditions. In most cases, the impact is negative, although there are some references to those who, by means of war, have gained benefits and kept profiting throughout the following stability.

In the descriptions about the influence of war over personal paths systematically appear some references and associations to other negative events of personal nature, from which diseases are the most emphasized. Its occurrence is almost invariably linked to war, either through personal experiences or through an overall perception regarding the country and other people's experiences. However, individual situations have resulted in specific combinations of events throughout life.

There is no doubt that the largest impacts were felt and still are felt at the level of economic activities. War and instability have conditioned the abilities to generate and access resources and revenues – particularly from labour. During the last 10 years, while the political and military instability has increased, there has been a strong migratory flux from the countryside towards the capital Bissau and Europe, especially by a younger population in search of new opportunities in life. On the one hand, this causes a considerable decline in rural production and domestic incomes and, on the other hand, the city of Bissau remains under heavy social pressure with some direct consequences, such as the degradation of living conditions of its residents. Nowadays, the mistrust about the future remains quite striking and is conditioning the development so sought by the participants. This will certainly cause an effect both on poverty and on the progression of living conditions.

Regarding future expectations about the way to overcome poverty, it is given emphasis to national stability at political, social and economic levels, following this exact string of importance. In a manner, all references to the roles played by the government and the administrative structures are greatly accentuated. In several occasions, there are references to a standpoint considered as a possibility to minimize the effects of instability while compensating the inexistence of solutions with immediate results, which is the investment on education. This investment, according to perceptions, would have the medium and long-term purposes of ensuring more advantageous political positions or facilitating migration, which seems to be a concern to the national development and the preservation of human resources inside the country. These days, Guinea is facing a wave of pessimism among its citizens about the future, an outcome of the cyclical instability which has been lasting for, at least, the last decade. Several programs and subsidies in matters of national reconciliation, peace, restructuration of the security and defence forces, among others, have not attained neither palpable results nor the supposed stability and peace. The lack of trust in the institutions of the nation is increasingly visible: “nobody believes anybody, and each one is looking out for solutions and justice at his own terms” (Handem, 2008).

Therefore, some questions posed about the level of awareness on the correlation between poverty and peace deserve a more profound forthcoming research and careful observation. On the one hand, there is a predictable interiorization of the recurrent instability and latent divergences, whose consequences at the level of socioeconomic investments are still undetermined. On the other hand, the chronic attribution to the government of responsibility over this instability and its resolution, for this brings implications in matters of development and consolidation of a civil society and of

decentralized structures for organization and representation. Finally, the effects of disinvestment of families in issues of economic mobilization and channelization of investments into education and its repercussions on the maintenance of high rates of emigration and departure of human resources from the country should be turned into prospective research subjects.

The certain way to avoid poverty is to work and work even more (E1).

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