THE WAR OF THE MAPS:
PORTUGAL VS. AFRICAN PARTY FOR THE
INDEPENDENCE OF GUINEA AND CABO VERDE (PAIGC)

Claim no easy victories . . .

(PAIGC directive 1965)

Michael H. Glantz
Lafayette College
Easton, Pennsylvania

(1973)
ABSTRACT

This article is the result of a recent research trip to Portuguese Guinea (referred to by the revolutionaries as Guinea-Bissau). A relatively extensive visit was made to many parts of the country controlled by the Portuguese during a two-week period in December and January, 1973. This period was prior to the assassination of Portuguese Guinea's revolutionary leader, Amilcar Cabral. The purpose of the field trip was to ascertain, if possible, the extent of territory under the control of each of the protagonists in the revolutionary war and to reconcile revolutionary claims of two-thirds of the territory (such as the claims made by Gerard Chaliand as recent as April, 1973) with Portuguese claims of total control of the territory. The article also attempts to look at the use that can be made of maps during a revolutionary situation by the participants in that situation.
Portuguese Guinea is a relatively small country and, with respect to natural resources, a relatively poor one. It has, however, been the scene of violent revolutionary activity for the past ten years. The African Party for the Independence of Guinea and the Cape Verde Islands (PAIGC) militarily and politically sought to gain independence from the Portuguese who have occupied that country for more than 500 years. Although Portuguese Guinea is a relatively poor country which is isolated from the region of major colonial conflicts in southern Africa, it has become extremely important to other African revolutionary movements as well as to the regimes in southern Africa which oppose them.

The successes of the PAIGC have been proclaimed in the capitals of independent African countries as well as in the European and the American press. In fact, it has become an accepted fact that the PAIGC would declare independence for Guinea in 1973. PAIGC's leader, Amilcar Cabral, has been considered the most successful revolutionary leader and tactician in contemporary Africa. On this point, Gerard Chaliand has recently written that "Cabral was widely known as one of the most important figures in the Third World—comparable in stature to a Ho Chi Minh or a Fidel Castro."²

On January 20, 1973, Amilcar Cabral was assassinated outside his home in Conakry, Guinea. Shortly thereafter, his subordinates in the
PAIGC closed ranks in order to avoid a split within the movement. If the current leadership manages to suppress latent political cleavages as Cabral had done in the past (such as the cleavage that exists between the African Guineans and the Cape Verdians in the PAIGC), then the intensity of the revolutionary activity in Portuguese Guinea will certainly increase. Any increase in activity in Guinea is bound to have an impact on the conduct of Portugal in her other African wars in Angola and in Mozambique. Success or failure of the PAIGC's revolutionary efforts in the near future will have a psychological impact at the least on the remaining revolutionary movements in southern Africa.

On The Use Of Maps

Maps can be used to serve many purposes. They could be used to show what is or to show what ought to be. States as well as other political actors such as corporations, churches, liberation movements, have used maps to show others what it is that they control or influence or what it is that they want to control.

For the Portuguese, a map of the current military situation in Guinea might be used to show that they are in control of most if not all of the country. To the revolutionaries, a map of Guinea might be used to show that the rebels in fact control large sections of that country. Taking the revolutionaries' use of maps one step further, their map could be used for propaganda purposes, that is, to show that more
territory is under rebel control than might actually be the case. This is important because, as one author wrote, "If insurgents control of territory can be made to appear widespread, it is possible to promote the idea that the revolution is a popular uprising of the 'people' against the government. This image aids in attracting both passive and active support from outside."³

A central concern to the political leaders of a state is the maintenance of unquestionable control of their own territory. Control of territory is no less important a concern to the leaders of a revolutionary movement. An apparent lack of control of territory within the jurisdiction of the leaders of a target state would raise many questions concerning the extent and degree of authority that the leaders possess. The loss of control of territory coupled with the existence of a revolutionary movement in that country could lead one to assume that some degree of territorial control was being carried out by the revolutionaries. On the importance of territorial control in an insurgency, Robert McColl wrote that "For contemporary national revolutions, the capture and control of territory has virtually become a 'territorial imperative.' Control of a geographic part of the state is a manifesto proclaiming: 'We have arrived. We are ready to replace the existing government.'"⁴

The problem associated with map warfare is the fact that it is a two-edged sword because it can negatively affect either side resorting
to its use. For example, the Portuguese in their desire to show that they control all of Guinea, as their official maps have indicated, have denied the possibility of the February, 1972 U.N. mission's visit into rebel held territory in Portuguese Guinea. This denial for the sake of maintaining their claims that the PAIGC controls no territory in Guinea has had negative effects on Portugal's credibility. In all probability, the mission entered into and toured some parts of Guinea, as scholars and newsmen have done. On the other hand, the PAIGC claims that they control about 75% of Guinea. On the basis of that claim, they are about to declare independence for Guinea and to establish a government, one which would probably be recognized by a number of other states.

Diplomatic recognition can be of great assistance to a revolutionary movement, however, the seeking of it should not overshadow the internal struggle that must take place within the target state. Otherwise, the victory of recognition may prove to be an empty one, as was the case for Holden Roberto's Government of the Republic of Angola in Exile (the GRAE) which after having been diplomatically recognized by twenty-three nations (most of which were African), lost the recognition of many of those states when their revolutionary successes declined.

Another problem associated with map warfare has been that those who resort to its use for propaganda purposes, are often taken in by their own claims, which is to say that maps used for propaganda purposes can often be self-deceiving.
In the case of Guinea-Bissau, it is apparent that both sides to some extent have been self-deceived. For example, while the Portuguese political leaders in Lisbon claim that the rebels hold no territory their military leaders in Guinea claim that 50% of the territory is under their control with the PAIGC. Representatives of the PAIGC, on the other hand, have claimed control of up to three-fourths of the country with claims of at least 50% going back to 1966. Can these claims be reconciled, or do the two protagonists hold territory that amounts of 150% of Guinea? It is with the use of this kind of psychological warfare in this particular war that the article is concerned. This is a statement of what the situation is and not what the situation was in the past or ought to be in the future.

Introduction

Portuguese Guinea is a small country in West Africa which is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean on the west, by Senegal on the north, and the Republic of Guinea on the south and east. Both of these countries have served as politico-military sanctuaries for the rebels in PAIGC for several years. Conakry has been the headquarters for the PAIGC.

The country is about 120 miles from north to south and 206 miles from east to west. The smallness of the country has made it possible
for the rebels to have relatively easy access to and from their external sanctuaries. The forest zone which runs north to south serves as a corridor through which the rebels can pass. This zone also divides the country into two parts. In the eastern section the country is hot, dry and flat and generally savannah-like. In the west, the terrains is swampy and broken up by many rivers that run east-west, a condition which tends to restrict the north-south movement of rebels in this zone.

Although the Portuguese had been in Guinea since 1446, in 1870 there were only 17 Europeans settled there permanently. The European community had grown to 3000 by 1960, excluding transient Europeans such as military personnel associated with the war effort. Their number has been estimated at about 30,000. Most of the Europeans settled in Guinea were traders not farmers. They did not create the typical African colony or foster typical colonial relationships with the indigenous Africans. On this point Amilcar Cabral wrote:

It so happens that in our country the Portuguese colonialist did not appropriate the land; he allowed us to cultivate the land; he didn't create agricultural companies of the European type like he did, for instance, in Angola; he didn't create colonatos, as he did in Angola, where he displaced masses of Africans in order to settle Europeans. . . . This is a very important characteristic of our peasant who was not directly exploited by the colonizer but was exploited through trade, through the differences between the prices and the real value of the products. It is there where exploitation occurs. Not in work, as happens in Angola with the hired workers and company employees. 6
This unique colonial relationship between the Europeans and the Africans, fostered to some degree by poor resources and the consequent distortion of the ratio of European to black population (3000 Europeans to 6-800,000 Africans), has not been without negative effect on rebel ability to create a revolutionary consciousness among the peasants in Guinea. With respect to this more subtle form of exploitation, Cabral said that "This created a difficult aspect in our struggle: to show the peasant that he was being exploited in his own land." Such a distorted population ratio has also hindered the Portuguese in their efforts to retain control over the population. Both protagonists, one might argue, have been faced with a manpower problem.

The economy of Guinea is tied to that of the Metropole. In 1965, for example, about 71% of Guinea's imports came from Portugal and the other overseas territories, while 91% of its exports went to those areas. Almost 87% of Guinea's revenue derived from exports came from the export of coconuts and peanuts. There is little or no mining or manufacturing activity in Guinea except for off-shore oil exploration by Esso (Exxon).

One of the major economic actors in Guinea has been the Companhia União Fabril (CUF, pronounced "koof"). CUF was started in an attempt to undermine French and German traders who were the only ones operating in Guinea as late as the 1920's and '30's. At first, CUF
bought goods from the little traders in the interior but later developed a larger operation in peanuts without establishing plantations, that is, without having to confiscate land from the africans. It was perhaps due more to the type of economic interaction—"exploitation through trade pricing"—than to its extent that the war in Guinea had at least once been referred to as "the Company's war."²

There are more than twenty different african tribal groups in Guinea and, according to Portuguese sources,³ the population breakdown is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balantas</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulas</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manjacos</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandingas</td>
<td>12-1/2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papeis</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The existence of many tribal groups has proven to be a liability as well as an asset to both the PAIGC and the Portuguese. The Portuguese have maintained better relations with some groups than they have with others.

On this point, Cabral wrote:

The Fula were themselves conquerors in Guinea; and the Portuguese found allies amongst them during their own conquest. So it is that among the people of this group we have found that the leading chiefs and their entourages are tied to colonialism. Their power is closely integrated with that of the Portuguese administration.⁴

He also noted that
Throughout the greater part of our country... we continued maintaining tribal characteristics; and though the tribes were being broken up economically by the Portuguese, at the same time the Portuguese rulers tried to maintain the tribal superstructure in order to better dominate our people. 11

The revolutionaries have been somewhat successful in the way they have responded to the tribal situation. Their appeals to members of the various tribes has met with some success. For example, appeals to the Balantas for support for the PAIGC have been rewarding in that a major part of revolutionary support comes from them. To the Balantas, rebel success or Portuguese defeat would also mean a defeat for the Fula and a loss of influence indicating an overall gain for the Balantas. The revolutionaries' activity in Guinea has also been restricted by the existence of tribal differences. On this point, Cabral noted

On our part it wasn't so much the economic base that led us to respect the tribal structure as a mobilizing element of our struggle, but its cultural aspects: the languages, the songs, the dances, etc. We couldn't impose on the Balantas the customs of the Fulahs or of the Mandingas. We defended this to the utmost, but we also fought to the utmost all division on the political plane. 12

In summary, tribal cleavages such as those centering on religion (Muslim and animist), dependence on the Portuguese (Fula and Balanta),
political structures (Fula and Balanta), traditions and the like, have tended to inhibit the building of coalitions by either side in the revolutionary situation.

Now, look at the situation as it exists in Portuguese Guinea today.

WAR OF THE MAPS

According to those who have visited the liberated areas in Guinea under the auspices of the PAIGC, the rebels have been in control of half to three-fourths of the territory in that country. In 1967, Gerard Chaliand wrote that "Under the leadership of Amilcar Cabral, the forces of the PAIGC have liberated more than half of their country." In the October 1968 foreward to Basil Davidson's book, Cabral wrote that "We have liberated more than two-thirds of our national territory." In February, 1972, testimony of the World Council of Churches to the U. S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee noted that the "... PAIGC now have two-thirds control of the territory of Guinea-Bissau. The rural population is largely under PAIGC control and comes within its jurisdiction, while the Portuguese are confined to garrisoned towns, most of which can only be supplied by helicopter." The report of the United Nations' Special Mission which was issued in July, 1972,
noted that "the struggle for liberation of the territory continues to progress and that Portugal no longer exercises any effective administrative control in large areas of Guinea (Bissau) are irrefutable facts. According to the PAIGC, the liberated areas now comprise . . . between two-thirds and three-fourths of the territory." The following maps serve to show the claims made by three of these reports. It should be noted for the purpose of information that Davidson wrote the foreword to Chaliand's book and that the U.N.'s 1972 Special Mission's report uses Davidson's 1968 map of the situation in Guinea.
In answer to these monographs, the Portuguese publicly assert that they can go almost anywhere within Guinea with the exception of a few small areas, such as the southern front and the Mores in the north central part of the country. [N.B.: When asked if it would be possible to see Madina do Boe, this author was told that there were no people in that region.]

Today, a visitor is invited to visit what the Portuguese refer to as the "so-called liberated areas" in the southern front. This is to show the visitor that the liberated region, about which the U.N. Mission had written some months earlier, was not liberated. As part of their external strategy, i.e., their appeals to the international community, the Portuguese replied to the U.N. report with a report of their own called Mission Invisible. In this report, they attempted to argue that the U.N. Special Mission had never entered Guinea. (Within the framework of the Portuguese report, this was the least convincing argument they raised against the Mission's report.) As part of their inside strategy, however, the Portuguese responded to the U.N. report on December 14, 1972, by undertaking a successful military operation to retake the area that the U.N. Mission had visited. [I believe this was at least the second time that the Portuguese had responded militarily to successful rebel propaganda. After a film had been made in the area of Madina do Boe by a Cuban film crew, the Portuguese heavily bombed that area.]
The following is the Portuguese military map of the psychological situation of the African population in Guinea today. It is the map that they use to carry out their daily military and para-military operations. The interesting point about this map is that it conflicts with the statements concerning lack of PAIGC control which emanates from Lisbon. Note that neither side has absolute control within the areas that they seem to control. The unmarked areas, according to the Portuguese, are under no one's control.
In an attempt to reconcile the differences in these maps with respect to PAIGC/Portuguese territorial claims, the next map will be an attempt to sort through the information at hand with the hope of reducing subjective information which can be considered propaganda. Consider first the latest PAIGC map which was published in the U.N. report of the Special Mission. Identify and record on the map below those areas which the PAIGC considers to be controlled by the Portuguese or where the population is at the least psychologically dependent on them. Consider next the Portuguese military map. To the Portuguese, the rebels control nothing outright and, therefore, rebel areas are considered to be contested areas or what the Portuguese call areas of "double control." Identify and record on the following map those areas that the Portuguese assume to be under rebel influence or control. The composite map is as follows.
Assuming that the Portuguese will not attribute any more land than absolutely necessary to the PAIGC, and assuming that the same will also be true with respect to the PAIGC's admittance of land under the "temporary" control of the Portuguese, this map should give an approximation at the least of the minimum extent of territory that each side in fact controls. The white areas at this point are considered to be either under no one's absolute control or under double control of both the PAIGC and the Portuguese.

Bernard Fall in his study of the French colonial war against the Vietminh had difficulty determining who controlled what in Vietnam. The French claimed that they had control of various areas but proof of such control on the part of the observer was difficult to find. Fall overcame that problem by supplementing the information he received from the French with other data that might shed light on the extent of French control. Using French records, he noted where the French had assigned school teachers. He also noted the towns from which the French collected taxes. By resorting to such information, Fall was able to reconstruct a different and more accurate picture of the situation as it was than the situation that the French had explained to him. With Fall's experience in mind, the following map indicates the locations (according to Portuguese sources) of military schools (henceforth, PEM) that the Portuguese have established as an important part of their psychological war with the
PAIGC in Guinea. In addition to these, the locations of aldeamentos (i.e., reorganized villages) were included in the same map. The following is a composite of PEM and aldeamentos locations superimposed on the map which shows territory that the PAIGC admits that Portugal controls.

The black areas are those which the PAIGC says Portugal controls.

The lined areas are those in which the Portuguese have established either PEM or reorganized villages. One might argue that the
Portuguese believe that they have established at least a minimum of operational security in those areas where they have established PEM and reorganized villages.

The next map is a combination of minimum Portuguese areas + PEM sites + aldeamento sites + minimum PAIGC areas. The status of the remaining white areas are undetermined as yet. (N.B.: Portuguese reluctance to take me to Madina do Boe, leads me to believe that they do not have even a minimum degree of operational security in that region.) With respect to PAIGC areas, this author is now in the process of recording those areas visited under the auspices of the PAIGC. This information should further add to the definition of the current struggle.
Finally, the next map shows those places that were attacked in 1972. The record of these attacks probably does not represent a complete list but they are the ones that the Portuguese military command released to the public in bi-weekly reports on the status of the war. They include mainly mortar and missile attacks with some incidents of armed attacks on villages and towns. The map indicates the frequency but not the intensity of these attacks. Combining this information with the preceding map tends to reconfirm Portuguese presence in many of the areas where they claim to be.

![Map showing locations of 1972 PAIGC attacks](image-url)
SUMMARY

This paper is not a comment on "what ought to be." It is a comment on "what is." It concerns a view of the situation in Guinea-Bissau, or Portuguese Guinea, at the beginning of 1973. It does not question the situations that existed in that country in 1967 and 1968 as reported by Chaliand and Davidson, respectively.

It appears that the map depicting the minimum area attributed to both sides by the other side which also includes the locations of the aldeamentos and the military schools, gives an idea of the situation as it is today. Little can be said about those areas that are unmarked. According to the Portuguese in Guinea, 40% of the territory of Guinea is under the control of no one. In fact, they do not fail to remind you that 11% of the land is underwater at high tide. If those unmarked areas were claimed by the revolutionaries (because they have operational mobility throughout them) one could see that 50% of the territory would be controlled by each side. Yet, to consider that land to be under the control of either side
would be speculation. The "objective" data collected from both sides (plus those places I was able to visit on my trip) gives little information about the unmarked areas. From these maps, one can see that neither side appears to control as much territory as it claims and that each side controls more territory than its opponents will admit. A useful summary of the 1972 situation in Guinea might be an appended version of an article written by a correspondent for The Economist in May 1970 when he wrote that

Progress in a guerrilla war is difficult to assess. Most towns are firmly in the hands of the Portuguese, as they always have been [and by the end of 1972, it seems that some new ones have been added to the list]. It is in the countryside that the war is waged, and here true control is often denied to either side. The guerrillas may move about freely in some areas so long as they avoid the main roads [and open areas as well]. But these may be patrolled with impunity by Portuguese troops from [relatively speaking] isolated garrisons [and from navy patrol boats and on air reconnaissance missions].


4. Ibid., p. 613.


7. Ibid., p. 145.


12. Ibid.


