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SUFFERING FOR THE NATION: BOTTOM-UP AND TOP-DOWN CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF THE NATION IN GUINEA AND GUINEA-BISSAU

Suffering for the Nation: bottom-up and top-down conceptualisations of the nation in Guinea and Guinea-Bissau[1]

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Abstract

Taking the two West African countries of Guinea and Guinea-Bissau as examples, the paper analyses how discourses of suffering can contribute to the emergence and development of a strong national consciousness among citizens. In both countries, rhetoric self-victimisation has different, characteristic features, referring to shared events and memories of the past. These discourses portray the population of these two countries as suffering at the hands of governments, foreign policy, or history. They do so in a collective way, bridging potential ethnic or religious divides in these otherwise very heterogeneous countries. Based on fieldwork in Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, the authors investigate how popular ('bottom-up') narratives interact with official, governmental ('top-down') portrayals of the nation to form alternate versions of the national project that have a stabilising effect on society. This paper traces historical origins, the subsequent development, as well as manifestations of national discourses of suffering that have specific political and identitarian effects.

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Introduction

With the protracted global economic crisis, suffering is – once again – on everybody's lips. Parts of the population of the countries experiencing the imposition of harsh austerity measures portray themselves as victims not only of the international finance industry and international politics but also of their misguided national governments (Fleischhauer 2011). From this perspective, suddenly parts of the Global North have something in common with countries in the Global South. While this collective self-imagination as victims can relieve people by shifting the blame to others, a negative impact arises from the inability of the victimised collective to escape from misery. Shared perspectives of suffering and fatalistic discourses of victimhood – based on the people's perception of themselves as victims of history, politics, governance, and the state – appear to be closely related.

The central question of this paper, therefore, is how various forms of collective suffering or discursive self-victimisation affect the collective identity of a nation. With the example of Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, we will investigate public practices and discourses – both contemporary and historical – that lead to particular national narratives and employ differing processes of nation-building through the shared experience of suffering. While both countries are often referred to as weak states, we focus on people's perceptions, memories, and strategies in dealing with protracted political and economic insecurities that are often caused or at least not mitigated by the state. To what extent does such a perceived collective victimisation by the state shape or influence national cohesion? Further, what are the specificities of nationalist victimisation discourses in postcolonial, culturally heterogeneous settings – in contrast to cases from the Global North that have been primarily studied so far? On which historical grounds are victimisation narratives constructed? And are victimisation discourses in the Global South construed 'from above', i.e. by intellectuals, political leaders, etc., or rather 'from below', i.e. by the wider public of ordinary citizens – and which repercussions do such perspectives have?

Countries like Guinea and Guinea-Bissau – often labelled as 'weak', 'fragile', and 'failed' (critical on such categorisation, cf. Huria 2008: 3–4) – are often regarded as examples for 'underdevelopment' and 'growth without development', growing income inequalities, and permanent positions at the bottom of global development scales. These observations are often associated with 'tribalism' and the absence of a strong national identity that mention in the same breath the lack of 'rational bureaucracies' in the Weberian sense of state-building and deeply-rooted neo-patrimonial structures, which appear to dominate the day to day conduct of state and government agents.

Such superficial analyses frequently overlook features conducive to state- and nation-building that may evolve beyond the official founding myth of the nation-state. After the initial founding phase of a nation-state marked in many countries by some kind of independence struggles, the abstract notions of nation and state have to be filled with life, given meaning, and maintained over long periods of time, which is a process most commonly guided by government or state elites, thus constituting a top-down approach to nation-building. Our argument is that bottom-up national integration processes are so strong in both Guinea and Guinea-Bissau – despite prevailing ethnic and religious heterogeneity – that they become viable alternatives to the weak government-led nation-building. These relate to a collective self-victimisation, both Guineans and Bissau-Guineans portraying themselves as victims of history, of incompetent state institutions, of repressive

governments, and of security apparatuses. In spite of these common grounds, crucial differences exist between the two countries and national discourses that need to be elaborated and analysed.

Studying the postcolonial cases of Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, we will explore how the victimisation of the nation is construed by the population in a bottom-up process, amongst others by reverting to images and narratives of historical events that were utilised in the nation-building discourses of the young countries' political elites and have become part of the state's identity resources. We will argue, that the population is – to different degrees – engaged in a "counter-state" nationalism where the nation "is imagined as distinct from, and often in opposition to, the (...) frame of an existing state" (Brubaker 2004: 144).

The first part will discuss the essential, analytical concepts that relate to the discursive (self-) victimisation of nations. Clearly, not any kind of imagined victimhood can render itself to become a cornerstone to national identity, since suffering is a ubiquitous phenomenon. For this reason, a careful analytical framing of collective suffering and self-victimisation is necessary, distinguishing victimisation discourses that may serve as national "imaginary glue" (cf. Lecocq 2010: 72–73), as a kind of "inverted pride in the nation", from other forms of collective memory and experience of suffering. In doing so, we will resort to works produced by historical science, focusing on similar components of national narratives in European history. The second part will address the significance of victimisation discourses in Guinea and Guinea-Bissau in historical and contemporary perspectives, thus uncovering the roots and trajectories of these present-day discourses. The ethnographic data presented in this paper was collected by the authors during fieldwork in 2006–2007 and 2013 and is the result of various interviews and informal conversations with Guinean and Bissau-Guinean nationals of various social, geographic, ethnic, gender, and age backgrounds.[3]

Clarification of Terms

Following a constructivist approach, we understand national (and ethnic) identities as socially constructed we-groups (Elwert 1989) that encompass large numbers of individuals. Hence, because these groups are no face-to-face collectives, the sense of community can only be imagined (Anderson 1983). It is therefore not a cultural substance within, such as language, rituals, material artefacts or suchlike, but the construction and reconstruction of identitarian boundaries that make ethnic groups or nations into viable identities (Barth 1969). This analytical, etic view contrasts with the notions employed by those engaged in making a nation, the emic perspective: political practitioners often believe that territory, culture, identity, and state should be congruent in order for the resulting nation-state to be viable. Some scholars do not clearly differentiate between nation and state, using these notions synonymously (Gellner 1983: 5–6; Barrington 1997, 2006: 4), thus accepting the nationalist rhetoric in their analysis. However, it is important to analytically separate the concepts of state and nation. Even if citizens are unsatisfied with their state or its politics, they can nevertheless develop a strong identification with their nation. The government can be viewed as the executive 'face' but need not be the sole player of the state that has a security apparatus, laws, and other institutions at its disposition.

Reference to a common state apparatus does not mean that a nation and a state are congruent. Rather, nations express their willingness and objective to live together, in principle, in 'their' own nation-state. Similar to the so-called 'belated nations' like Germany and Italy[4], in many African countries a nation had to be created after independence. In Africa, ethnic diversity was a challenge for (post) colonial leaders, who addressed it differently. Some of them – like Amílcar Cabral in Guinea-Bissau, Julius Nyerere in Tanzania, and Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana – conceived the nation as an umbrella for various ethnic groups while other leaders – such as Samora Machel of Mozambique – openly fought "tribalism" (Frahm 2012: 24–25). Yet others, like Sékou Touré of Guinea, sought to overcome heterogeneity with an educational project of the postcolonial nation, uniting ethnic groups to form the national population (Schroven 2010b: 83). Recent years have seen the return of politicised ethnicity (Berman 1998) and the (re-)emergence of exclusivist concepts of nationhood that go along with new waves of xenophobia and nationalist autochthony discourses (Kersting 2009; Frahm 2012: 25; cf. Geschiere 2009) – compare current discourses about *ivoirité* with older ones about Chadian *tchaditude* and Zairian *authenticité*. It is therefore not surprising that with these continuous debates about (state- and) nationhood, most Africans do not only accept the notion of the nation (Kersting 2009: 8) but attach high significance and emotions to it.

Misery, crises, distress, and fatalism have often been constituents of powerful narratives that are able to weld together people that refer to a common national identity. Encapsulating these strong and negative emotions into suffering, the consequences can be described as follows:

> "Human beings find their plans and actions resisted by forms of resistance in the life course, in social relations, in biophysical processes. Out of these forms of resistance emerge what is shared in our human condition: loss, deprivation, oppression, pain. Human conditions are shaped as well by our responses to those forms of resistance: grief, rage, fear, humiliation, but also by what Scheler (…) calls transcendent responses: enduring, aspiration, humor, irony. Yet these are so greatly elaborated, culturally and personally, by systems of meaning and individual idiosyncrasy that human conditions must always contain great divergence too." (Kleinman and Kleinman 1991: 294)

Even though this article focuses on suffering, it is not only negative emotions but also more positive forces of transcendence of suffering or resilience to perpetual misery that people come to associate with being part of a nation. With Kleinman, we assert that suffering is always a social process as it is a "transpersonal engagement with pain and misery in social relationships (…) it is a societal construction that acts as a cultural model, a moral guide of and for experience" (Kleinman 1997: 320–321).

So far, emotions have been a neglected topic in the research on (ethnicity and) nationhood, and "affective ties" have often been dismissed as ephemeral, irrational, and regressive (Baldacchino

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[4] Although influential national movements engaged in discursively creating a German and Italian nation, culminating in the birth of respective nation-states in 1871 and 1861, even thereafter Italians and Germans were still to be 'made': In Italy, this process was called "make Italians" ("*fare gli Italiani*"; Italian statesman and novelist Massimo d'Azeglio coined this expression in his memoirs shortly after the Italian nation-state had been established) whereas in Germany the building of citizens' loyalty towards the state came to be known as "internal development of the empire", or "*innerer Ausbau des Reiches*" (Weichlein 2006: 43; cf. Langewiesche 2000: 100). However, even so-called 'long-established' states were affected by a 'belated' nation-building: although France had been an established independent state for centuries, it was, similarly to many African countries, marked by a high level of cultural diversity – most notably, for a significant proportion of the population French was a foreign language in the mid-nineteenth century (Weber 1976: 67–94) – and the different parts of the populations were only 'united' under a French umbrella in the late nineteenth, early twentieth century.

2011: 80–82) or have been black-boxed in crude notions such as 'tribalism' or 'nepotism'. However, under certain circumstances, collective suffering or the shared emotion of feeling victimised, as we conceptualise it, can have integrative effects on nation-building. As a consequence, national belonging can be a very powerful emotion in itself, which should not be underestimated.

Some cases presented below demonstrate how discourses of collective suffering are not only composed and exploited by nationalists but also combined with religion. In fact, victimisation discourses are often framed in the language of the "sacred" (Lagrou 2011: 286) because suffering relates to the core of many religious narratives. Political elites connect these symbols and theological patterns of interpretation with appeals to nationhood (Graf 2004: 119–124). The relationship between nation and religion can even lead to a sanctification of the nation, i.e. the magnification of the nation through religion, resulting in a 'holy nation' (Kennedy 2008). Hence, the nation does not replace religion as a resource of social relations, as theorists of modernisation thought (Schulze Wessel 2006: 7–9), but religion and nation can actually be complementary.

Nationalist discourses that conceive the nation as suffering from external and/or internal threats have been reported from various European countries.[5]

The discursive victimisation of the nation appears all the more powerful when it is associated with a charismatic personality who represents a nation's rescue and salvation from collective distress. This also applies to national projects in Africa – where politics haven often been marked by personalisation – that were headed by charismatic leaders such as Amílcar Cabral, Kwame Nkrumah, Samora Machel, or Sékou Touré who were confronted with high degrees of cultural and ethnic diversity when embarking on their nation-building project. Such a personality is stylised to redeeming the nation from the burdens of colonialism and socio-economic and political hardships (Mühlmann 1964: 251–260, 397). Viewed in this way, political leaders serve as prophets who are marked by ethical rigour (Mühlmann 1964: 318), which "means: to constantly fight against passion and sins both within oneself and in the world – against greed for money with poverty" (Justin Popović quoted in Buchenau 2006: 223). These qualities that characterise such personalities are similar to millenarism, which refers to movements that make "a strong appeal to the oppressed, the disinherited, and the wretched." (Worsley 1957: 225) Millenarian anti-authoritarianism expresses the rejection "of the dominant ideology of the ruling authority" (Worsley 1957: 226) and aims at the redistribution of material goods and rights in favour of a majority that has been discriminated against so far (Mühlmann 1964: 330). Millenarism stands out due to its ability to "cut across village, tribe, and clan" (Worsley 1957: 255) and thus contrasts with other forms of exclusivist nationalism. In light of these criteria, utopian millenarism can serve as a precursor and support of a nationalism movement.

The historical references quoted above focus largely on Europe and North America, hence the Global North that has been dominated by Judaism and Christianity for centuries. The question

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[5] For instance, in nineteenth century Poland, erased from the map as an independent state, Catholicism served to overglorify the own nation as "Christ among the nations" (Weichlein 2006: 140–141; Berger 2008: 11), depicting the Polish nation-to-be as the victim of external power politics. The sanctification of the nation in combination with collective distress can also be found in other settings, which led to the depiction of this variant of nationalism as "political religion" (Hayes 1926; Vögelin 2007 [1938]; cf. Kapferer 1989: 161; Weichlein: 2006: 137–138; Kennedy 2008: 120–121; cf. Sand 2013). The so-called "Kosovo myth", a foundational narrative, is the backbone of Serbian identity construction secularised by nationalists in the nineteenth century in their struggle for a "rebirth" (another Christian figure of speech, Lehmann 2002: 24–25) of the nation-state. Serbian nationalists created a "political theology" that conceived the Serbs as Christian underdogs in a fight against the Turkish "hereditary enemy", the Muslim Albanians (Sundhaussen 2000: 70–71, 81–83).

arises if the sanctification of the nation and the discourses of victimhood and redemption can be translated to other settings as well. As our ethnographic cases will illustrate, the victimisation of the nation is not bound to a specific religion. The catalytic capacities in combining religious and political suffering can also be observed in areas marked by Islam, the majority religion in Guinea and Guinea-Bissau. Schept (2010: 92–93, 98, 103–104) has analysed popular Palestinian hip-hop music that can be understood as a counter-hegemonic movement of the marginalised. He argues that this kind of music serves to rhetorically resist Israeli occupation and domination, using tropes – images and metaphors alike – of Palestinian victimisation. Palestinian hip-hop, Schept continues, is able to overcome borders, communicating the loss of the nation. There, nationalist independence movements and the newly independent nation-state attempted to mobilise the population and increase people's commitment to the nation by projecting an ideal of nationhood with religious connotations. They reverted to languages with religious symbolism in order to produce strong emotional feelings of togetherness. Palestinian hip-hop thus has some parallels with Bissau-Guinean rap music. Often marked by a "*djitu ka tem*" (there is no last resource) mentality because of economic hardships and poverty, lack of future prospects, and political hopelessness, the Bissau-Guinean youth particularly in urban settings identifies with hip-hop as a "project of contestation of recognition through its critical-interventionist protagonism." Political hip-hop in Guinea-Bissau uses the nation's assassinated founding father Amílcar Cabral as an idealized role model worthy of imitation (particularly for present-day politicians), portraying him as a hope for the nation(-state), a "messenger of truth" (de Barros and Lima 2012: 99, 111), that way combining religious and nationalist languages.

As Lagrou (2011: 283) states, the "discourse of victimhood is a universal source of legitimacy, (…) a route to full social and political recognition" that possesses a coded language. This suggests that imagined or 'objective' subalterneity can be considered a basic requirement for the emergence of self-victimisation discourses. Further characteristics of collective victimisation and corresponding discourses are the creation of an integrative sense of identity and community, thus separating friends from foes, with the community of suffering victims, on the one hand, and vicious perpetrators, on the other (Lagrou 2011: 283; cf. Schlee 2008). Tropes of collective victimisation are directed towards the past and are characterised by passivity, and nostalgic backward-leaning, directed towards an endless repetition of a reified, essentialised past in order to perpetuate a self-perception as victims (Lagrou 2011: 284–285). Suffering can thus be conceived as an inverted mode of hatred that is channelling strong emotions from a potentially aggressive outward-oriented behaviour [hatred against an exterior] to an internalised mode (Kersting 2009: 10). This internalisation, however, should not be mistaken as resignation per se. Rather, the collective reference to the shared victim-identity affords negotiation space in order to make sense of the individual experience of (repeated) powerlessness and (continued and prolonged) frustration combined with lack of political or economic changes by referring to a larger (historic) process. This provides meaning beyond the individual's situation and the suffering is elevated beyond the individual to the national level and therewith embedded into the collective fate that is shared by the nation as a whole. At the same time, suffering is given societal meaning, and therewith it becomes transcendent and lends the opportunity to find resilience in the shared experience (Kleinman and Kleinman 1997: 294).

Certainly, not all kinds of suffering effect processes of nation-building. Most citizens of postwar Angola, for example, regard themselves as victims of decades of protracted war – however,

suffering is more or less strictly divided, splitting the suffering nation into two or even three camps: those who suffered from government attacks, others who became victims of the rebel movement, and a third camp that blames both warring parties altogether.[6] As it becomes clear, a "politics of victimhood" must be involved (Jeffery and Candea 2006) that entails the entire nation to unfold integrative effects, not only parts of it.[7]

Although victimhood "makes a claim for a non-political space", thus presenting itself as a neutral phenomenon, in reality it clears the ground by establishing "a space for a specific kind of politics" (Jeffery and Candea 2006: 289). Such a specific kind of politics often encompasses a friend-foe-thinking, implying that victims portray themselves as passive and innocent (Jeffery and Candea 2006: 291) vis-à-vis both the perpetrators and the general public. Naturally, a strict separation of victims and perpetrators is impossible from an analytical perspective, especially since self-declared victims can turn into perpetrators as well, as the civil wars in former Yugoslavia have demonstrated.

Similar to nationalist, emic conceptualisations of the nation, those who are actively engaged in using images of victimhood for political purposes, pretend a high degree of homogeneity among the sufferers. In this respect, victimhood strategies match procedures well known from nationalism – a very specific political principle, hence 'politics of victimhood' per se.

Crucial for analysing such politicised victimisation discourses are the ways in which victims are 'made' in the context of national projects. Some discourses appear to have been fabricated, historicised, and divulged by elites, hence in a 'top-down' fashion (see Gellner 1983), to spread nationalist ideas. However, the resounding success of such nationalist projects depended on their persuasive power and resilience amongst the general population. This means that nationalist victimhood narratives had to be popularised (including popular music, such as hip-hop, as in Palestine) among decisive parts of the population to achieve popular support for the respective nation-building claims and processes. In other words, the masses had to be subject to an (state) elite-led, top-down process of political, nationalist indoctrination by 'high culture' (see also Gellner 1983: 9–11, 35–38). In both Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, the victimisation of the nation is narratively constructed in a bottom-up fashion. By referring to late colonial, early postcolonial historical occurrences, the population is – to different degrees – engaged in a "counter-state" nationalism directed against the state, which itself promoted a different version of nationhood or has in the meantime seized to engage in nation-building altogether. National identity bottom-up can thus take on forms that oppose its official, state-sponsored version and provide for alternative discourses that have as key part the perception that the nation has become the victim of the state apparatus. This perception is enabled by the fact that in many countries the elite-led, top-down nation-building efforts have slowed or come to a standstill. Guinea and Guinea-Bissau are no exceptions. The void has by now been filled with an alternate version of national identity that makes strong references to the independence era and its leaders and at the same time employs the current state and its face, the government and other executive branches, as a source for the nation's suffering. As a consequence, the discourse of the nation as a victim can be conceived of as both the

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[6] Based on observations during Christoph Kohl's field research in Angola in 2011 and 2012.
[7] Kapferer (1989: 173) has portrayed the Anzac remembrance in Australia as a top-down memorial complex that builds on First World War sacrifices, portraying war as "the sacrifice of society". This way, the Anzac tradition seeks to foster in a top-down fashion the concept of egalitarian "mate-ship" among male Australians, which is appropriated quite differently in actual bottom-up practices (Kapferer 1989: 175, 177). This example demonstrates how state-sponsored top-down processes and bottom-up conceptions may be simultaneous, yet have opposite effects

driving force ("because we are victims we have to fight for the nation") and the result ("the faithful struggle for our nation causes victims") of nationalism, thus creating a circle as, for instance, in the case of Eritrea (cf. O'Kane 2012).

   Although powerful victimisation discourses are able to bridge, so to say, to a certain extent societal cleavages based on cultural, ethnic, social, political, and economic grounds and hence to strengthen national cohesion, these frictions can nevertheless continue to exist. Further, the victimisation discourse can manifest differently among different individuals and groups of the countries in question. Hence, the respective modes of suffering can be, to a large part, conceived as idealised in Weber's sense. According to him,

> "An ideal-type is formed by the one-sided *accentuation* of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent *concrete individual* phenomena, which are arranged (…) into a unified *analytical* construct (*Gedankenbild*). In its conceptual purity this mental construct (*Gedankenbild*) cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality. It is a *utopia*." (Weber 1949: 90, italics in original)

Considering the heterogeneity of the past forms a part of the discourse of suffering among the respective nations, which can be quite ambivalent: while people and groups opine that they, their ancestors, or their country as a whole suffered under colonial rule, they may – in the same breath – praise the advantages of colonial infrastructure or efficient colonial governance. It is worthwhile considering the nuances in appreciation of the (colonial) past, as depending on the context and individual prioritisations they can shed light on the evaluation, perception, and – possibly rational-selective – valorisation of a particular past vis-à-vis a particular present.

The Cases of Guinea and Guinea-Bissau

Present-Day Modes of Collective Suffering
A frequent observation that many foreign visitors arriving in Guinea or Guinea-Bissau for the first time make is that the country's inhabitants suffer, both materially and immaterially. Suffering seems to be a ubiquitous phenomenon in the whole sub-region. The two countries in question rank at the bottom of the Human Development Index annually determined by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 2011: 129). Even if the explanatory power of such statistical rankings can be questioned, they nevertheless give an indication about the living conditions in the respective countries. The vast majority of Bissau-Guineans, however, do not only suffer physically and materially but also emotionally due to societal, political, and economic structures transmitted through history that, the people believe, they are powerless to influence. This explains why Bissau-Guineans nostalgically and melancholically look back in search of a reputedly better past much more intensively then individuals do elsewhere in the world. Frequently, Bissau-Guineans complain about the state, inefficient public institutions, corrupt and incapable politicians and government officials, as well as power-hungry and selfish army representatives, all of which create many reasons for the Bissau-Guinean nation to suffer as a whole. Contradictions, however, are obvious: Despite the condemnations, public service appears to be an attractive employer –delayed salary payments are offset by low workloads and permanent employment, even for individuals with low qualifications, and possible access to illicit income sources – and notwithstanding the widespread rejection of corruption, people are ready to employ such practices in their private lives.

Hence, "the actors simultaneously condemn the practices that they justify." (Blundo and Olivier de Sardan 2006: 133)

In Guinea-Bissau, the victimisation and sanctification of the nation consists of two components, representing external and internal dimensions respectively. On the one hand, a mechanism that vaguely resembles a principle known as "balanced antagonism" – popularised by the writings of E.E. Evans-Pritchard (cf. Meeker 2004) – provides for the construction and maintenance of a social boundary, attempting to unite the nation across ethnic and religious boundaries and positioning it against a generalised, collective other. On the other hand, the exploitation of the feeling of distress tries to ensure that the nation is portrayed as a collectivised victim suffering from political and socio-economic crises and hardships. Similar mechanisms weld people together in contemporary Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, hence providing popular cohesion. As mentioned above, Bissau-Guinean politicians and civil servants are often perceived by citizens mostly as counterparts of the nation. Since the citizens hold them responsible for political authoritarianism, economic mismanagement, and social grievances, they do not believe that these political players are serving the interests of the nation. The obviation of state representatives under political authoritarianism and an overwhelming sense of socio-economic deprivation form the backbone of the subaltern discourse of collective victimisation in contemporary Guinea and Guinea-Bissau. According to such discourses, in both countries, the political and military elites share financial resources amongst themselves while leaving the general population more or less to fend for themselves. The enormous wealth transported out of or through both countries in the form of drugs and mineral resources does not filter through to the population but remains firmly in the elites' hands while the national economies are barely viable. In this context, public service is an attractive – and often the only – employment potential for many. It offers a fairly regular income and gives access to bribes and public resources. So while public service is esteemed for its financial potential, public servants – and particularly those in higher echelons who thus enjoy access to bigger public coffers – are seen as in league with the kleptocratic governments and thus not part of the suffering national population.

In the face of the persistent economic struggle for survival that many people in these countries face, with no perspective for improvement, suffering may seem ubiquitous. Therefore, the question arises how the particular discourses of collective suffering can produce a strong national identity in these two West African countries. Obviously, both countries have experienced long periods of authoritarian political rule. Upon Guinea's independence in 1958, the French colonial system was replaced by a socialist-inspired autocratic system dominated by the country's long-term charismatic leader Touré, succeeded by Lansana Conté in 1984 who, albeit liberalising parts of the political and economic systems, continued the chosen authoritarian path that built heavily on the distribution of extractive-industry revenues within the ruling political and military elites. At the same time, governance ideology or infrastructure was not changed nor new or alternative nation-building project undertaken.

In neighbouring Guinea-Bissau, repressive Portuguese colonialism also cleared the way to a left-wing one-party system upon independence in 1973–1974, achieved after twelve years of armed struggle. Although a multi-party system was introduced in the early 1990s, coups d'état as well as a nine months so-called "Military Conflict" (1998–1999) have since marked the country. As one consequence of these socio-political experiences and security developments, both Guinea and

Guinea-Bissau rank very high in the 2012 Failed State Index (Messner 2012: 4, 36, 43; for a critique of such indices see Bethke 2012).

The fatalist discourse of the Bissau-Guineans is commonly represented by frequent sayings such as – the most popular ones – "*djitu ka tem*", "*n'sufri*" (I suffer), and "*koitadi*" (poor blighter). Based on similar observations, Trajano Filho (2002: 154–157) has therefore described this way of representing the Bissau-Guinean nation as the "ethos of *koitadesa*," referring to Bissau-Guineans as a nation of "*koitadis*". The Kriol term "*koitadesa*", derived from Portuguese "*coita*", means poverty, infelicity, disgrace, ache, and misery (cf. also Scantamburlo 2002: 313), thus depicting a mode of life in resignation, deprivation, and suffering (Trajano Filho 2002: 155–156).

The Makings of Victimisation Discourses: outside causes of suffering

How is collective suffering constructed in Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, and who are those responsible? In many a strand of popular and official discourses it is outsiders who are identified as the causes for the nation's plight. Widespread oral narratives among Bissau-Guineans keep circulating that both neighbouring countries, Senegal and Guinea, were planning to divide the reputedly rich Guinea-Bissau between them. In this context, a considerable number of Bissau-Guineans believe that it was Guinea's president Touré who masterminded the assassination of Amílcar Cabral (see also Forrest 1992: 38). Backed by journalistic inquiry (Castanheira 1999: 277–281), most scholarly authors agree that the Portuguese secret police ordered Cabral's assassination and had it carried out by disappointed members of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea[-Bissau] and Cape Verde (Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde – PAIGC).[8] Nevertheless, the conspiracy theory implicating Touré persists and Bissau-Guineans regard themselves collectively as victims of regional and international political plots aiming to destabilise their country and overthrow the government. Thus, contemporary Bissau-Guinean discourses surround particularly Senegalese, and less so Guinean politicians and migrants in Guinea-Bissau with an atmosphere of suspicion. Senegalese and Guinean citizens (the latter are locally known as *nanias*), who often act as traders in Guinea-Bissau, are frequently regarded as disingenuous and ruthless by Bissau-Guineans. In comparison, Bissau-Guineans usually describe themselves as peaceful, ethical, and family-oriented.

Similarly to Guinea-Bissau, foreigners in Guinea are at moments of crisis portrayed as the enemy of state and nation. Unlike Guinea-Bissau, Guinea had not reached its independence by violent struggle but as a consequence of the 1958 referendum, more swiftly than many had anticipated. The French colonial infrastructure was quickly stripped away as a reaction to the referendum and left the country with few human resources to build a new nation-state. The popular vote against the continued colonial relations with France is still a source of national pride today, especially as Guineans were the only colonial population to vote for independence (cf. Goerg et al. 2009). The former colonial power was later often accused of blocking Guinea's national interests and contributing to the political isolation Guineans experienced both on a regional and international level – not only by its political leadership but also by others.

The charismatic leader of the independence movement and majority party Parti Démocratique de Guinée (PDG) constructed a vision of Guinea as the spearhead of African independence and Pan-Africanism, framing the fate of the Guinean people as larger than itself, as a part of anti-colonial struggle for freedom and dignity beyond any particular nation-state (Touré 1969). Many of the

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[8] See Galli and Jones 1987: 70; Forrest 1992: 37–38; Dhada 1993: 46–48.

young state's insignia, like the anthem, and the government's ties to newly independent states across (West) Africa manifested this vision. A trademark quote associated with Sékou Touré, that Guineans "preferred poverty with honour to riches in slavery" (Rivière 1978: 12), illustrates that Guineans should be ready to suffer economically but to rejoice in the dignity they assert in their independence. As during the so-called First Republic under Sékou Touré's rule (1958–1984), the quote is still prominent in contemporary conversations. The capability of bearing hardship with dignity and with the aim of preserving that dignity in the face of suffering, poverty, or atrocity is a quality often asserted by Guineans themselves. It is also hailed in the context of regional insecurity and neighbouring civil wars to signify that these Guinean characteristics are the reason why civil war has not broken out in Guinea itself yet – even though there might have been sufficient causes identified for it.

Guinea's First Republic saw coup-attempts and plots to overthrow the government – or staged impressions thereof (Arieff and McGovern 2013; Keita 2002; McGovern 2002), thereby creating an image of the socialist revolution – and hence of the nation itself – under threat. This threat was often construed either as originating from the outside, from foreign nationals operating against Guinea and Guinean interests, as in the so-called 'Portuguese aggression' in 1970, or the publicly circulated rumours that Liberian ex-combatants were mobilising in Conakry and the Forest region in the South East of the country during national strikes in 2007. Foreigners from within were at times also identified: individuals who did not share the national vision and political ideology and hence could not be regarded as true Guineans. Not only was this image invoked during the First Republic, but also later for example during periods of political unrest towards the end of the Second Republic under Lansana Conté (1984–2008), when the political or security situation demanded the mobilisation of the population as it happened in early 2007 (McGovern 2007; Schroven 2010a).

Roots and Trajectories of Suffering Discourses

Models of state-society-relations created on the basis of European post-socialist, transitioning countries emphasise that people who have been subjected to authoritarian political systems reveal a demanding attitude toward the state as an almighty allocator of resources and benefits; such a state is also characterised by a preponderance of publicly voiced views that conform to the politically desired positions (see Strohschneider 1996: 40). As discussed above, collectively experienced socio-economic distress that has been historically charged and politically fostered can contribute to welding the nation together, particularly when the experience of authoritarian rule remains.

The feeling of collective victimisation and resulting suffering discourses has a long tradition in both Guinea and Guinea-Bissau and is very much rooted in collective memory, constituting an important source for contemporary narratives. This concerns not only material suffering and discrimination experienced under both colonial and postcolonial rule, but also, as discussed above, the imagination of foreigners as (potential) threats to the sovereignty or destiny of the nation.

Authoritarian rule in both colonial and postcolonial periods seems to have fostered the collective self-affirmation as victims, for they allow Guineans and Bissau-Guineans to regard themselves as powerless and oppressed. Particularly in the latter's instance, the colonial state was characterised by a racist attitude toward the local population, suppressing people in legal-political, economic, and social terms (including forced labour, denial of civil liberties and education, economic and

workforce exploitation).[9] While the regimes officially changed after independence, political authoritarianism continued. The independence-movement-turned-single-party continued to control both society and economy through repressive means, while maintaining a centralised state structure and imposing dogmatic indoctrination on the population in both countries. Yet, the scope and success of indoctrination were limited as people were able to maintain some distance and private space, partly due to the difficult infrastructural conditions, partly due to evident contradictions between public rhetoric and state action. In Touré's Guinea, for example, forced labour had just been abolished in 1956, two years before independence. After independence, the government reinstated it as so-called "human investment projects" in order to raise resources for agricultural and other projects the young country was otherwise unable to muster resources for (cf. Rivière 1978: 12). While the experience of renewed forced labour may have disillusioned many citizens in some ways, it did not undermine the overall pervasive nature of the young nation-state's political indoctrination and long-term capacity to shape a (revolutionary) national vision (Straker 2009).

Similarly, as during colonial times, post-independent Guinea-Bissau was characterised by a discrepancy between official ideology and everyday life. Even after the introduction of multiparty democracy in the early 1990s, authoritarianism continued, encompassing the violation of human rights and democratic procedures. As my (CK) observations and conversations with informants suggest, citizens feel unprotected and exposed to hostile attacks – first and foremost from the state apparatus.

This fear complex is supplemented by a socio-economic component. While the late 1970s and early 1980s were characterised by a general shortage of basic consumer goods, as my informants remembered, Bissau-Guineans have been faced with limited employment opportunities, reduced earning power, lack of infrastructure, and omnipresent corrupt practices for numerous years. Bissau-Guineans are "faced by a system in which they feel they cannot succeed, but must participate in and thus perpetuate in order to survive." (Pink 2001: 112) The sense of powerlessness and dependence has apparently been aggravated by projects and payments from the international development co-operation sector. The international assistance that followed the country's armed struggle for independence after 1974 seems to have transformed Guinea-Bissau into an "aid orphan" characterised by a rentier economy (see Schiefer 2002). Therefore, observers have attested that Bissau-Guineans had developed a "mentality of dependence" as early as in the early 1990s (Acção para o Desenvolvimento 1993: 41; own translation, CK). This includes the conviction among Bissau-Guineans that "(…) their things are of less worth", as a Brazilian cultural worker observed (Figueira 2013: 245). In particular, the time after the "Military Conflict" was marked by a sharp decrease in international commitment and financial support, which severely impacted the socio-economic and rentier foundations of many Bissau-Guineans. Nevertheless, Bissau-Guineans are proud of their country, beyond bad governance, manipulative politicians, military interference, and socioeconomic grievances, all of which make the people suffer.

In Guinea, by contrast, no war was fought for independence but war came to the country from neighbouring countries as the civil wars from Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Ivory Coast all brought refugees, armed groups, and struggle particularly to the South-East of Guinea, the so-called Forest region. International aid was significant during this period, both to refugees and hosting communities, but dwindled away after the violence had seized and refugees could return to their home countries. These major population and aid movements, however, made considerable

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[9] See Furtado (1986); Galli and Jones (1987); Forrest (1992); Mateus (2004); Havik (2006, 2007, 2008).

impressions on rural communities who, also due to decades of Touré's isolationist politics, felt insulated from larger, regional processes. Rural populations today still remark encountering the refugees and their ways of live and livelihood highlighted the fundamental differences between them and the newly arrived. Their sense of national identity and pride was seen as less developed, their social and family values as more eroded and corrupted. Many Guineans in former host communities remarked that while the refugees brought a lot of modern ideas, from dress code to gender relations, they seemed to lack dignity and strength in national identity. Considering the recent civil war experiences of the refugees, such observations may appear self-evident. For Guineans, however, they served to underline differences and appropriate the relative stability their nation-state was securing for them. In light of the ethnic character that parts of the regional warfare was portraying, Guineans remarked with pride that while ethnicity was an important marker of identity, their national identity was stronger than in the neighbouring countries and, implicitly, saved Guinea from its own potential for ethnic conflict.[10]

Beyond the immediate experience of differences, the refugee period also opened the country more to aid organisations and their influence. While the development industry has not reached the intensity known in other African countries of similar social-economic conditions, there is a prevalent attitude that these organisations are in Guinea to deliver services the population is entitled to. While non-governmental organisations are indeed delivering some services, such as primary education or basic medical facilities, bilateral donor projects were working on physical infrastructure. People were demanding their entitlements from the international community, just as they were demanding similar services from the extractive industry, which is the major economic player in the country. It is remarkable that people were not making the same demands from the government itself, as if they had given up hopes their government would actually deliver any services. After decades of dwindling and partially non-existing public services, Guineans today are used to seeing multilateral donors, aid organisations, or mining companies provide public infrastructure like roads, sanitation, education, or medical infrastructure. Accordingly, at field visits of international NGOs or large donors like the UN family, people at the field site regularly demand to be helped on the grounds of their suffering.

Apart from these legal-political and socio-economic pre-conditions for national suffering, Bissau-Guineans have felt threatened by foreign interventions. During the war of independence that shook the Portuguese colony from 1961 to 1973, the liberation movement and successive single-party PAIGC portrayed the Bissau-Guinean nation-to-be as a suffering collectivity that was contained, exploited, and oppressed by Portuguese colonialism. Through this portrayal, the independence movement intended to appeal to the people's emotions, hoping to mobilise and win the people's support for their strategic as well as utopian goals, those being national independence, unity, prosperity, and welfare. Guinea-Bissau was portrayed as underdog David fighting against the Portuguese Goliath and is even said to have contributed to the downfall of the Portuguese dictatorship in April 1974.

In Guinea, there was no bloody struggle for the liberation of the nation as in neighbouring Bissau. Independence was won after strikes, political mass mobilisation of the population during the 1950s (Schmidt 2005, 2007), and, in the final act, by the referendum against continued French

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[10] Ethnic tensions in national politics have been rising in recent years but have generally been linked to political party mobilisation. Many voices in the field identify an abuse by political leadership rather than profound problems in day-to-day interethnic relations.

colonialism (Goerg et al. 2009). The newly independent government later stylised this referendum into the heroic act of the nation demanding its freedom. While other countries had to fight bloody wars, Guineans remark with pride that they reached their independence in such a civilised and democratic manner, underlining their shared pride in achieving the result other (French West African) colonies did not reach, or that their populations did not dare to reach. The vote, as remembered in shared consciousness, underlines the demand for continuing civilised conduct as a mark of being Guinean. In many debates about the specific characteristics that set them aside from their regional, civil-war battered neighbours, Guinean informants remarked upon the sense of duty this historic event instilled in them. Rather than solving political issues with violence in the past and present, they would "find quiet, civilised means" to reach their goal. This could entail bearing hardship longer, but, as pronounced by Sékou Touré, thereby they would maintain dignity and not descend into violence and chaos, such as Guineans have witnessed happening in their neighbouring countries and as they fear could erupt – coupled with ethnic tensions that arise when political stakes are high.

Such rhetoric resources to historically incurred duties speak as much about the appreciation of the past as they do to a contemporary perception of powerlessness when facing the overpowering state and army in Guinea that employs violence to quiet opposition or public demonstrations.

The hopes and expectations of both the Guinean and the Bissau-Guinean population were desperately disappointed in the decades following independence. Nevertheless, the meta-narrative of the glorious way of reaching independence by war or referendum respectively continues to be well internalised in the public consciousness. In the case of Guinea-Bissau, this even meant to ignore the deep frictions within the PAIGC, on the one hand, and many rival organisations (e.g., Frente de Libertação e Independência Nacional da Guiné [FLING], also supported by Senegal), on the other, during the liberation and post-independence phase. This selective memory conceives the Bissau-Guinea nation, in retrospect, as one community of fate that resisted oppression and war atrocities and strove for freedom and welfare. The Bissau-Guineans' attitude towards the anti-colonial armed struggle can be summarised by using the solemn quotation by a nationalist association of Serbian priests: "The entire people have made blood sacrifices on the altar of freedom." (quoted in Buchenau 2006: 225; own translation CK)

The collective self-imagination as victims of malignant strangers – not only of Portuguese colonialists but also of the French, Senegalese, and Guineans – can be traced back to the late nineteenth century and nowadays forms part of popular discourses among Bissau-Guineans. Both Senegal and Guinea (including the former colonial power France) are believed to have vested interests in the small neighbouring country, as many Bissau-Guineans have repeatedly pointed out to the author. To date, Guinea-Bissau's geopolitical in-between position and historical narratives conspire to foster cohesion among the Bissau-Guinean nation of victims: In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, France had attempted to acquire political and economic influence in Guinea-Bissau, which was only nominally controlled by Portugal whereas French traders dominated Bissau-Guinean commerce (Bowman 1987: 98–99). France, intending to expand its control further south into territories claimed by Portugal for centuries, had clashed with the Portuguese. Finally, Portugal had – because it was in a weak position – to cede the Casamance to France in 1886, in exchange for the Rio Nunez and Rio Cacine areas that had previously belonged to French Guinea (Roche 1973, 1985; Bowman 1980: 165–169, 180; Esteves 1988). Resistance to this exchange – to this day regarded by many Bissau-Guineans as unequal and derogatory –

emerged in 1888 after a Franco-Portuguese border delimitation commission had been installed. Portuguese and local residents, including Cape Verdeans, accused the Portuguese administration of corruption and betraying the country's interests (see Kohl 2009: 160–161). Even today, the Portuguese past is remembered by Bissau-Guineans and numerous of them point out the fact that Kriol continues to be spoken in Ziguinchor and that the legacy of lusocreole culture persists in the city. Interestingly, in current collective memory it is not the 'corrupt' Portuguese who 'lost' the Casamance, rather it is the Bissau-Guinean nation-state that was betrayed by the French – as colonial power ruling Senegal and Guinea – thus turning the Bissau-Guinean nation into a victim. Hence, today Bissau-Guineans appropriate past Portuguese territorial claims in current discourses and, in so doing, they take side with the Portuguese of the past. Future events strengthened the belief among Bissau-Guineans they may become victims of their superior neighbours: When the independence of Senegal impended in 1960, Portuguese military officials feared that Portuguese Guinea-Bissau could be incorporated into a federation of independent West African states (Henri Labéry in Chilcote 1972: 314; Keese 2003: 119). In 1964, Touré laid claims to large parts of the territorial waters of Guinea-Bissau. These historical developments have left their mark on the contemporary Bissau-Guinean national consciousness. Narratives keep circulating among Bissau-Guineans that both Senegal and Guinea were reputedly planning to divide their neighbour Guinea-Bissau – potentially rich in agricultural, oil, and mining resources – between themselves, thus reinforcing the self-image of Bissau-Guineans as victims.

Such deep-rooted sensations and prejudices, directed against Guinea and Senegal, were met when the "Military Conflict" broke out in mid-1998. At that time, the majority of Guinea-Bissau's population sided with the so-called junta – led by former chief commander Ansumané Mané – that had risen against President João Bernardo "Nino" Vieira. Referring to bilateral cooperation agreements, Vieira called in Senegalese and Guinean troops, supported by France. Vieira's legally correct policy was considered by many as a threat to independent nationhood. Since the civil war mainly centred around the capital, where most of the Senegalese army units were stationed, Bissau's residents suffered most from Senegal's military intervention. Townspeople had to obtain permission from the commander of the Senegalese troops, not from Bissau-Guinean authorities if they wished to leave Bissau.[11] Widespread popular outrage and misery were triggered by heavy bombardments of residential quarters and a hospital – for which the Senegalese army was allegedly responsible. Vast inventories of both the national archives and the national library were likewise reportedly destroyed by the Senegalese army, which had set up its headquarters in the research complex (cf. Lopes, Cardoso and Mendy 1999; Djaló 2004). Hence, the Senegalese, less so the Guineans that were defeated close to the border, were regarded as invaders who turned the whole nation into victims of occupation.

More recently, many Bissau-Guineans appear to be upset about the international reporting and representation of their country as "weak", "corrupt",[12] "failed", as a drug-trafficking stronghold and security risk by both the foreign media and the international community. Although rivalling political camps have emerged over the past decade – the most relevant cleavage separating adherents of former populist President Kumba Yalá and the supporters of former Prime Minister

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[11] Based on statements of informants.

[12] Similarly, Guineans felt ashamed when in 2006 Transparency International ranked the country amongst the most corrupt countries. While this sad news was transmitted on public radio, it was widely commented on as a practice everyone may be implicated in somehow. Having the international community alerted to the fact was, however, even more shameful.

Carlos Gomes Júnior – who used to be favoured by the West but was deposed in a military coup in April 2012 – most Bissau-Guineans will agree that their country has been cast in an unfavourable light, Guinea-Bissau thus becoming a victim of negative media coverage and turning into a plaything of foreign political and economic strategic interests (covering Senegal and other Economic Community of West African States [ECOWAS], Angola, the European Union, etc.) depending on the political standpoint. In other words, things appear to change, and Bissau-Guineans seem to become furious and angry about allegations and alleged 'campaigns' against their country, and it is this aggravation that welds together the nation – despite severe political disagreements and assessments – against what could be called a 'victimisation discourse imposed from the outside'.

Suffering with and without Redeemer

As discussed, the Bissau-Guinean *koitadesa* discourse incorporates the meta-narrative of the successful and glorious war for independence. A crucial aspect in this regard was played by Amílcar Cabral, the co-founder and long-time leader of the independence movement PAIGC. In numerous conversations and observations, Bissau-Guineans voiced their desire for a redeemer of the nation. In retrospect, many people regard Cabral as a martyr. As some informants stressed, Cabral would have ensured the nation's salvation from distress – if he had not been assassinated shortly before independence in 1973. As a martyr figure, he serves as an icon on which the multiple hopes of the present-day Bissau-Guineans are projected. Cabral personified qualities that seemed to be concordant with those of an active prophet. He was a charismatic personality, who unveiled a utopian strategy to redeem the nation from the burden of colonialism, while his ascribed ethical rigor conferred superiority over his peers on him (cf. Mühlmann 1964: 251–260, 318, 397). Bissau-Guineans opined that Cabral laid the foundations for the national liberation but could not launch independent Guinea-Bissau's economic and political recovery due to his sudden death. Longing for a strong leader, Bissau-Guineans continue to identify him as the one who would have been capable of fundamentally improving the country's political and economic performance, and thereby the living conditions of the entire nation. Most Bissau-Guineans are convinced that if Cabral had been able to rule over independent Guinea-Bissau, the country would have adopted a positive trajectory. On this account, Cabral, as the country's dearest son, continues to be regarded as an outstanding personality by the majority of Bissau-Guineans. Many Bissau-Guineans hold the opinion that Guinea-Bissau's political and economic decay after independence was the result of the incorrect and incomplete implementation of Cabral's utopian ideology – aimed at overcoming exploitation and suppression – as well as renouncing his ethical rigor. In doing so, they overlook authoritarian tendencies and the executions of rivals during Cabral's leadership. In the beginning, the PAIGC had garnered support for the war by promising to eliminate colonial patterns of political oppression and socio-economic exploitation. In this way, the liberation movement adopted the characteristics of a millenarist movement, appealing to the vast discriminated-against and disadvantaged layers of the Bissau-Guinean population. Upon achieving independence, the PAIGC promised to appropriate all the assets and rights that had been previously the exclusive domain of the Portuguese colonial elite and their self-serving ruling apparatus, the colonial state. The PAIGC was thus targeting the reversal of the colonial order by converting the erstwhile victimised menials into masters.

Millenarism shares the objective of overcoming an unjust social order with anti-imperialism and socialism/communism – two ideologies that were combined by the PAIGC. Millenarian-nativistic

movements have been identified as forerunners of nationalism, among others, by Guiart (1951), Worsley (1957), Mühlmann (1964), while, vice versa, ideologies like national socialism and communism could also take on millenarian thought patterns and action (Cohn 2004). Tacitly or overtly, millenarists aim at the establishment of a golden age through the creation of an idealised, levelled, and egalitarian society. These hopes and aspirations were embodied by Cabral and amplified by his charisma. As a strong, charismatic leader, he could produce a strong sense of national cohesion, clearing the way for a narrative that developed into a crucial component of Guinea-Bissau's national history (cf. generally Berger 2008: 9; for the golden age in the case of Israel, cf. Sand 2013: 123). Cabral promised that if the movement succeeded in liberating the country, the population would receive several long-denied material and immaterial benefits (cf. generally Mühlmann 1964: 281–282, 307–308), and socialism was ultimately considered the means to achieve these objectives. Moreover, millenarism is often characterised by the discrepancy between declarations of intent ex ante and the reality experienced by people once independence is achieved and the victorious movement secures its power. The following diagnosis also applies to the Bissau-Guinean case:

> "The belief can emerge that by simply shaking off colonial foreign rule and formal sovereignty, a substantial change of socio-economic overall structure will be effected – as a matter of fact, however, virtually nothing changes by means of 'declarations of independence' and the imitation of parliamentary-democratic institutions. The authoritarian structure of society that persisted under colonial rule does not change at all, but is rather preserved to the full extent (…)." (Mühlmann 1964: 386–387; own translation, CK)

While Guinea does not have a national martyr, a similar role for its national identity is played by Sékou Touré. Other than Amílcar Cabral in Guinea-Bissau, the charismatic leader of the Guinean independence movement became president of the one-party state and ruled the country for 26 years, a period of both great hopes for Guinea's and Africa's future as well as economic hardship and political suppression and terror. Sékou Touré had led the trade unions and later the Parti Démocratique de Guinée (PDG), the Guinean branch of the French West African Rassemblement Démocratique Africain, (RDA), that brought some highly visible and ideological changes for the Guinean colony even before independence. By 1956, international and local pressure on the French colonial system had grown so strong that France dissolved the regional administrative structure of canton chieftaincy and abandoned the large campaigns of forced labour, both integral parts of indirect rule, and for Guineans symbols of native collaboration with the external colonial exploitation that was also strongly linked to tax extortion (cf. Schmidt 2007). After independence, it was believed that with hard work and sacrifice Sékou Touré's visions, which would become the Guinean state's visions, could be attained. And indeed, the government's economic and political policies demanded many sacrifices from the population. Despite the pride people feel today in the political progress of the 1950s and 1960s, they also acknowledge the sacrifices they had to make. Upon independence, subsistence economy could not be transferred into the envisioned modernised agriculture. Mismanagement of socialist-inspired five-year plans and the political isolation Guinea experienced after independence inadvertently lead to the country being unable to feed itself. Guineans thus link memories of that time of their lives with hunger, deprivation, and political uncertainty. Yet, however difficult those times, there is an understanding that sacrifices were necessary in order to attain and maintain the revolution that would free Guinea (in light of

continued French opposition) and Africa (with perpetuated (neo-) colonial dependencies) in the long-run.

Considering domestic processes, political mobilisation reached a permanent stage in the 1970s with perpetual projects and campaigns, both to fend off (imaginary and actual, external and internal) foes and to control the population. A regime of secret police, disappearances, and public trials of treason quieted any opposition in the later years of Touré's rule. Dominant historic discourses present this period as one of suffering, as the population fell victim to a cruel state. As many informants remarked, no family was left untouched by political prosecution and denunciations to the party or the secret police. At the same time, sacrifices were expected for the revolution – in the official discourse of the time. Even today, people hold the government of that time in forgiving regard allowing that there might indeed have been external foes threatening Guinea. This is also a means to externalise responsibility for injustices that happened to family, friends, and neighbours – as many Guineans today are hesitant to talk about their own involvement in the Touré-regime (cf. Arieff and McGovern 2013: 216).

In hindsight, many of the past cruelties are regarded as sacrifices necessary in order to secure the nation against external enemies and in the forging of the nation itself, which evolved under the strict rule and the morally clear vision of Touré. In short, the rhetoric recourses of Touré's official justifications for Guineans being victimised in the post-independence phase are well integrated in the national ontology.

Today, however, people support a different vision of state-nation relations than may have been intended. While Guineans are proud of their history, including the person and deeds of Touré, the suffering under the charismatic leader's rule is also emphasised, thereby projecting to contemporary governments that may or may not be ideologically valid or morally pristine, but will without doubt cause the Guinean people suffering. Some intellectual supporters of Touré's ideological legacy, institutionalised in the "Club Ahmed Sékou Touré", argue that his policies and stately vision for both Guinea and Africa were indeed pristine but were misinterpreted or even abused by his entourage, who were not morally rigorous but rather weak and corruptible. Guineans identifying with this version of national trajectory can be sure to be on the moral high-ground. But it contrast with the ideological as well as legal and security problems people experienced under President Lansana Conté and currently expereince with President Condé's government (cf. Arieff and McGovern 2013: 212).

The argument of corrupted dignity was often heard in the late years of ailing President Lansana Conté, who during the later years of his 24-year-reign is also said to have been misinterpreted and his policies abused to the personal benefit of his corrupt and power-hungry entourage, while he himself possessed the above-mentioned moral rigour. This rhetoric move may underline the extension of Touré's regime into the following Second Republic, both with regard to actual administrative and governance practices as well as to an ascribed moral rigor of the president (cf. McGovern 2007).

Beyond the extension of one president's (presumed and expected) moral rigor to another, the public discourse of the nation as a victim of the state and its public face, the government, continued as well (Højbjerg et al. 2012: 6). With the lack of nation-building activities during the Second Republic, the references to the First Republic became even stronger, filling the moral void that the Second Republic inadvertently created in its day-to-day politics and practices and with its lack of vision for the nation.

Conclusion

As a result of the widespread and generalised dissatisfaction with both the Guinean and the Bissau-Guinean state apparatuses, national cohesion is achieved by Guineans' and Bissau-Guineans' collective discursive self-assessment as (innocent) victims of an incompetent, corrupt, and anonymous state apparatus. In short, people tend to portray themselves as a "solidarity community of victims" or "community of fate". This self-assessment is not limited to the "parliaments of the poor" (Vigh 2006: 146–148) – i.e. the disempowered, poor, and disadvantaged majority of the countries' population – albeit these certainly constitute one of the main spaces of lamentation.

   The populations of Guinea and Guinea-Bissau are united in their collective regard of themselves as innocent and powerless victims suffering from the consequences of unjust and inefficient politics as well as illicit bureaucratic practices on the side of the state. From their subaltern perspective, they stand together against a faceless, overpowering antipode of government elites. In the past, all their hopes of redemption from their hard living conditions had been squashed. These conditions were aggravated even more when Cabral, who continues to be regarded as the national redeemer, was assassinated. From the perspective of many Bissau-Guineans, all the promises for a better future were destroyed after Cabral's successors betrayed his noble goals. This paved the way for widespread fatalism and the, yet unfulfilled, yearning for a new "redeemer" among vast sections of the country's population, a strong but benevolent man who is able to lead the country to prosperity and stability. For many, albeit not all, Bissau-Guineans, the former Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Júnior, who was deposed by military coup in April 2012, showed at least some of the qualities of a redeemer as he seemed to lead the country back to the right track, to development, introducing reforms – whereas others pointed to his dark, power hungry, and corrupt side. Per definition a fatalist

> "(…) cannot do anything about the future. He thinks it is not up to him what is going to happen next year, tomorrow, or the very next moment. He thinks that even his own behavior is not in the least within his power (…)." (Taylor 1962: 656)

This fatalism leaves most people frustrated as they could not and cannot do anything about in the situation in their country. Guinea-Bissau's political instability, socioeconomic hardships, the fate of politicians like Cabral or Gomes – it is not in their hands. Rather, they and their country are playthings of sinister, both internal and external, forces that deprive them and their beloved country of everything that promises improvement and redemption. As in Guinea, the only escape from this hopelessness appears to be migration.

   In Guinea, the moral rigor and vision of the charismatic leader Sékou Touré have formed a vision and destiny for the nation that people hold on to, particularly in light of the lack of new visions and the continued disappointment with contemporary politics, economy, and increasing socio-economic distance of the governing elite to the general population. Hence, the majority of Guineans can fall back on an experience of shared victimhood that affords orientation and meaning to the contemporary suffering – out of which no government seems to be able or want to lead a renewing national project. Guinea-Bissau is different in this regard: the early post-independent government followed a national unity approach after the war of independence, in which fighters had sacrificed themselves for independence and the freedom from colonialism. Thus, the unofficial 'bottom-up' victimisation discourse appears to be largely in contrast to early official 'national reconstruction'

and 'national unity' policies and was presumably triggered by the non-realisation of the 'peace and independence dividend'. The Guinean perceptions – less so the Bissau-Guinean ones, we would say – of a suffering nation stand opposed to the officially sponsored notions of nationalism of the past, while at the same time they employ many elements of the official discourse, reinterpreting them in a new context that forms Brubaker's counter-state national discourse (2004: 144) from the bottom up. The discourse of the nation as a victim can fill the vacuum created by both Guinea's and Guinea-Bissau's post-independence governments that have not been engaging in nation-building in the last decades; it can even oppose the official national discourses of the past and unite Guineans and Bissau-Guineans in new ways, using the very same historic references.

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