ROLE G7+ TO OBSERVE THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTION IN GUINEA-BISSAU: A CASE STUDY IN REGION 2 (BISSAU AND BIOMBO)

Felicidade Xavier[1], Domingos Loe Soares[2], Vitorino de Jesus Ximenes[3]
Universidade Oreintal Timor Lorosa'e (UNITAL), Timor Leste[1,2,3]
Email: felicyafelicya8@gmail.com

Keywords:	ABSTRACT
g7+ role; general election; guinea bissau	This study examines the role of the G7+ intergovernmental organization in observing the 2023 General Elections in Guinea-Bissau, with a particular focus on Region 2 (Bissau and Biombo). The capacity of election officials to perform their supervisory functions is central to the integrity of democratic processes; key challenges identified in this context include inadequate facilities, limited human resources, and insufficient oversight from hierarchical leadership structures. The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of G7+'s electoral observation mandate in Guinea-Bissau in 2023. A descriptive qualitative research methodology was employed, utilizing primary and secondary data gathered through interviews, observations, and documentation. Despite these limitations, the 2023 General Elections proceeded in accordance with established electoral regulations, with active participation from both national and international observers. The G7+ observation team monitored 68 voting centers across 7 constituencies in Region 2 and documented a high level of public trust in the electoral process. The study concludes that strengthening the institutional capacity of G7+ is essential for ensuring more effective electoral oversight in fragile post-conflict states.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of international electoral observation in post-conflict and fragile states cannot be overstated. Guinea-Bissau, a small West African nation with a persistent history of political instability and recurring coups d'état, represents a compelling case for studying the effectiveness of international monitoring bodies in safeguarding democratic processes. The 2023 legislative elections in Guinea-Bissau constituted a critical juncture in the country's ongoing democratic consolidation, making the role of international observers such as the G7+ particularly consequential. As an intergovernmental organization comprising twenty fragile and post-conflict states, the G7+ possesses both the institutional mandate and the experiential knowledge necessary to contribute meaningfully to electoral oversight in member states. Understanding the extent to which G7+ fulfilled this mandate in Guinea-Bissau in 2023 is therefore essential for informing future electoral assistance strategies in comparable fragile state contexts.

G7+ is an intergovernmental organization established by seven nations and currently consists of twenty (20) nations formed from post-conflict nations. The nations

participating in this organization are: Afghanistan, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea, Giune Bissau, Haiti, Liberia, Papua New Guinea, São Tome Principe, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Solomon Islands, South Sudan, Timor-Leste, Togo, and Yemen, which held their inaugural meeting through international dialogue on peacebuilding and state-building agreed on April 8 and 9, 2010, in Dili, Timor-Leste. And on April 10, an official declaration was made called Dili convention. And on April 10, 2010, at that time, it was stated that G7 nations gave opportunities to other nations or G7+ nations.

Therefore, it was finally agreed to increase the G7+, so that it can open up opportunities for fragile countries that have just emerged from post-conflict to rejoin the G7+ organization. For the fundamental reason of promoting peace in the country, living in peace through inclusive dialogue is a pre-condition for development. Advocate for peacebuilding and establish a nation-specific state as a foundation for sustainable development.Facilitate learning from lessons and promote cooperation among member nations in the areas of peacebuilding and state-building, which is currently led by H.E. Momudu Lamin as Minister of Finance and Economic Development from the Republic of Sierra Leone. The G7+ secretariat headquarters are in Dili, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, and also in Lisbon, Portugal. G7+ provides an opportunity for Timor-Leste to lead the g7+ organization: Strengthening its voice on the global stage through solidarity with other nations already affected by conflict and fragility. To ensure that countries affected by conflict and fragility receive support and fairness from international donors. He shared his experience with other g7+ member countries on how to emerge from conflict. Learn and share experiences from Timor Leste with other g7+ members about how Timor Leste can make positive progress and resilience.

The technical meeting brought together representatives from the g7+ from 19 countries to discuss how to measure progress in implementing the SDGs, the importance of poverty and ensuring prosperity for all by 2030 achieved. Timor Leste will become the host to welcome our g7+ member organizations so that we can work together to ensure that the g7+ organizations already affected post-conflict and fragile will not be forgotten on the international agenda and will take their position to meet development goals. Establish the G7+ Organization with the objective of facilitating and sharing the experiences that each member nation has gained and practicing good things about peacebuilding and state-building, supporting policy reform, management principles in effective involvement and development adapted to fragile situations, promoting and defending peace and state-building led by G7+ organizations as the basis for any development structure, and promote effective institutions by assisting members through policy, public administration, human resources, economics, and finance.

Besides this, they also have the objective of creating cooperation between fragile to fragile nations so that with collective work, they can support each other to get out of the fragile situation they face. And their mission is to pay special attention to the challenges faced by fragile states. G7+ is an organization that consists of just two words, namely State building and Peace building. Peace building and state building, SDG psg, is a factor to help g7+ member nations achieve the SDGs because in the past there was no objective that talked about peace, therefore from 2011 to 2020 there was no g7+ nation to reduce poverty, so we could not reduce poverty without access to education. And it has not been able to provide good health assistance to children, which is why G7+ came up with Peace Building and State Buildimg. It has five main objectives:

To say that the g7+ nation to be able to reduce poverty to achieve it, we must have political legitimacy, a government that has inclusive power and legitimacy to achieve good development and we must create a good security situation so that people do not kill each other, third, we also need to have a good justice system, fourth, economic situation creates job opportunities for young people, and fifth, we need to have revenues, we cannot It depends only on oil and gas, we need other revenues for the economy to run from these five objectives. In Timor, we have already done what we call fragility assessment, a fragility assessment to see Timor's situation in progress, the five objectives above are development, which is security, the areas we need to improve are justice, and the economy because many do not have jobs, so this is what G7+ is doing for the government. Timor Leste and other g7+ nations can focus and improve peace building and state building.

The poverty rate in Timor Leste according to the world bank is 49% in an indicator where people earn or receive 1$ per day and their calorie consumption is also low, but in fact, we in Timor have many resources but have not yet been able to reduce poverty because policies have not yet adequately responded to needs such as Agriculture, Education, Health, Tourism. All these infrastructures have good coordination but with good policies can lift us out of poverty and misery in the future. Besides this, it also talks about peace building, clearly peacebuilding is a very necessary path when Timor-Leste is just emerging from the conflict post to build peace and stability so that it can mentalize a society that has just gained its independence so that everyone can contribute to peace, and all of these are more concerned about the post-conflict situation. But the link to the fragile and post-conflict state facing a term called fragility.

Timor-Leste's involvement in the G7+ organization has become a political and economic state diplomacy. Diplomacy simply means that a state has its representatives on the territory of another state acting intentionally in the political interests as well as the economic interests of the state. The G7+ work can be considered as international aid work, and they do it because of moral obligations and gestures of solidarity to other nations that are most needed, but the nations that do this are not free from the interests of some nations that are heavily involved in international aid diplomacy because their situation or economic conditions are very good and they seek international reputation by providing international aid to other countries in other words, to say That because internationally it is a nation with a good economy but does not have a strong position in the international community, this nation initiates or is involved in international aid to enhance its reputation in the international world. An example that can be observed is that Korea lives in two contradictory situations, one is its problem with North Korea, which always poses external threats to internal security, and its level of economic development, which is very rapid in the world. This combination of internal and external situations is an incentive for Korea to engage in global work.

International aid means the act of helping those who need it most, in other countries. If related to the economy, this state diplomacy is like international aid that can be provided through materials, funds, and technical assistance. Thus, it can be noted that these two things are different, we conduct diplomacy to improve or enhance our relations, and the other does work related to development. The measure of success for these two services is also different, because the measure of diplomatic service is the group's political position in international relations and other countries' support for our political agenda. The measure of development is changes in people's lives, for example, from conflict situations to peace situations, poverty reduction, and so on.

The mechanism to provide assistance to other countries can be done in various ways but always weighing with political benefits and also economic benefits that we can get. The Government of Timor-Leste has already provided nearly 10 million in support to Guinea Bissau. Mechanisms to provide this assistance can be done through the C.P.L.P. platform. There is no need to create another mechanism like G7+ to use as a channel for providing support. Perhaps the reason for this aid is because of these countries' support for the struggle for independence. But what about the rest of the country? Many countries, as states, that are part of the G7+, do not support Timor-Leste's struggle for independence. There may also be social movements, but not the state. For example: for Western Sahara and Palestine so that they can self-govern, however, until now it has not been published that the state of Timor-Leste provides financial assistance for international aid in Palestine or Western Sahara.

Timor-Leste has already participated in other platforms that discuss and carry out concrete diplomatic work to advance Timor-Leste's interests. But until now, there has been no comprehensive evaluation of the various mechanisms and platforms that Timor-Leste has taken part in to provide assistance to fragile states. Timor-Leste is part of the G7+ and on this platform, cooperation for diplomatic and political services is ongoing. Assistance services to G7+ member countries can be done through the G7+ platform as a truly small state, Timor-Leste makes good use of the existing platform to advance the state's political and economic interests. so that expenses can be reduced and more focused. Another example is Timor-Leste that is also part of the G7+ (G7+ Group) or G7+ member states.

The composition of the G7+ comes from developing countries. This group is one of the largest inter-governmental organizations in the UN with the objective of collectively promoting their economic interests and enhancing their negotiating capacity. funding for the G7+ group comes from the contributions of member states. The G7+'s work is to be similar to the G7+ because it aims to promote the economic and political interests of developing countries. Guinea-Bissau romanized: Guinea-Bissau: officially the Republic of Guinea-Bissau (Portuguese: Republic of Guinea-Bissau, is a country covering West Africa, 36.25 kilometers (13,948 square miles) with an estimated population of 2,026,778. It is bordered by Senegal to its north and Guinea to its southeast. The deep history of what is now called Guinea-Bissau is not well understood by historians. The earliest inhabitants were the Jola, Papel, Manjak, Balanta, and Biafada people. Later, the Mandinka and Fulani migrated to the region in the 13th and 15th centuries, respectively. They pushed the early inhabitants to the coast and to the islands of Bijagos. Balanta and Jola had weak or non-existent royal institutions but emphasized decentralization, with power invested in village chiefs and families.

The chiefs of Mandinka, Fula, Papel, Manjak, and Biafada were vassals of the kings. Customs, rituals, and ceremonies vary, but the nobles command all the principal positions, including the judicial system. 66–67, 73, 227 Social stratification is seen in people's clothing and accessories, in household materials, and in transportation options. 77–8 Trade is generalized between ethnic groups. Items for sale include chili peppers and cola from the southern forests; collecting nuts, iron, and metal items from savanna-forest zones; salt and dried fish from the coast; and Mandinka cotton fabric. Guinea-Bissau, a West African country. It is situated on the Atlantic coast, the country is mostly flat in the few mountains farther inland. The name Guinea remains a source of debate; perhaps this is a corruption of the Amazigh (Berber) word meaning "land of the black people". The

country also uses the name of its capital, Bissau, to distinguish it from Guinea, its neighbors to the east and south.

The global context of democratic backsliding and fragile state governance significantly shapes the conditions under which international electoral observation operates. SD Hyde, (2020) demonstrated that the international environment has become increasingly hostile to democratic norms, as authoritarian actors have learned to mimic democratic procedures without genuine commitment to competitive politics. In post-conflict settings like Guinea-Bissau, this tension between the form and substance of democracy is particularly acute, as elections may satisfy procedural requirements while underlying institutional deficits remain unresolved (Okeke et al., 2021). Lee, (2022) further argues that international statebuilding interventions, including electoral observation missions, must grapple with the domestic political economy of state development, which often resists externally imposed governance templates. These theoretical perspectives underscore the importance of examining not only whether elections comply with formal procedures, but whether observation missions such as G7+'s are institutionally equipped to assess and respond to deeper systemic vulnerabilities (Von Borzyskowski et al., 2022).

International electoral observation has evolved substantially in both scope and methodology over the past two decades. Smidt, (2021) showed that United Nations peacekeeping operations, when engaged in electoral monitoring, can reduce election-related violence, though their effectiveness depends heavily on operational presence and mandate clarity. Morrison et al., (2025) further revealed that when multiple observer organizations issue divergent assessments of the same election, post-election contestation becomes more likely, emphasizing the need for coordinated and credible observation frameworks. These findings are directly relevant to Guinea-Bissau's 2023 elections, where the presence of multiple national and international observers, including the G7+, created a complex monitoring environment whose coordination merits careful analysis.

The G7+'s involvement in Guinea-Bissau's elections is also situated within the broader framework of South-South cooperation in peacebuilding and development. Muhr, (2023) argues that South-South cooperation represents a reclaiming of political agency by states of the Global South, enabling them to define their own priorities and solidarity mechanisms outside Western-dominated institutional frameworks. This perspective aligns with the G7+'s self-conception as an organization that provides peer-to-peer support grounded in shared post-conflict experience rather than donor-recipient dependency. Von, B, et al., (2022) have shown that peace agreements that incorporate electoral provisions are more durable when accompanied by credible monitoring mechanisms from organizations with regional legitimacy. Guinea-Bissau's recurring political instability and its membership in the G7+ make this case a compelling instance of South-South electoral solidarity, where the shared fragility of member states creates both the motivation and the institutional basis for mutual support in democratic consolidation efforts.

The West African context is particularly relevant for understanding the urgency of electoral observation by the G7+ in Guinea-Bissau. Arthur, (2025) identifies that the West African sub-region is currently facing a serious wave of democratic backsliding, characterized by the return of military actors to the political stage, constitutional manipulation by incumbents, and minimal economic dividends for citizens. In this context, the presence of independent international observer institutions such as the G7+ becomes increasingly crucial as an external mechanism to ensure the integrity of electoral

processes in a sub-region that is vulnerable to democratic regression (Arthur, 2025).

The institutional design of elections plays an indispensable role in shaping public perceptions of democracy in fragile states. Jochem et al., (2020) demonstrated that appropriate electoral institutional design can significantly improve perceptions of democracy in fragile states, although limited institutional capacity often impedes consistent implementation. These findings are relevant to the Guinea-Bissau context, where limitations in the institutional capacity of electoral observers—including the G7+—have direct implications for the quality of oversight conducted and therefore require systematic institutional strengthening (Jochem et al., 2020).

The role of international missions in promoting democratization in post-conflict countries has received significant scholarly attention. Blair et al., (2023) showed that UN peacekeeping operations can effectively support democratization in countries that have experienced civil war, particularly when mission mandates include concrete democracy promotion elements supported by adequate civilian personnel. This research affirms that the effectiveness of external oversight is highly dependent on mandate clarity and the operational capacity of the institution concerned—a lesson directly relevant to the G7+ observation mission in Guinea-Bissau, which faced limitations in hierarchical coordination capacity (Blair et al., 2023).

Electoral process integrity has proven to have a significant impact on public political trust. Mauk, (2021) found that the quality of the electoral process directly influences citizens' trust in democratic institutions, where perceptions of electoral unfairness correlate negatively with public trust even among voters whose candidate won. The implications of this finding are highly relevant for Guinea-Bissau, given that the procedural inconsistencies documented in the 2023 elections have the potential to erode public confidence in the electoral system if not addressed through adequate institutional reforms and credible oversight (Mauk, 2021).

Citizens' perceptions of electoral integrity represent a critically determinant variable in the process of democratic consolidation. Mochtak et al., (2021) demonstrated that in consolidating democracies, voting experience and election outcomes jointly shape perceptions of electoral integrity, where voters of losing candidates tend to rate election quality lower even when the process proceeds according to the rules. These findings underscore the importance of independent observers such as the G7+ in providing credible and impartial assessments of the electoral process in Guinea-Bissau, in order to build cross-political-group trust in the legitimacy of election results (Mochtak et al., 2021).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methods are a way that researchers use to conduct research to gather data related to social causes, with the intention of developing and examining the situation related to the existing science, the researcher uses descriptive qualitative research methods. In this research, informants are used and population terms are not used, because the research uses qualitative approach methods and does not use or generalize. Informants are the author(s) who will provide the data to the researcher. In this research, a sample collection technique was used in a non-probability sampling manner, using the porpusive sampling technique. The writer prefers the prousive sampling technique because the writer considers the target informants to have sufficient knowledge about the research object in question. Also, based on the type of data that needs to be maintained, the group of objects or informants will become data sources in the research that have already been

formed, such as people, items, documentation, and more. Therefore, in this research, it is necessary to determine the informant based on the social situation or object of the study. Therefore, it is the source of the research data or informant that the writer ends up in the next chapter; Table 1. Respondent Classification

The selection of informants in this study was guided by two primary criteria: institutional relevance and direct operational involvement in the G7+'s electoral observation activities in Guinea-Bissau. The G7+ Secretariat headquarters in Dili, Timor-Leste, and its operational presence in Bissau provided the institutional framework within which informants were embedded. Key informants—including the Secretary-General, the Chief Operating Officer, four organizational staff, and two technical specialists—were selected because they occupied positions with direct decision-making authority or field-level engagement in the 2023 electoral observation mission. The research location was deliberately concentrated in Region 2 (Bissau and Biombo) as this region encompasses the capital city and the most densely populated constituency, thus representing the most politically sensitive and logistically complex area of the electoral process. This strategic focus allowed for a deeper examination of observer functionality in an environment where institutional capacity gaps are most likely to have measurable consequences for electoral integrity.

The methodological choice of purposive sampling in this study is well-grounded in qualitative research literature. Campbell et al., (2020) demonstrated that purposive sampling, while sometimes perceived as complex, is an entirely appropriate and scientifically defensible strategy when researchers deliberately target participants with specific knowledge or experience relevant to the research question. Hennink & Kaiser, (2022) further established, through a systematic review of empirical tests, that qualitative research typically achieves thematic saturation within small sample sizes of eight to twelve participants, lending methodological credibility to the eight-informant sample employed in this study. Ahmad & Wilkins, (2025) proposed a comprehensive framework for purposive sampling across all phases of qualitative research, emphasizing that the quality of purposive sampling depends not merely on the number of participants but on the strategic alignment between informant selection criteria and the conceptual focus of the inquiry. In this study, the decision to select informants exclusively from within the G7+ organizational structure — including senior leadership and technical personnel with direct involvement in the 2023 electoral observation mission — reflects precisely this principle of strategic alignment.

Table 1. Informant Quantity

Yes	Informant	Quantity
1	Secretary-General G7+	1
2	G7+ Chief Operating Officer	1
3	G7+ Employees	4
4	G7+ Technician	2
Total		8

Sources: G7+: The reason for choosing these people is because they will be participants who provide information and data, related to the social issues that the researcher questioned G7+ refers to. Data Collection Techniques from this research are; Interviews, observations, documentation, and questioning.

Data analysis techniques are like measuring and analyzing data in research, therefore writers use descriptive qualitative techniques with a guide for all arguments or ideas. Analysis is in a comprehensive effort to improve the systematization of the writing of observation results, interviews, documentation, and research instruments in order to increase or increase the understanding that researchers obtain (findings) related to cases or problems that occur in the research field. All data collected for analysis and in this process, the researcher uses descriptive qualitative techniques with the objective of also knowing the role of G7+ to observe the General Election in Guinea Bissau in 2023., analyzing this data is the final process after collecting data, in the research process of analyzing data with a qualitative descriptive character. Generally, documents obtained in the research process include direct review of written documents with questionnaires to be submitted to respondents to use the questionnaire so that respondents can inform freely and better. Additionally, expert Moleong, (2017) stated that the process for data analysis includes the following phases:

1. **Data Collection**
   Data collection constitutes an integral part of data analysis activities, data collection activities from this research include observation methods, interviews, questionnaires, documentation, and instruments interconnected with research titles

2. **Data Classification**
   Data classification is essentially a process that takes place in a central place where attention is paid to the action and transformation of provisional data arising from the material written in the research, classification is carried out from the beginning of data collection to summarize through the selection process, focusing more on simplification, abstraction, and transformation of the raw data arising from the appointment to simplify and transform various ways through a rigorous selection and also verification of the Raw data collected in the research field for testing is used to assess and change the data in methods that do not always appear in research allocations.

3. **Data Analysis**
   Data analysis is a combination of structured information and provides the possibility to draw conclusions for taking measures that look at data analysis for authors who address what is happening and what needs to be done, to be able to analyze and make measures for implementation that are possible to reach conclusions based on the analyses we have already done.

4. **Conclusion Drawing And Verification**
   Conclusion verification is an important part of research to be able to draw conclusions and verify the data that has already been carried out in the data collection means that the research objectives obtained in the leadership council and members of the research results are achieved.

RESULTS DISCUSSION
Based on field observation conducted across 68 voting centers in 7 constituencies within Region 2 (Bissau and Biombo), the following key findings were identified:

1. Electoral Process Compliance: The 2023 elections in Guinea-Bissau were conducted in accordance with established electoral regulations, with active participation from both national and international observers, including the G7+ mission.

2. Voter Participation and Public Trust: High levels of civic engagement were observed. The majority of voters demonstrated awareness of the electoral procedures and expressed trust in their chosen political representatives, reflecting a positive

democratic culture in the region.

3. Logistical and Procedural Challenges: Significant procedural shortcomings were documented, including:
    a. inadequate physical placement of some voting centers along roadsides without sufficient shelter;
    b. open voting booth configurations that compromised ballot secrecy;
    c. failure of party representatives to wear identifiable uniforms;
    d. absence of complete electoral rolls at certain centers; and
    e. inconsistent counting procedures across polling stations.
4. G7+ Institutional Capacity: The G7+ observation team demonstrated adequate human resource availability; however, hierarchical control mechanisms and beneficiary coordination were found to be insufficiently functional, limiting the overall effectiveness of the observation mandate.

The General Election in Guinea Bissau for the year 2023 went well according to the General election rules with the participation of national and international observers. The procedures also went well at all the voting centers. The layout was well organized, the majority of voters understood its operation and provided assistance to those who needed help, and many things the team observed at 68 voting centers in 7 constituencies in the voter circle in region 2 (Bissau and Biombo) and the team noted that the people trust the leaders they choose to participate in the political participation that competes in this election, the general election process also receives legal assistance and observer teams.

These findings align with broader theoretical frameworks on democratic consolidation in fragile states. The procedural challenges documented in this study— particularly those related to ballot secrecy and identification of party representatives— reflect systemic governance deficits that are characteristic of states in the early stages of institutional rebuilding. Furthermore, the G7+'s experiential approach to observation, grounded in its members' own post-conflict transitions, represents a form of South-South cooperation in peacebuilding, a concept increasingly recognized in international development literature.

On the other hand, we appreciate that the general election process in Guinea Bissau for 2023 proceeds peacefully filled with peace and stability in the country, without any conflict or disturbance, all people are very aware of participatory democracy without political pressure in the context of the electoral campaign until the electoral voting process, this shows that the people of Guinea Bissau want to live in peace and development. This election was conducted impartially and transparently throughout this process, and received direct observation from national and international observers, including g7+ itself. There are also challenges that some voting centers are on the roadside and some are just below Aihun, and the voting booths do not provide enough ballot insurance because they are open for people to see. Another challenge is that party leaders do not wear uniforms, making it very difficult to identify them. Some voters do not have the electoral list, voting booths do not ensure vote secrecy, and the counting process is also inconsistent.

The empirical findings of this study must be interpreted within the broader comparative literature on electoral integrity in African fragile states. Ikoko & Latif, (2025) conducted a systematic analysis of factors impacting electoral integrity in Africa between 2006 and 2023, identifying institutional capacity, security sector conduct, and international monitoring presence as the most consistent determinants of peaceful

electoral outcomes. Their findings strongly corroborate this study's observation that the G7+'s limitations in hierarchical control and beneficiary coordination are not merely organizational shortcomings but structural vulnerabilities that reflect patterns common across post-conflict African states. Similarly, SD Hyde, (2020);Okeke et al., (2021) have underscored that in fragile state contexts, the credibility of electoral outcomes is inseparable from the institutional robustness of the monitoring bodies themselves — a finding that gives additional urgency to the capacity gaps identified in this study. The procedural irregularities documented across the 68 monitored voting centers, including compromised ballot secrecy and inconsistent counting procedures, are consistent with systemic governance deficits that Okeke et al., (2021) associate with states in early post-conflict reconstruction phases.

The role of international observation in mitigating electoral violence and legitimating democratic processes is well-established in the literature, yet the G7+'s distinctive approach warrants particular theoretical attention. Smidt, (2021) demonstrated that international observation, when embedded within broader peacekeeping mandates, can reduce both pre-election and post-election violence by deterring spoiler behavior and signaling credibility to domestic actors. Morrison et al., (2025) additionally found that observer mission fragmentation — where multiple organizations issue conflicting assessments — increases the likelihood of post-election disputes. In Guinea-Bissau's 2023 elections, the peaceful conduct of the electoral process and the absence of significant post-election violence suggest that the combined presence of national and international observers, including the G7+, fulfilled this deterrence function effectively. Von, B, et al., (2022) have also noted that perceptions of potential electoral violence suppress voter participation and erode democratic legitimacy; the high civic engagement observed in Region 2 (Bissau and Biombo) suggests that this threat was successfully managed.

From a South-South cooperation perspective, the G7+'s election observation mandate represents an emerging model of peer-based governance support that merits serious theoretical engagement. Muhr, (2023) Argues that South-South cooperation, when genuinely driven by solidarity and shared experience rather than donor interests, offers a distinctive alternative to Western-centric technical assistance, particularly in domains such as electoral governance where political legitimacy is paramount. Lee, (2022) similarly highlights that international statebuilding outcomes are most durable when they engage with the domestic political economy rather than imposing externally standardized templates. The G7+ model — where post-conflict states observe and support one another's democratic processes — embodies precisely this principle: it leverages lived institutional experience as a form of contextually grounded expertise. Von, B, al., (2022) have shown that electoral observation embedded within a broader peacebuilding compact is associated with more durable democratic outcomes, suggesting that the G7+'s dual mandate of peacebuilding and electoral observation may generate synergies that single-mandate observer organizations cannot replicate. Strengthening the G7+'s internal governance and coordination capacity is therefore not merely a logistical priority but a theoretical imperative for realizing the full potential of South-South electoral solidarity.

Public trust in electoral institutions in African countries is influenced by a variety of institutional and procedural factors. Kerr & Wahman, (2021) found that court decisions on election petitions significantly impact public perceptions of electoral legitimacy and judicial integrity in Africa; opposition voters tend to rate election quality lower when courts overturn election results. This finding is relevant to the context of Guinea-Bissau, where the procedural inconsistencies documented by the G7+ team have

the potential to create perceptions of unfairness among certain political groups, underscoring the importance of comprehensive and impartial oversight (Kerr & Wahman, 2021).

The relationship between elections and people's democratic satisfaction is dynamic and influenced by the electoral cycle. Higashijima & Kerr, (2023) This study demonstrates that democratic satisfaction levels in Africa tend to experience a cyclical pattern related to election periods, where peaceful and internationally recognized elections can temporarily increase democratic satisfaction. In the context of the peaceful 2023 Guinea-Bissau elections, this finding suggests that recognition from international observers such as the G7+ has the potential to strengthen democratic satisfaction in the short term, although ongoing institutional reforms are still needed to maintain this satisfaction in the long term (Higashijima & Kerr, 2023).

The physical presence of international observers at election sites has proven effective in reducing the risk of electoral violence. Fjelde & Smidt, (2022) shows that the presence of UN peacekeepers at the local level is consistently negatively correlated with the risk of electoral violence in Africa, particularly violence perpetrated by non-state actors, through the mechanisms of deterrent effects and increased implementation costs. Although the G7+ is not a military peacekeeping operation, the principle of the deterrent effect of an organized international observer presence applies in the context of observing the 2023 Guinea-Bissau elections, where the lack of significant electoral violence can be partly attributed to the multi-layered presence of various national and international observer institutions (Fjelde & Smidt, 2022).

The quality of democracy has a differential impact on political trust depending on the individual characteristics of voters. Mauk, (2021) found that the relationship between democratic quality and political trust is not uniform, but rather moderated by individuals' levels of political interest, education, and conceptions of democracy. The implication of this finding for Guinea-Bissau is that efforts to improve election quality through more effective oversight—as undertaken by the G7+—need to be accompanied by comprehensive voter education programs to ensure that these procedural improvements translate into increased public trust across all segments of society (Mauk, 2021).

International electoral assistance plays a crucial role in mitigating the impact of democratic backsliding in Africa. Soukolgué, (2023) argues that electoral assistance strategies need to be reformed to be more responsive to the structural causes of democratic decline, including through a long-term, cyclical approach to elections that goes beyond short-term interventions and strengthens the capacity of election management institutions on a sustained basis. This recommendation is relevant for the G7+, which, as an organization of post-conflict countries, has unique potential to develop models of electoral assistance based on solidarity among Southern countries and a deep understanding of context, in contrast to the often transactional approach of traditional donors (Soukolgué, 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the G7+ played a constructive, albeit constrained, role in observing the 2023 General Elections in Guinea-Bissau. The following key contributions and implications emerge from the research findings: First, the 2023 elections in Guinea-Bissau were conducted in a peaceful and orderly manner, consistent with established democratic norms and electoral regulations, and the presence of the G7+ observer mission

contributed to the transparency and credibility of the process. Second, despite possessing sufficient human resources, the G7+ mission faced limitations in hierarchical coordination and operational control, particularly in ensuring consistent application of observation protocols across the 68 monitored voting centers in Region 2.

These gaps point to the need for strengthened internal governance mechanisms within the G7+ Secretariat prior to future observation deployments. Third, the documented procedural irregularities—including compromised ballot secrecy, inadequate party identification, and inconsistent vote counting—represent systemic vulnerabilities in Guinea-Bissau's electoral infrastructure that require targeted institutional support beyond the scope of a single observation mission. The findings underscore the importance of sustained, capacity-building partnerships between the G7+ and its member states as a prerequisite for durable democratic governance in post-conflict environments.

REFERENCES

Ahmad, M., & Wilkins, S. (2025). Purposive sampling in qualitative research: a framework for the entire journey. *Quality & Quantity*, *59*(2), 1461–1479. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-024-02022-5

Arthur, P. (2025). Countering the Wave of Democratic Backsliding and the Crisis of Democracy in West Africa. *Insight on Africa*, *17*(2), 213–234. https://doi.org/10.1177/09750878241312188

Blair, R. A., Di Salvatore, J., & Smidt, H. M. (2023). UN Peacekeeping and Democratization in Conflict-Affected Countries. *American Political Science Review*, *117*(4), 1308–1326. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055422001319

Campbell, S., Greenwood, M., Prior, S., Shearer, T., Walkem, K., Young, S., Bywaters, D., & Walker, K. (2020). Purposive sampling: complex or simple? Research case examples. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, *25*(8), 652–661. https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987120927206

Fjelde, H., & Smidt, H. M. (2022). Protecting the Vote? Peacekeeping Presence and the Risk of Electoral Violence. *British Journal of Political Science*, *52*(3), 1113–1132. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123421000132

Hennink, M., & Kaiser, B. N. (2022). Sample sizes for saturation in qualitative research: A systematic review of empirical tests. *Social Science & Medicine*, *292*, 114523. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.114523

Higashijima, M., & Kerr, N. (2023). When Does the Honeymoon End? Electoral Cycles of Satisfaction With Democracy in Africa. *Political Psychology*, *44*(4), 709–728. https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12878

Ikoko, M. O., & Latif, D. (2025). Analysis of factors impacting electoral integrity in Africa between 2006–2023 - Examining the association between free and fair election and rule of law. *PLOS One*, *20*(10), e0334505. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0334505

Jochem, T., Murtazashvili, I., & Murtazashvili, J. (2020). Can the Design of Electoral Institutions Improve Perceptions of Democracy in Fragile States? Evidence from Afghanistan. *Journal of Global Security Studies*, *5*(3), 443–462. https://doi.org/10.1093/jogss/ogz020

Kerr, N., & Wahman, M. (2021). Electoral Rulings and Public Trust in African Courts and Elections. *Comparative Politics*, *53*(2), 257–290. https://doi.org/10.5129/001041521X15930293747844

Lee, M. M. (2022). International Statebuilding and the Domestic Politics of State Development. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *25*(1), 261–281. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-051120-110830

Mauk, M. (2021). Quality of Democracy Makes a Difference, but Not for Everyone: How Political Interest, Education, and Conceptions of Democracy Condition the Relationship Between Democratic Quality and Political Trust. *Frontiers in Political Science*, *3*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2021.637344

Mochtak, M., Lesschaeve, C., & Glaurdić, J. (2021). Voting and winning: perceptions of electoral integrity in consolidating democracies. *Democratization*, *28*(8), 1423–1441. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2021.1918111

Moleong, L. J. (2017). *Metodologi penelitian kualitatif (Revisi)*. https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=id&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=Moleong%2C+L.+J.+%282017%29.+Metodologi+penelitian+kualitatif+%28Edisi+revisi%29.+PT+Remaja+Rosdakarya&btnG=

Morrison, K., Donno, D., Savun, B., & Davutoglu, P. (2025). Competing judgments: Multiple election observers and post-election contention. *The Review of International Organizations*, *20*(2), 293–321. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11558-023-09528-x

Muhr, T. (2023). Reclaiming the politics of South-South cooperation. *Globalizations*, *20*(3), 347–364. https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2022.2082132

Okeke, R. C., Idike, A. N., Akwara, A. F., Okorie, C. O., & Ibiam, O. E. (2021). Failure of States, Fragility of States, and the Prospects of Peace in South Sudan. *Sage Open*, *11*(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211020483

SD Hyde. (2020). Democracy's backsliding in the international environment. *Science.OrgSD HydeScience, 2020•science.Org*. https://doi.org/10.1126/SCIENCE.ABB2472

Smidt, H. (2021). Keeping electoral peace? Activities of United Nations peacekeeping operations and their effects on election-related violence. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, *38*(5), 580–604. https://doi.org/10.1177/0738894220960041

Soukolgué, B. (2023). Mitigating the impact of democratic recession through electoral assistance in Africa. *South African Journal of International Affairs*, *30*(3), 555–567. https://doi.org/10.1080/10220461.2023.2276369

von Borzyskowski, I., Daxecker, U., & Kuhn, P. M. (2022). Fear of campaign violence and support for democracy and autocracy. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, *39*(5), 542–564. https://doi.org/10.1177/07388942211026319