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WEATHER SAHEL WEST AFRICA AND SAHEL

ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL AND SECURITY SITUATION IN THE SAHEL AND WEST AFRICA

MAY 2025



The "Sahel weather May 2025" bulletin highlights the complex dynamics shaping West Africa and the Sahel, revealing major trends in the political, security and diplomatic spheres. These trends, marked by electoral tensions, persistent insecurity and a reshuffling of regional alliances, highlight a region in search of stability in the face of multifaceted crises.

On the political front, the region is faced with a weakening of democratic transitions, exacerbated by tense electoral processes and controversial institutional reforms. In the run-up to the 2025-2026 elections, countries such as Benin, Cameroon, Côte and Guinea are d'Ivoire experiencing increased polarisation, fuelled by accusations of corruption (for example, the Richard Boni affair in Benin) and the exclusion of candidates (Tidjane Thiam in Côte d'Ivoire). In Togo and Mali, reforms such as the transition to a parliamentary system or the dissolution of political parties are perceived as strategies to consolidate power, provoking demonstrations and an erosion of public confidence. The fight against corruption, although visible in trials such as that of Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz in Mauritania, is often used to neutralise opponents, reinforcing mistrust of the institutions.

In terms of security, insecurity remains endemic, fuelled by an upsurge in terrorist attacks and inter-community violence. In Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria and Cameroon, groups such as Boko Haram, the Islamic State and JNIM are stepping up their attacks, targeting soldiers and civilians alike, as in Djibo and Diapaga in Burkina Faso and Dogon Kiria in Niger.

The growing sophistication of these attacks, including the use of drones in Nigeria, highlights the limits of purely military approaches. At the same time, migratory crises, such as the mass refoulements from Algeria to Niger, are aggravating humanitarian tensions, while regions such as northern Togo are taking in thousands of refugees from Burkina Faso, with the risk of further destabilising border areas.

On the diplomatic front, the region is witnessing a reshuffling of alliances, marked by a strengthening of regional cooperation and a reassessment of relations with foreign powers. The Confederation of Sahel States (SSA) - Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger - is seeking to establish a minimum partnership with ECOWAS centred on the fight against while rejecting bilateral terrorism, negotiations. Senegal, under Ousmane Sonko's Pastef, is asserting its sovereignty by announcing the withdrawal of foreign military bases and consolidating partnerships with Guinea and Burkina Faso. Mauritania, thanks to its anti-terrorism doctrine, is maintaining relative stability and attracting foreign investment, while initiatives such as the joint Chad-Central African Republic force illustrate a desire for regional coordination in the face of crossborder threats.

West Africa and the Sahel are thus at a critical crossroads, where political, security and diplomatic challenges are intertwined. The fragility of democratic institutions, growing insecurity and the quest for regional sovereignty are redefining priorities. Integrated approaches, combining inclusive dialogue, strengthened governance and cross-border cooperation, will be essential to promote resilience and stability in the region.



BENIN

Towards a decisive presidential election?

At the end of April, political scientist and politician Richard Boni's "Le Libéral" party announced that it had obtained its provisional receipt, materialising its official existence. It came as a general surprise when, two weeks later, on 15 May, the Minister of the Interior and Public Security called into question the party's legality, on the grounds that Richard Boni had allegedly made payments in exchange for facilities to obtain his party's recognition certificate. In his statement, the Minister referred to "proven acts of corruption involving two Ministry officials, one from the Directorate of Political Parties and Electoral Affairs, and the other from the Directorate of Internal Affairs and Religious Affairs" in connection with the said receipt. Subsequently, the leader of the Le Libéral party and the two Ministry officials were formally charged on 21 May by the Court for the Repression of Economic Offences and Terrorism (Criet) with "corruption of public officials" and "money laundering". The defendants were remanded in custody on 22 May, with the exception of a third, an official from the same ministry, who was not brought before the court.

According to the Criet prosecutor, Mario Mètonou, the founder of the Liberal party, Richard Boni, admitted paying the sum of 7 million FCFA in exchange for facilitating the obtaining of a receipt to make his party official. The prosecutor also indicated that the Director of Political Parties and Electoral Affairs - one of the officials implicated confessed to having received FCFA 5 million. The same sum was found in his home during a search. In addition, Achille Tchaou, a businessman and close associate of Richard Boni, was also placed under arrest on 23 May for "cybercrime" and "money laundering". While awaiting the outcome of this case, public opinion in Benin is still focusing on the 2026 presidential election.

Indeed, the leader of the "Liberal" movement, Richard Boni, an entrepreneur based in Canada, was gradually beginning to settle in his home country. After transforming his "Terriens" movement into the Ligue d'initiative bénévole pour l'éducation et l'action libérale (Liberal League of Voluntary Initiative for Education and Liberal Action) in December 2023, he has since multiplied his charitable actions towards the people - in the north in this case -, thus refining his anchoring strategy. This approach has led many to believe that he has presidential ambitions.

2026 on the horizon

While the arrest of the founder of the "Le Libéral" party has put the 2026 general elections back on the agenda, the electoral code is still being contested. Clearly, the opposition, civil society and the clergy are calling for it to be reviewed. At a press conference on 23 May, Benin government spokesman Wilfried L. Houngbédji once again rejected this proposal. "The Electoral Code imposes the same challenge on all parties (...) All those who would like to take part in the elections and who meet the conditions will take part in the elections. So no one is excluded from the elections. You have to want to and you have to meet the conditions", he maintained. Meanwhile, while the identity of the candidates for the 2026 presidential election remains unclear, one of the contenders has officially declared his intention to run for the supreme office. The candidate is Daniel Edah, a former international civil servant, a former candidate in the 2016 presidential election, and a member of the consultation framework of opposition political parties. "I am a candidate with a vision, that of an economically prosperous and socially stable Benin in a well-integrated and growing Africa", declared Daniel Edah in a video posted on his Facebook page on 29 May.



Episodic trial

The verdict in the trial of former police director general Philippe Houndégnon, accused "cyber-harassment and incitement rebellion", will not be known any time soon. The Criet, which was due to hand down its decision on 19 May, unexpectedly declared "incompetent" itself . The case has therefore been sent back for investigation, as the judges consider the facts in question to be "criminal in nature". "This is a flagrant violation of the rights of the defence (...). This is judicial infamy", ranted François Kéké, one of his legal advisers. Pending an appeal by the defence, the Special Public Prosecutor's Office has lodged an appeal. The case of Philippe Houndégnon - a critic of the government - will therefore be examined by the judge of the appeal chamber. If the latter "confirms the first judgment, the public prosecutor will have to refer the case to an investigating judge. If it does not, the court will either convict or acquit", reports RFI. As a reminder, the Criet had requested two years' imprisonment against Philippe Houndégnon in April.

Another court case is that of Steve Amoussou, presented as the columnist and cyber-activist "Frère Hounvi", who still denies the identity attributed to him by the Criet. The court was due to give its final ruling on 26 May, but postponed its decision until 2 June. On 29 April, the prosecutor had requested a 2-year prison sentence against Steve Amoussou for "cyber harassment and incitement to rebellion". According to the Criet, Steve Amoussou is the same person as "Frère Hounvi", the author of strong criticisms of President Patrice Talon's governance, a claim that Amoussou has never ceased to deny.



BURKINA FASO

Between the resurrection of Sankarism and deadly insurrections

This month's headline event in Burkina Faso was the inauguration with great fanfare on 17 May of the Mausoleum marking "recognition of the political legacy of the revolutionary leader" in homage to Thomas Sankara and his 12 companions. This symbolic date marks the start of the revolution triggered by the arrest of the man nicknamed the African Che Guevara, leader of popular protest and Prime Minister of the People's Salvation Council (CSP) in 1983. The leader of the junta seems to be more interested in strengthening his legitimacy than in rallying young people, and is multiplying references to Sankara in both his speeches and his actions.

The Senegalese Prime Minister celebrating Sankara: The beginnings of military cooperation against terrorism in the Sahel

Under the patronage of Captain Ibrahima Traoré, the ceremony was led by Prime Minister Rimtalba Jean Emmanuel Ouédraogo in the presence of his Senegalese counterpart who had travelled to attend this historic event. Ousmane Sonko, who never misses an opportunity to reaffirm his admiration for Thomas Sankara, is considered one of the rising figures of pan-Africanism. Taking advantage of the occasion in an interview with the national channel, he spoke of the possibility of collaboration and support for Burkina Faso, because, in his view, "it is illusory to think that the ordeal suffered by Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger will simply remain within the borders of these countries... no country in the sub-region will be spared by this gangrene, if it continues to spread across West Africa".

This event comes at a time when the country is facing unprecedented security pressure as a result of the persistent terrorist threat, particularly in recent weeks. Since taking office, Ibrahima Traoré has been committed to continuing Sankara's legacy in a context marked by an upsurge in terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso.

Resurgence of terrorist attacks

On the security front, the fight against terrorism has been intensifying in Burkina Faso for several months. This is evidenced by the major seizure of 900 motorbikes and 164 tricycles, as announced by the Ministry of Security on 23 May. According to Mahamadou Sana, this equipment was intended to finance terrorism in West Africa. He was keen to warn individuals who might attempt to take part in terrorist financing operations. Any natural or legal person involved in the financing of terrorism will face the full force of the law". For him, the time has come to crack down.

Meanwhile, the news in Burkina Faso continues to be dominated by the resurgence of terrorist attacks, with all the attendant human and material damage. In the north of the country, in Djibo, terrorist attacks attributed to the Groupe de soutien à l'islam et aux musulmans (support group for Islam and Muslims) targeted a military base, a police station and the central market on 11 May.



These attacks resulted in dozens of deaths and a large number of wounded in the ranks of the army and civilians, as well as volunteers for the defence of the homeland. This tragic act comes at a time when Ibrahim Traoré is visiting his counterpart Vladimir Putin in Moscow. These tragic events have put the people of Djibo and the surrounding area in a state of even greater fear in the face of the terrorist threat that has been raging in the area for several months. The area has been under a jihadist blockade for a long time. According to ACLED, 26,000 civilians and soldiers have died since the horrific attacks began in 2015.

This alarming situation calls into question the effectiveness of the security system in the country of men of integrity. One day later, a terrorist attack of rare violence struck the country again. On 12 May in Diapaga (East), security sources reported this jihadist offensive, which caused serious material damage. According to a local resident, "the terrorists set fire to several public and private services before freeing the inmates of the prison and correctional facility". Most of the detainees were accused of terrorism. The attackers also ransacked public monuments and set fire to businesses and shops. lt should be remembered that this area was the scene of a similar attack in which dozens of soldiers and civilian auxiliaries of the Burkina Faso army were killed. The authorities are working hard to track down these troublemakers.



CAMEROUN

Towards a tense presidential election?

The electoral management agency Elecam and the UN signed a cooperation agreement on 9 May. The aim of the agreement, it is claimed, is to "optimise elections Cameroon, with a view to strengthening the transparency and inclusiveness of electoral process". Clearly left out of this the MRC (Movement for Renaissance of Cameroon) party of the opposition leader Maurice Kamto voiced its indignation vehemently, denouncing "signature on the sly". Maurice Kamto called on therefore "the UN to make public the Convention signed with ELECAM or else to publicly disassociate itself from it, unless it has decided, against democratic values and the interests of the Cameroonian people, and above all against its cardinal mission of conflict prevention, to support the current Cameroonian dictatorship to the very end and come what may".

Although President Paul Biya has not yet officially declared his intention to stand for reelection, since April he has opted for unusually intensive digital communication on social networks and Facebook. In regular posts - each time in French and English - Biya has launched several appeals for national cohesion. On 28 May, for example, he declared: "Peace, unity and democracy are sure values that I never stop advocating and that we must constantly reinforce. They are priceless but fragile". On 12 May: "Together, we must continue to build a healthy society made up of human beings who enjoy each other's company, rather than seeing each other as wolves. Or earlier in the month, on 2 May: "Our objective is the total fulfilment of every citizen, wherever they live and work, without discrimination".

This communicative shift is seen by much of public opinion as a way of taking the temperature in the run-up to the presidential election in October 2025. Meanwhile, Cabral Libii has been nominated as the official candidate presidential of the Cameroon Party for National Reconciliation (PCRN). This is the second time Cabral Libii has run for the supreme magistracy - he came third in the 2018 presidential election.

National outcry after a murder

In Cameroon, the murder of Mathis, a six-yearold boy, on 10 May caused a national uproar. According to witnesses, the tragedy occurred after a fight between Mathis' father and the alleged murderer in a Yaoundé bar. The alleged murderer then went to Mathis' parents' house and stabbed the six-year-old boy several times. The security forces had to intervene to prevent him from being attacked by the crowd. The case has sparked a wave of indignation, particularly as the alleged murderer is the father of popular Cameroonian artist Lydol. Moved, the slam artist immediately took to her Instagram account to offer her condolences to the grieving family, cancelling her forthcoming concerts scheduled for late May and early June out of deference. On Tuesday 27 May, 47-year-old Dagobert Nwafo was charged with "murder" and transferred to Kondengui central prison. He will spend six months in provisional detention there, pending his trial scheduled for 27 November.

On 20 May, the country celebrated its bank holidays, punctuated by military parades and official words calling for national unity.



However, the day came against a backdrop of socio-political tensions, with the boycott of Maurice Kamto's MRC and the exclusion of militants from Célestin Bedzigui's Liberal Alliance Party (PAL). In the English-speaking city of Buea, "a police source reported that an improvised explosive device placed near the ceremonial square had been defused a few hours before the start of the parade", reports RFI.

Security challenges

At the end of the month, two terrorist incursions attributed to the Boko Haram terrorist group were recorded in the far north of the country. The first occurred on the night of 18 to 19 May in the Guipéré district of the village of Moskota (Mayo-Tsanaga department) and resulted in the death of one person. The second, on the night of 23 May in the canton of Moskota (Mayo-Moskota district) also killed one person. Several people were injured.

In addition, a report published on 9 May by the NGO Foder (Forêts et Développement Rural) warned of "the consequences of artisanal mining in localities in the east of the country". According to the report, illegal mining in these protected areas seriously threatens the existence of certain emblematic mammals threatened with extinction, such as the leopard, the buffalo, the African golden cat, the pygmy hippopotamus and the derby elk.



IVORY COAST

Between "electoral" demands and political uncertainty

For several months now, religious, traditional and civil society players have been campaigning for free and transparent elections without violence. On 20 May, the traditional chiefs of Agnibilékrou were mobilised for the occasion to work towards a peaceful presidential election. The awarenessraising day was an opportunity for the National Chamber of Traditional Kings and Chiefs of Côte d'Ivoire to convey messages of peace and call on the political players to preserve national harmony and stability in the country. In order to avoid the painful events of 2010 and 2020 in Côte d'Ivoire, the President of the Chamber was keen to point out that "electoral periods, when poorly managed, can tip over into violence and suffering".

A revision of the electoral roll for an inclusive election

For many observers, this situation could lead to a deadlock; hence the need to create frameworks for consultation in order to find solutions five months before the next presidential election. An online survey by the Abidjan.net information website showed that more than 75% of Internet users believe that political dialogue is still possible before the election. At the same time, the Coalition pour l'alternance pacifique en Côte (Coalition for a peaceful changeover in Côte d'Ivoire) has announced a meeting on 31 May to call for a revision of the electoral roll, the registration of rejected opposition leaders and the dissolution of the IEC to ensure more inclusive elections.

Meanwhile, the Ivorian opposition has contacted the human rights organisation Amnesty in Paris to denounce what it describes as "irregularities" in the process leading up to the presidential election in October 2025.

Several parties, including those of Laurent Gbagbo and Guillaume Soro, submitted motions on 22 May demanding that the elections be "transparent, democratic and inclusive". The Parti des Peuples Africains - Côte d'Ivoire (PPA-CI), Générations and Peuples Solidaires were keen to internationalise their fight, which they consider legitimate following the exclusion of several political figures from the electoral roll, preventing them from taking part in the elections.

Alassane Ouattara acclaimed by his comrades to stand for re-election

For its part, the government was keen to reassure national and international opinion that the elections will be held in a peaceful manner within the constitutional timeframe next October. The announcement was made on 21 May by the spokesman of the Rassemblement des houphouétistes pour la démocratie et la paix (RHDP), Kobenan Kouassi Adjoumani Étienne, at a press conference held at his party's headquarters in Cocody in the presence of several party executives. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss current events in the country and at the same time prepare for the forthcoming congress, which will be held on 21 and 22 June this year and will be attended by 7,000 delegates and 70,000 people at the closing meeting, where a candidate will be chosen. Will this candidate be Alassane Ouattara or another personality from the ranks of the ruling party? In any case, this question is on the minds of Ivorians, who are impatiently awaiting the decision of the current president.



On the other hand, the watchword from the ruling party has been announced. ADO is their one and only candidate for the forthcoming presidential election. "We are going to designate the party president and our presidential candidate. President Alassane Ouattara will be proposed as our candidate". In the same vein, the ruling party organised a major event in Abengourou on the initiative of Minister Fofana, the party's regional coordinator, under the chairmanship of the Minister of Finance. Many militants attended this important event for the future of their political party, and issued a clear call for unity, discipline president's <u>and mobilisation</u> around their candidacy. For his part, Alassane Ouattara has yet to say whether or not he will attend. Moreover, many observers continue to worry about Alassane Ouattara's state of health. This is evidenced by his speech at the opening ceremony of the General Assemblies of the African Development Bank, during which he appeared no longer to be able to stand for long. President Ouattara was helped by his aide-de-camp after losing the thread of his speech.

Will Tidjane Thiam take part in the next presidential elections?

On the opposition side, following the invalidation of his candidacy, President Tidjane Thiam is resigning from his post as president of his political party, the PDCI, which is the main political party of the Ivorian opposition. In a video posted on social networks, the unsuccessful candidate stated that "In the interests of the party, I have decided to hand over my mandate as party president to you, the militants". He also reiterated his unambiguous commitment to victory in October 2025, despite his decision. It should be noted that he has obtained the support of several opposition leaders, including Charles Blé Goudé, who has also been eliminated from the starting line for the next presidential election.

On the other hand, some of her party comrades criticise her for not renouncing her French nationality soon enough. Valérie Yapo is continuing her legal offensive, denouncing her president's action as cheating. She believes that Tidjane Thiam did not tell the whole truth about his nationality, which damaged their political group and led to the rejection of their candidacy.

According to her, "I denounce Tidjane Thiam's cheating". The case is now before the courts, and a hearing was held at the Plateau courthouse in Abidjan on 15 May. Will a plan B like Billon be needed to secure the PDCI's participation? In any case, the businessman continues to proclaim loud and clear his ambition to preside over the destiny of the country through his party. He reaffirmed this on 26 May at a press conference in Dabakala: "I remain a militant of the PDCI-RDA. I am a presidential candidate for the party".

At the same time, the Abidjan court confirmed that Thiam had regained Ivorian nationality after renouncing his French citizenship. As a result, he re-elected party president overwhelming majority of his comrades, reflecting a clear desire to see him occupy the presidential chair for the next term. Is this a political strategy to enable him to take part in the elections after being struck off the electoral roll? According to writer and journalist Venance Konan: "As soon as he renounced French nationality, he became an Ivorian again". On the other hand, public law researcher Patrick Mboyo Bakambo believes that the PDCI leader should learn from his legal setbacks to prepare for the 2030 presidential election.

The news was also marked by a false coup d'état alert, reported on the X social network. The Agence de la Sécurité des Nationale Systèmes d'Information de Côte d'Ivoire (ANSSI) (Côte d'Ivoire's national information systems security agency) was keen to issue a formal denial of these rumours, which were being spread by individuals lurking in the shadows with a hidden agenda aimed at disrupting the peace of mind of Ivorians. The note published at on 22 May states "...this assertion is totally unfounded. It is the result of a deliberate and coordinated disinformation campaign.



GUINEA

Republic of Guinea: A fragile democratic transition?

Just as the Republic of Guinea's path towards democracy was becoming clearer, reluctance began to emerge. On 12 May, Prime Minister Amadou Oury Bah confirmed that a constitutional referendum would be held in September 2025, and that legislative and presidential elections would be held in December 2025 - good news for a country in doubt as to whether the transition timetable announced by the junta would be maintained. However, this mistrust was confirmed at the press conference on Thursday 22 May by the government spokesman, who clarified the prime minister's remarks by explaining that "we must not put the cart before the horse". "As spokesman for the Presidency, I am not in a position to give you a date for the elections, but we want to make this year an election year, in accordance with the declaration of the Head of State".

Compliance with the transition timetable is not the only concern about the democratic transition programme. The temporary suspension of 28 political parties in March 2025 has also sparked controversy among the opposition and civil society. According to observers, this succession several suspensions reflects a desire to unbalance the electoral process to the advantage of the government in power, by weakening the opposition in the run-up to the elections. Indeed, despite the ban on members of the junta standing for election, Colonel Mamadi Doumbouya is gathering a good deal of support for his candidacy in the forthcoming presidential elections, and there seems to be some doubt about his candidacy. However, a revision of the Transitional Charter would be necessary to authorise him to stand. A decision that would run counter to the democratic principles defended and desired by the transition regime.

Vast mining "clean-up operation": the State regains control

Meanwhile, the country has ordered the withdrawal of "research permits" and "operating permits" from dozens of mining companies. The list of these companies was made public by Information Minister Fana Soumah on Guinean national television on the evening of Saturday 17 May. This operation is part of "the ongoing operation to clean up the land registry" initiated by the junta. The aim is to "make room for potential serious investors", announced the Executive Director of the NGO Action Mines Guinée and a member of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) in Guinea. In reality, this is a key issue for the country, which is unable to ensure that the population benefits from the revenues generated by mining, and which is continuing its fight against corruption.

Senegal and Guinea consolidate their security partnership

The <u>Guinea-Senegal Bilateral Cooperation</u> Commission, held in Conakry on 22 and 23 May 2025, concluded with the signing of 15 partnership agreements covering a wide range of areas: economy, security, justice, culture, agriculture, higher education and cinema. The aim of this session was to update the legal framework for cooperation and strengthen strategic relations between the two countries. The key texts include an agreement on air services, border demarcation agreements on justice and security, and cultural and film cooperation agreements. The two foreign ministers welcomed the spirit of collaboration and stressed the importance of effective implementation of the agreements, via a monitoring and evaluation mechanism. The next session is scheduled for 2027, with the aim of taking stock of the concrete progress made.



MAURITANIA

Sentencing of a former president and a political turning point

In this month of May 2025, the news in Mauritania revolves around the confirmation of the pending verdict against the former president, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz. The Nouakchott Court of Appeal sentenced him to <u>fifteen years in prison for corruption</u>. The ruling reflects a growing determination to tackle wrongdoing by influential figures, which has polarised public opinion. For some, the trial sends a strong message against impunity. Others feel that it serves purely political interests. This emblematic trial crystallises the tensions between state reform and the settling of scores at the top.

The Court of Appeal is a second-tier court. Those convicted on appeal have no choice but to appeal to the highest court in the land.

Mehtarists and the fight against terrorism: Mauritania strengthens its security doctrine

In terms of security, Mauritania stands out for its proactive policy against terrorism, thanks to the méharistesin part, the nomadic desert troops. Carrying on an ancestral tradition, these soldiers now play a central role in Mauritania's military philosophy. Thanks to their expertise in the field and their agility, Mauritania's anti-terrorist forces are increasing the effectiveness of their operations at a time when the terrorist threat in the Sahel region remains unclear. This commitment testifies to Nouakchott's determination to preserve its internal security by relying on troops that are well adapted to local conditions.

Mauritania continues to apply its <u>tried and tested</u> <u>counter-terrorism doctrine of more than 13 years</u>, based on an integrated approach combining military measures, local development and community dialogue.

This model, often cited as an example within the former G5 Sahel, has enabled it to maintain a certain resilience in the face of regional upheaval. Nevertheless, this privileged situation is precarious, as systemic difficulties such as poverty, youth unemployment and migratory flows could erode its achievements. The month of May in Mauritania highlights a country at a crossroads, oscillating between consolidation of the state and bold strategic projects.

In addition to this security policy, the fight against illegal immigration has been stepped up and has become a strategic priority. More than 30,000 migrants have been intercepted since the beginning of the year, and more than 80 smuggling networks have been dismantled, proving that the authorities have stepped up their controls in border areas. This decision, applauded by certain European allies, is intended to strengthen collaboration to stem the flow of migrants to the continent. However, it also raises concerns about respect for immigrants' rights and raises questions about the external dynamics influencing Mauritanian migration policy.

Finally, from a perspective more focused on economic geopolitics, Nouakchott is also striving to exploit its natural resources to increase its influence on the international stage. At a conference in Paris, Mauritania's oil minister highlighted the country's "exceptional geological assets". This message is in line with the energy policy under negotiation, which aims to encourage foreign investment in the development of deep-sea oil resources and green energy sources. The country's relative political stability is a key argument for attracting players in the sector, at a time when the global energy transition is redefining strategic partnerships.



MALI

The debate on democratic freedoms is still raging

In recent months, the rule of law in Mali has been called into question. The measures adopted by General Assimi Goïta as part of the transition programme have led to an increase in the number of restrictions on freedoms. On 13 May, the Malian authorities announced the dissolution of "political parties and political organisations". A week before this dissolution, General Assimi Goïta had already announced the temporary suspension of all political parties and organisations. As an early protest against the repeal of the law governing political parties, an authorised rally was held in Bamako on Saturday 3 May 2025. Despite the large number of demonstrators, the meeting was disrupted by the presence of pro-transition activists. The authorities intervened to disperse the demonstrators and pro-junta supporters. civil society denounced the Meanwhile. deliberate sabotage of the event by the forces of law and order. There were also protests against this decision. On Wednesday 21 May, legal proceedings were initiated by former political leaders of parties that have now been dissolved, with the aim of contesting the dissolution. Although these proceedings have little chance of success, they are considered necessary by the initiators.

NGOs issue a call to order

The UN is calling for the repeal of the decree dissolving political parties. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, is calling for the restoration of political rights in the country and reminding Mali of its international human rights obligations and commitments. For its part, the NGO Human Right Watch (HRW) has demanded explanations for the abduction of two representatives of Malian opposition parties.

The Secretary General of Convergence and the head of the Change party were abducted by unidentified men on 8 May. According to AFP, the two politicians are "currently being heard by the competent authorities for investigative purposes". At the same time, HRW also called on the Malian authorities to open a "credible" and "independent" investigation following the news that 22 civilians had been killed by the army in the centre of the country.

Meanwhile, the TV news channel TV5 Monde has once again been suspended by the junta. The news channel promotes French-speaking culture and is the official operator of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF). The editorial director of Reporters Without Borders condemned this "abusive decision" and "yet another act of intimidation and pressure against the media in a country where the conditions in which they exercise their profession are constantly being hampered".

Dialogue between the SSA and ECOWAS leads to cooperation in the fight against terrorism

Meeting in Bamako on 22 May, the foreign ministers of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger affirmed, on behalf of the Confederation of Sahel States, their desire to pursue discussions with **ECOWAS** within an exclusively collective framework. Their aim is to lay the foundations for a new post-withdrawal partnership, focusing in particular on the joint fight against terrorism. At the end of this first session of consultations, a statement of conclusions was adopted, covering political, security and legal aspects. While rejecting separate negotiations, the three Sahelian countries insisted on the need to preserve regional gains such as freedom of movement, while denouncing the lack of support from ECOWAS in the face of security challenges.



NIGER

Multiple threats and increased vulnerability: endemic insecurity in Niger?

On 4 May 2025, an attack described as "terrorist" led to the deaths of several Nigerien soldiers near Dogon Kiria, in the Dogondoutchi department in the Dosso region of south-west Niger. The attack, which occurred at around 5pm, also left seven wounded, one of whom is in a critical condition, and around ten dead, according to the public radio station Voix du Sahel. This region, which the authorities do not consider to be a jihadist hotbed, has nevertheless been the target of acts of sabotage attributed to armed groups from Nigeria. In particular, they have targeted the pipeline that transports crude oil to Benin. Several assailants were killed and a number of accomplices arrested. The regional governor, Colonel Bana Alhassane, went to the scene to express his condolences to the families of those killed.

The following night, from 5 to 6 May 2025, members of Boko Haram <u>attacked two police checkpoints in Diffa</u>, in the east of the country. However, the security forces repelled them.

These tragedies are taking place in a country where violence has persisted since the coup d'état of July 2023, which caused the death of more than 2,400 people, according to the NGO Acled. These events are further proof of the constant pressure on Niger's border regions. The actions of jihadist groups affiliated to al-Qaeda, the Islamic State and Boko Haram, which are taking advantage of the unstable situation in the country, are a major factor.

On 18 May, an attack by armed individuals on a delivery convoy on the Dori-Téra road linking northern Burkina Faso to south-western Niger resulted in the tragic death of three Nigerien drivers and several injuries. In a press release issued the following day, the Union des Travailleurs du Transport et Assimilés du Niger (UTTAN) strongly condemned this "odious attack", which took place in a region often targeted by terrorist organisations.

The union also urged the armed forces to step up protection of communication routes.

Mass migrant refoulements: Niger under tension between humanitarian emergency and security issues

In April, Niger experienced an unprecedented wave of refoulements of migrants from Algeria. The Assamaka police counted more than 6,000 people at the border. This migratory pressure has led to overcrowding in IOM accommodation centres, prompting the Niger authorities to speed up their repatriation programme between now and July in order to avoid a humanitarian disaster. The Nigerien government, through the Minister of the Interior, has denounced a situation that is upsetting the national security balance. According to the NGO Alarme Phone Sahara, more than 31,000 people were expelled in 2024. The migrants, from West and Central Africa, are to be reintegrated into their countries of origin in coordination with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the High Commissioner for Refugees (HCR).

To cope with the influx of migrants in northern Niger, the country has pledged to repatriate more than 4,000 migrants by July, in collaboration with the IOM. The aim of this measure is to prevent a humanitarian crisis arising from the mass arrival of people expelled from Algeria. Since 2014, Algeria has been regularly turning back irregular migrants, mainly from Niger and other countries in Central and West Africa. Faced with the massive influx of migrants and its repercussions on security, the Nigerien government is calling for an increase in the means of voluntary repatriation with the help of the IOM.



NIGERIA

Persistent insecurity and the lessons of a deadly month

During the month of May 2025, it was noted that the threat posed by Boko Haram and its allies, notably the Islamic State in West Africa (ISWAP), remains a major concern in terms of Nigeria's security. Despite the tireless efforts of the armed forces, terrorist attacks have increased in the north-east. One of the most significant occurred on 4 May 2025, when at least 11 soldiers were killed by fighters affiliated to Daech during an assault in Yobe State. These repeated attacks demonstrate the complexity of regulating a region that has been a hotbed of violence for many years.

On 12 May, a military base was attacked in Gajiram, Borno, killing <u>4 soldiers and wounding several others</u>. A few days later, <u>at least 5 soldiers and 17 civilians were killed</u> in two successive attacks claimed by jihadist groups in the north-east, according to security sources. This offensive strategy illustrates the insurgent groups' still intact capacity to cause harm and to project themselves.

While north-east Nigeria remains the main focus of the insurgency, other regions of the country are increasingly affected. In the state of Benue, in the centre of the country, at least 23 civilians were killed, including children, in armed attacks carried out by unidentified assailants whose modus operandi is similar to the violence perpetrated by extremist militias. According to the local authorities, this bloody attack was perpetrated by Fulani herders. Another bloody attack in Borno state left at least 23 villagers dead. This violence shows that insecurity is tending to spread beyond the areas historically affected. Armed terrorist groups are not only targeting the Nigerian defence forces and military infrastructures for and ammunition, but are also targeting civilians.

Despite a strong military presence and largescale operations launched several years ago, the results have been mixed. A coordinated and sophisticated attack, attributed to Boko Haram, targeted Nigerian forces in the northeast of the country, causing significant loss of life and property despite emergency reinforcements. The attackers reportedly used reconnaissance drones, signalling a worrying rise in the technological power of the armed groups. These repeated military setbacks are weakening people's confidence institutions and fuelling the jihadist discourse, which is presenting itself as an alternative in marginalised areas.

Faced with such a complex threat, a purely military approach is not enough. The Nigerian government needs to change to an integrated strategy combining the fight against poverty, the strengthening of local governance and community reconciliation. The State could not only intensify its action against terrorism on its own territory, but also work closely with its neighbouring countries , such as Cameroon, Chad and Niger, to combat the cross-border effects of this scourge.



SENEGAL

New partnerships and reaffirmed security "sovereignty

Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko has announced the definitive withdrawal of all foreign military bases still present on Senegalese soil by July 2025. One French military base has already been withdrawn. This withdrawal could be part of a regional movement by some West African countries to re-evaluate their position with regard to the military presence of foreign powers. "It's an ordinary act for a sovereign country to say that we don't need a foreign military base. We have a national army, defence and security forces, and we thought we could manage our security ourselves", he defended. This statement by the Senegalese prime minister was made during an interview on national television (RTB) in Burkina Faso, where he was on a visit and where security was one of the issues discussed. The head of the Senegalese government affirmed his "absolute support" for President Ibrahim Traoré in the fight against terrorism. Senegal "will not exclude any form of collaboration to support these brotherly [countries] in this ordeal", maintained. Ousmane Sonko also praised President Traoré's determination to unify the sub-region and remains open to any proposal for economic and security cooperation. Is Senegal, the figurehead of African democracy, open to new and closer cooperation with SSA member countries?

As part of this drive to strengthen cooperation with countries in the sub-region, Senegal is continuing to consolidate its border security by setting up a joint Senegal-Mauritania patrol. The Defence and Security Forces (FDS) of the two countries are cooperating to "step up the fight against the illegal activities rife in the region, particularly banditry, cattle rustling and illegal immigration", according to the Senegalese press agency (APS).

Justice and politics: backlash against Macky Sall's former ministers?

On 08 May, the National Assembly adopted a series of resolutions requiring five of expresident Macky Sall's ministers to appear before the High Court of Justice, notably for misappropriation of an anti-Covid fund. The 1,000 billion CFA francs was intended to strengthen the health system, support economic players and protect jobs in a context of vulnerability. However, the management of this fund is now being debated, in particular for embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds. Sentences are being handed down one by one, and several people have been charged.

Alongside this judicial upheaval, the political duo of Khalifa Sall and Barthélémy Dias, the former mayor of Dakar, have parted company, first with the Socialist Party and then with the Taxawu Sénégal party. Although the split is described as an "amicable agreement", in reality it reflects the differences and tensions that have emerged between the two men in recent months. This new departure seems difficult for Barthélémy Dias at a time when the opposition is finding it increasingly difficult to make its presence felt in the political arena.

National dialogue: towards in-depth reform of Senegal's political system?

President <u>Bassirou Diomaye Faye opens the Day of National Dialogue</u> on the reform of Senegal's political system. It runs from 28 May to 4 June 2025 and aims to "rethink our institutions, revisit our practices, and rebuild trust between the State and its citizens", as announced by the Head of State.



Dr Cheikh Gueye, who has been appointed general facilitator of the dialogue, has been tasked with guiding the discussions along 10 axes. The points addressed include improving the system and updating the Electoral Code. The aim is to ensure transparent elections by overhauling the procedures for collecting results, rigorously supervising electoral bodies and strengthening the role of independent observers. In addition, there is a desire for an in-depth rationalisation of political parties, as well as greater control over their funding, a crucial issue that echoes the fight against corruption being waged by Ousmane Sonko's current government. At the end of the dialogue, the general facilitator, Dr Cheikh Guèye, expressed his satisfaction with the broad consensus reached, despite the profound differences on the issue of freedoms.

Renewed tensions in Casamance

It is more than a month since a soldier was abducted during a sweep in the Djinaky forest. This operation followed a major robbery of a cashew nut business in the commune of Boutoupa Camaracounda, in the department of Heavily armed individuals Ziguinchor. ambushed the goods and recovered the equivalent of 30 million CFA francs. The Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance (MFDC) is suspected of holding the missing soldier captive. These tensions are resurfacing in the region despite the fact that a peace agreement was signed with the separatist group in February 2025 with a view to "establishing lasting peace in Casamance", according to Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko.

Voluntary" return of migrants

Meanwhile, 591 Senegalese migrants have been repatriated "voluntarily". After emigrating to Europe, these migrants were residing illegally in transit countries in North Africa or the Sahel. Their "voluntary return" is a growing trend in sub-Saharan Africa. By October 2024, 200 returnees had already voluntary registered in Senegal. Tunisia counted 1,000 sub-Saharan Africans in April 2025. To facilitate their return, Tunisia has introduced one flight a week. The International Organisation for Migration has deployed a return protection and reintegration programme for migrants in sub-Saharan Africa. This initiative aims to limit new departures to Europe and concerns 16 countries in the region, including Senegal.



CHAD

Opposition politician and former prime minister Succès Masra held in custody

Since the legislative elections of December 2024, which his party "Les Transformateurs" boycotted, the political future of the former prime minister, Succès Masra, has been the subject of debate. At the end of January, he made a surprise appeal to those in power, saying he was "ready to work" with President Mahamat Idriss Déby. This offer was not taken up. Better still, in the middle of May, on Friday 16th, Succès Masra was arrested at his home. In a press briefing held on the same day, the public prosecutor, Oumar Kedelaye, indicated that the opponent was accused of "inciting hatred". He is therefore being prosecuted for "complicity in murder", "arson" "desecration of graves". According to the public prosecutor's office, these charges are linked to the intercommunity clashes that took place on Wednesday 14 May in the village of Mandakao, in the province of Logone Occidental, on the border with Cameroon, which left 41 people dead (mostly women and children) and several others injured. According to a judicial source, some 80 nomad camps were burnt down.

According to the prosecutor, "the investigations conducted by the judicial police revealed the involvement of Mr Assyongar Masra Succès". He added that "messages were circulated, particularly on social networks, calling on the population to arm themselves against other citizens".

The Succès Masra party condemned "a brutal arrest carried out without any known legal procedure". Djesada Ndolembaye, said that , one of the vice-presidents of the Succès Masra partySuccès Masra "was taken aback by the charges brought against him (...) He would never called for hatred or community confrontations". The audio in question, attributed to Succès Masra, was broadcast in Ngambay, his mother tongue. According to his lawyers, the audio in question dates from May 2023 and is available on S. Masra's Youtube channel. They therefore dispute the claim that this audio could be linked to the deadly incidents in Mandakao. Although Masra was due to be heard on 19 May, the hearing was finally postponed and his lawyers were turned away. Succès Masra was finally questioned by the judicial police the following day. On 21 May, he was formally charged and placed in pre-trial detention. His lawyers are calling for the case to be dismissed outright. The State's judicial agency has brought a civil action against Succès Masra in this case.

A joint force between Chad and the Central African Republic

At the same time, N'Djamena and Bangui announced the creation of a joint force to combat insecurity on their shared 1,200 km border. The memorandum of understanding that led to the creation of this force was signed in October 2024.



"The operational leader has already been appointed," says Issakha M. Djamous, Chad's Minister of the Armed Forces. "Central Africans and Chadians have suffered enough. It's time for these two peoples to live in peace and security", said the Central African Defence Minister, Claude Rameaux Bireau. For the time being, the number of soldiers in this force is not yet known.

On the other hand, at the end of his trial, Youssouf Déby Itno, the former director of the cabinet of President Mahamat I. Déby Itno, Youssouf Boy, <u>was sentenced</u> on 9 May to five years in prison for "active corruption".

The conviction follows a complaint lodged in January by Chadian businessman About Hachim Bouder, who accused Youssouf Boy of not having repaid the sum of 11.8 billion CFA francs earmarked for the construction of infrastructure in the east of the country, using a mandate from the President of the Republic. The plaintiff, About Hachim Bouder, was also sentenced to five years in prison for "passive corruption". At the end of the month, a TikTok video of an army officer caused controversy. In it, the officer made offensive comments about the Sara community. Despite the virality of the video, no official reaction was recorded until 29 May.



TOGO

Real democratic change or institutionalised status quo?

Once again this week, the political situation in Togo, with the recent demonstrations, raises questions about the country's democratic development. Last March, Togo made a major institutional change. The country officially moved to a parliamentary system, with a presidential ticket put to the people. Under this system, the post of Chairman of the Council of Ministers was created in the 5th Republic, and will be responsible for steering government action alongside the President of the Republic, who has an honorary title. At the end of this exercise, Faure Gnassingbé was chosen as Chairman of the Council to preside over the country's destiny for a 6-year term. He succeeded his father Eyadéma Gnassingbé 20 years ago. Many observers see this new reform as a hidden attempt to remain in power with a veneer of democracy. For some, it ensures that he will remain the alpha and omega a long time to come of political, economic and social life for.

Togo's transition from a presidential to a parliamentary system: Faure remains the country's "strong man

Alongside him, the President of the Republic really only has symbolic power; all powers are in the hands of the President of the Council. This is Jean Lucien Savi de Tové (86), a historic opponent and former Minister of Trade and Handicrafts under Edem Kodjo, who was the sole candidate of the ruling Union for the Republic (UNIR) party and was unanimously elected by the 150 members of the Congress of Deputies and Senators during the special session. He was elected for a 4-year term, renewable once only.

For many observers, he is regarded as a living memory of the country's political life over several decades, and has taken part in all the country's battles and major events. A choice that is amply justified in view of his stature and experience.

The measures accompanying the 5th Republic strongly criticised by the opposition and civil society

The opposition, for its part, has not failed to decry the government's measures. It rejects the Fifth Republic out of hand, which for some is clearly an attempt by the current regime to stay through power measures deemed Machiavellian. Opposition leaders believe that Faure has waited until the eve of the end of his term to propose these reforms, which will consolidate his position as president. Civil society activists are also continuing to challenge the reforms through peaceful demonstrations, which are very often banned by the current regime. According to the spokesman of the Touche pas à ma Constitution movement, "The Fifth Republic is an act of rape, in other words, without consent, that is being inflicted on the Togolese people. By replacing the Constitution in the dead of night, on the sly, without clear explanations, without consulting the people, the people have been scorned and the conscience of every citizen has been violated". The lack of dialogue and consensus upstream was strongly criticised by a large section of the political class and leaders of organisations.



Security situation in northern Togo: suspicion of authoritarian excesses and increased presence of Burkinabe refugees

On the security front, <u>cases of authoritarian excesses</u> within the security forces were raised during the month. Gendarmes were reported to have committed acts of torture in a village. There was also the case of an individual who accused a police commissioner of swindling him out of 2,500,000 FCFA. Another highlight was the case of a drunk police officer who allegedly caused a serious accident involving a motorcyclist and even refused to take the victim to hospital for treatment. No further action was taken...

Meanwhile, Burkinabe refugees continue to make the headlines, particularly in the northern part of the country. The Savanes region, particularly Dapaong, is home to thousands of women and children who have fled Burkina Faso to escape the violence. According to figures from the census of displaced persons, there are around 29,500 in the region. Is there a risk that the security situation will get worse, given the tense situation in the Sahel?



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