

Guinea

# *Ethnicity in Guinea*

## *Group selection*

The **Malinke, Peul and Susu** are politically relevant groups in Guinea. The remaining 10% of the population (besides the three big politically relevant groups) is made up of several small ethnic groups, none of which is politically organized/represented and thus politically irrelevant according to the definition of EPR. Group sizes according to figures provided by the CIA World Factbook <sup>(2245)</sup>.

<sup>2245</sup> [CIA World Factbook]

## *Power relations*

### *1958-1984, Sekou Toure's rule*

Toure, a Malinke, who led the country to independence was known for his personal commitment to a transethnic, united Guinean nation <sup>(2246; 2247)</sup>. Although his party (PDG) - the country's single ruling party until the military coup in 1984 - was sometimes portrayed/seen as a Malinke and Susu and anti-Peul party by political opponents, its leaders made a great personal effort to construct a party and government that included all of the country's ethnic groups and to maintain an ethnic balance <sup>(2248)</sup> - despite the highly personalized rule of Toure. Representation of all regions and ethnic groups in the party leadership was emphasized <sup>(2249)</sup>.

<sup>2246</sup> [Schmidt, 2005]

<sup>2247</sup> [O'Toole, 2005]

<sup>2248</sup> [Schmidt, 2005]

<sup>2249</sup> [Schmidt, 2005]

Nevertheless, the more distrustful and authoritarian Toure became over the years, the more he was inclined to rely on a small clique of family members and Malinke associates which in the end formed the inner power circle of the regime <sup>(2250)</sup>. I thus coded the Malinke as "senior partner" and the Susu and Peul as "junior partners".

<sup>2250</sup> [O'Toole, 2005]

There was an alleged "Peul plot" in 1976 after which Toure proceeded aggressively against prominent Peul intellectuals. Many were arrested and died in prison. However, Toure also persecuted opponents from his own ethnic group (e.g. Malinke merchants after another alleged plot in 1975) <sup>(2251)</sup>. I have no evidence of an ongoing targeted discrimination or political exclusion of the Peul as a group. It seems that Toure simply became more and more distrustful and authoritarian in general, striking aggressively against all kinds of real and imagined opponents to stay in power.

<sup>2251</sup> [O'Toole, 2005]

### *1985: Military coup in April 1984 after Toure's death*

According to EPR's January 1st rule, the new period is coded as starting in 1985. A military junta takes over power. At first, a power-sharing regime is installed between the two main leaders: Lansana Conte, a Susu, becomes president, Diarra Traore, a Malinke, prime minister. However, ethnic and personal tensions quickly come to the fore (<sup>2252</sup>).

<sup>2252</sup> [O'Toole, 2005]

Nevertheless, this single-year period is characterized by a power-sharing situation between the different ethnic factions within the army. Conte's Susu can be considered the "senior partner", the Malinke and Peul groups the "junior partners" in the country's executive.

### *1986-2008*

After Traore is sidelined by Conte, there is an unsuccessful coup attempt in July 1985. This leads to anti-Malinke violence and to the execution of numerous Malinke politicians and officers (<sup>2253</sup>).

<sup>2253</sup> [O'Toole, 2005]

Meanwhile, Conte consolidates his power. More and more personalized, authoritarian rule despite the transition to a (superficial) multi-party democracy at the beginning of the 90s. The Peul- and Malinke-elite are almost completely excluded from political power. (Even the leadership of Conte's own national party PUP becomes marginalized.) A clique of Susu friends and businessmen dominate the politics alongside President Conte (<sup>2254</sup>). Also, the public sector and the top-leadership of the military are dominated by the Susu group (<sup>2255</sup>). The new opposition parties that emerged in the 90s and which are severely constrained by Conte's government are built along ethnic lines: the RPG of Alpha Conde is a Malinke party, the PRP and UNR are Peul parties (<sup>2256</sup>; <sup>2257</sup>).

<sup>2254</sup> [O'Toole, 2005]

<sup>2255</sup> [US State Department, 1999-2016]

<sup>2256</sup> [O'Toole, 2005]

<sup>2257</sup> [US State Department, 1999-2016]

From 2006 onwards, there was increasing and increasingly mobilized opposition, which in turn was met with severe violence by the regime, and continuing ethnic bias and dominance of Conte's Susu group which also occupies the crucial posts in the all important army (<sup>2258</sup>; <sup>2259</sup>). Based on this information and in absence of new evidence contrasting the picture sketched in the period of 1986-2005, Conte's last 3 years of rule are added to the foregoing period, resulting in a combined period from 1986 to 2008 in which the Susu are coded as "dominant" and the Peul and Malinke as "powerless".

<sup>2258</sup> [US State Department, 1999-2016]

<sup>2259</sup> [Freedom House, 2006-2009]

### *2009*

After Conte's death, Capt. Moussa Dadis Camara seizes control of the government in a military coup, establishing a military junta (National Council for Democracy and Development) with himself as president (until a failed assassination attempt in December 2009 which left him incapacitated and led to his leaving the country for medical treatment). Camara belongs to the Kpelle (Guerze) group, one of the small ethnic groups located in the southeastern highlands

(Forrest Region) which total about 10% of the population and are not relevant politically (although according to the U.S. State Department's Human Rights Report 2009 <sup>(2260)</sup>, they now enjoy a certain favoritism by the military junta leading to resentment by other groups). Generally, ethnicity still matters for national politics and the major political parties - RPG (Malinke), UPR, and UFDG (both Peul) - have easily identifiable ethnic bases. According to the U.S. State Department's HR Report of 2009, all major ethnic groups are included in the cabinet leadership. The junta's second man (and Camara's successor after the latter left the country), is Sekouba Konate, a Malinke; prime minister in 2009 was a Malinke, too (Kabine Komara). Nevertheless, it is not exactly clear based on the available information how much power representatives of the different ethnic groups really have (since Camara's Kpelle are not politically relevant as a group). Therefore, all three relevant groups (Susu, Malinke, Peul) are coded as "senior partners" in 2009.

<sup>2260</sup> [US State Department, 1999-2016]

### 2010

After the coup attempt in late 2009, vice-president and minister of defence S. Konate, a Malinke, took over power with president Camara staying outside the country. As no major ethnic reshuffling of the cabinet is reported for 2009 but the Malinke are upgraded through the new position of S. Konate, they are coded senior partner, while Peul and Susu are coded as junior partners on January 1 2010.

### 2011-2021

After a period of a transition government, the second round of presidential elections were finally held on November 7 2010. Alpha Conde, a Malinke from the RPG party (also mainly Malinke) won the election. As the party system in Guinea is very much based on ethnic identities I argue that the Peul are excluded from power, thus "powerless". Although some sources report members of all ethnic groups to be included into government (<sup>2261</sup>; <sup>2262</sup>), no report indicates that members of one of the two Peul parties (UPR, UFDG) have access to executive power. Furthermore, the International Crisis Group (<sup>2263</sup>) reports anti-Peul rhetoric from the part of government members and major tensions of the government with the opposition parties. With regard to the Susu, M. Z. Fofana was elected as PM, reportedly inter alia because of its linkages with the Susu political community and the support it granted to Conde in the second electoral round (<sup>2264</sup>). I therefore code the Malinke as being senior partner, with the Susu as junior partner for the years 2011 to 2013.

<sup>2261</sup> [International Crisis Group, 2011]

<sup>2262</sup> [US State Department, 1999-2016]

<sup>2263</sup> [International Crisis Group, 2011]

<sup>2264</sup> [International Crisis Group, 2011]

Parliamentary elections (free and fair; <sup>2265</sup>) were - after 2 years of delay - finally held in 2013.

<sup>2265</sup> [US State Department, 1999-2016]

Any assessment of the situation in Guinea should cover the political representation of the two main ethnic groups, the Malinke and the Peul (also known as "Fulani"). Alpha Conde, a Malinke from the

RPG party, remains President in this period following his victory in the 2015 Presidential elections, thus justifying their continued “senior partner” position (<sup>2266</sup>). Regarding the Peul group, their political representatives in the UFDG and UPR parties have been excluded from Conde’s cabinet, according to numerous sources (<sup>2267</sup>; <sup>2268</sup>). This exclusion is significant, particularly in the context of tension between the two ethnic groups, ongoing for decades. Sources cite that many Peul consider it is “their turn” to rule (<sup>2269</sup>). The Peul group therefore remain “powerless” in this period.

In 2015, the prime minister M.Z Fofana resigned, and was replaced with the independent former businessman Mamady Youla on 26 December (<sup>2270</sup>). Youla is an independent, with no obvious party connections and intended to appear as a technocratic choice. As the party system in Guinea appears to be founded on ethnic identities, the introduction of an independent, pro-business and development candidate to a political position could be a sign of changing internal political strategy. Furthermore, the complete re-structuring of the Cabinet in 2016 is said to have represented a shift towards a focus on the economy following the Ebola endemic. Many ministers, for example the Finance minister, Maladho Kaba, studied and worked abroad before the cabinet was formed with no obvious party connections (<sup>2271</sup>). However, the Susu can still be considered “junior partner” in this period for 2 reasons. Firstly, searches on Lexis Nexis show that Youla identifies as a Susu, although he refrains from bringing ethnic identity into his politics. Secondly, it is clear that the Susu elite and political class remain on the side of Conde, as they supported him in the 2015 election second round. Furthermore, sources cite Conde to have said “Guinea belongs to the Malinke, to those from the Forest Region, and to the Susu!” (<sup>2272</sup>). Therefore, this suggests that, as warned by the International Centre on Non-violent Conflict, there may be a rift between not just the Malinke and the Peul, but that a broader “Mandingo Ethnic Coalition”, of Susu and Malinke, exclude the Peul (<sup>2273</sup>). Overall, there is enough evidence to suggest that the Susu remain “junior partner” in this period.

The government of Guinea resigned in May 2018 after delayed local elections in February initiated several waves of protest. While Alpha Conde’s RPG-party won the majority of the votes, they lost the municipal government of Conakry - the capital housing a quarter of the total population of Guinea (<sup>2274</sup>). The elections were marred by violence after Celou Dalein Diallo - the leader of the main opposition party UFDG - accused the RPG-party of widespread electoral fraud (<sup>2275</sup>). Only after the international community mediated a dialogue between the authorities and Diallo, did the opposition movement suspend its demonstrations <sup>2276</sup>. The resignation of the cabinet followed a day later on 17 May, 2018.

On 21 May 2018, Ibrahima Kassory Fofana was appointed as new prime minister (<sup>2277</sup>). The appointment of a Susu as prime minister hinted at the further diminishing domination of the Malinke within

<sup>2266</sup> [International Crisis Group, 2015]

<sup>2267</sup> [Trade Bridge Consultants, 2015]

<sup>2268</sup> [Human Rights Watch, 2015]

<sup>2269</sup> [Gerber, 2013]

<sup>2270</sup> [Reuters, 2016]

<sup>2271</sup> [Guinee Direct, 2015]

<sup>2272</sup> [Pham, 2015]

<sup>2273</sup> [Darboe, 2010]

<sup>2274</sup> [VOA Afrique, 2018]

<sup>2275</sup> [Africa News, 2018]

<sup>2276</sup> [Human Rights Watch, 2018]

<sup>2277</sup> [Al Jazeera, 2018]

the RPG-party. However, ethnicity remains highly relevant in the country as exemplified by the ethnically divisive rhetoric used during political campaigns, and the ethnically targeted violence (<sup>2278</sup>). Since the rest of the government remained largely intact, there is no evidence suggesting a change in the composition of the executive power as of 2021. With president Conde re-elected as President of Guinea for the third term after a controversial constitutional referendum which sparked ongoing violent protests during late 2019 and throughout 2020, the Malinke remain "senior partner", while the Susu are coded as "junior partner" in the cabinet. The Peul remain "powerless" due to their absence in any position of executive power.

<sup>2278</sup> [US State Department, 2019]

# *Bibliography*

- [Africa News, 2018] Africa News (2018). Guinea govt resigns ahead of planned cabinet reshuffle. Retrieved on 10.08.2020 from: <https://www.africanews.com/2018/05/17/guinea-govt-reigns-ahead-of-planned-cabinet-reshuffle/>
- [Al Jazeera, 2018] Al Jazeera (2018). Guinea: Ibrahima Fofana named new PM amid political tensions. Retrieved on 10.08.2020 from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/05/guinea-ibrahima-fofana-named-pm-political-tensions-180522080943320.html>
- [CIA World Factbook] CIA World Factbook. Guinea - Population. Retrieved on 29.05.2017 from: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gv.html>
- [Darboe, 2010] Darboe, Alieu (2010). Guinea: 1958 Onwards. Retrieved on 29.05.2017 from: <https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/guinea-1958-present/>
- [Freedom House, 2006–2009] Freedom House (2006-2009). Freedom of the World: Guinea. Retrieved on 29.3.2014 from: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2006/guinea>
- [Gerber, 2013] Gerber, N (2013). Elections and Ethnicity in Guinea (Blog for Africa is a Country). Retrieved on 25.05.2017 from: <http://africasacountry.com/2013/09/elections-and-ethnicity-in-guinea/>
- [Guinee Direct, 2015] Guinee Direct (2015). Portrait de Maladho Kaba, la femme aux commandes de l'économie guinéenne. Retrieved on 29.05.2017 from: <http://www.guineedirect.org/index.php/flash-special/1708-guinee-portrait-de-maladho-kaba-la-femme-aux-commandes-de-l-economie-guineenne>
- [Human Rights Watch, 2015] Human Rights Watch (2015). Guinea Parties should Show Restrain. Retrieved on 25.05.2017 from: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/10/15/guinea-parties-should-show-restraint>
- [Human Rights Watch, 2018] Human Rights Watch (2018). Guinea: Deaths, Criminality in Post-Election Violence. Retrieved on

- 10.08.2020 from: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/07/24/guinea-deaths-criminality-post-election-violence>
- [International Crisis Group, 2015] International Crisis Group (2015). Ebola en Guinée : une épidémie "politique"? Retrieved on 29.05.2017 from: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/fr/africa/west-africa/guinea/ebola-en-guinee-une-epidemie-politique>
- [International Crisis Group, 2011] International Crisis Group (2011). Guinea: Putting the transition back on track. Retrieved on 28.05.2014 from: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/west-africa/guinea/178-guinea-putting-the-transition-back-on-track.aspx>
- [O'Toole, 2005] O'Toole, Thomas (2005). Historical Dictionary of Guinea. 4th ed, Historical Dictionaries of Africa. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.
- [Pham, 2015] Pham, Peter J. (2015). Dangerous Game: Guinea's President Plays the Ethnic Card. Atlantic Council Africa Centre. Retrieved on 29.05.2017 from: <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/africasource/dangerous-game-guinea-s-president-plays-the-ethnic-card>
- [Reuters, 2016] Reuters (2016). Guinea's Conde names mining executive as new prime minister. Retrieved on 25.05.2017 from: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-guinea-government-primeminister-idUSKBN0U90JU20151226>
- [Schmidt, 2005] Schmidt, Elizabeth (2005). Mobilizing the Masses: Gender, Ethnicity, and Class in the Nationalist Movement in Guinea, 1939-1958. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- [Trade Bridge Consultants, 2015] Trade Bridge Consultants (2015). President Alpha Conde Names 35 member cabinet. Retrieved on 25.05.2017 from: <http://tradebridgeconsultants.com/news/reshuffles/president-alpha-conde-names-35-member-cabinet/>
- [US State Department, 1999-2016] US State Department (1999-2016). Human Rights Report: Guinea. Retrieved on 28.01.2018 from: <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/>
- [US State Department, 2019] US State Department (2019). 2019 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Guinea. Retrieved on 10.08.2020 from: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/guinea/>
- [VOA Afrique, 2018] VOA Afrique (2018). Victoire du parti au pouvoir lors des élections locales en Guinée. Retrieved on 10.08.2020 from: <https://www.voaafrique.com/a/>



[victoire-du-parti-du-president-alpha-conde-lors-des-elections-locales-en-guinee/4263889.html](#)

## Political status of ethnic groups in Guinea

*From 1958 until 1984*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Peul	0.4	JUNIOR PARTNER
Malinke	0.3	SENIOR PARTNER
Susu	0.2	JUNIOR PARTNER

*From 1985 until 1985*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Peul	0.4	JUNIOR PARTNER
Malinke	0.3	JUNIOR PARTNER
Susu	0.2	SENIOR PARTNER

*From 1986 until 2008*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Peul	0.4	POWERLESS
Malinke	0.3	POWERLESS
Susu	0.2	DOMINANT

*From 2009 until 2009*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Peul	0.4	SENIOR PARTNER
Malinke	0.3	SENIOR PARTNER
Susu	0.2	SENIOR PARTNER

*From 2010 until 2010*



Figure 416: Political status of ethnic groups in Guinea during 1958-1984.



Figure 417: Political status of ethnic groups in Guinea during 1985-1985.



Figure 418: Political status of ethnic groups in Guinea during 1986-2008.



Figure 419: Political status of ethnic groups in Guinea during 2009-2009.



Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Peul	0.4	JUNIOR PARTNER
Malinke	0.3	SENIOR PARTNER
Susu	0.2	JUNIOR PARTNER

*From 2011 until 2021*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Peul	0.4	POWERLESS
Malinke	0.3	SENIOR PARTNER
Susu	0.2	JUNIOR PARTNER



Figure 421: Political status of ethnic groups in Guinea during 2011-2021.

# Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Guinea

From 1958 until 1958

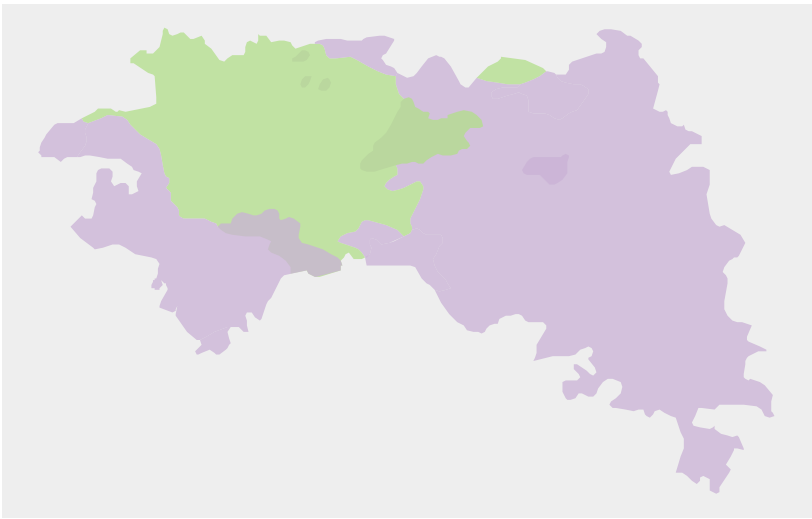


Figure 422: Map of ethnic groups in Guinea during 1958-1958.

Group name		Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
<span style="color: purple;">■</span>	Malinke	119 508	Regionally based
<span style="color: green;">■</span>	Peul	65 470	Regionally based
<span style="color: lightpurple;">■</span>	Susu	38 704	Regionally based

Table 150: List of ethnic groups in Guinea during 1958-1958.

From 1959 until 2021

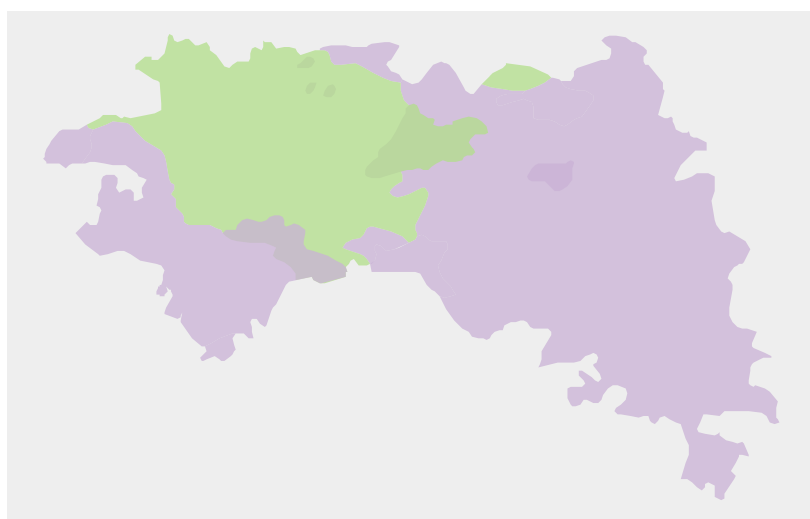


Figure 423: Map of ethnic groups in Guinea during 1959-2021.

	Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
■	Malinke	119 508	Regionally based
■	Peul	65 470	Regionally based
■	Susu	38 704	Regionally based

Table 151: List of ethnic groups in Guinea during 1959-2021.

*Conflicts in Guinea*

*Starting on 2000-08-31*

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Guinea	RFDG		2000-08-31			