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Guinea-Bissau: The Everlasting Return to Institutional Instability

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Similarly to Sisyphus — condemned to push a rock up a mountain, only to see it roll down time and again to the starting point as soon as the top was reached — Guinea-Bissau also appears doomed to repeatedly and everlastingly return to a state of institutional instability.

The reasons keep shifting according to circumstances, yet the crisis reoccurs cyclically, with profound negative consequences as regards to institutional stability and governability in Guinea-Bissau.

The recurring failure in managing and steering political differences through dialogue certainly has multifarious explanations, namely of a cultural and sociological nature. That said, we can add an additional one of political nature: the semi-presidential system which, in an ad-

verse context such as in Guinea-Bissau, also contributes to fostering and exacerbating conflict.

Semi-presidentialism establishes two power centers, both of which are democratically legitimized by direct, secret and periodic universal suffrage. In absence of a solid capacity for dialogue and a consolidated democratic regime, political conflict between the president and the prime-minister is almost inevitable.

To the long list of deep and difficult reforms in Guinea-Bissau's agenda one should add yet one more: a review of the constitution towards adopting a presidential regime. This will not solve every single problem in Guinea-Bissau, but it will certainly help prevent and palliate some of them.



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